

Regional effort under way for Chesapeake Bay cleanup
written by Newspark Team | August 9, 2010



By Bridgett Lynn

Charlottesville Tomorrow

Tuesday, August 10, 2010

A federal pollution crackdown meant to protect the Chesapeake Bay likely will spell major changes for local governments and area growth, officials said Monday.

"We're concerned ... local governments are going to be required to increase [their] attention to existing regulatory efforts, that there will also be increased regulatory requirements, [and] ... that the new pollutant loadings resulting from growth will need to be offset," said

Steve Williams

, executive director of the

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

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The Environmental Protection Agency is announcing, for all levels of government, mandates to limit the Total Maximum Daily Load, which refers to the total amount of pollutants and sediment allowed to enter into a body of water before water quality becomes impaired.

The forthcoming changes were discussed at Monday's meeting of the

Rivanna River Basin Commission

. Albemarle County Supervisor

Ann Mallek

, a commission member, said that the new pollutant loadings have important implications for local growth patterns.

"For the last 20 years, any of the gains that we've made procedurally [in watershed protection] ... have been demolished by the growth," Mallek said.



(Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)

"If [the mandate] doesn't end up being enforced by EPA, the state, or the local governments, [then] it's going to end up being enforced by the courts," Williams said. "There will be some sort of lawsuits brought that will ultimately force this down our throats in one way or another."

The basin commission recommends programs to enhance the water and natural resources in the Rivanna River watershed, a tributary of the

James River,

which forms Albemarle County's southern border. The James River watershed accounts for one-fourth of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay drainage area.

"The major reason that communities should consider being prepared is that, regardless of this federal and state mandate, we have water quality issues in our watershed as well throughout the entire planning district commission," said Leslie Middleton, the commission's executive director. "It's not just in the Rivanna."

In September, the commission and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission will begin facilitating focus group meetings with pairs of elected officials from each of the six member governments. Meetings for other stakeholder groups will be held during next three months.

Additional information can be found on the commission's Web site at

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