

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 62.1-44.15:31, as it shall become effective, and 62.1-44.15:55, as it is currently effective, of the Code of Virginia, relating to stream restoration; standards and specifications.

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Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 62.1-44.15:31, as it shall become effective, and 62.1-44.15:55, as it is currently effective, of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 62.1-44.15:31. (For effective date, see Acts 2016, cc. 68 and 758, as amended by Acts 2017, c. 345) Standards and specifications for state agencies, federal entities, and other specified entities.

A. As an alternative to submitting soil erosion control and stormwater management plans for its land-disturbing activities pursuant to § 62.1-44.15:34, the Virginia Department of Transportation shall, and any other state agency or federal entity may, submit standards and specifications for its conduct of land-disturbing activities for Department of Environmental Quality approval. Approved standards and specifications shall be consistent with this article. The Department of Environmental Quality shall have 60 days after receipt in which to act on any standards and specifications submitted or resubmitted to it for approval.

B. As an alternative to submitting soil erosion control and stormwater management plans pursuant to § 62.1-44.15:34, electric, natural gas, and telephone utility companies, interstate and intrastate natural gas pipeline companies, railroad companies, and authorities created pursuant to § 15.2-5102 may submit standards and specifications for Department approval that describe how land-disturbing activities shall be conducted. Such standards and specifications may be submitted for the following types of projects:

1. Construction, installation, or maintenance of electric transmission and distribution lines, oil or gas transmission and distribution pipelines, communication utility lines, and water and sewer lines; and

2. Construction of the tracks, rights-of-way, bridges, communication facilities, and other related structures and facilities of a railroad company.

The Department shall have 60 days after receipt in which to act on any standards and specifications submitted or resubmitted to it for approval. A linear project not included in subdivision 1 or 2, or for which the owner chooses not to submit standards and specifications, shall comply with the requirements of the VESMP or the VESCP and VSMP, as appropriate, in any locality within which the project is located.

C. As an alternative to submitting soil erosion control and stormwater management plans pursuant to § 62.1-44.15:34, any person engaging in more than one jurisdiction in the creation and operation of a wetland mitigation or stream restoration bank that has been approved and is operated in accordance with applicable federal and state guidance, laws, or regulations for the establishment, use, and operation of (i) a wetlands mitigation or stream restoration bank, pursuant to a mitigation banking instrument signed by the Department, the Marine Resources Commission, or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or (ii) a stream restoration project for purposes of reducing nutrients or sediment entering state waters may submit standards and specifications for Department approval that describe how land-disturbing activities shall be conducted. The Department shall have 60 days after receipt in which to act on standards and specifications submitted to it or resubmitted to it for approval.

D. All standards and specifications submitted to the Department shall be periodically updated according to a schedule to be established by the Department and shall be consistent with the requirements of this article. Approval of standards and specifications by the Department does not relieve the owner or operator of the duty to comply with any other applicable local ordinances or regulations. Standards and specifications shall include:

1. Technical criteria to meet the requirements of this article and regulations developed under this article;

2. Provisions for the long-term responsibility and maintenance of any stormwater management control devices and other techniques specified to manage the quantity and quality of runoff;

3. Provisions for administration of the standards and specifications program, project-specific plan design, plan review and plan approval, and construction inspection and compliance;

4. Provisions for ensuring that personnel and contractors assisting the owner in carrying out the land-disturbing activity obtain training or qualifications for soil erosion control and stormwater management as set forth in regulations adopted pursuant to this article;

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5. Provisions for ensuring that personnel implementing approved standards and specifications pursuant to this section obtain certifications or qualifications comparable to those required for VESMP personnel pursuant to subsection C of § 62.1-44.15:30;

6. Implementation of a project tracking system that ensures notification to the Department of all land-disturbing activities covered under this article; and

7. Requirements for documenting onsite changes as they occur to ensure compliance with the requirements of this article.

E. The Department shall perform random site inspections or inspections in response to a complaint to ensure compliance with this article and regulations adopted thereunder.

F. The Department shall assess an administrative charge to cover the costs of services rendered associated with its responsibilities pursuant to this section, including standards and specifications review and approval, project inspections, and compliance. The Board may take enforcement actions in accordance with this article and related regulations.

§ 62.1-44.15:55. (For expiration date, see Acts 2016, cc. 68 and 758, as amended by Acts 2017, c. 345) Regulated land-disturbing activities; submission and approval of erosion and sediment control plan.

A. Except as provided in § 62.1-44.15:56 for state agency and federal entity land-disturbing activities, no person shall engage in any land-disturbing activity until he has submitted to the VESCP authority an erosion and sediment control plan for the land-disturbing activity and the plan has been reviewed and approved. Upon the development of an online reporting system by the Department, but no later than July 1, 2014, a VESCP authority shall then be required to obtain evidence of Virginia Stormwater Management Program permit coverage where it is required prior to providing approval to begin land disturbance. Where land-disturbing activities involve lands under the jurisdiction of more than one VESCP, an erosion and sediment control plan may, at the request of one or all of the VESCP authorities, be submitted to the Department for review and approval rather than to each jurisdiction concerned. The Department may charge the jurisdictions requesting the review a fee sufficient to cover the cost associated with conducting the review. A VESCP may enter into an agreement with an adjacent VESCP regarding the administration of multijurisdictional projects whereby the jurisdiction that contains the greater portion of the project shall be responsible for all or part of the administrative procedures. Where the land-disturbing activity results from the construction of a single-family residence, an agreement in lieu of a plan may be substituted for an erosion and sediment control plan if executed by the VESCP authority.

