



State of Maryland Office of the Governor

November 30, 1998

Dear Friends:

The restoration and preservation of our region's most important natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay and its vast network of tributaries, has been one of the most daunting environmental challenges undertaken anywhere in the United States, indeed, anywhere in the world. That was clear in 1983, when efforts to restore the Bay's health were first and begun, and it remains clear today, in 1998, as we stand on the brink of a new millennium.

The Chesapeake's watershed stretches over six states and encompasses more than 64,000 square miles of forest and farmland, cities and suburb. There are tens of thousands of miles of streams and rivers in the Bay's vast network, and the watershed is the home to more than 2,700 different species of wildlife and more than 15 million people. But as the region's population continues to grow and technology and world politics transform the nature of business and industry in our region, more and more land will be transformed from farm fields, wetlands and woodlands into housing tracts, highways and commercial centers. As we enter a new age, we must recognize that the techniques we have used in the past to clean up the Chesapeake are not the ones we will need in the future to preserve and protect it.

The work that has been done over the past 15 years- the replacement of phosphated detergents with less polluting soap powders, upgrades to sewage treatment plants, best management practices installed on thousands of acres of agricultural lands- has helped slow down the Bay's deterioration. But if we are to truly restore the Bay's ability to sustain life, we must look beyond the easy and the obvious, beyond the Bay's shoreline, and beyond the banks of local streams or rivers. The key to restoring the Chesapeake lies with the people who live here. So, how farmers farm, how and where builders build, how homeowners care for their lawns and city dwellers sweep the sidewalks all affect how many crabs, rockfish and oysters we have in the Chesapeake Bay. Knowledge and understanding about how the Bay "works," personal responsibility, and the adoption of a new ethos, a personal Chesapeake ethic that says, "I am responsible," will determine whether we ultimately reach and sustain our goals.

This year's Executive Council Meeting will be remembered for many reasons. For the first time, the Bay Program has formally embraced "technology" as an aide in solving our problems. The Executive Council is urging that we extend our efforts in this direction, identify where technological advances can do the most good and then undertake a direct and clearcut strategy to implement the new advances. A second highlight is the presentation of a new strategy to more fully involve local watershed groups and community organizations in the formal Bay restoration- a key factor in fully implementing the Program's Tributary Strategies. We have also taken measures to fine tune the development of fisheries management plans, key components in our strategy to restore some of the Bay's most valuable living resources, such as oysters, crabs, rockfish, perch and herring.

From my perspective, in addition to these measures, two of the most important actions we are taking this year are the adoption of an education directive and the announcement of Chesapeake 2000, a process to renew the historic 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement by the year 2000. Without an updated set of goals, and the strategies to achieve them, we cannot expect our cleanup efforts to be successful. Without a population that can make informed decisions in the home and on the job, we cannot expect our hard-won victories and environmental gains to be sustained.

Years from now, when our sons and daughters have children of their own, they deserve to see and experience a revitalized Chesapeake Bay, with its rivers and streams running clean and pure and its marshes, wetlands, woodlands and forests teeming with life. They should have the same chance to understand and appreciate nature's glory that we had. It is our moral duty to leave them no less. It is our great opportunity to leave them so much more.

Sincerely,
Parris N. Glendening
Governor

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