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Oppose Bills that Weaken Statewide Stormwater Program

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation opposes legislation that would weaken Virginia's statewide stormwater management program. To ensure all Virginians across the state have the benefit of clean streams as well as a restored Chesapeake Bay, we urge that the following bills be rejected:

Bill Number	Patron	Description
HB1004	Byron	Requires localities to fully waive stormwater fees for airport public use runways and taxiways.
SB367	Newman	Authorizes localities to provide partial waivers of stormwater fees for airport property used for runways and taxiways.
HB805	O'Quinn	Restricts the application of modern, effective stormwater management rules to the Chesapeake Bay watershed; relegates non-Bay watershed region to outdated stormwater management rules in effect before 2014.
SB507	Carrico	Restricts the application of modern, effective stormwater management rules to the Chesapeake Bay watershed; relegates non-Bay watershed region to outdated stormwater management rules in effect before 2014.
HB1308	Hodges	Authorizes rural Tidewater localities to avoid plan review responsibilities by accepting signed and certified plans and supporting calculations prepared by the developer's retained engineer for land disturbances from 2,500 square feet to an acre.
HB1566	Hodges	Authorizes localities across the Commonwealth to avoid plan review responsibilities by accepting signed (but not certified) plans and supporting calculations prepared by a developer's retained engineer for land disturbances greater than one acre.

Virginia's Stormwater Management Program

Almost 15 years ago, Virginia began work to modernize its outdated stormwater management program. To assist in this effort, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) convened a large and diverse group of stakeholders, including developers, local governments, scientists, stormwater engineers, technical experts, and conservation organizations who worked together on the project for many years before reaching a consensus on the appropriate technical requirements. The General Assembly approved the new consensus rules in 2011, but postponed their implementation for three more years. Since 2014, these new rules have been part of the state's stormwater permitting programs (MS4, industrial stormwater, construction general permit) and have been successfully followed by localities, industry, developers, and engineers across the state in new development projects.

The bills described above challenge different aspects of the stormwater program: the updated technical requirements (HB805, SB5067); localities' fee system to defray the cost of stormwater management (HB1004; SB367); and localities' administration responsibilities (HB1308; HB1566).

Why Should We Manage Stormwater?

Water running off streets, parking lots, and lawns picks up trash, motor oil, pesticides, pet waste, and other contaminants and washes them into streams flowing through our communities, causing water quality issues for local rivers and streams. In addition to the contaminants it carries, stormwater not properly managed is conveyed

in hardened channels where the increased volume and velocity gouges out streambanks and carries sediment downstream. The updated technical rules in Virginia's post-2014 program allow rain water to slow and soak into the ground.

Polluted runoff is not just an environmental problem—it's also an economic problem. It increases drinking water treatment costs, worsens local flooding, closes beaches, and contaminates shellfish. The ongoing water quality degradation adds to local public works costs and the economic hardship of watermen and communities that rely upon clean water for their way of life.

Oppose Detrimental Bills

The proposed bills listed above ask for dilution or exemption from the rules that safeguard our waterways from polluted runoff. **We urge legislators to oppose these bills that would weaken Virginia's stormwater management program.**

Virginia has committed funds to upgrade its wastewater facilities and to reduce runoff from agricultural lands, and our rivers and streams are cleaner and healthier as a result. Unfortunately, urban and suburban polluted runoff increases with every new roof, lawn, road, and parking lot built. It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly protect these consensus-based stormwater regulations from being weakened.



Figure 1: Damage to channel caused by stormwater erosion. Photo credit: Center for Watershed Protection



Figure 2: Step pools in restored stream allow water to slow and pollutants to filter out. Photo credit: Ecosystem Services

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