

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

VIRGINIA SEA GRANT

Identification and Mitigation of Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in Stormwater in Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Communities of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

For projects starting May 1, 2024 and ending May 31, 2026

Full Proposals due February 16, 2024

Program Synopsis

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) and the Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC), with support from the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) and its partners: the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs (MD, PA, NY, DE, NJ, NC); select USGS-funded WRRCs in the Chesapeake Bay (DE, NY, PA, NC); and the Chesapeake Bay Toxic Contaminants Workgroup are seeking two single or multi-investigator proposals relevant to the identification and mitigation of contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) in stormwater in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. For the purpose of this research call, CECs include, but are not limited to pharmaceuticals, personal care or household cleaning products, industrial chemicals, per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), lawn care and agricultural products, and microfibers. Microplastics will not be considered as part of this call.

Projects funded under this competition may request up to \$200,000. All projects require a 50% non-federal cost match (\$1 match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding). Funded projects will take place between May 2024 and May 2026. Funding will be competitively awarded per the procedures found in this document. Projects must take place in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. All selected projects will support the priorities identified in this document.

This full solicitation with instructions specific to the request for proposals will be maintained at <https://vaseagrant.org/research-funding/>.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

Notice of Intent (optional): Due January 16th, 2024, by 11:59PM. Please provide a one-page notice of intent to submit a proposal by January 16th. This notice should include a draft of your abstract, or at minimum the project title and a brief description of the work proposed. These notices will be used in order to put together technical panels, and will not be considered during review of the full proposals. A notice of intent is not required in order to submit a full proposal.

Full Proposal Submission: Due February 16, 2024, by 11:59PM.

Application Instructions: This solicitation contains specific instructions on the format and content that must be adhered to in each proposal. Failure to follow the instructions outlined in the text below is grounds for rejection without review.

Virginia Sea Grant

VASG is a federal-state partnership, funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with matching support from our university partners - Virginia Institute of Marine Science at William & Mary, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, George Mason University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

VASG's Strategic Plan aligns with and complements the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) Strategic Plan, while addressing the Commonwealth of Virginia's specific coastal and marine challenges. VASG's Strategic Plan focuses on four areas: workforce development and environmental literacy, resilient coastal communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and healthy coastal ecosystems and communities. More information, including the 2024 - 2027 Strategic Plan, can be found [here](#) Please review VASG's website to learn more about how we achieve our vision and mission (vaseagrant.org).

Virginia Water Resources Research Center

The VWRRRC was established at Virginia Tech in 1965 under the federal Water Resources Research Act of 1964 and established in 1982 by the Virginia General Assembly under the *Code of Virginia* (§23.1-2628). All colleges and universities in the Commonwealth are served by the VWRRRC. With federal and state support, the VWRRRC provides research and educational opportunities to future water scientists, promotes research on practical solutions to water-resources problems, and facilitates timely transfer of water-resources information to policy- and decision-makers and the general public.

Focus Area

Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in Stormwater in Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Communities of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Projects should propose research that takes place in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, with specific attention to socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Research should focus on one of the following priorities:

1. Identifying the presence and sources of CECs in Stormwater.
2. Determining the ability of current Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce CECs in stormwater;
3. Researching new methods of CEC mitigation via new or altered stormwater BMPs;
4. Providing a regional outreach and education program that engages populations in disadvantaged communities.

Award and Eligibility Information

Award Information: Virginia Sea Grant anticipates supporting two research projects at up to \$200,000, for work to be completed between May 2024 and May 2026. Projects are contingent on availability of federal funds. All projects require a 50% cost match for each proposal (\$1 match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding). Only non-federal funds may be committed as matching contribution.

Successful full proposals will be sent to the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) for official funding approval and review of NEPA compliance.

Eligibility Information: Principal investigators (PIs) must be affiliated with an academic institution or research laboratory. Non-academic or research institution partners may serve as Co-PIs. Single investigators and multiple investigator research teams from multiple institutions are also encouraged to apply.

Schedule and Submission Instructions

Timeline:

RFP Released:	November 17, 2023
Notice of Intent Due:	January 16, 2024 by 11:59PM
Proposals Due:	February 16, 2024 by 11:59PM
External Review and Technical Review Panel:	February 2024 – April 2024
Projects Selected/PIs Notified:	April 2024
Funding Cycle:	May 2024-May 2026

Proposal Submission Instructions: You must submit your proposal online through the eSeaGrant system. The deadline for proposals is **February 16, 2024 at 11:59PM**. The system will shut down automatically at each deadline, and late submissions will not be accepted.

Proposals should use 12-point font and be single spaced. VASG does not require an original signature on submitted proposals, electronic signatures are acceptable.

To submit your proposal online, go to <https://vaseagrant.ecsion.com/> and login to the system, or create a new user profile if necessary. Click “Add proposal” under the Contaminants of Emerging Concern Research Competition tab. Your electronic submission through eSeaGrant is your official submission.

Format:

Failure to adhere to these guidelines is grounds for proposals to be returned without review.

Each proposal must include the following components:

- Project Narrative:
 - Signed Cover Page
 - Proposal title page
 - Abstract
 - Project description (Limited to 10 pages)
 - Project Title
 - Project Background
 - Project Objectives
 - Project Details
 - Anticipated Outcomes and Results
 - Project Timeline
 - Works Cited
- Outreach Plan (Limited to 1 page)
- Curriculum vitae (Limited to 2 pages per PI/Co-PI)
- Letters of Support (if applicable)

- Budget & Budget Justification
- NEPA Questionnaire
- Data Management Plan

Project Narrative

Signed Cover Page: PIs are responsible for routing the proposal through their institution's research administration and for obtaining all required institutional endorsements prior to submitting. If there is a collaborative proposal, please include a signed cover sheet for each institution with a subaward.

