

December 8, 2005

Virginia DEQ

Stream Impact and Compensation Manual (SIACM)

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has issued its Stream Impact and Compensation Manual (SIACM) for testing and comments. The DEQ intends to adopt the SIACM as formal guidance by January 1, 2006.

Please note that the DEQ's SIACM is a completely separate process from the Corps' SAAM. Therefore, applicants will need to conduct both procedures and compute impact and compensations amounts separately. In the end, two crediting/debiting systems will be required for at least the next six to twelve months, at which time the Corps and DEQ have agreed to revisit the procedures to review consistency and predictability. Both agencies will discuss the possibility of agreeing to a single methodology, however, there is no guarantee of said resolution.

Significant considerations include:

1. The **SIACM** will be applied state-wide. Please remember that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Stream Attribute Assessment Manual (SAAM) is only valid within the Piedmont Physiographic Province with a few exceptions.
2. All state permit applications submitted after the adoption date will likely require the use of the **SIACM** to determine stream quality, compensation requirements, and mitigation credit.
3. Bank Sponsors that have not submitted a draft Mitigation Banking Instrument by the guidance adoption date will likely be required to use the **SIACM**.
4. The **SIACM** will not affect previously issued DEQ permits and approved mitigation banks.
5. The **SIACM** is applied to potential stream impact and compensation sites. The methodology includes four metrics (channel condition, riparian buffer, instream habitat, and channel alteration) to determine the total Reach Condition Index (RCI) and Stream Quality Factor – the relative “value” of the stream.
6. Stream compensation is based on the proposed method of mitigation: Preservation, Enhancement Level II, Enhancement Level I, and Restoration. Adjustment factors for the degree of impact (fill vs. relocation) and compensation (i.e. watershed protection) are incorporated into the methodology and affect the amount of stream mitigation. Adjustment factors including buffer width, threatened and endangered species, watershed restrictions, and community related constraints are also employed to raise/lower compensation requirements.
7. Impacts to higher quality streams will generally require much more mitigation than impacts to more degraded systems.
8. Stream mitigation costs are anticipated to increase significantly based on past costs and mitigation requirements.

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