



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

Richard Eskin, Ph.D., Director  
Technical and Regulatory Services Administration  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
1800 Washington Blvd., Suite 540  
Baltimore, Maryland 21230-1718

FEB 1 2011

Dear Dr. Eskin:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region III, has reviewed the report *Water Quality Analysis of Eutrophication for the Potomac River Washington County Watershed, Washington County Maryland*, which was submitted by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for final review on September 30, 2010. The Potomac River Washington County watershed (MD-02140501) has been identified on Maryland's 2008 Section 303(d) list as impaired by nutrients (phosphorus), total suspended solids (1996), methylmercury (2002), biological impacts (2002), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in fish tissue (2008). This water quality analysis (WQA) addresses only the nutrients impairment. The listings for sediments, impacts to biological communities, methylmercury, and PCBs in fish tissue will be addressed separately at a future date.

EPA agrees with MDE that current data indicates that a nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not necessary for the non-tidal Potomac River Washington County watershed. The data collected shows that chlorophyll *a* concentrations do not exceed the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile instantaneous 30µg/l threshold that is indicative of nuisance levels and that excluding three unrepresentative samples, only one out of the 347 samples collected for dissolved oxygen had concentrations that were below the 5 mg/l criterion. Based upon this information, the Potomac River Washington County watershed is attaining the nutrients water quality criteria required for the watershed's Use I and III – P designated uses. The watershed was assessed based on the nutrient-related parameters of dissolved oxygen and chlorophyll *a* because currently there are no specific numeric criteria for nutrients.

In addition to the monitoring data provided by MDE, a biological stressor identification analysis was presented in the WQA which confirmed that nutrients were not interfering with the designated uses of the Potomac River Washington County watershed. Biological data collected from the Department of Natural Resources CORE/TREND program was also used to reach the same conclusion about nutrients in the watershed. In fact, the data from the CORE/TREND program identified the overall water quality of the watershed as being good/very good.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Water Quality Analysis. If you should have any questions, please contact Mrs. Helene Drago, TMDL Program Manager, at 215-814-5796.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon M. Capacasa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Jon M. Capacasa, Director  
Water Protection Division

cc: Melissa Chatham, MDE-TARSA