

March 15, 2011: Dr. Rich Eskin (MDE) met with the Dorchester County Commissioners (afternoon) to discuss the "kick-off" of the WIP, Phase II initiative.

In February, MDE/DNR held a regional forum at Salisbury University, which was attended, in the most part, by local County (and some Municipal) Staff. The intent of these forums was to initiate the development of Local Teams (County based, with Municipal representation anticipated), identify missing Local Team representation, and discuss what the State wanted from each County during the development of Phase II of the WIP. At that regional forum Dorchester County Staff expressed concern about beginning this work absent formal direction from their respective Elected Officials. Local Staff was concerned on two fronts: 1) The Staff time that would be taken over this several month effort, and 2) the policy/financial decisions incorporated in the Phase II WIP, and potential need for Local Elected Officials approval and/or support.

Dr. Eskin's presentation to Dorchester Officials was intended to alleviate local Staff level concerns as outlined above, and to hopefully garner the Elected Officials' "approval" of the designation of Local, County level teams and the initiation of work on the WIP. Dr. Eskin achieved both Elected Official support (albeit reluctant) and Elected Official support of local Staff time needed for this effort. Dr. Eskin acknowledged that the County needed to contemplate how local adoption and/or support of potential policy and/or fiscal issues were to be settled prior to the State formally submitting the Phase II WIP to EPA, but indicated that these decisions could be put off for a bit, as the immediate effort is to assess current capacity, set 2-year milestones, and develop BMP's/Strategies for pollution offsets.

Below are summaries of Questions by the Local Elected Body and MDE answers, which followed Dr. Eskin's brief formal presentation:

Dorchester County Council:

Council Chair: Where is the money coming from to implement these requirements, isn't this just another unfunded mandate?

MDE Response: Rich admitted that some of the burden will be felt at the local level. Rich mentioned several existing programs for funding such as the Bay Restoration Fund, 2010 Trust Fund, 319 Program, Ag. Cost Share programs, etc. However, Rich was very forthright about funding being an issue, and reiterated that the Council needs to be involved in final development of Local Team proposals, to consider what efforts are currently being made, what additional expenses are anticipated and funding mechanisms (recognizing the difficult financial circumstances at the State and Local levels)

Council Member: Isn't this just another circumstance of the State telling us to do more with less resources, this is just another State Mandate.

MDE Response: First, the mandate is a directive of EPA. Second, in essence your position may be accurate, we are asking a lot, and we realize these are difficult times, but this has to be done.

Council Member: What about the other States, it seems that this Bay cleanup effort always falls on Maryland.

MDE Response: All States are responsible, however each State has an individual responsibility, and if, say, Virginia doesn't do what is needed, the consequence will be Virginia's not Maryland's.

SUMMARY: The meeting went well. Dorchester County gave permission to Mike Moulds (County Engineer) to start Local Team meetings.