

Chesapeake Bay Local Government Advisory Committee 2001 Annual Report to the Chesapeake Executive Council

In the past year, the Bay Program and the signatory jurisdictions began to implement the commitments of the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement (C2K). The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), like other committees and subcommittees had to re-examine its role in the effort to implement *Chesapeake 2000*.

Given the increased role of local governments called for in the agreement, the LGAC felt it was very important that its primary function be to facilitate effective, two-way communication between the Bay Program and local governments in the watershed.



Local Government Advisory Committee Chair Pat O'Bannon (right) speaks with Maureen Tooke and Mark Thompson prior to the Annual Meeting of the Chesapeake Executive Council.

In addition to re-examining its role, the LGAC has initiated efforts to achieve those goals. Major efforts include *Bay LOGIN*, an electronic network for local officials to keep up with Bay Program activities, and the reevaluation of the Local Government Participation Action Plan.

The Local Government Advisory Committee consists of twenty-one members, six from each state and three from the District of Columbia. Currently there are three vacancies in the Maryland delegation and one vacancy in the Pennsylvania delegation.

Recent Activities

- Chesapeake Bay Partner Community Awards
- Community Environmental Review
- *Bay Currents* newsletter
- Local Governments Information Needs Assessment
- Bay Local Government Information Network - Bay LOGIN
- Reevaluation of the Local Government Participation Action Plan
- Work with the Metropolitan Areas Workgroup

Visit the Chesapeake Bay Program website:
<http://www.chesapeakebay.net>

Chesapeake Bay Partner Community Awards

In the last year, the LGAC has continued to implement its programs designed to assist local governments in doing their part to restore the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay Partner Community Awards is one of those programs. It recognizes those local governments who have made serious efforts to protect water resources in their community. Recipients are awarded a bronze, silver, or gold status, depending on the quality and comprehensive approach of their programs. This year, thirteen communities received the Bay Partner Community Award, and two of those thirteen were upgraded in status. Five of the recipients are communities in Maryland, four are in Pennsylvania, and four are in Virginia.

Community Environmental Review

This program provides concentrated assistance to a Bay Partner Community in attempting to improve their award status, and thereby the water quality in their community. This year, a Review was conducted for Lewisburg Borough, Pennsylvania. Issues evaluated included low impact design, riparian forest buffer and river access. These issues were evaluated in advance of the review session by a team that included technical experts, community officials and Bay Program staff. The Review provided a number of possibilities for improvements in these areas (as well as possible sources for implementing those recommendations), and was very well received by the Borough.

Bay Currents Newsletter

The committee's newsletter was sent to over 3,500 local officials in the watershed. It provided updates to those officials on recent Bay Program activities and also on state/district activities related to the Bay. *Bay Currents* was distributed quarterly and was seen by many of its recipients as a prime source of Bay Program information relevant to local governments.

Local Governments Information Needs Assessment

A survey was sent to 1,900 local government officials in the watershed to determine their information needs regarding water resources and bay-related issues. One hundred eleven responses were returned. The results indicate that these issues are fairly important to them and more information needs to be made available to local governments on these subjects.

Bay Local Government Information Network (Bay LOGIN)

Bay LOGIN is a new program this year. It is a web-based tool that allows local government officials to receive information about the Bay Program and provide feedback on issues important to local governments via the Internet. Bay LOGIN is a powerful tool to increase the involvement of local governments in the Bay Program. However, there is some concern on the part of the committee over the decrease in the number of tools available to increase the involvement of local governments in the Bay Program, as *Chesapeake 2000* requires.

Visit the Chesapeake Bay Program website:
<http://www.chesapeakebay.net>

Reevaluation of the Local Government Participation Action Plan

The LGAC has taken the lead in the Bay Program effort to reevaluate the Local Government Participation Action Plan. *Chesapeake 2000* requires that this reevaluation be completed by the end of 2001. In order to meet that deadline, LGAC members have worked with Bay Program officials, state/district staff, local government associations, and local government officials to begin the drafting process. As part of that process, meetings have been held with a limited number of local officials in each jurisdiction to gain feedback on the existing Participation Action Plan and on what needs to be included in the revised Plan.

A critical feature of this effort is close involvement of the states and the District of Columbia in the process. Local government participation in the Bay Program will not increase unless states are involved in that effort. Once a new plan is approved, it is anticipated that new efforts to promote communications with local governments will be forthcoming. The LGAC fully supports an appropriate level of effort to increase the involvement of local governments in Bay Program activities.

Work with the Metropolitan Areas Workgroup

In the past year, the committee and the Metropolitan Areas Workgroup (MAW) have continued to work together to see that the Bay Program is made aware of issues of concern to local governments. The MAW, in coordination with the LGAC, has participated in several Bay Program task forces and has worked to provide a local government perspective to their deliberations. The two groups look forward to continued collaboration on various issues.

Unfortunately, the Community Environmental Review and Bay Currents programs have been eliminated from the Bay Program budget. Although Bay LOGIN shows great promise as a communications tool, the LGAC is concerned that adequate funding for outreach to local governments will be overlooked. The advisory committee is committed to increasing the involvement of local governments in the Bay Program, and urges the Bay Program to recognize the need for and adequately support increased outreach to local governments.

Activities in the Coming Year

The coming year will require local governments to play a bigger role in the effort to restore and protect the Bay. The LGAC looks forward to working with the states and EPA to increase that role. The committee's primary goal is to foster effective two-way communication between the Bay Program and local governments in the watershed.

The reevaluation of the Local Government Participation Action Plan is an important step in increasing that communication. It will provide in effect a roadmap for the Bay Program to increase local government participation. Another prime component of that effort will be Bay LOGIN. As local governments increase their use of the Internet for communication, this tool will grow in importance as a link to the Bay Program.

The committee is also hopeful that funding will be restored for some of the local government-related programs that were eliminated. If local governments are to rise to a new level of effort to meet *Chesapeake 2000* commitments, an increased effort to effectively communicate with them and provide assistance in meeting those commitments is necessary.