

Federal Agencies Protection and Restoration Progress in 2011

2011 was the first fiscal year of enhanced federal effort to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed under Executive Order (EO) 13508 – *Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration*. The federal team has begun implementation of **the long-term strategy that will lead to clean water, recovered habitats, sustainable fisheries, abundant wildlife, and enhanced conservation of lands, including access by the public to the bay's many treasures.**

The Chesapeake E.O. FY 2011 Progress Report, issued in March 2012, documents critical progress by federal agencies working together with CBP partners. Departments and agencies have teamed up to get more done—more effectively and more efficiently—drawing on the unique skills and assets of federal programs, people, and science. The advancements reflected in this FY 2011 Progress Report are the result of work by multiple partners, including federal-state collaborations.

Restore Clean Water: Effort in this goal area focuses on reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other pollutants; improving the health of streams; and working with producers to apply new conservation practices on working agricultural lands in high priority watersheds.

- The Environmental Protection Agency and its jurisdictional and federal partners focused on **implementing the historic Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)**. Partners began putting in place on-the-ground and in-the-water controls that achieve 11 percent of the sediment reduction goal, 8 percent of the nitrogen reduction goal and 1 percent of the phosphorus reduction goal. This work is ahead of schedule for all but phosphorus. **Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans were drafted** highlighting local actions—put in place with the help of farmers, home builders, watershed organizations and others— that will eventually help meet water quality standards for dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll *a* and clarity.
- The jurisdictions and federal agencies also developed **short-term milestones to ensure all partners keep on an aggressive path** to achieving their required pollution reductions. The milestones spell out specific actions the partners will take over the next two years to reduce pollutants in the watershed. EPA also provided more than \$20 million to the states and \$5 million to local innovative and small watershed restoration actions.
- EPA, U.S. Geological Survey, and the states **expanded the Chesapeake non-tidal water quality network to provide monitoring data** to better assess progress toward the bay TMDL, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) enhanced efforts to monitor dissolved oxygen in the Bay using its Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's **Natural Resources Conservation Service treated more than 650,000 acres of working lands in priority watersheds with at least one conservation practice**. By providing technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers, NRCS achieved 16 percent of the agricultural conservation outcome of 4 million acres. These practices will help reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering the Chesapeake Bay.

Recover Habitat: Partners are working to **bolster land and water habitats to support priority species and public benefits** by restoring tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhancing the function of degraded wetlands; restoring riparian forest buffers; and restoring historical fish migratory routes.

- **148 stream miles were opened for fish passage** to benefit anadromous and resident species. This exceeded the annual target of 67 stream miles.
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- the Maryland portion of a fish passage prioritization for blockages in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. This tool will accelerate projects that enhance passage of target species and open large stretches of high-quality habitat.

Sustain Fish and Wildlife: Federal departments and agencies are working to **sustain healthy populations of fish and wildlife**, which contribute to a resilient ecosystem and vibrant economy, and currently are focusing on native oysters, brook trout, blue crabs and black ducks.

- NOAA led an inter-agency workgroup, including USACE, in the development of oyster restoration performance metrics. The effort, for the first time in the Chesapeake Bay, established criteria for evaluating success of oyster restoration projects at both tributary and reef spatial scales and the metrics will be used to track progress toward the EO goal to restore oysters in 20 tributaries by 2025. These performance metrics are incorporated into monitoring protocols outlined in USACE's Native Oyster Master Restoration Plan. USACE, NOAA and Maryland have also initiated a targeted and intensive effort to restore oysters in Harris Creek, a Maryland oyster sanctuary. This collaborative effort serves as a bay-wide model for science-based, large-scale oyster restoration.
- The 2011 Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Stock Assessment was released by NOAA and was used by the states to **establish a new adult, female-specific, blue crab abundance target of 215 million female crabs** for the bay. The new target will help maintain a sustainable stock of blue crabs and ensure a robust harvest over the long-term.
- The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Science and Data Committee (which includes FWS, USGS, and the US Forest Service) evaluated the health of brook trout in sub-watersheds within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the FWS Coastal Program **initiated brook trout restoration projects** in Little Tuscarora Creek, Frederick, Maryland, and Mossy Creek, Augusta County, Virginia.
- FWS, USGS, federal, state and nongovernmental partners initiated work to improve a regional black duck habitat model, to include a USGS-led quantitative assessment of how different black duck food sources provide different levels of energy. This information is necessary to assess the quality and spatial arrangement of available black duck habitat in Chesapeake Bay, and to prioritize and target restoration measures in coordination with the Atlantic Coast and Black Duck Joint Ventures. A 2011 mid-winter aerial survey was completed, and estimated **the 2009-2011 rolling three-year average at 47,269 black ducks in the Chesapeake Bay.**

Conserve Land and Increase Public Access: Federal agencies and state, local and nongovernmental partners are **protecting additional high-priority lands and adding public access sites** to the bay and its tributaries to enable boating, swimming and fishing.

- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service worked with agricultural producers to enroll **over 6,000 acres in programs that place permanent easements on farmland and wetlands.** These efforts conserve open space, keep working lands working, and help reduce the flow of nutrients and sediment into the Chesapeake Bay.
- The Public Access Planning Team, led by the National Park Service, with representation from federal, state, local and nonprofit partners, worked to expand, assess demand, determine gaps, and identify opportunities for public access sites. This team **identified and mapped approximately 1,100 existing public access sites throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed**—the first time the entire watershed was inventoried. A web-based mapping tool was developed to **identify public access gaps and opportunities using input from the public.** The website received more than 14,000 hits in just 30 days, including more than 300 additional public access site suggestions. **These suggestions will be included in a strategy for expanding public access that will be released in July 2012.**

Experts and scientists from across the federal government are determined to achieve the goals set forth in the *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. To date, they have achieved measureable successes toward overall goals, and are thoughtfully plotting the way forward, using best science and collaborative decision making to ensure all involved resources are used in a well-planned manner. Collaboration among these agencies and with state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, academia, community groups and individual citizens will allow the goals to be met. After the first year of implementing the *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, forward progress is evident, with more tangible protection and restoration poised for action.

In addition, the Federal agencies issued the E.O. 13508 Action Plan for FY2102, setting forth actions and initiatives totaling **over \$419 million across the Federal government.**