



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

April 5, 2019

Matthew J. Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Cosmo Servidio
Regional Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Mr. Dana Aunkst
Director
EPA, Chesapeake Bay Program
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 112
Annapolis, MD 21403

Re: Virginia's Draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan for Meeting the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load

Dear Administrator Servidio and Director Aunkst:

On behalf of Governor Ralph S. Northam, I submit the Commonwealth's Draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) for meeting the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Concurrently, the Virginia Office of Natural Resources, through the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), releases the Draft Phase III WIP for public review and comment.

Development of the Commonwealth's Draft Phase III WIP has been guided by Governor Northam's goals for his Administration:

- To achieve the state basin planning targets while accounting for future population and economic growth and the impacts of climate change and to do so no later than December 31, 2025;
- To engage and seek guidance from partners, including local governments, planning district or regional commissions (PDCs), and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) through a local area planning effort;
- To develop a plan that is resilient, practical, cost-effective, and provides for multiple benefits; and
- To adhere to expectations established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and our Chesapeake Bay Program Partners, particularly those regarding reasonable assurance.

Achieving the Commonwealth's 2017 reduction targets for nitrogen and phosphorus through successful implementation of the Phase I and Phase II WIPs demonstrates clearly that the goal of fully achieving Virginia's state basin planning targets is within our reach. Yet, restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries will require significant additional action by federal, state

and local governments, wastewater utilities, farmers and the agriculture and forestry industries, landowners and homeowners, lawn care companies, the general public and many others.

The building blocks of our Draft Phase III WIP include our existing federal, state and local programs, detailed local area plans provided by our PDCs and SWCDs, as well as new state initiatives. Governor Northam and I remain grateful for the thoughtful recommendations received from multiple local stakeholders through the PDCs and SWCDs local area planning effort throughout 2018, and we have incorporated many of these recommendations into the Draft Phase III WIP.

The Commonwealth will benefit from cleaner water and a restored Chesapeake Bay. Failing to meet our obligations under the Clean Water Act and to our Chesapeake Bay Program Partners is not acceptable. As our current progress reflects, reducing nutrient and sediment pollution enhances our economy and our quality of life. This Draft Phase III WIP will result in a healthier, more diverse economy, including but not limited to recreation, tourism, and water-based industries, increased property values, more sustainable land uses, and a Chesapeake Bay that future generations of Virginians will have the opportunity to enjoy.

While the Draft Phase III WIP outlines multiple state actions, Virginia will continue to rely upon a strong federal partnership to implement those actions. As noted by the Chesapeake Bay Commission in 2017 “the state-federal Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership has successfully advanced a collaborative, state-led, federally supported restoration approach.”

Unfortunately, the President’s proposed budget does not include funding adequate to meet this commitment. The Chesapeake Bay will not be restored if funding for EPA’s Chesapeake Bay Program is reduced by 90 percent. To sustain strong collaboration, the federal government must remain a full partner by not only maintaining but also increasing financial support to the states and the District of Columbia.

We now invite EPA’s review and recommendations along with those of all stakeholders and the general public. Through your collective input, we anticipate building an even stronger, final Phase III WIP.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Strickler

Attachment: Virginia’s Draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan for Meeting the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load

cc: Members of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders Advisory Group
The Honorable David Bulova, Chair, Chesapeake Bay Commission Virginia Delegation

The Honorable Danny Marshall, III, Chair, Virginia House of Delegates Agriculture,
Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Richard H. Stuart, Chair, Virginia Senate Agriculture, Conservation and
Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Kenneth R. Plum, Virginia House of Delegates Agriculture, Chesapeake
and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Chap Petersen, Virginia Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural
Resources Committee
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, President
Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Planning District/Regional Commissions, Executive
Directors
Virginia Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team