

Proposed VA stormwater regulations available for comment

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is proposing changes to the state's stormwater regulations that would for the first time require all municipalities to establish stormwater programs and establish a fee structure to support those programs.

The regulations are available for public review and comment through Aug. 21.

Rooftops, parking lots, sidewalks and streets do not allow rain to soak into the ground. Stormwater runoff from these impervious surfaces picks up pollutants, including nutrients, sediments, heavy metals, grease, oils and other toxics. These surfaces also greatly speed up the flow of stormwater, leading to increased erosion with more nutrient and sediment pollution and destroyed aquatic habitats in nearby streams as well as further degradation to waters downstream. Stormwater also contributes to flooding. Runoff from developed properties is the fastest growing and only increasing source of water pollution in the state.

Enhancing these stormwater regulations is a key part of Virginia's overall

approach to improving water quality statewide and restoring the Chesapeake Bay, which includes pollution reductions from sewage treatment plants and farmland runoff," said Joseph Maroon, DCR director. "We continue to seek constructive input and comment from local governments, the development community and citizens at large."

Several technical committees made up of representatives from local governments, developers, contractors and environmental groups helped to develop the proposed regulations. The DCR conducted more than 50 public meetings. The Center for Watershed Protection and Virginia Tech were among the institutions that provided technical support and economic benefit analysis in developing the proposals.

For the first time, the regulations will result in local stormwater management programs in all state localities. Currently, local stormwater programs exist only in localities in eastern Virginia covered by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, those with populations of more than 100,000 people, or a handful of other local

governments that opted to have their own stormwater management programs. These regulations propose a fee structure that allows local governments to fund their programs. They also revise water quantity and quality standards, including a more protective phosphorus standard for developed lands. Phosphorus is seen as a leading indicator of other potential pollutants in stormwater.

The draft runoff standards are set at levels needed to help improve state waters and the Chesapeake Bay while still allowing for development to occur.

In addition, the regulations increase stream channel and flood protection measures, promote the use of low impact development techniques and provide developers new methodologies, best management practices and off-site reduction options to help reduce costs associated with meeting the new regulations.

For details on stormwater and links for viewing the draft regulations and a list of planned public hearings, go to www.dcr.virginia.gov and click on "Policy, Regulations and Public Comments."

various programs and activities at NOAA to further NOAA's coastal resource stewardship mission.

Authorize the Chesapeake Bay Interpretative Buoy system, a system of buoys that reports real-time weather and environmental information such as wind speed, temperature, and wave height.

Strengthen the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program, which supports existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages the development of partnerships among environmental education programs in the watershed.

Expand the expertise that NOAA offers to help watermen develop aquaculture programs. It also promotes programs for the propagation of submerged aquatic vegetation, which acts as a natural filter for the Chesapeake Bay.

The bill was co-sponsored by Sens. Jim Webb of Virginia and Barbara Mikulski and Benjamin Cardin of Maryland. Similar legislation has been introduced in the House by Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland.

Fort A.P. Hill easements

announced in June that it has totaled more than 4,200 acres in conservation easements since it began its compatible use buffer program in 2005. Nearly 3,000 acres of the total were permanently protected in 2008.

Fort A.P. Hill is one of the Army's largest training sites on the East Coast.

MD looking to rework Sparrows Point decree

The new owners of the Sparrows Point steel mill are complying with orders to remedy decades of pollution at the plant outside Baltimore, according to federal and state environmental regulators.

While Severstal is in compliance, Maryland's secretary of the environment said her department was looking to rework the consent order as a result of assessments and investigations conducted since the 1997 agreement was reached.

The regulators were responding to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's court filing in May that it intends to sue state and federal regulators and past and present owners of the mill to force compliance with the consent decree.

Nearly a century of steel-making and

ment Secretary Shari T. Wilson said in a statement that her agency was looking to update the consent decree because the 1997 agreement "focuses on investigation and lacks specific requirements or time frames regarding remediation."

The plant does not pose any immediate public health threats, but MDE continues to inspect the site in response to citizen complaints about operations and the consent decree, Wilson said, noting that MDE inspected the site eight times last year and five times so far this year.

VA, conservancy purchase 4,000 acres near Bay

More than 4,000 acres of a vital Chesapeake Bay tributary will be permanently protected.

Virginia Gov. Timothy Kaine announced in May that the state and The Nature Conservancy have purchased 4,188 acres of land within the Dragon Run watershed from the Hancock Timber Resource Group.

The Smithsonian Institution has called Dragon Run the "second most ecologically important watershed in the Chesapeake Bay." It is home to 90 bird species and 55