

Resource Management Plan program Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is this Resource Management Plan something entirely new?

It is and it isn't. The plan is a new way to take a comprehensive look at implementing tried and true best management practices that have been around for years. These practices are not only beneficial for local water quality, most are also beneficial to the farming operation's bottom line (link to http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/water_quality/cmwmml.shtml). While the practices being implemented are not new, the concept of receiving nine years of certainty from certain environmental regulations is new.

2. So what is in a plan?

All operations covered by a resource management plan will have an implemented nutrient management plan. It will also have a conservation plan that will include a mix of traditional BMPs that include stream buffers and address issues such as soil erosion.

3. What exactly is "certainty"?

In the Virginia Resource Management Plan program, certainty means that once a farm operation has been certified with a resource management plan, the operator can be certain that for the next nine years that operation is in compliance with all of Virginia's nutrient, sediment and water quality-related standards.

4. Does certainty cover all environmental regulations?

No, farming operations would still need to get VPA or VPDES permits as they apply. The certainty pertains to those standards that are associated with TMDLs or total maximum daily load clean-up plans. Currently approximately 52 percent of the state's lands are covered by the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and there are numerous local stream segment TMDLs across the state, with a potential for more.

5. What is "safe harbor"?

It is another term that has been used for certainty. They are synonymous – they mean exactly the same thing.

6. When does certainty actually begin? When the plan is signed or when the last planned BMP is installed?

The nine years of certainty begin on the date the state issues the Certificate of Verification. All BMPs must be installed and functioning before the certificate is issued.

7. If a producer is doing all the components of a resource management plan, what is the point of actually developing a plan and having it verified?

With a verified RMP, the producer is certain that for nine years, even if TMDL-related state regulations change, that the operation is still in compliance and he does not have to implement any new requirements.

8. After nine years, will the original practices be “grandfathered”?

No. Once the nine years of certainty have expired the producer is encouraged to renew his plan. However, this new plan will have to comply with all new regulations and requirements that may have been enacted during the previous nine years.

9. Who do I contact about a resource management plan?

A good place to start would be your local soil and water conservation district. They have been working with farmers for years to determine the best practices for their specific operations. They can advise you on a plan and put you in touch with a local resource management plan developer.

10. Does it cost to get a plan?

Most resource management plans will be written by private-sector resource management plan developers. There is a cost involved; however, DCR is working to ensure that cost share funds are available to develop these plans so that there is not a cost to the producer.