



CITIZEN WATER QUALITY MONITORING GRANT PROGRAM

CREATING CITIZEN STEWARDS FOR VIRGINIA'S WATERWAYS

Talking Points for Restoring Cuts to the Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program.

We are asking legislators to support a budget amendment to restore this budget item in the 2009 and 2010 Commonwealth's biennial budget*. Below is some synthesized information about Citizen Water Quality Monitoring and the grant program that is being cut.

What is Citizen Water Quality Monitoring?

Throughout Virginia there are hundreds of "citizen-scientists" who spend their weekends streamside; making important observations about the health of their streams and rivers and their watershed. These monitors look at a myriad of environmental indicators such as dissolved oxygen, pH, and they record observations about near stream habitat conditions and instream organisms such as benthic macroinvertebrate. Their observations can tell a "story" about the stream and its health. Citizen volunteer water quality monitors in Virginia are the eyes and ears for documentation the conditions of this most important natural resource.

What impact do Citizen Water Quality Monitors have on their community and protecting natural resources?

- There are over 750 active volunteer monitors estimated throughout Virginia
- There are over 50,000 stream miles in Virginia of which DEQ monitors less than 20%. Volunteer monitoring data helps fill data gaps and provides DEQ with information to further investigate local water issues.
- Community outreach educational materials are developed from the data collected by volunteer water quality monitoring groups.
- Volunteer water quality monitors become an engaged constituency who participate in local watershed stewardship and management activities.
- Volunteer water quality monitoring groups often provide "local experts" for teachers and help provide students with meaningful watershed experiences.

What is the Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant?

- Since 2000, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has administered the Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program. The start-up costs to the state totaled \$60,000; however, due to the strong public/private relationships that continue to grow from the monitoring program the budget reached \$106,000 by 2007
- This grant program has provided funding for over 65 organizations throughout Virginia.
- The data collected through this grant program helps provide ancillary data for a variety of water resource programs in Virginia such as the integrated assessment report, the total maximum daily load program, the non-point source program, and the water resource program.

What are the impacts of the budget cut to the Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Grant?

- The loss of matching funds
- Some nongovernmental organizations face the potential of laying off staff responsible for interacting with volunteer monitors and citizen groups throughout Virginia.
- The possible elimination of citizen monitoring groups and networks established throughout Virginia.
- One less critical tool to evaluate water quality clean up goals and standards.
- The 3,000 stream miles volunteer monitoring goal will not be met by the 2010 date if at all

* The Governor's budget will not be released until December 17. There are indications that the program will be eliminated from his proposed budget for 2009 and 2010.