



Virginia Environmental Law

A New Year, a New Outlook on the Economic Benefits of Cleaning Up the Bay?

By: Ann Neil Cosby. Wednesday, January 11th, 2012

Last week, Virginia submitted its 2012-2013 Chesapeake Bay Milestones to the Environmental Protection Agency. They will be available shortly on the Virginia Bay TMDL website at <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/vabaytmdl/index.shtml>. The milestones were required by EPA to gauge the effectiveness of Virginia's initial efforts in implementing strategies intended to meet the pollution load requirements established for the Chesapeake Bay (aka, the Chesapeake Bay TMDL). We will need to wait and see if Virginia is doing enough, now, to satisfy EPA.

Submission of the milestones comes a week after the **Chesapeake Bay Foundation** issued a report finding that **environmental regulations** do not hurt the economy. Entitled "**Debunking the 'Job Killer' Myth, How Pollution Limits Encourage Jobs in the Chesapeake Bay Region**," the report offers a counter-point to well-publicized criticism of the Bay TMDL and stringent EPA requirements, which, to date, have asserted that current Bay cleanup requirements are too expensive to implement, and are detrimental to localities and private enterprises already struggling in a down economy.

The Bay Foundation report, compiled through data from state and federal environmental agencies, published studies and reports as well as through interviews with economic experts, business owners and workers, likens current concerns that environmental regulations will be bad for business to similar claims made by critics of the clean air and fuel-efficiency standards in the 1970s and, later, the 1990 federal **Clean Air Act Amendments**.

The report presents several examples of job creation areas and foresees an increase in such jobs in the Chesapeake region because of **water-pollution** limits. The jobs include environmental clean-up and monitoring jobs (primarily generated by sewage and water system improvement projects), construction and engineering jobs necessary for stormwater **pollution control**, and sewage plant upgrade projects. Jobs in the agricultural sector were also identified related to the construction of facilities to reduce manure and farm-runoff, as were job increases in the more traditional areas of fishing, processing, packing, restaurants and tourism. The report also posits that new environmental regulations will encourage innovation and necessitate new jobs for new technologies.

If the Bay Foundation's report is an accurate forecast of the economic benefits to cleaning up the Bay, and if the milestones submitted to EPA reflect effective first steps in meeting the Bay TMDL, then 2012 is off to a good start. What do you think?

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