



Efforts to Support Local Capacity Building

Environmental Finance Center, University of Maryland

January 3, 2012

The Region 3 Environmental Finance Center (EFC), through a cooperative agreement with the Chesapeake Bay Program Office, will hold a series of Watershed Implementation Plan (WIPs) Environmental Financing Forums.

These forums are designed to assist local governments in identifying and understanding financing issues related to implementation of the WIPs. After the workshops, local governments may request direct technical assistance or implementation support via EPA's Local Government Capacity Building Initiative, Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction, and Small Watershed Grant programs (run through cooperative agreements with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation).

The EFC will hold roughly a dozen forums in total. The EFC believes it will be important to focus on one or two initial Forum offerings and adapt our approach as we move forward with others based on lessons learned. Our goal is to make these sessions as meaningful as possible to the communities they are designed to serve.

On December 14, 2012, an Environmental Finance Forum was conducted in Prince Georges County and centered on MS4 Phase I finance issues. Sessions included: snapshots of existing and proposed Maryland storm water financing programs; rate setting; credits, rebates, and exemptions; and overcoming barriers to implementation. The format focused heavily on peer-to-peer exchange and dialogue, rather than lectures or slide presentations, and initial feedback has been extremely positive.

Additional Environmental Finance Forums in the planning stages or under consideration include:

- A Stormwater Financing Forum for Pennsylvania communities – initial discussions with Pennsylvania contacts indicate that communities in the state are struggling to identify efficient and effective ways of implementing and financing the Minimum Control Measures (MCMs) required in their MS4 Phase II permits. Planning discussions are scheduled with additional EPA and state contacts in the coming weeks and dates and locations will be forthcoming. Anticipated timing: late winter 2013.
- An Agriculture Financing Forum for Pennsylvania communities – possibly to be held in conjunction with the stormwater event to minimize travel and other expenses. Planning discussions with state, federal and local contacts will take place in the coming weeks and dates and locations will be forthcoming. There is an interest in engaging field staff in these discussions in a way that supports local WIP implementation. Anticipated timing: late winter 2013.

- A Stormwater Financing Forum for Virginia communities – initial discussions with contacts in the Northern Virginia region indicate that would not be an ideal location for an initial stormwater offering. There may be some opportunity to share the feature activities in Lynchburg as a model for other communities and to work with existing contacts in the Shenandoah region. Additional discussions are planned. Anticipated timing: spring 2013.

- An Agriculture Financing Forum for Virginia communities – as with the Pennsylvania events, possibly holding this in conjunction with the stormwater forum could create beneficial efficiencies, particularly if located in the Shenandoah region, as those communities are grappling with both issues. Additional planning is scheduled. Again, there is an interest in engaging field staff in in these discussions in a way that supports local WIP implementation. Anticipated timing: spring 2013 but may need adjustment to accommodate planting season.

- A Stormwater/Waste Water Forum for West Virginia communities – our contacts in West Virginia indicate that communities in the state are struggling with management and financing of all of their water systems. Offering a session that addresses both stormwater and waste water would enable the EFC to leverage our other project work in this area. Anticipated timing: early summer 2013.

- An Agriculture Financing Forum for Delmarva communities – Rural communities in Delaware and on Maryland and Virginia's Eastern Shore struggle with similar issues. Again, engaging field staff in a manner that can better support local WIP implementation is of interest, and UMD Ag Extension has expressed some interest in possibly partnering to deliver this event. Anticipated timing: summer 2013 but may need adjustment to accommodate planting/harvest season.

There are a number of opportunities to leverage the EFC's existing work to deliver Environmental Finance Forum content as well. These include, or in the case of events that have already taken place, have included:

- An October 26, 2012 session offered as a part of the Center for Watershed Protection's Conference in Waynesboro, Virginia;

- Assistance to some of Maryland's unpermitted communities through the Watershed Assistance Collaborative's Stormwater Management and Financing Series, with events offered on December 11, 2012, January 16, 2013, and a third date in early spring 2013 to be determined;

- A spring 2013 event for West Virginia's panhandle focusing on management and financing of all water systems (tentative); and,

- An April 2013 stormwater financing session offered as a part of an event in College Park, Maryland for the Association of County Engineers.

Updates to this document will be made as additional details become available.