B. The VESCP authority shall review erosion and sediment control plans submitted to it and grant written approval within 60 days of the receipt of the plan if it determines that the plan meets the requirements of this article and the Board's regulations and if the person responsible for carrying out the plan certifies that he will properly perform the erosion and sediment control measures included in the plan and shall comply with the provisions of this article. In addition, as a prerequisite to engaging in the land-disturbing activities shown on the approved plan, the person responsible for carrying out the plan shall provide the name of an individual holding a certificate of competence to the VESCP authority, as provided by § 62.1-44.15:52, who will be in charge of and responsible for carrying out the land-disturbing activity. However, any VESCP authority may waive the certificate of competence requirement for an agreement in lieu of a plan for construction of a single-family residence. If a violation occurs during the land-disturbing activity, then the person responsible for carrying out the agreement in lieu of a plan shall correct the violation and provide the name of an individual holding a certificate of competence, as provided by § 62.1-44.15:52. Failure to provide the name of an individual holding a certificate of competence prior to engaging in land-disturbing activities may result in revocation of the approval of the plan and the person responsible for carrying out the plan shall be subject to the penalties provided in this article.

When a plan is determined to be inadequate, written notice of disapproval stating the specific reasons for disapproval shall be communicated to the applicant within 45 days. The notice shall specify the modifications, terms, and conditions that will permit approval of the plan. If no action is taken by the VESCP authority within the time specified in this subsection, the plan shall be deemed approved and the person authorized to proceed with the proposed activity. The VESCP authority shall act on any erosion and sediment control plan that has been previously disapproved within 45 days after the plan has been revised, resubmitted for approval, and deemed adequate.

C. The VESCP authority may require changes to an approved plan in the following cases:

1. Where inspection has revealed that the plan is inadequate to satisfy applicable regulations; or
2. Where the person responsible for carrying out the approved plan finds that because of changed circumstances or for other reasons the approved plan cannot be effectively carried out, and proposed amendments to the plan, consistent with the requirements of this article and associated regulations, are agreed to by the VESCP authority and the person responsible for carrying out the plan.

D. Electric, natural gas, and telephone utility companies, interstate and intrastate natural gas pipeline companies, and railroad companies shall, and authorities created pursuant to § 15.2-5102 may, file general erosion and sediment control standards and specifications annually with the Department for review and approval. Such standards and specifications shall be consistent with the requirements of this article and associated regulations and the Stormwater Management Act (§ 62.1-44.15:24 et seq.) and associated regulations where applicable. The specifications shall apply to:

1. Construction, installation, or maintenance of electric transmission, natural gas, and telephone utility lines and pipelines, and water and sewer lines; and

2. Construction of the tracks, rights-of-way, bridges, communication facilities, and other related structures and facilities of the railroad company.

The Department shall have 60 days in which to approve the standards and specifications. If no action is taken by the Department within 60 days, the standards and specifications shall be deemed approved. Individual approval of separate projects within subdivisions 1 and 2 is not necessary when approved specifications are followed. Projects not included in subdivisions 1 and 2 shall comply with the requirements of the appropriate VESCP. The Board shall have the authority to enforce approved specifications and charge fees equal to the lower of (i) \$1,000 or (ii) an amount sufficient to cover the costs associated with standard and specification review and approval, project inspections, and compliance.

E. Any person engaging, in more than one jurisdiction, in the creation and operation of a wetland mitigation or stream restoration bank or banks, which have been approved and are operated in accordance with applicable federal and state guidance, laws, or regulations for the establishment, use, and operation of (i) wetlands mitigation or stream restoration banks, pursuant to a mitigation banking instrument signed by the Department of Environmental Quality, the Marine Resources Commission, or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or (ii) *a stream restoration project for purposes of reducing nutrients or sediment entering state waters* may, at the option of that person, file general erosion and sediment control standards and specifications for wetland mitigation or stream restoration banks annually with the Department for review and approval consistent with guidelines established by the Board.

The Department shall have 60 days in which to approve the specifications. If no action is taken by the Department within 60 days, the specifications shall be deemed approved. Individual approval of separate projects under this subsection is not necessary when approved specifications are implemented through a project-specific erosion and sediment control plan. Projects not included in this subsection shall comply with the requirements of the appropriate local erosion and sediment control program. The Board shall have the authority to enforce approved specifications and charge fees equal to the lower of (i) \$1,000 or (ii) an amount sufficient to cover the costs associated with standard and specification review and approval, projection inspections, and compliance. Approval of general erosion and sediment control specifications by the Department does not relieve the owner or operator from compliance with any other local ordinances and regulations including requirements to submit plans and obtain permits as may be required by such ordinances and regulations.

F. In order to prevent further erosion, a VESCP authority may require approval of an erosion and sediment control plan for any land identified by the VESCP authority as an erosion impact area.

G. For the purposes of subsections A and B, when land-disturbing activity will be required of a contractor performing construction work pursuant to a construction contract, the preparation, submission, and approval of an erosion and sediment control plan shall be the responsibility of the owner.