Meeting Summary
VA Stakeholder Dialog on Innovations & Partnerships through VEEP

Virginia DEQ
April 2, 2008
Environment VA Conference
Virginia Military Institute

Attendees:

Organization	***Name***
Chesapeake Bay Foundation	Ann Jennings
Wetlands Watch	Skip Stiles
Dominion	Jud White
New River Land Trust	Carol Wampler
VA Municipal League	Denise Thompson
Hampton Roads Planning District Commission	John Carlock
ERM	David Johnson
Merck	Barbara Wunder
	Marguerite Murray
Micron	Christopher Dott
Cargill Meat	Brooke Swecker
	Jill Raymond
Lockheed Martin	David Gunnarson
Environmental Solutions	Harry Gregori
VA Dept. of Corrections	Tim Newton
	Tony Parnell
DEQ/EPA	Eileen McGovern
DEQ	Sharon Baxter
	Rick Weeks
	Mike Murphy
	Rachel Bullene
	Tom Griffin
	James Golden
	Amy Owens
	Frank Daniel
	Melanie Davenport
	Gerry Seeley
Booz Allen Hamilton (facilitator)	Robin Day Hirschhorn

Meeting Summary:

A Stakeholder Dialog was held at the Environment Virginia Conference on April 2, 2008. It resulted from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) interest in increasing its outreach and collaboration efforts with a cross-section of Virginians. The dialog was designed to explore using partnerships and innovative approaches to seek solutions to the complicated issues of environmental protection, particularly through the Virginia Environmental Excellence Program (VEEP).

The meeting was opened by Rick Weeks, DEQ Chief Deputy, who welcomed the stakeholders. Mike Murphy, Director of DEQ's Division of Environmental Enhancement, provided a summary and background of VEEP. Robin Day Hirschhorn, the meeting facilitator, then opened the dialog, with the questions below serving as the focus of the discussion. Summary points have been grouped along the general themes that emerged from the discussion.

Stakeholder Discussion Questions:

- *What environmental goals do you see as common to the DEQ and your organization?*
- *The DEQ is interested in facilitating collaboration to achieve regional environmental goals. How might that process work?*
- *What are the challenges and costs to your organization in collaborating or partnering with the DEQ?*
- *What does the DEQ need to do differently to encourage partnership/collaboration?*
- *How could we, the DEQ, facilitate innovative approaches through VEEP?*

SUMMARY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Benefits:

- Facilities would like to see VEEP members receive preferential treatment in flexibility and acceleration in the permit process. It can be a burden for facilities to wait months for a permit issuance, modification or renewal, which can be a factor in their competitiveness.

- Flexibility is especially desirable with new criteria pollutants.

- Some facilities are looking for flexible permitting opportunities (e.g., Project XL-type permits) to maximize their economic competitiveness. It was suggested that this type of incentive might be appropriate for E3 and E4 levels of VEEP.

- Business benefits exist that are not being taken advantage of (e.g., fostering waste exchanges).

Barriers:

- DEQ currently lacks consistent internal buy-in.

- DEQ must be able to deliver any promised benefits. There is a great temptation to over-promise benefits that do not materialize. There needs to be greater dialog among DEQ, EPA, and the member facility as to what their benefits will be.

- Facilities need a relief from the "extra" work of a program like VEEP. Compliance alone is overwhelming and VEEP can be too much of an additional burden (application, annual reporting, goal setting).

- Some benefits may have negative repercussions (e.g.., EPA Performance Track's low priority for routine inspections policy is often misinterpreted to mean "no inspections required").

Operational Improvements:

- Increased recognition of members is needed (particularly those that do not have innovations projects). Suggestions include ceremonies, press releases, and newspaper articles to strengthen the facility's connection to its community.

- Maintaining the integrity of the program is critical (reviews, site visits, and annual reports).

- There is a need for transparency with the public. Transparency is key (especially concerning incentives) to maintain program credibility. VEEP needs to avoid even the appearance of reducing opportunities for citizen input. There is a need to provide enough information and opportunity for interaction that the public feels comfortable with the program.

- VEEP should be marketed not only to increase membership but also to increase program value to members.

- There is a need to better define the process for using an alternate compliance method (including an explanation of what is meant/needed re: citizen input).

- DEQ should better define the VEEP "external communications" requirement to encourage greater collaboration and partnerships (e.g., facilities could be encouraged to establish a dialog with community groups).

- DEQ should use its application and annual reporting processes to encourage facilities to consider regional and state priorities when setting environmental goals.

- Engagement of trade associations would be beneficial, especially in broadcasting the message that DEQ is looking for transformation.

- DEQ should make clear that VEEP is appropriate for all types of facilities, even if they are not subject to environmental regulatory requirements. In fact, a number of current VEEP members are local government departments that are not permitted by DEQ.

- DEQ should engage the other state agencies that administer environmental regulatory programs, such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Health, to broaden the base of potential incentives for VEEP participants.

- DEQ should establish a bank of project ideas for potential or renewing VEEP facilities. These could be tied to DEQ's community involvement initiative and may involve churches, schools, other non-permitted facilities.

Communication:

- A clearer definition of the programs' goals, list of benefits, and other program specifics would help in "selling" the program. There should be a list of benefits that reads almost like a menu. It should include those benefits that are commonly used (e.g., additional time for submitting Discharge Monitoring Reports) as well as those that apply in "unique" (facility-specific) circumstances.

- Generally it takes a "champion" at a facility who wants to join VEEP to make it happen. Those individuals need more information to generate management support for the decision to apply to the program. It would be more effective for the CEO to champion the initiative so it is implemented from the top down.

Partnerships:

- Partnerships and collaboration should include multiple entities and levels, e.g., industry-to-industry as well as government-to-non-profits.

- Information that touts the benefits of partnering can help overcome initial internal barriers and resistance.

- Partnerships cannot be limited to programs covered by regulations and permits.
- Public stakeholders are key to the success of innovative approaches as they can bring credibility to the process.
- DEQ should establish a process to foster partnerships. An excellent model is the Virginia Regional Environmental Management System (VREMS).
- In partnership situations, DEQ may or may not have a role. If DEQ does assume a role, it should be appropriate given the specific participants and goals.
- Some facilities have concerns that disclosing their environmental aspects, even in a collaborative setting, will increase their vulnerability and open them up to unfounded criticism and concerns.

Next Steps and Follow-up:

DEQ plans to continue periodic stakeholder engagements similar in style to this one. The next one is expected to be held next fall. The DEQ welcomes suggestions and input from its stakeholders. If you have further comments or are interested in participating in a future dialog, please contact Sharon Baxter at *skbaxter@deq.virginia.gov* or (804) 698-4344. You are also invited to visit www.deq.state.va.us/veep/ for additional information on VEEP.