



August 16, 2016

Dr. Lisa Wainger, Chair
Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
Chesapeake Bay Program
645 Contees Warf Road
P.O. Box 28
Edgewater, Maryland 21037

Dear Dr. Wainger:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee's (STAC) report entitled "Re-plumbing the Chesapeake Watershed: Improving Roadside Ditch Management to Meet TMDL Water Quality Goals". The authors and the steering committee should be commended for an excellent review and synthesis of an improved practice to enhance water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The comprehensive and integrated approach to manage and treat road drainage outlined in the report is a solid and timely restoration strategy for numerous watershed sectors. The report is also a reminder that the local and state highway community can and should play a greater role in Bay restoration and need to be more fully engaged in the Bay partnership.

We are addressing the three major recommendations, as follows.

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.

The CBP has recently recognized the importance of road drainage in the hydrology and water quality of the Bay watershed. For the first time, the modeling team has established a unique transport land use in the forthcoming Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model. This enhancement will enable states and localities to map and assess the impact of roads on the pollutant loads in the watershed. As the STAC report notes, we currently do not have the capability to distinguish between roads that are served with ditches and roads that have storm drain pipes. The CBP partnership considers such road mapping data to be an important priority, and is considering supporting a pilot ditch mapping effort as part of CBP's broader initiative to acquire more precise land use and land cover data for the watershed as a whole.

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.

The CBP supports the recommendation to create a roadside ditch working group to tackle the engineering and management challenges associated with re-plumbing roadside ditch networks across the watershed. We also concur that this effort will require extensive coordination and collaboration across the CBP jurisdictions as well as all watershed sectors.

As a first step, I have requested that the work group chairs and coordinators from the urban and agricultural sectors get together to determine which past, current or future expert BMP panel reports could be applied or adapted to credit pollutant removal achieved by improved management of roadside ditch networks. It is my understanding that more than a half dozen existing reports may apply to some aspects of ditch management, although some further adaptation for unique highway and terrain conditions may be required. In addition, at least two current expert panels are also looking at elements of improved ditch management for the urban and agricultural sectors.

The goal of this initial assessment will be to determine if sediment and nutrient reduction credits for different ditch management practices could be derived from existing or pending panel reports, or whether a new multi-sector expert panel should be launched. In either case, we will work with the various CBP workgroups, the ditch management steering committee, and appropriate representatives from municipal and state highway agencies to implement the next steps.

Create targeted, funded research programs focused both on improving our understanding of ditch impacts and better management practices to address these impacts.

The CBP supports the research recommendations to enhance ditch management across the Bay watershed, and encourage scientists to pursue existing monitoring programs and grant programs to support them. One important funding source is the annual Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Removal (INSR) grants that are administered by NFWF. This grant program is designed to demonstrate innovative BMPs in the watershed by funding both water quality research and practice implementation.

In closing, on behalf of the Management Board, I want to thank you for your important and timely recommendations. Please extend our gratitude to STAC and the workshop steering committee for the time and effort involved in the production of this report. We greatly appreciate the ongoing role of STAC in serving as an independent review body directly towards continually improving our overall management of the Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration efforts.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nicholas A. DiPasquale", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicholas A. DiPasquale, Chair
Management Board

Attachment A

cc: Management Board

Tom Schueler, Coordinator, Urban Stormwater Work Group

Mark Dubin, Coordinator, Agricultural Work Group

Attachment A

Issues of concern raised by LGAC, following STAC's presentation to them at the June 10, 2016 meeting are as follows:

- The connection of the road ditch network to private property must be addressed. Specifically, a means for accessing private property for the installation and maintenance of BMPs outside the right-of-way will be required in order to implement and maintain some of the recommended BMPs.
- Mapping flow paths and inventorying the system of road ditches would be helpful. However, the cost of mapping will be a limiting factor for local governments. *Note: LGAC questioned the potential implications regarding Waters of the US Rule. They understand that the Rule is being implemented in the Bay states but cautioned that this may not be widely understood and therefore could raise questions as this moves forward.*
- Management of road ditch networks varies among jurisdictions. For example, in Virginia roadways and roadside ditches in nearly all **counties** are maintained by the state DOT, not the locality. Independent cities and towns do their own maintenance, but counties do not.
- Local governments need guidance about best place for specific practices. Information about immediate changes that can be instituted, e.g. recommended aggregates, should be communicated to local government as soon as possible.

Finally, LGAC appreciated the scale of this effort. They noted that it is of particular relevance and benefit to local governments. More work at this scale would be very beneficial.

Mary S. Gattis, AICP

Director of Local Government Programs/LGAC Coordinator

NOTE: Since LGAC's comments deal with program development and implementation issues, they were not included in the main body of the Management Board response. LGAC raises important concerns that should be addressed as the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) considers the development of a roadside ditch initiative.