



Virginia Environmental Law

DEQ Report Card Muddys the Waters

By: Ann Neil Cosby. *This was posted Wednesday, August 25th, 2010*

On Monday, August 23, 2010, the [Virginia Department of Environmental Quality](#) released [Virginia's 2010 Water Quality Assessment Report](#), and its findings appear to be just as murky as the James River.

As with many things in life, there's the good news, and the bad news. The [good news](#) is that more than 430 waters have been removed from the impaired waters list because they now fully meet water quality standards. And an additional 600 waters have been removed for a least one impairment. The [bad news](#) – DEQ added about 1,400 miles of streams and rivers, and 2,500 acres of lakes to the impaired waters list.

So while some of Virginia's waters are being restored, others seem to be degrading just as quickly. The Report provides detailed information on more than 1,200 watersheds in the Commonwealth, and includes assessment information from January 2003 to December 2008. How the state's waters have fared since 2008 remains unknown. Also unknown is what effect the states' [new stormwater regulations](#) and [Watershed Implementation Plans](#) (topics previously discussed in our blog) may have on some of these water sources in the future. We will have to wait and see.

You can find a copy of the [draft report here](#). DEQ is encouraging public comment on the contents of the report until September 24, 2010, at 5 p.m. Those comments must be submitted in writing by letter or email attachment. A [webinar summarizing the findings](#) in the report will be held on the Internet on August 26, 2010, from 11 a.m. to noon. Those interested must register in advance at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/267343337>. Questions about the report may be submitted online during the webinar.

Even with the report only in draft stage, what seems crystal clear is that for land owners, localities, and major contributors whose activities may be impacting and degrading Virginia's waters, close scrutiny and additional restrictions are just around the bend. [Virginia's environmental lawyers](#) such as our team at [Sands Anderson](#), are looking for workable solutions for clients who have the responsibility to improve and maintain the quality of our state's waters. What solutions do you think might be workable in this challenging effort to keep Virginia's waters clean?

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