



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT ENVIROMATTERS

March 24, 2010

Restoring the Bay -- Now's the Time

Last year brought renewed enthusiasm for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay -- momentum that can build on the experience that has shown us the magnitude of the challenge. Now, the time has come to make substantial and tangible progress. Maryland is working hard on a number of fronts to meet fast-approaching deadlines in the most ambitious Bay restoration commitment yet.

The good news is that Maryland has laid the groundwork to position us for success in meeting our obligations. In particular, MDE has focused on reducing pollution from stormwater and from large agricultural animal feeding operations. And we're implementing our strategy to go on -- and stick with -- a "pollution diet" for the Bay and its waterways.

The federal government has made it clear that there will be consequences for failing to implement a strategy to clean up the Bay, but Maryland will have much to show the Environmental Protection Agency when it reviews our plan.

With widespread acknowledgment that two decades of voluntary goals and far-off deadlines had brought progress, but not enough to get the needed results, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia agreed to ambitious 2-year milestones for Bay restoration in May 2009. Those [milestones more than double Maryland's efforts to reduce nitrogen](#), the most significant pollutant to Bay waters. On the same day the Bay States announced our milestones, President Obama issued an [Executive Order](#) describing the Bay as a national treasure and demanding a renewed federal commitment to its clean up.

EPA's response included a commitment to complete the [Bay's Total Maximum Daily Load](#) -- limits for nutrients and sediments entering the Bay. Many across Maryland participated in meetings last fall to learn more about and discuss the Bay TMDL.

Along the way, U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin and Congressman Elijah E. Cummings introduced legislation designed to set many of the Executive Order provisions into law and help pay water quality improvements.

In January 2010, the EPA announced it will propose new, more stringent regulations on stormwater and large animal feeding operations to reduce water pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed -- areas in which Maryland has already taken significant action.

Which brings us to today.

MDE is leading the effort to develop a Watershed Implementation Plan for Maryland that will outline steps to meet the pollution reduction limits set by the Bay TMDL. It will be designed to reduce pollution levels, sustain the lower levels, and avoid any backslide in water quality.

MDE has formed "action teams" with our sister agencies to coordinate this complex task. Meeting these goals will require federal, state, and local governments, along with other stakeholders, to limit pollution. Preliminary target loads recently issued by the EPA for major Bay tributary basins will help jurisdictions begin to develop more detailed pollution reduction plans.

A preliminary Watershed Implementation Plan is due to EPA by June 1. A draft plan, with any necessary revisions, is due by August 1. A two-month public comment period for the draft Bay TMDL and draft implementation plan has been tentatively scheduled, with December 31, 2010, as the deadline for EPA to establish a Bay TMDL.

Meanwhile, Maryland continues to reduce water pollution from all of the major sectors -- urban and rural.

Through the [Bay Restoration Fund](#), the water and sewer fees Marylanders pay are bringing state-of-the-art performance to our largest sewage treatment plants and upgraded septic systems in our most environmentally sensitive areas. We are reducing air emissions of nitrogen that would otherwise wind up in the Bay.

More than 450 animal poultry operations are now working to come into compliance with [new manure management controls](#). And, by May, local jurisdictions are scheduled to implement regulations developed in accordance with the [Stormwater Management Act of 2007](#) to employ state-of-the-art controls on runoff from new development and redevelopment projects. Also underway are [upgraded permit requirements to reduce polluted stormwater runoff from urban and suburban areas](#) in Maryland's most populous counties and municipalities.

Restoring the Bay is a complex and challenging task, but each of these actions will make a significant difference. The truth is, we're all in this together, and everyone can help. Whether you are connecting your gutter to a rain barrel or representing your industry on a particular regulation, we all have a role in forging a strong Maryland, whose economic engine depends upon abundant clean water and a healthy Chesapeake Bay.



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