



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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Action Highlights 2011-2012

As the only Chesapeake Bay Program partner representing the legislative branch of government, the Chesapeake Bay Commission exercises a unique role within the restoration effort. Over the past year, that role has focused on policies and legislation related to implementation of its member states' Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs).

Commission members introduced legislation in all three member states to limit the application of nitrogen and phosphorus to lawns and require certification of professionals who apply fertilizer to turf grass. The legislation was adopted in Maryland and Virginia and awaits committee action in Pennsylvania. These measures will help to significantly reduce nutrient loads from urban stormwater, the only sector whose loads continue to increase.

For the agricultural sector, practical alternative uses of manure will be necessary as heightened expectations for nutrient management limit opportunities for land application in many parts of the watershed. Consequently, the Commission, along with the Maryland Technology Development Corporation, Farm Pilot Project Coordination, Inc., and Chesapeake Bay Foundation, hosted a Manure-to-Energy Summit in September. In the months leading up to the Summit, the project partners conducted an intensive policy development process which resulted in fourteen different policy options for consideration by the Summit's attendees.

A significant new report on these findings, *Manure to Energy: Sustainable Solutions for the Chesapeake Bay Region*, was released in time for the January 2012 legislative sessions. Subsequently, Commission members and staff have successfully pursued a few priority action items, including enactment of a thermal energy tax credit in Maryland, and the convening of a multi-sector Manure to Energy Working Group in Pennsylvania.

In addition to new pollution reduction tools, successful implementation of the TMDL will require tools that lower the cost of pollution reduction. With nutrient credit trading a key part of each state's WIP, the Commission launched a comprehensive research project in August to better understand the potential cost savings that trading could achieve. The final report released in May, 2012, concluded that the potential for cost savings increased as the geographic area and number of participating sectors increased. However, the report also noted that important limits on trading necessary to protect local water quality, and verification measures necessary to ensure that reductions were in fact achieved, could limit the potential savings.

The TMDL requires not only that load reductions be achieved, but that they also be maintained in perpetuity. This will be especially challenging as the region is expected to experience continued population growth. In order to protect future water quality, the Commission convened a select group of Bay Program scientists and policy makers in 2011 to quantify the relationship between natural landscapes and water quality. A sequel effort is planned in 2012 to evaluate the legal questions involved with incorporating land conservation into the TMDL. As a liaison between its member states and the federal government, the Commission is working with the National Park Service and the Department of Defense to identify opportunities for enhanced federal-state landscape conservation initiatives in the Chesapeake region.

Additionally, the Commission is working with the region's Congressional delegation to secure language favorable to the Chesapeake region in the 2012 Farm Bill. Increased federal financial support and continued technical assistance is an integral part of each state's WIP.