

Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce

ENVIRONMENT

Loudoun County has long-established, broad and effective environmental protections set out in its ordinances and regulations, including the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, Facilities Standards Manual and Revised General Plan. Such protections have ensured a thorough and effective network of environmental protections, which has garnered Loudoun County honors as one of the nation's most environmentally sensitive jurisdictions.

The Chamber supports a holistic environmental strategy that is flexible, respects private property rights and the aspirations of businesses, and reflects Loudoun's diverse urban, suburban, and rural land uses. This includes local, state and federal environmental initiatives that rely on market-based incentives, trading programs, and voluntary compliance. The Chamber specifically supports voluntary initiatives promoting conservation, efficiency, and other economically viable business practices, such as the Chamber's Green Business Challenge.

The Chamber acknowledges the importance of efforts to conserve and ensure the efficient use of energy and fuels. In addition, with regard to the environment, the Chamber believes the greatest reductions in greenhouse gases in the transportation sector will be achieved through the development of higher mileage and alternative fuel vehicles, and supports greater investments in these and other carbon dioxide-reducing technologies. The Chamber also supports more intense use of the land to leverage the value of transportation investments to the best extent possible and encourage walkable communities.

While the Chamber strongly and consistently supports measures that enhance Loudoun's environment, it believes these measures must:

- Minimize any financial burden imposed on both businesses and residents;
- Advance a Loudoun-specific environmental strategy that is flexible and reflects the County's diverse land uses in its urban, suburban and rural areas;
- Support the implementation of state and/or federally-approved trading programs for wetlands, streams, and storm water mitigation;
- Have a measurable and positive impact, and utilize incentives and proven market-based methodologies to accomplish its stated objectives; and

- Ensure the predictability of Loudoun County’s land development application process.

Given the effect that the land development application process can have on a prospective business’s site selection decision, the Chamber supports efforts by the Board of Supervisors to fully evaluate the impact of existing and proposed environmental regulations, such as Virginia’s Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP), on Loudoun’s competitive advantages relative to other jurisdictions. Similarly, the Chamber objects to County duplication of, or involvement with, Section 404 Clean Water Act Permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Virginia Water Protection Program Permits issued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (i.e. collectively known as “Wetlands Permits”) as such actions delay approvals and increase costs for businesses without a commensurate environmental benefit.

With regard to the WIP, the Chamber supports reasonable, scientifically-valid efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay. The Chamber objects to the imposition of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements that will diminish economic development and impose unjustifiable limits on business activities and economic growth in Loudoun County. The Chamber supports a final WIP that achieves the requirements imposed by state and federal governments with the least possible cost and burden to Loudoun’s businesses and commercial taxpayers. The WIP also must reflect the input of business stakeholders who will be required to comply with the process and its restrictions, and bear the costs of compliance for years to come.

With regard to the implementation of state-level water management and erosion and sediment control programs through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ), the Chamber supports regulations that focus on both agricultural and manmade storm runoff and do not impose disproportionate burdens on economic development and redevelopment projects that contribute substantially to Loudoun’s tax base. The Chamber advocates stakeholder outreach programs in the development of any storm water or erosion and sediment control regulations and, because insufficient resources can lead to uncertainty and delay for permittees, the Chamber also supports the full funding of DEQ staff to implement said programs. For those jurisdictions which have chosen to administer the Stormwater Management Program locally, the Chamber supports a larger portion of the permitting fees collected being returned to the administering entity.

The Chamber also supports state funding for the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund, which directly supports the Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share programs, including implementation of best

management practices that are necessary to meet the Phase II WIP local pollution reduction goals. This additional funding could provide much-needed support to Virginia's rural and agribusinesses.

The Chamber also supports policies that provide appropriate incentives – including, but not limited, to tax credits, development densities, fast track permitting approval and other measures that are competitive with those offered in surrounding jurisdictions – for businesses that invest in environmentally sustainable building designs and systems.