



2024-2025 SEA GRANT FELLOW PROJECT SUMMARY

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Water Planning Division is responsible for activities related to the Chesapeake Bay including the Watershed Implementation Plan, assistance with Bay related planning, and nonpoint source implementation activities, Total Maximum Daily Loads, and No Discharge Zones. The Sea Grant Fellow would work primarily in these programs to assist with Chesapeake Bay and water quality improvement efforts focused within the Bay watershed.

Assistance with No Discharge Zones

The federal Clean Water Act bans untreated vessel sewage releases within three nautical miles of shore but allows states to seek EPA approval for No Discharge Zones (NDZ) waters which are designated to additionally prohibit the release of vessel sewage that has been treated by an onboard marine sanitation device. VA DEQ is developing a strategy designed to expand and prioritize NDZs in Chesapeake Bay tributaries with the goal of improving water quality in waters with shellfish and recreational designated uses. The spatial scope of this effort includes the tidal tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay with sufficient salinity to sustain a shellfish population other than the James, York, and Rappahannock rivers and the Chesapeake Bay mainstem. Topic areas and a sampling of activities are as follows:

- Assistance with prioritization and waterbody identification for future NDZ development
- Application to EPA for NDZ designation in identified waterbodies.
 - Communication with commercial and government sectors to gain insight into their vessel sewage management practices and vessel sewage pump-out requirements.
 - Communicating with and visiting marinas to gain additional information required for NDZ application to EPA.
 - Refining our understanding of the vessel populations navigating in subject waters.
 - Identifying mobile sewage pump-out vessels available to the commercial sector.
 - Assist in completion of an NDZ application to EPA and responding to EPA's comments on the application.
 - Research costs of NDZ implementation to the commercial and government sectors as well as impacts to local small business entities.
 - Research socioeconomic benefits of NDZ implementation.
- Enforcement of NDZs is difficult so outreach and education are important components of successful NDZ implementation.
 - Development and promotion of educational materials.
 - Investigate how Environmental Justice communities or VA Tribes may be impacted by shellfish closures as well as NDZ implementation.

VIRGINIA SEA GRANT PARTNER UNIVERSITIES



Assistance with TMDL Research and TMDL/IP Development

- Research and assist in TMDL development particularly related to research, outreach, and document development.
- Assist with IP and Clean Water Act 319 funding outreach and stakeholder identification and engagement.
- Assist with development and refinement of Clean Water Act Nonpoint Source Management Plan development and revisions.

Assistance with Bay WIP, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, and Bay Implementation Activities

- Assist with outreach and stakeholder engagement on Bay WIP activities and implementation.
- Assist with WIP goals, milestones, and updates including outreach and engagement, research, or drafting.
- Assist with Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act guidance, training, and tools updates, document or guidance development, and stakeholder engagement particularly related to climate resiliency amendments.

VIRGINIA SEA GRANT PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

