



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation

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Commerce and Trade

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Director

To: Virginia Localities  
From: Kate Nosbisch, Executive Director, Virginia APELSCIDLA Board  
Date: September 23, 2016  
Re: Land Surveyor Scope of Practice

It has been brought to the attention of the Virginia Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers and Landscape Architects (APELSCIDLA) that there may be a misconception in some Virginia localities as to the regulatory permitted scope of professional practice a licensed land surveyor and land surveyor B may provide, including, but not necessarily limited to, the design of Stormwater Management Projects. The Board has also been advised that some localities have adopted rules, standards or regulations that are more restrictive, such as placing limits on the disturbed area of a site that a land surveyor and land surveyor B may design and/or not accepting a design which is provided by a land surveyor that is otherwise allowed by the state statutes. Therefore, this clarification of Virginia Code is provided for guidance.

*Per §54.1-400 of the Code of Virginia, by definition, a "land surveyor" means a person who, by reason of his knowledge of the several sciences and of the principles of land surveying, and of the planning and design of land developments acquired by practical experience and formal education, is qualified to engage in the practice of land surveying, and whose competence has been attested by the Board through licensure as a land surveyor.*

*In that same section of the Code, the "practice of land surveying" is defined as follows: includes surveying of areas for a determination or correction, a description, the establishment or reestablishment of internal and external land boundaries, or the determination of topography, contours or location of physical improvements, and also includes the planning of land and subdivisions thereof. The term "planning of land and subdivisions thereof" shall include, but not be limited to, the preparation of incidental plans and profiles for roads, streets and sidewalks, grading, drainage on the surface, culverts and erosion control measures, with reference to existing state or local standards.*

As to the permitted practice of a land surveyor, the Board has determined that the practice of land surveying is not limited by the amount of disturbed area associated with any survey or plan. Further, the Board has also determined that under the provision of "planning of land and subdivisions thereof" above, a regulant is permitted to design and prepare plans for stormwater

management and water quality facilities provided that such design is for systems that convey "drainage on the surface" for which the design, application and calculations are based on current state or local standards, as well as "as built" surveys of Stormwater Management facilities. The Board considers the *Virginia Stormwater Management Handbook* and the application of the *Virginia Runoff Reduction Method* as current state standards.

*§ 54.1-408. Practice of land surveying; subdivisions* define a land surveyor B's scope of practice:

*In addition to the work defined in § 54.1-400, a land surveyor may, for subdivisions, site plans and plans of development only, prepare plats, plans and profiles for roads, storm drainage systems, sanitary sewer extensions, and water line extensions, and may perform other engineering incidental to such work, but excluding the design of pressure hydraulic, structural, mechanical, and electrical systems. The work included in this section shall involve the use and application of standards prescribed by local or state authorities. The land surveyor shall pass an examination given by the Board in addition to that required for the licensing of land surveyors as defined in § 54.1-400. Any land surveyor previously licensed pursuant to subdivision (3) (b) of former § 54-17.1 may continue to do the work herein described without further examination. Except as provided, nothing contained herein or in the definition of "practice of land surveying" in § 54.1-400 shall be construed to include engineering design and the preparation of plans and specifications for construction.*

As to the permitted practice of a land surveyor B, the Board has determined the land surveyor B can perform all the activities of a land surveyor and in addition, the design for storm drainage systems, sanitary sewer extensions, and water line extensions and other engineering incidental to such work.

In closing, localities are reminded that, while they are within their rights to adopt more restrictive rules, standards or specifications with regard to development standards, they should not adopt more restrictive rules, standards or specifications that limit the scope of practice of licensed professionals governed by the Virginia Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers and Landscape Architects at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Virginia APELSCIDLA Board at (804) 367-8514.

Thank you.

cc: Virginia Department of Transportation  
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality  
Virginia Department of Health