

# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## 2015 HISTORICAL DATA CLEANUP

*Funding Source: EPA Chesapeake Bay Regulatory and Accountability Program Grant (Federal Funds)*

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Is the due date February 13 or February 20?**

February 20. An updated RFA is available online:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/programs/water/cleanwaterfinancingassistance/nonpointsourcefunding.aspx>

#### **Does this only apply to urban areas?**

Any urban or developed area is eligible. So don't just think "cities" or census "urbanized areas." If you have rural residential developed areas, strip malls, gas stations, grocery stores...anything impervious (along with associated pervious areas), that is all considered "urban" in the Bay models, so we want to know about any approved urban BMPs treating those areas (see the list in the spreadsheet).

#### **Are all localities in the Bay Watershed eligible or only those in Bay Act Areas eligible?**

All Bay watershed localities and PDCs are eligible. We have amended the LIS reference on Page 2 of the RFA to reflect this. An updated version of the RFA is available online:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/programs/water/cleanwaterfinancingassistance/nonpointsourcefunding.aspx>

#### **Are state agencies and other regulated MS4 entities (Universities, VDOT, Ft. Belvoir etc.) also eligible?**

Only cities, counties, towns and PDCs are eligible. The other entities, however, could collaborate with those eligible local governments to join and strengthen their proposals. For example, a university could collaborate with the city in which it resides to collectively report all of the BMPs and land use information for both. Whatever financial arrangement is made between the city and the university is for them to negotiate and would need to be spelled out in the proposal. The max allocation would still be limited to 25,000 per eligible entity.

#### **Would the maximum funding request be capped at \$50,000 for a PDC covering 2 counties?**

Yes.

#### **If a county has BMPs that were never recorded, would this grant help us to locate and record them, or does the grant only apply to previously recorded BMPs?**

Yes, collecting and documenting this type of data would be considered eligible (see section V of the RFA, specifically B and C). It will be important to include information in the proposal regarding the processes used to verify the existence and functionality of BMPs such as these.

**Should BMPs that are installed outside of the MS4 boundary be reported?**

Yes.

**Should localities report Agricultural BMPs?**

No. Historical agricultural BMP data will be collected from state and federal agencies.

**How will the data submitted by the localities be managed by DEQ and EPA?**

The raw data will be stored in a secure database at DEQ. DEQ will aggregate the data so that a minimum number of data points are represented by a given geographic area. Depending on the density of BMP implementation, this may be aggregation to the HUC-12, HUC-8, or county level. This aggregated data will be submitted to the Bay Program through the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN), the required repository of all BMP reporting for the Bay Program. From NEIEN, the Bay Program modeling team will pull the data into the modeling system. Once run through the model, the (aggregated) data will likely be exported to the VAST (and similar) tools to facilitate planning efforts in 2017 and beyond. These tools are accessible to anyone who requests an account. Our goal is to maintain the highest resolution of data possible while still protecting the privacy of constituents.

**Can you please provide further explanation of how the data may influence future nutrient and sediment reduction allocations?**

As far as nutrient and sediment reduction allocations are concerned, all indications from EPA are that allocations will remain at the segment-shed level. The submission of land use data and historical BMP data will, however, lend itself toward more accurate model representation and load reduction crediting at the local scale.

**Why should localities provide this data?**

Information on local land use/land cover and BMP implementation that is as accurate as possible is integral to:

Phase 6 Watershed Model:

The Chesapeake Bay Program is calibrating a new version of the Watershed Model. Enhancing the quality of the land use/land cover and developed/urban BMP data in the Phase 6 model is expected to significantly improve the quality of model outputs and their relevancy at the local scale. Specifically, improved local land use/land cover data will be used to advance the modeled land cover conditions so that they better align with on-the-ground conditions. This data will also influence the Bay Program's land change model so that it can more accurately forecast future development trends and patterns. Accurately documenting and simulating historical BMPs will improve the watershed model calibration as well.

### Planning Tools:

Once the model is calibrated and approved by the Bay Program Partnership, the locally accessible CAST and VAST tools will be updated to represent the calibrated model. With the addition of updated and accurate history of BMP implementation, these tools will become more useful as implementation planning instruments for local planning, Phase 3 WIP and milestone development leading to 2025. Accurately representing BMPs implemented on the landscape through time is critical for crediting water quality efforts undertaken to date as well as targeting future implementation efforts.

### Verification:

Concurrent with the development of the Phase 6 model, the Bay Program is instituting a higher degree of scrutiny on reported BMPs. This effort is referred to at the Bay Program as Verification. In accordance with the established verification guidance, the Bay Program will require that all BMPs reported for credit into the Bay Model have been verified to exist on the land and confirmed to be functioning as intended. The Bay Program will also be instituting credit lifespans for each BMP which will necessitate periodic re-verification inspections to ensure reported practices continue to function through time. Absent such re-verification, the practice would be removed from the model at the end of its credit lifespan. If, however, the BMP has been inspected or maintained during the course of the lifespan, and that re-verification is reported to the state, the credit lifespan will reset from the inspection or maintenance date. As such, we must rely on localities to keep track of and report installations, inspections, and maintenance activities so as to receive and retain model credit for all functioning BMPs.

In Virginia, where we have not historically had a reliable database for tracking BMPs in the urban/developed sector, the historical record of urban BMPs was created based on assumptions and estimates that are no longer viable in the face of this enhanced verification regimen. That means, without the submission of quality local data representing actual verifiable BMPs on the ground, the vast majority of our previously credited urban/developed BMPs will be removed from the models, resulting in higher loads and requiring higher levels of implementation in the future to meet the TMDL.

### Modeled Progress:

Virginia has been reporting BMP implementation aggregated to larger scales to avoid model conflicts with incorrect land use classification and inaccurate historical BMP data. This practice allowed us to work around the model's limitations and maximize the credit for reported BMPs. The downside of this was that localities that have been slow to implement BMPs may have seen model reductions resulting from the higher implementation levels in other localities in the same region. Conversely, those localities that have been aggressive in implementation may have seen their model results diluted by the lower levels of activity in neighboring localities. With the improvements being made to the model and the new calibration, we have the opportunity to reset. This collection of accurate BMP records will allow us to report BMP implementation at the locality scale, possibly finer. That means that instead of looking at model results at a statewide scale, we will be able to assess progress at the locality scale. Each locality's efforts would be individually reflected in the model results. Localities that participate in this data call and provide detailed records of BMP implementation through history, along with subsequent

inspection and maintenance data, will see greater load reductions in the model results. Those localities that do not participate, will not have any BMPs reported for their area, and as a result would not see loads declining through time.

#### Trends in Monitoring Data:

Understanding the factors affecting observed trends in water quality requires a clear understanding of what actions have been implemented over time. An accurate accounting of management practices will improve the ability of partners to evaluate the contribution of management actions to observed changes in loads from the watershed. Subsequently, federal, state and local partners will be better able to select future actions and track progress if the partnership has a more accurate accounting of implementation to date. Historical BMP data will allow partners to identify where there are opportunities to implement more controls.

#### **Why should localities provide this data AGAIN?**

While some localities have provided BMP information to the State as part of regulatory reporting requirements or the 2012 Phase II WIP data collection effort, more often than not, that data is insufficient to meet the current Bay Program verification and reporting requirements. Our hope is that this collection effort, with a pre-established reporting template, will, once and for all, gather the complete history of BMPs in the Urban/developed sector. Similar efforts are ongoing in each of the other sectors too. Once complete and incorporated into the new model, this history of BMP implementation will lay the foundation for our continuing efforts to implement all practices necessary to meet the Bay TMDL loads by 2025.