



Press Release

410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109 • Annapolis, Maryland 21403 • 410-267-5700 • toll free 800-YOUR-BAY

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Contact: Jane Ballentine, 410/267-5758
cell: 301/332-1742

BAY REGION LEADERS TAKE NEW ACTIONS TO ACCELERATE CHESAPEAKE CLEAN-UP

Specific actions to be "Championed" will cross borders throughout Bay watershed

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – The Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) met today to chart a new course to accelerate efforts to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution throughout the Bay watershed.

“We are at a key crossroad in our Bay restoration efforts,” said Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, who serves as the chair of the Executive Council. “With the alignment of political leadership, public will and good science, we have the moral imperative to turn back the decline in the Bay’s health that has been decades in the making. We have made significant progress in many areas over the last 25 years. However, we also acknowledge that based on our current pace we will not meet our 2010 nutrient and sediment reduction goals. Today we pledge to accelerate our efforts to have the remaining programs and policies in place by 2010.”

The Executive Council, which establishes the policy direction for the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources, includes the Governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. Also in attendance today were representatives from Delaware and West Virginia, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Chesapeake Bay Program partnership has currently achieved 44 percent of nitrogen, 60 percent of phosphorous and 57 percent of sediment reduction goals, as well as 44 percent of habitat restoration and 69 percent of watershed protection goals. While the progress has been significant, particularly given the 170,000 new watershed residents each year, the partnership agreed that the pace of restoration has not been enough to meet the 2010 water quality goals.

“Environmental responsibility is everyone’s responsibility, and so I’m pleased we are all embracing our collective responsibilities for the Chesapeake,” said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. “The Executive Council agrees on the need to accelerate our efforts to green this watershed. From the high-tech to the common-sense, EPA and our partners are helping pick up the pace of the Bay’s restoration by reducing sediment and nutrient pollution.”

The principals attending the meeting each agreed to “champion” an issue or issues that are vital to restore our streams, rivers and the Bay, intending that the outcomes of the various projects or programs be models that are transferable to towns, municipalities, counties and other cities and states. Looking to the areas of most concern in individual jurisdictions, each leader found that there were specific issues they could focus on, using the expertise available to them. As each ‘Champion’ makes progress, they will report back to the partnership and the partners will be encouraged to consider these individual models, and modify them for their respective uses.

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“We all share a responsibility to protect our Bay, which can only be accomplished by improving accountability and strengthening the ongoing efforts within each of our jurisdictions,” said Governor O’Malley. “We have pledged to take a leadership role on behalf of the partnership to measure and increase our progress not only to improve water quality, but to restore our aquatic resources – such as bay grasses, blue crabs, American shad and striped bass -- to historic populations and health.”

Agriculture is very significant to the economy of this region, with over 87,000 farm operations and 6.5 million acres of cropland in the Chesapeake watershed. But, agriculture is also the largest single source of nutrient and sediment pollution in the watershed. Virginia’s Governor Kaine advocated for enhanced delivery of agriculture management practices and assistance, such as targeting conservation dollars to activities and areas with the greatest return on investment for nutrient and sediment pollution reductions.

“Virginia has put \$700 million dollars into addressing point source pollution and is on track to fulfill its wastewater treatment plant promises by the Chesapeake Bay Agreement’s 2010 deadline,” Governor Kaine said. “Our next challenge is non-point pollution, which often results from agriculture. We are dedicated to helping people working in our number one industry to improve the environment they depend upon and their bottom line.”

“The United States Department of Agriculture’s farm bill proposals offer the options to help stakeholders and producers achieve the agricultural water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay,” said Mark Rey, USDA’s Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. “These proposals will allow USDA to use innovation to improve the Bay’s natural resources, including the creation of market-based financial rewards for farmers who create environmental benefit such as clean water.”

Pennsylvania’s Governor Rendell is leading the states in encouraging Congress to pass a sound Farm Bill that would provide needed resources for conservation practices. Governor Rendell, along with Delegate Jim Hubbard of the Chesapeake Bay Commission will also champion a “Biofuels Summit” to explore ways to accelerate use of cellulosic sources of ethanol. Cellulose results in far less nutrient pollution in the region’s waters as compared to corn.

"Corn-based ethanol represents a viable and readily available alternative to foreign oil," said Governor Rendell, "but I believe there is an even more promising approach just over the horizon in cellulosic ethanol technology, and Pennsylvania is uniquely situated to take the lead in developing it. Rather than depending on corn to produce fuel, with cellulosic ethanol, we can take plant materials, biomass and agricultural waste and turn that into fuel. With such a fantastic economic and environmental opportunity at our feet, I think we should do everything we can to spur its development."

"A committed partnership between leaders of government and a well educated public is the only way to restore the Chesapeake Bay. Anything other than that kind of partnership will guarantee failure and rob future generations of one of God's natural wonders," concurred Hubbard, chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and co-champion for the “Biofuels Summit”

and Farm Bill passage.

Delaware is committing to accelerating the Bay clean-up by investigating agriculture's and forestry's gas mitigation options for carbon sequestration sinks defined as agricultural and forestry lands that absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂). Helping agricultural, commercial, and private interests work together to implement strategies and conservation practices should increase our sequestration of carbon rather than emissions of carbon. To this end, Delaware will host a carbon sequestration working session for the watershed states and other Bay program partners in the coming year.

Governor O'Malley agreed to champion the creation of a regional approach to foster innovative technology advancements to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution throughout the watershed.

Maryland has also committed to lead the regional effort to seek improvements in Chesapeake Bay Program accountability and governance structure – through approaches such as Maryland's BayStat – a system implemented by Governor O'Malley to track, measure and target restoration practices and successes.

“We will not let past and current conditions discourage us from making a better, healthier future for the Bay,” concluded Governor O'Malley. “Individually, we may each be a part of the problem, but collectively we can be the source of a permanent and lasting solution.”

The Executive Council also discussed that the growing pollution impacts from increased development in many parts of the watershed are outpacing water quality improvement and progress in other areas. The region's leaders unveiled a series of actions to reduce pollution from urban and suburban stormwater runoff and Mayor Fenty pledged to make the District of Columbia a model for “greening” urban areas. “The District is a region-wide champion for developed lands by making green infrastructure the standard for managing its stormwater because we recognize that for the health of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, *the solution to water quality is found on the land,*” stated Mayor Fenty.

Yesterday, the Mayor and EPA announced the next generation stormwater permit that would ensure significant reductions of polluted runoff through green roofs, expanded areas of urban trees, and other green practices.

Also yesterday the Department of the Navy announced a new low impact development policy that calls for no net increase in storm water volume, sediments and nutrients in its new construction and significant reconstruction projects. This new policy will help to mitigate pollution impacts from the new development anticipated by the regional expansion of bases through the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). These are new actions that can be replicated elsewhere throughout the Watershed.

In a joint report, the Executive Council's Advisory Committees (Local Government, Citizen's, and Scientific and Technical) recommended ways to better engage local governments

in the combined quest to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution from development, using the tools and authorities that are unique to many local governments. O'Malley, on behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program, agreed to work to develop new models to expand local engagement.

Acknowledging the need to expand the call for new ideas, actions, and solutions beyond the partnership, EPA announced \$6 million for new innovative implementation activities that foster innovative efforts to reduce nutrients and sediments to the Bay. The EC also announced the development of a collective goal for permanently protecting an additional 695,000 acres of forest in the Bay watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to more than 16 million people living in parts of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Since 1983, the Chesapeake Bay Program has coordinated the restoration of the Bay and its watershed.

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