



## Virginia Environmental Law

### [Virginia's Watershed Improvement Plan Revealed at Long Last](#)

September 14, 2010 By: [Ann Neil Cosby](#).

Last week, the Commonwealth of Virginia revealed its [Watershed Improvement Plan \(WIP\)](#) as it was required to do by the [U. S. Environmental Protection Agency](#). The state's efforts to improve the water quality of the [Chesapeake Bay](#) actually [began over 30 years ago](#). These efforts have continued to plod along at what some might consider a snail's pace, but the pace may actually reflect the speed at which the state and impacted stakeholders can realistically move, given the huge economic and political impacts at risk because of hundreds of years of free and unfettered use of our nation's largest tidal body.

The deadline for Virginia's WIP submittal came as a result of an [Executive Order issued in May 2009](#), by President Obama. In conjunction with the required WIPs, EPA will hold public meetings this fall to discuss the draft Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) – the strict [“pollution diet”](#) to restore local waters and the Chesapeake Bay. The draft Bay TMDL will be issued on Sept. 24, 2010. The public meetings in Virginia are scheduled for:

- Harrisonburg, Virginia, October 4, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
- Annandale, Virginia, October 5, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
- Richmond, Virginia, October 6, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
- Webinar, October 7, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
- Hampton, Virginia, October 7, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Complete information on the meetings, including venues, directions and webinar registration links, can be found on the [Bay TMDL web site](#).

The draft Bay TMDL will establish proposed limits on nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution that will be applicable throughout the 64,000-square-mile watershed. The restrictions are intended to establish clean water standards for the Bay and its tidal tributaries, and are intended to help restore local rivers and streams. The EPA wants to ensure that by 2025, all practices that are necessary to fully restore the bay are in place, with 60 percent of these actions occurring by 2017.

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The EPA will also receive comments and answer questions from the public as part of an official 45-day public comment period on the draft Bay TMDL, ending November 8, 2010. Instructions for submitting formal written comments to EPA will be included on the [Bay TMDL web site](#) and contained in an upcoming Federal Register Notice.

A final Bay TMDL will be established by Dec. 31, 2010.

Any comments so far on the potential benefits and/or weaknesses of Virginia's WIP? Does it go too far? Does it go far enough? Are the proper sectors impacted?

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