

Federal legislation mandating Chesapeake Bay clean-up still under development  
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By Bridgett Lynn

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A senior attorney with the

Southern Environmental Law Center

has briefed the

Rivanna River Basin Commission

on the status of new federal legislation that would provide nearly \$1.5 billion for programs to help reduce pollution in the Chesapeake Bay.

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Rick Parrish discussed the details of Senator Benjamin Cardin's (D-MD) proposed Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration of 2009.

If passed by Congress, the Cardin bill would increase funding for monitoring grants and implementation grants for Chesapeake Bay states and localities. The goal is to help all levels of government attain the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limits mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



*Rick Parrish of the Southern Environmental Law Center*

"The good news for local governments working to restore local waters that contribute to the Bay's problems is that the Cardin bill would authorize \$1.5 billion to be spent over the next five years to help local governments deal with stormwater problems, develop stormwater regulatory programs, provide technical assistance to those in need, and there may even be a little bit left over for financial assistance," said Parrish.

The Cardin bill would require states to develop Watershed Implementation Plans as soon as May 12, 2011 and provide progress reports every two years beginning May 12, 2014. These plans must describe in detail how nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment will be reduced or removed from agricultural runoff, stormwater, and sewage treatment facilities. Parrish said the task is not without challenges, especially as deadline to develop Bay-wide plans to meet pollution loads by December 31, 2010.

"[The] EPA has set out criteria for development of the Bay TMDLs that are really impressive, really aggressive, and are going to be burdensome. There's no question about it. This is going to be a challenge," said Parrish.

The national economic crisis, however, has created other priorities that have delayed this bill.

"There's support, but there's a lot of concern about the money, there's also concern among the agricultural community and the developers that this is the first step toward a national regulatory program that reins in their activities, so it's a pretty contentious issue," said Parrish.

The

draft TMDL plan

for the entire Chesapeake Bay will be completed by August 1, 2010, after which the public review process will begin. The EPA is expected to release its final Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan in December 2010.

Parrish concluded, "At this point, the environmental community intends to support [the] EPA and what they're producing."

The

next meeting for the Rivanna River Basin Commission

is scheduled for August 9 at the

Albemarle County Office Building

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