Secretary Summers Remarks
March 4 Stormwater Symposium

Thank you all for joining this important discussion today. We've been working together on the Bay restoration for decades.

From Tributary Teams to Soil Conservation Districts and now our County WIP teams, this is a true federal-State-local partnership. We've made good progress.

Since we signed the first Bay agreement with the other jurisdictions in the watershed, we have made steady progress on reducing pollution and restoring Bay water quality.

Overall, nitrogen and phosphorus reductions in the Bay watershed are well over ½ way to our 2025 goal (61% N, 58% P) and MD is leading the way with 75% of our N goal and 88% of our P goal achieved already.

Despite Tropical Storm Lee, which caused the second biggest Susquehanna River flood on record in the Fall of 2011, the following summer of 2012 had the smallest area of low dissolved oxygen in the Bay since we signed the Bay Agreement in 1983.

Over 80% of our 54 state river monitoring stations showed overall nutrient improvements attributed to our reduction strategies.

Much of MD's recent progress can be attributed to Governor O'Malley's leadership in setting milestone targets and tracking our progress through BayStat, which has prompted the U.S. EPA to establish ChesapeakeStat where we can all see the progress of other Bay jurisdictions as well.

MD's nation-leading Enhanced Nutrient Removal wastewater treatment upgrades in partnership with local governments and the leadership of our farmers installing stream buffers, best nutrient management practices and who in each of the last 3 years have broken their own record for the acreage planted in cover crops, have been the major drivers of our progress so far.

But we are beginning to make progress on stormwater too. As of 2011 we estimate that stream restoration and stormwater retrofits of land with little or no stormwater controls has reduced an estimated 200,000 pounds of nitrogen. This is great progress. We've met our 2013 milestone goals for the WIP, but we still have a lot of work to do.

We know that there are concerns about the cost of controlling our stromwater pollution.

The reason we wanted to have this event today, is that we believe that working in partnership with local governments we can achieve the Bay Watershed Implementation Plan statewide, by 2025 at lower costs than reflected in the cost estimate in the Plan.

It’s not by accident that our restoration strategies so far have mostly focused on WWTPs and Agriculture; the cost of reductions from these sectors is less than other sectors.

WWTPs and Agriculture have also received most of the State and federal funding so far.

Now, we are increasing the focus to the other major sectors: Stormwater and septic systems.

New funding and legislative initiatives reflect this shift, while Agriculture and Point Source are continuing to make more reductions as well.

As Secretary Griffin will cover in more detail shortly, the State’s Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund, created by legislation sponsored by Governor O'Malley, has millions in funding for stormwater pollution control.

In addition, Governor O'Malley proposed and signed last year, legislation increasing the Bay Restoration Fund and expanding the authorization to use it for stormwater. These funds will come into play for counties and municipalities in 2018 after major WWTPs upgrades are completed.

In the 2012 session, legislation was also passed to require our most densely populated counties to put in place stormwater utility fees to support implementation efforts. We’re going to hear more about this later in the day from Anne Arundel County, which is going through this process right now.

Throughout the watershed implementation process, we’ve worked together. MDE, MDA, DNR and MDP are providing technical assistance and continuing to engage local governments through Webinars and regional meetings.

We just had a Webinar on February 26th with 110 registered participants and we will start our Spring Regional Meetings starting April 8 – these regional meetings were very successful during the WIP development process. These meetings will focus on making progress on the 2013 2-year milestones and setting the 2015 2-year milestones.

We will then have face-to-face staff-level meetings in late Spring – into Fall 2013 and then Fall Regional meetings.

These webinars and meetings form the core of our continued local engagement process. In addition to this core framework, the State is also providing direct one-on-one technical and financial assistance to local governments through the Watershed Assistance Collaborative, coordinated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Stormwater plays a critical role in achieving our water quality goals. Stormwater and septic system pollution is continuing to grow as our population grows.

To counter this, while requiring new development to meet state-of-the-art standards, the Watershed Implementation Plan has also set a goal of retrofitting 20% of existing impervious surfaces by 2025.

When it comes to reducing pollution from existing developed areas, everything we do counts towards progress in meeting Bay restoration goals and also in improving local waters.

Focus on capturing and treating your impervious surface runoff and, on the pervious areas, look for opportunities for tree planting and managing fertilizer application and recording and reporting these efforts, so we can get credit for them toward our restoration goals.

Consequences if we fail to meet our goals:

First and foremost the consequences of not meeting our water quality goals for the Bay are the continuing degradation of the quality of our groundwater, streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and the Bay and the reduction of the health and quality of life for our citizens.

We are talking about protecting our fresh water supply – stopping the increasing nitrate levels in our ground water, sedimentation of our rivers and reservoirs and

increasing cost of drinking water treatment.

Preventing algae blooms and fish kills like those that occurred this past Spring and Fall.

Restoring oysters, protecting crabs, Rockfish and other MD seafood.

What is this the legacy we want to leave for future Marylanders?

Beyond that, the US EPA has also said it will use all of the enforcement tools available under the federal Clean Water Act to compel watershed jurisdictions to comply, including:

Federal takeover of a state's delegated Clean Water Act authority to issue permits for wastewater treatment plants, industrial discharges, stormwater discharges and construction permits over 1 acre in size.

Federal mandates for additional pollutant removal requirements on the above permits.

Expansion of Clean Water Act permit coverage to include less densely populated areas served by stormwater conveyance systems and animal feeding operations with smaller heard or flock sizes.

Reduction in federal grant funding for a state's environmental programs and water and infrastructure.

We need to continue to work together, focus on incremental progress and make a good faith effort.

Other States react to Maryland’s leadership. If we falter, they will use that as an excuse. Regaining the momentum of their involvement would be difficult.

Maryland has the most to win from a cleaner, healthier Bay and the most to lose should we walk away from our cleanup plan. The best action that we can take is to move ahead with the pollution reduction strategies in our Watershed Implementation Plan. For the health of the Bay and Maryland’s economy, we cannot afford to go backward. We must move forward with our Bay restoration efforts.

The longer we wait, the more the restoration of the Bay will cost. A “Free Market” doesn’t mean that economic development can push its costs off onto the environment, taxpayers and future generations. Maryland is making great strides in its restoration efforts, but we are in this together.

The Watershed Implementation Plan is a proven, science-based blueprint already in place that outlines pollution reduction strategies needed to save the Bay and our rivers and streams. It is already helping us restore clean water, and we need to continue to move forward as we continue to look for better, more cost-effective ways of achieving our goals.

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