



# CITIZEN WATER QUALITY MONITORING GRANT

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CREATING CITIZEN STEWARDS FOR  
VIRGINIA'S WATERWAYS

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From the Potomac to the Roanoke, from the historic Appomattox to the headwaters of the Clinch River, citizens have volunteered their time to monitor the health of Virginia's rivers and streams, securing high-quality data and providing important educational opportunities. This citizen-scientist effort has been made possible thanks to the **Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program**, now endangered due to budget cuts. This grant program, administered by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has an outstanding history of service to the Commonwealth, and has helped train thousands of citizens to protect and improve water quality in addition to monitoring it.

This White Paper discusses the history and successes of this outstanding cost-effective grant program, and urges action by the Virginia General Assembly on four points:

- Retain current \$106,000 funding commitment for DEQ's Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program.
- Specify that funds can be used for staffing costs (Proposed - up to 25% total allocated)
- Request future funding is specified as a line item in the state budget (not general fund supported).
- Request that funding increase to \$200,000 annually for FY 2009 & 2010.

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## GRANT PROGRAM HISTORY

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The Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program was started in 1999. Recent funding levels have been:

FY 2008	\$106,000 (original budget)
FY 2007	\$106,000
FY 2006	\$106,000
FY 2005	\$100,000
FY 2004	\$ 0
FY 2003	\$65,000 (This is before Pass Through funding was added to the Grant)
FY 2002	\$63,613
FY 2001	\$60,626
FY 2000	\$59,917

DEQ received \$132,000 worth of grant proposals for FY2008. **Due to the state budget shortfall, FY 2008 funds are proposed to be completely eliminated.** Additionally, it is anticipated these cuts will be sustained for Fiscal Years 2009 & 2010, totaling 3 years of no financial support from Virginia.

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## GRANT PROGRAM BENEFITS

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- According to the 2006 305(b) report published by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, only about 20% of the 50,000 stream miles in Virginia are monitored on a regular basis. That leaves 40,000 miles of streams with unknown water quality. Volunteer monitoring programs help fill that gap.
- DEQ uses volunteer data to follow up on sites that are identified as having possible water quality issues.
- DEQ and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) use volunteer data to determine if conservation practices are positively addressing water quality. In impaired watersheds that are part of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, volunteer data are used to help target conservation best management practices (BMPs).
- Volunteer water quality monitoring enhances and complements state and federal agency programs.
- Volunteer monitoring helps fulfill the intent of House Bill 1150 (passed in the General Assembly 2006 session) by providing data that can help determine the success of various conservation programs.
- The Code of Virginia (62.1-44.19:11) establishes a goal of 3,000 miles to be monitored by citizen volunteers by 2010.
- Volunteer monitors provide consistent monitoring over the long term, fill data gaps (both spatial and temporal), and provide monitoring on streams where no data exist.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes the value of volunteer water quality monitoring in the scope of larger restoration efforts. In a recent EPA Inspector General Report (Development Growth Outpacing Progress in Watershed Efforts to Restore the Chesapeake Bay, Report No. 2007-P-00031), it was noted, “Programs outside regulatory requirement are also used to meet load reduction goals. Some of these programs include citizen education, stream restoration, volunteer monitoring, brownfields restoration, and stormwater system retrofitting.” Volunteer monitoring engages citizens in both data collection and citizen education, while building a foundation for citizens to become more engaged in larger community conservation efforts.

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## GRANT PROGRAM SUCCESSES

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- There are over 750 active volunteer monitors estimated throughout Virginia. Thousands of Virginians have been trained in volunteer monitoring techniques over the past 10 years.
- In some circumstances, volunteer monitoring data has resulted in DEQ further investigating local water issues where they have not previously monitored. While volunteer monitoring is not used for enforcement purposes, it provides ancillary information to agencies in areas not currently monitored.
- Clean Virginia Waterways (a regional nonprofit affiliated with Longwood University) has developed a well water testing program for poor and underserved families in Southside Virginia as an off-shoot of the Appomattox River Water Quality Monitoring Program. The sustainability of this program is now in question.
- Numerous volunteer water quality monitoring groups use their stream monitoring data to develop reports, brochures, power point presentations, and other community, outreach educational materials on the state of local water quality and stream health. These educational materials inform the citizenry of watershed problems, needs, and actions that can be taken on the local level.
- Volunteer water quality monitors become an engaged constituency who participate in local watershed stewardship and management activities. Some examples include - stream clean ups, restoration projects, local water quality protection meetings, state government program meetings (i.e. TMDL development and implementation), community event participation, and community education on watershed issues.
- Volunteer water quality monitors become advocates who encourage local governmental authorities to adopt policies and ordinances to protect water quality. Examples include applying zoning and other land management practices that protect stream-valley corridors and their riparian buffers, enforcing stormwater management requirements, monitoring and upgrading aged septic tank treatment facilities, and establishing local watershed management plans.
- Volunteer water quality monitoring groups often collaborate with local school systems to provide “local experts” for teachers and their students engaged in outdoor studies and programs to provide students with meaningful watershed experiences in fulfillment of Virginia’s and DEQ’s environmental education goals.
- Numerous published scientific studies have resulted from partnerships between volunteer monitors and the Commonwealth’s colleges and universities. These partnerships have included Ferrum College, Longwood University, Lynchburg College, Randolph Macon College, Shenandoah University, Virginia Tech, and others.

