



cChesapeake Bay Program
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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March 7, 2016

RE: STAC Roadside Ditch Report

Nicholas DiPasquale, Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109
Annapolis, MD 21403

Cc: Management Board; Water Quality Goal Implementation Team; Stream Health Workgroup; Local Government Advisory Committee; Urban Stormwater Workgroup; Watershed Technical Workgroup; Agriculture Workgroup; Land Use Workgroup.

Dear Mr. DiPasquale,

Please see the attached STAC workshop report entitled, “Re-plumbing the Chesapeake Watershed: Improving Roadside Ditch Management to Meet TMDL Water Quality Goals.” This report provides a summary of STAC’s October 9-10, 2014 workshop and includes specific recommendations identified by workshop attendees.

The purpose of this workshop was to (a) share recent scientific assessments of regional surface water quality impacts from ditches alongside low-volume, rural roads; (b) review Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) accepted best management practices (BMPs) to mitigate impacts from roadside ditches and explore novel approaches to treating road runoff; (c) outline additional policy, research, and monitoring needs to enhance rural roadside ditch management; and (d) establish a communications network for professionals including decision-makers, practitioners, and scientists, engaged in building better ditch management across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Workshop participants identified a set of eight recommendations for improving roadside ditch management across the Chesapeake Bay to help meet the Bay Program’s TMDL goals. These recommendations incorporated lessons learned from several case studies of successful ditch management, including the importance of inventory and assessment of ditch networks as a first step, education of all stakeholders, interagency cooperation and partnership, and strong leadership. The recommendations can be summarized broadly into the three categories below:

- Ensure that the CBP emphasizes water quality and habitat impacts associated with these micro-topographic features and the opportunity to help meet CBP goals by promoting ditch management, including funding and regulatory incentives to ensure implementation.

- Explicitly recognize the critical roles that roadside ditch networks have on water pollution, flooding, and wildlife habitat by developing a comprehensive, watershed-wide program with cross-jurisdiction team-based leadership and consistent policy and guidelines to promote “re-plumbing” roadside ditch networks across towns, counties, and states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Create targeted, funded research programs focused both on improving our understanding of ditch impacts and better management practices to address these impacts.

We hope the Management Board, Goal Implementation Teams, and various workgroups find these workshop recommendations to be useful, and STAC looks forward to your feedback. STAC respectfully requests a written response to the workshop findings and recommendations from the CBP Management Board Chair by June 7, 2016.

Please direct any questions you may have about this report and its recommendations to Natalie Gardner, the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee Coordinator, Kathy Boomer at The Nature Conservancy, and Rebecca Schneider at Cornell University.

On behalf of the entire STAC, thank you again for considering these recommended next steps, and we look forward to working with you closely on this in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Wainger', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lisa Wainger
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee