

Governor Martin O'Malley
Stormwater Symposium – Opening Remarks
March 4, 2013

Thank you very much. And thanks everyone for being here today. I want to recognize County Executive Rick Pollitt, as well as Mayor “J” Davis,... thank you for your leadership and partnership. Thanks also to Secretary Bob Summers and Secretary John Griffin, as well as our MES Executive Director Jim Harkins.

Before we begin, I wanted to share some thoughts with you to frame our conversation together.

PROGRESS IS A CHOICE

Progress is a choice. Job creation is a choice. Making investments in innovative, cost effective solutions that allow us to strike a better and more sustainable harmony in how we live in balance with the other living systems of this earth,... this, too, is a choice.

In this common platform of ours called the State of Maryland, we have set 15 strategic goals. Among those strategic goals are creating jobs, improving public safety, and improving public education. But five – that’s right, five – of those 15 goals for our State have to do with protecting our environment. And we’re here together today because of one of those goals – to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

There’s a trap we often find ourselves in, which is the senseless thinking that there is very little we can accomplish together. That our best days are behind us. But Maryland is a shining example of the fact that our best days are still in front of us.

When we set the goal several years ago for having the #1 best public schools in America, there were people who said “Oh you shouldn’t do that. What happens if you don’t hit it?” Well, we said “But what if we do?” And so we did. For five years in a row, we’ve achieved the best public schools in America.

If you believe you can, or you believe you can’t, then you’re probably right.

Six years ago, we set the goal of reducing violent crime,... not treating it like the weather, or something beyond our control. Instead, we said “We’re going to reduce violent crime by 20%.” There were people who said, “Well, don’t do that. What happens if you don’t?” And we said “What happens if we do?” And so we did.

We actually reduced violent crime together,... even in a recession, when there were plenty of excuses about why crime should be going up. In Maryland, we drove violent crime and homicides down to three decade lows. That’s a lot of lives saved.

So, setting goals is important. Measuring progress is important. Making better choices is the most important thing. If we set goals, we measure progress openly, and we continue to work together, we can achieve things that once seemed impossible.

Including big things, like turning back the tide on the harmful pollutants that enter our waterways and our Bay. That threaten our ecosystem and our very way of life. Changing the course of global warming. Making sure that our kids and our grandkids can enjoy the Chesapeake Bay, just as we did.

“What happens if we do?”

With better choices, together we have brought the Blue Crab back from the brink. Today, its numbers are the highest they've been in 19 years.

With better choices, together with Maryland's watermen, we are making progress restoring our Bay's native oyster population. Our 2011 survey saw the highest survival rate in 26 years.

With better choices, we enrolled a record 1,860 farmers in our cover crops initiative last year. During that time, we planted more than 414,000 acres of cover crops to protect the Chesapeake Bay – part of a total 1.89 million acres we've planted since 2007.

But we're not done yet. And this year, we're building on our progress. We're choosing to invest nearly \$113 million this year in our Bay Restoration Fund. We're including \$10 million for new oyster sanctuaries. And we're fully funding Program Open Space.

What's more, we're investing record amounts in our Bay 2010 Trust Fund,... \$31.5 million this year alone to support the non-point source pollution reduction projects that you're working on in your communities. That brings our total investment in the Trust Fund to \$120 million in just 6 years.

Finally, we're investing more than \$36 million in our capital budget to mitigate stormwater runoff and other non-point source pollution control projects.

CONCLUSION: FINDING A WAY FORWARD

Now, without any sugar coating, I know we don't always agree on everything. We're asking for your partnership to carry out the Watershed Implementation Plan, so that it works for each individual community.

We can't do this alone, and we need your help. Therefore, we've implemented a system of open and transparent State government, at your service, and we want to hear your ideas and concerns. In that vein, I want to take a minute to point you towards our BayStat website, which offers tools and resources for you so that we can meet our Bay TMDL requirements together as a State.

When it comes to stormwater management, we ask you that you continue a dialogue with us. But as we search for common ground, I know that we can agree that we must work together if we are going to find a better, more prosperous, and more sustainable way forward.

These are not just good things to do, these are essential things to do. They are logical things to do. They are reasonable, needed things that we must do with a deeper understanding, and with a greater love, and a greater appreciation of the connectedness of our shared humanity.

These are the choices which enable us to build together a stronger and better future,... the future that all of us prefer for our children: more job creation; more opportunity; a stronger, growing middle class.

We only get one chance to do this, and the time is now. Thank you.