- Several Soil & Water Conservation Districts are engaged in volunteer water quality monitoring for purposes of education and TMDL implementation efforts.

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ELIMINATION OF THE GRANT PROGRAM WILL CAUSE:

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- **The loss of matching funds for other funding requests.** In many cases, DEQ funds are matched 1:1 by volunteer monitoring groups. The match amount in many cases is greater. These budget cuts result in reductions two times the grant amount or greater for applicants.
- **The possible elimination of citizen monitoring groups and networks throughout Virginia.** Small, unincorporated grassroots organizations have been established solely for volunteer monitoring. Their status makes them ineligible for private and foundation financial support. In many cases, CWQM funds are the only source of funds available to these groups.
- **Some nongovernmental organizations face the potential of laying off staff responsible for interacting with volunteer monitors and citizen groups throughout Virginia.** In the past, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia Office had five staff, currently reduced to two staff solely dedicated to Virginia programs. The Virginia Izaak Walton Leagues' Save Our Streams program currently employs one person, down from 2.5 staff in 2003. These reductions in program staff occurred during the CWQM budget cuts in 2003. Further budget reductions may seriously harm these existing programs, which are operating leaner and more efficiently than in the past.
- **One less tool to evaluate water quality clean up goals and standards.** This directly impacts Natural Resource agencies in their abilities to meet the requirements of H.B. 1150 (known as Virginia's Water Clean-Up Plan; see <http://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/Initiatives/WaterCleanupPlan/>).
- **The 3,000 stream miles volunteer monitoring goal can not be met by the 2010 date.** With the elimination of these funds for up to three years, it is likely small volunteer groups will not be able to sustain their momentum due to lack of resources. Larger groups may have to curtail their outreach and network support efforts. This directly impacts Virginia's ability to meet the 3,000 mile goal.

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## CITIZEN WATER QUALITY MONITORING GRANT PROGRAM

### PAST GRANT RECIPIENTS

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Groups from all over the state have gathered data about the health of our rivers and streams thanks to this grant. The list below reflects groups who have received funding over the past five years.

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	Monacan SWCD
Assateague Coastal Trust	Nelson County Master Gardeners
Augusta River Monitors	New River SWCD
Back Bay Restoration Foundation	Northern Virginia Planning District Commission
Big Sandy SWCD	Northern Virginia SWCD
Blackwater Nottoway Riverkeeper	Page County Water Quality Advisory Committee
Chesapeake Bay Governor's School	Pedlar River Institute
Chesterfield County Office of Water Protection	Piedmont Region TMDL Initiative
Chowan SWCD	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Clean Virginia Waterways	RappFLOW
Cowpasture River Preservation Association	Reedy Creek Coalition
Culpeper SWCD	Rivanna Conservation Society
Eastern Shore SWCD	Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Edge Valley Preservation LLC	Sappony Tribe Water Alliance
Elizabeth River Project	Smith Mountain Lake Association
Elliott Creek Watershed Protection Council	Staunton-Augusta Chapter Izaak Walton League of America
Evergreen SWCD	Tazewell SWCD
Friends of Chesterfield Riverfront	The Historic Green Springs Inc.
Friends of Claytor Lake	The Opequon Watershed Inc.
Friends of Page Valley	The River Foundation, Inc. (Virginia's Explore Park)
Friends of Powhatan Creek	Tidewater RC&D and Coan River Watershed Citizen Committee
Friends of Stafford Creeks	Timberlake Homeowners Association
Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River	Tri-County/City SWCD
Friends of the Occoquan	Upper Roanoke River Roundtable
Friends of the Shenandoah River	Upper Tennessee River Roundtable
Friends of the South Fork Holston River	Virginia Museum of Natural History
G.G. Marshall High School	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Gloucester County	Virginia Water Monitoring Council
Goose Creek Association	Warren County Chapter Izaak Walton League of America
Greater Richmond Area Health Education Center	Warren County Water Monitoring Group
Headwaters Association	
Hoffler Creek Wildlife Foundation	
Hurley Community Development	
Izaak Walton League of America – Virginia Save Our Streams Program	
James River Association	
John Marshall SWCD	
Lake Anna Civic Association	
Loudon Wildlife Conservancy	
Loudoun County SWCD	
McClure River Kiwanis Club	

\* SWCD denotes Soil & Water Conservation District



