



EPA Releases Milestone Reviews, Gives Virginia Good Marks September 2016

On June 17, EPA issued its Baywide and state-by-state milestone evaluations for 2014-2015 milestone progress and 2016-2017 milestone commitments. Baywide, EPA highlighted progress made on phosphorus and sediment; the 2015 goals were met for both. Baywide 2015 goals for nitrogen were not met however, and EPA cautions that "...the jurisdictions will need to substantially increase nitrogen reductions in order to get back on target." Additionally, although the news on phosphorus and sediment is good, "an updated Phase 6 Watershed Model could result in changes to the projected reductions."

Unlike the Baywide review, EPA's review of Virginia's progress showed that the Commonwealth met its goals for nitrogen. Virginia also met its 2015 goals for phosphorus. Virginia fell short on sediment because the urban and agriculture sectors are off-track for reductions, according to EPA. Wastewater is on-track for all three pollutants. For the 2016-2017 period, the state in the aggregate is on track to meet 2017 goals for all pollutants, although on sector-specific basis the urban stormwater sector is behind target for all three pollutants according to EPA. EPA states that "Virginia will need to place additional emphasis on increasing implementation in the urban sector in order to meet its target Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL) targets by 2025."

Specifically for offsets and trading, during the 2014-2015 period, Virginia achieved its milestone of finalizing the Nutrient Credit Trading Ratio Study Report and published the 2013 and 2014 Nutrient Loads Report and 2014 Nutrient Trades Report. Virginia failed, however, to finalize draft regulations establishing procedures for certification, verification and reporting of nonpoint source nutrient credits. This milestone carries over to the 2016-2017 milestone period.

EPA cites Virginia's commitment to continue development of the online nutrient credit registry as a milestone strength for 2016-2017, but expects the Commonwealth to track steps to finalize the nonpoint source trading regulations. In addition, EPA will look to Virginia to "continue to work with EPA...on EPA-prepared draft sector growth demonstrations" by providing comments and any additional information requested.