

## Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

### Notice of Release of Final Assessment Guidance

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will release the final 2012 Water Quality Assessment Guidance Manual on June 20, 2011.

Virginia's 2012 Water Quality Assessment Guidance Manual contains the assessment procedures and methods to be used for the development of Virginia's 2012 §305(b)/§303(d) Integrated (i.e. combined Water Quality Assessment and Impaired Waters) Report. The assessment guidance seeks to address all key elements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2006 Assessment Guidance and subsequent updates current up to March 2011, in addition to the assessment methodology for Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Standards established by EPA, most recently updated in the May 2010 addendum to *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Dissolved Oxygen, Water Clarity, and Chlorophyll a for the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries*.

The assessment guidance also reflects changes in Virginia's Water Quality Standards, which became effective on January 6, 2011. The Standards were updated with refinements to the methodology used in the estimation of pycnoclines in the Chesapeake Bay. Furthermore, the use of a geometric mean for seasonal chlorophyll *a* criteria in the James River has now been explicitly specified.

The assessment guidance also includes a new section devoted to the assessment of continuous monitoring data.

Section 62.1-44.19:5 C of the Code of Virginia requires DEQ to develop and publish the procedures used for defining and determining impaired waters and provide for public comment on the procedures. A draft version of this guidance was released for public review and comment on March 28, 2011. The comment period closed on April 29, 2011. Only one comment was received from the public.

A copy of the final 2012 Water Quality Assessment Guidance Manual is available to download from the DEQ Water Quality Assessment webpage at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/wqa/>. A hard copy can also be requested from Tish Robertson, DEQ Water Quality Assessment Coordinator, using the contact information below.

DEQ's response to comments received during the public comment period is also available for download at the URL above. This document has also been mailed to the organization that submitted comment.

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