Proposal Title Page: This page should list the project title as well as names, affiliations, and contact information for each PI and Co-PI on the project.

Abstract: Briefly summarize the proposed project objectives, methodologies and rationale. Explain the importance of your research to communities on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **Limit your abstract to 300 words).**

Project Description: Limited to 10 pages of single-spaced text and graphics.

- a. *Project Title*
- b. *Project Background:* This section should describe the context and justification for the proposed work. It should explain why the work is being proposed and its direct connection to the focus in this RFP and to Virginia Sea Grant's strategic plan.
- c. *Project Objectives:* Provide a list of clearly defined objectives.
- d. *Project Details:* Outline the methods and techniques for completing each of the project objectives.
- e. *Anticipated Outcomes and Results:* Describe the outcomes, deliverables, and implications of the anticipated results of the project. PIs will be required to track their progress and report annually.
- f. *Project Timeline:* Provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work covering the entire project duration. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the work.

Outreach Plan: Limited to one page. Virginia Sea Grant and its partners strive to fund research that provides real benefits for end-users. For this RFP, end-users include disadvantaged communities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. To address this concern, we ask researchers to develop a plan that describes how the project will engage these end-users, and in what way communities may benefit from the project described. The plan should address the following:

- Who is the end-user audience you are trying to reach?
- How and when will end-users be engaged?
- How will end-user needs drive the project?
- How are socially disadvantaged communities reached by your proposed project?
- What is being budgeted or leveraged to support engagement?
- What is the time frame for your engagement activities?
- What are the intended impacts of your efforts?

Works Cited: List references on a separate page. *Not included in page limits.*

Letters of Support (optional): Include letters of support from partners or agencies that can substantiate the need for the research.

References: List references on a separate page. Reference pages are not included in the three-page maximum for the project description.

Curriculum Vitae: Provide a **2-page** limited curriculum vitae for each PI and Co-PI.

Budget & Budget Justification: VASG-funded projects require a 50 percent funding match (i.e., budgets must show \$1 of match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A and tuition, non-federal research expenses, start-up funds, faculty salaries, travel support (research, conference, professional development, etc.), partial stipend and tuition are all examples of match.

Common methods used to meet match and full support requirements include: 1) providing partial support for the stipend and/or tuition as part of the required match (although that partial support cannot come with other responsibilities, e.g., teaching assistantships, in order to receive the full professional development benefits of the fellowship), or 2) the academic institutions volunteering to waive overhead on the federal dollars.

Budgets should be developed in the 90-4 budget worksheet (available on the VASG website). Please identify the PI on the budget and budget justification. The budget justification must be a detailed description of each cost item in the 90-4 budget; and should be broken down by year. Additional guidance is available on the VASG website.

NEPA Questionnaire: A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) [Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire](#) (OMB Control No. 0648-0538) is required.

Data Management Plan: NOAA regulations require that data and information collected and/or created under NOAA (including Sea Grant) grants must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at a minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data is collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. Therefore, VASG requires PIs to include a data management plan that describes how the project's data and metadata will be made available to others. The proposed plan will be reviewed for compliance with NOAA requirements.

Demographic Question (Optional): Please answer this question as the PI of the proposal. If you have the information for other Co-PIs, please add a response for each. Virginia Sea Grant will submit summary data for the entire RFP applicant pool to NOAA. No identifiable individual information will be shared.

Submission: Click the "Submit" button in the upper right corner to submit your proposal. **YOU MUST CLICK THE SUBMIT BUTTON BY THE DEADLINE OR YOUR PROPOSAL WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED, REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY UPLOADED.**

Review

Applications received will go through a three-part review process:

1. Administrative Review: Completed by VASG to ensure that the application is complete.

2. **Written Peer Review:** Completed by at least three scientific experts in relevant fields. Reviewers will be given questions to answer regarding relevancy and scientific merit of the proposals.
3. **Panel Review:** Panels will be made up of at least three persons. This panel will include a diverse makeup of opinions, backgrounds, and experiences. Panel members will judge proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed below.

The Virginia Sea Grant leadership team will conduct a final review and consider the review panel recommendations. The VASG director has final discretion to select proposals to fund based on panel recommendations, technical reviews, availability of funds, and specific programmatic priorities, which include having a diverse and inclusive portfolio of awards. Selected proposals will be submitted to the National Sea Grant Office for concurrence.

Evaluation Criteria

- a. **Relevance and applicability of the proposed project to the competition objectives (30%)** Relevance of the proposal to the focus area of the RFP and to VASG's strategic plan. Potential of adoption or influence of the findings by the end-user. Long- and short-term potential to make a difference and address a substantial societal challenge locally, regionally or nationally.
- b. **Technicality of the Scientific Merit of the proposed project (30%)** Feasibility of the research proposed. Clearly stated obtainable objectives that lead to actionable outcomes. Work proposed can be reasonably expected to be completed within the proposed time frame.
- c. **Outreach, engagement and educational benefits of the proposed project (30%)** Presentation of a well-developed outreach or engagement plan that specifically benefits underrepresented communities. Potential for the research to have the potential to impact policy or management decisions. The inclusion of student researchers throughout the project and work proposed that will engage diverse audiences.
- d. **Applicant (10%)** The applicant possesses clear knowledge in the field of study or has compiled a team of collaborators who do. The PI has experience working with diverse audiences.

Award Administration Information

Notification of the award is made to the submitting organization by VASG. PIs on proposals that are declined will be advised as promptly as possible.

As part of all awards, VASG and NOAA require mandatory annual financial and progress reports and a final report to evaluate the project.

For further information about this RFP please contact:

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