June 15, 2021

TO: Soil and Water Conservation District Board Chairs in the James River Watershed

RE: Expansion of the “Animal Waste Storage in Upper and Middle James River Watershed” grant by the Virginia Environmental Endowment

Dear Board Chairs,

On November 1, 2019, the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) entered into a grant agreement called “Animal Waste Storage in Upper and Middle James River Watershed”, an agreement designed to assist the Commonwealth in meeting its Virginia Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals for animal waste. This grant award is for $500,000.

Historically the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program (VACS) has offered 75% cost-share funding to eligible producers willing to implement an animal waste system. The original VEE grant provided matching funds of up to $25,000 per contract, in addition to VACS cost-share, not to exceed 100% of actual eligible costs in combination. Matching funds were limited to Tier I and Tier II parcels, as defined by the Chesapeake Conservancy’s Restoration Planner, within four Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in the Upper and Middle James River watershed: Mountain, Mountain Castles, Natural Bridge and Peter Francisco (“the four original SWCDs”).

Due to low participation over the first year of grant implementation, VEE and DCR recently agreed to an expansion of the grant as follows:

- The entire James River Watershed will be eligible from its headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay.
- Proposed animal waste facilities must be located within Tier I, Tier II and Tier III parcels, as defined by the Chesapeake Conservancy’s Restoration Planner, which can be viewed as a data layer within the DCR Conservation Application Suite. In addition to the four original SWCDs, other SWCDs that include one or more of these parcels are Appomattox River, Colonial, Culpeper, Hanover-Caroline, Headwaters, Henricopolis, James River, Monacan, Peaks of Otter, Peanut, Piedmont, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jefferson and Virginia Dare (“the newly eligible SWCDs”).
• The four original SWCDs are still prioritized for VEE funding with matching funds available for animal waste storage facilities on a first come, first serve basis.
• The newly eligible SWCDs must notify DCR by close of business on September 15, 2021 if they have any FY22 animal waste facility contracts within Tier I, Tier II or Tier III parcels where potential matching funds will be requested.
• In a follow-up to this letter, DCR will send all eligible SWCDs the following PDF documents that describe in detail the process for notifying DCR and processing these contracts in the Conservation Application Suite:
  "VEE Animal Waste Grant Projects in AgBMP Tracking"; and
  "FieldDoc User Guide for Virginia Environmental Endowment".
• DCR will report all potential Tier I, Tier II and Tier III animal waste contracts to VEE by October 1, 2021. VEE will then choose, based upon their watershed priorities, the individual contracts to which they will award matching grant funds.
• DCR will then contact the eligible SWCDs and confirm VEE matching funds are available through the Conservation Application Suite. After receiving funding confirmation, SWCDs should formally approve both the VACS contracts and associated VEE funds at their next monthly SWCD Board meeting.
• Any VEE funds awarded will be disbursed to SWCDs through the normal quarterly disbursement letter process in coordination with local Conservation District Coordinators.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity to accelerate the implementation of animal waste facilities in the James River Watershed. Should you need additional information or have questions about this new opportunity, please contact me at our Central Office address or via telephone at (804) 627-3278.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Darryl M. Glover, Director
Division of Soil and Water Conservation

CC: Christine Watlington Jones, DCR, Policy and Regulatory Coordinator
David Bryan, DCR, Agricultural Incentive Program Manager
Blair Gordon, DCR, Soil and Water Conservation District Liaison
Amy Walker, DCR, Eastern Area Manager
Jim Echols, DCR, Western Area Manager
Leigh Estes, DCR, Grants Manager
Debbie Cross, Conservation District Coordinator
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Marissa Roland, Conservation District Coordinator
Mark Hollberg, Conservation District Coordinator