

Focus on the Forum

Inside this Issue:

Focus on the Forum	1
The TMDL Clearinghouse	2
Contact Information	2

In our increasing technological age, the internet has emerged as a powerful information sharing tool. Internet forums or message boards have developed as an effective means for those with common interests to easily communicate and share ideas. Many types of forums exist on the internet ranging from boards for those with similar hobbies to software user groups. Most forums are organized by threads in which users discuss a given topic or theme. Internet forums can be used to facilitate communication in all facets of TMDL development and implementation.

The Center is making use of "forums" on its website as one avenue to share information with stakeholders. The Center establishes a forum thread for all of the Center's TMDL-related projects, Figure 1. Forums have been used by the Center in various ways from informing stakeholders about upcoming meetings, to posting meeting summaries or minutes, to providing reports, presentations, and other pertinent information for public access and comment. The Center's forum uses the free-ware software package Snitz Forums 2000 (available at: <http://forum.snitz.com/>). The forum administrator creates general forum headings and designates a moderator

The screenshot shows the 'Snitz Forums 2000' interface. At the top is the Center for TMDL and Watershed Studies logo. Below it is a navigation menu with links for Home, Profile, Register, Active Topics, Members, Search, and FAQ. A login section includes fields for Username and Password, a LOGIN button, and options to Save Password and Forgot your Password? Below the login section is a table listing forum threads.

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post	Moderator(s)
- TMDL Implementation				
Big Otter River This forum is created to centralize the discussions regarding the Big Otter River TMDL Implementation Program.	3	3	09/26/2005 10:14:38 AM by: astalev	benham@vt.edu
Opequon Creek This forum is created to centralize the discussions regarding the Opequon Creek TMDL Implementation Program.	3	6	09/11/2005 3:31:46 PM by: nino2001	benham@vt.edu
Stroubles Creek This forum contains information related to the Stroubles Creek implementation effort in Montgomery County, Virginia.	11	13	10/10/2005 3:42:34 PM by: svagow	svagow
- TMDL Development				
North River This Forum will discuss and update about the process of TMDL Development in North River (Rockingham and Augusta County)	3	3	11/16/2005 10:46:11 AM by: rceckoaki	kbrannan-rceckoaki
Pigg River This forum serves as the common platform for people who are involved with the development of the TMDL on Pigg River (Franklin, Henry, and Pittsylvania counties). Please feel free to post your comments.	2	5	11/16/2005 10:52:53 AM by: rceckoaki	rceckoaki
Old Womans Creek This forum serves as the platform for discussing the issues related to the TMDL Development in Old Womans Creek (Pittsylvania County).	1	1	07/21/2004 10:29:39 AM by: rceckoaki	rceckoaki
Mill Creek (Page County) Hello Everybody! This forum is for the people who are involved with the development of Mill Creek (Page County) TMDL.	5	6	03/03/2005 3:30:40 PM by: anurag-admin	svagow
Beaver Creek This forum discusses the issues related to the TMDL Development in Beaver Creek (Rockingham County).	6	7	02/10/2005 3:42:32 PM by: anurag-admin	kbrannan-malmsadi

Figure 1: Screenshot of the Center's forum website

for each forum thread (typically the project manager) who reviews posts made to that thread. Anyone who creates a username and password can post a comment or reply to a previously posted comment.

So far the Center's TMDL implementation project forum threads have received the most traffic. We anticipate that as exposure to, and comfort with, using the forum

increases, all aspects of the forum will be more fully utilized by watershed stakeholders. The forum will receive a facelift when the Center's redesigned website is updated early in 2006, but the basic functionality will remain the same.

To access the Center's forums, navigate to <http://tmdl.bse.vt.edu/forum/> in your web browser. Check it out!



Brian Benham
Biological Systems Engineering (0303)
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061
Phone: 540.231.5705
E-mail: benham@vt.edu
Website: tmdl.bse.vt.edu



The Center's mission is to conduct interdisciplinary research, teaching, and outreach to improve the integrity of the Nation's waters and watersheds by advancing the science, tools, and expertise available for developing, evaluating, and implementing watershed planning and management processes.

The EPA TMDL Clearinghouse

As 2005 came to a close, the Center continued gathering Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) resources that will populate the EPA TMDL Clearinghouse database. A state-by-state review of TMDL-program websites, guidance documents, and various TMDLs was completed in order to compile and evaluate the methods used by each state when developing TMDLs for various impairments. Information collected about each state's program included consent degree status, applicable water quality standards, and a brief description of the methodology or approach used for developing TMDLs. TMDL development guidance documents were collected from twenty states. This state specific information along with other data will be available in the EPA TMDL Clearinghouse's searchable database on the Center's website (<http://tmdl.bse.vt.edu>) by mid-2006.

Information available through the TMDL clearinghouse will be useful to a variety of audiences. Contractors developing a TMDL for an impairment that they have little experience with will be able to search the TMDL Clearinghouse to see what methods are being used to address that particular impairment in other states across the nation. The database will also be useful to state agency personnel who may be interested in refining, changing, or otherwise improving their approaches to TMDL development. EPA regional personnel will also be able to review the database to help their states with TMDL development and stay current to approaches used in other regions.

For instance, it is interesting to compare state TMDL programs that use less-intensive load-duration-curve methodology for developing TMDLs with those that continue to use more-detailed

methods such as nonpoint source (NPS) simulation models or other mass balance procedures to determine allocation reductions. The load-duration-curve methodology was first adopted by the state of Kansas and characterizes the loading over the entire flow regime without the use of a complex NPS model. The load duration curve is a graph representing the percentage of time during which a constituent's load exceeds water quality standards based solely on flow data and analytical sample data. Twelve of the twenty-nine states that have EPA approved bacteria impairment TMDLs use the load-duration-curve approach. In addition, seven states use the load-duration-curve approach for other impairments. The information compiled in the Clearinghouse will provide users an overview of the nation's TMDL program.



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY

www.ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Patricia M. Sobrero, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Clinton V. Turner, Interim Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.



VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY