



## **DEQ Releases Final 2014 Integrated Report on Impaired Waters September 2016**

On June 13, DEQ released its final 2014 Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report. The CWA requires states to provide an assessment of the quality of all their waters (§ 305(b)) and a list of those that are impaired or threatened (§ 303(d)) every two years. The draft Integrated Report was released in December 2014 for public comment, and on a critical issue VAMWA submitted comments supporting DEQ's determination *not* to list the Shenandoah River as impaired for the recreational use designated use based on third-party allegations about nutrient discharges and algae. VAMWA's comments also addressed the need for DEQ's assessment program to require the use of 40 C.F.R. Part 136 analytical methods. In May, DEQ responded to VAMWA's comments, addressing only the use of 40 C.F.R. Part 136 analytical methods. DEQ said that it follows 1 VAC 30-46, which requires that all analyte data submitted to DEQ for regulatory purposes must be from a NELAC-accredited laboratory, to ensure that only data of high quality be used. Because laboratory certification and auditing are the responsibilities of DCLS, concerns about inconsistencies in analytical procedures should be directed to DCLS rather than DEQ.

The final Report shows an increase in the number of impaired waterways since the 2012 report. The report indicates approximately 15,677 miles of the state's rivers and streams are impaired. That is a 19% increase from the 2012 report and represents 16% of all rivers and streams in Virginia. Since the last report, DEQ has updated its Geographic Information System to conform to the 1:24K USGS Dataset. The more accurate mapping resulted in a 92% increase in the state's total stream mileage relative to estimates reported. In addition, about 81% of Virginia's lakes (94,764 acres) are impaired as well, a 0.77% increase from 2012. Bacteria remains the most common cause for impairment, accounting for 2,412 impairment listings in 2014. Total impairments increase or decrease report-to-report for various reasons including ambient conditions but also non-environmental factors such as data availability (e.g., more monitoring yields more impairments). EPA approved the final report on May 19, 2016.

We encourage VAMWA members to review the final report to check the accuracy of references to and information about your receiving streams and downstream waters and sources of pollutants of concern. As EPA continues to tighten TMDL implementation policy such as we are currently seeing in the Bay TMDL process, it is likely that listings in this report will continue to have increasing regulatory implications, so it is important to make sure it is accurate for your local waters.