



Chesapeake Bay Program

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

ADOPTION STATEMENT COMMUNITY WATERSHED INITIATIVE



In support of the *Community Watershed Initiative Directive (97-3)*, we reaffirm our commitment to increase our emphasis on watershed restoration, planning and management at a small watershed scale and to promote integration of Chesapeake Bay Program restoration goals at that level.

WE REAFFIRM OUR BELIEF THAT the cumulative benefits derived from many community-based watershed projects will mean continued progress toward a healthier bay.

WE RECOGNIZE the critical role of state and local governments, soil and water conservation districts, watershed organizations and other organizations concerned with small watershed restoration and seek to ensure that resources are available to assist these efforts where they currently exist and where they may be needed. We further recognize that targeting limited resources based on available regional and state watershed planning and analysis will be necessary.

WE BELIEVE that the efforts of the Chesapeake Bay Program should not duplicate existing efforts that successfully address Program goals and objectives and that the Program and its partners should learn from those efforts and, where appropriate, interact with them. Likewise, we believe that community watershed organizations can learn from the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program and, where appropriate, modify their activities to effectively work in support of Chesapeake Bay Program goals and objectives.

WE BELIEVE that successful efforts at the community watershed scale should be recognized and promoted so that others can learn from them.

WE THEREFORE COMMIT to the implementation of the *Community Watershed Initiative Strategy* and will do that which is within our power to focus our individual efforts towards the goals of *Directive 97-3*.

WE DIRECT the Chesapeake Bay Program to establish a Community Watershed Task Force to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the *Community Watershed Strategy*.

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

Environmental Science Center

701 Mapes Road CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Ft. Meade, MD 20755-5350

Date December 8, 1998

FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND



Pat N. Grogan

FOR COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



John M. Lutz

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



James S. Gilmer

FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Marion B. Buzay

FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION



John F. H. H. H.

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Alan D. Robertson

Introduction

As directed by the Chesapeake Executive Council in 1997 (see Appendix I), the Community Watershed Initiative offers a framework to enable the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) to better support community watershed efforts for the benefit of the small watersheds within the Chesapeake Bay basin. The challenge of this strategy is to promote implementation of Chesapeake Bay Program priorities at the small watershed scale. Implementation at this scale will recognize the value and accomplishments of existing state, regional and local efforts and improve program integration, delivery and results.

The Community Watershed Initiative Strategy supports and builds upon previous Chesapeake Executive Council actions including the *1992 Amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement* (which called for the development of tributary strategies), the *Local Government Participation Action Plan* and the *Priorities for Action for Land, Growth and Stewardship*. Each of these previous documents promotes sustainable local communities and watersheds and complements a number of the actions proposed in this strategy.

This strategy was developed through a collaborative process involving Chesapeake Bay Program partners and representatives of watershed organizations, watershed-based non-profits and local governments.

Why a Community Watershed Strategy?

The citizens of the Chesapeake Bay watershed often make their connection to the Bay at a small scale -- through their neighborhoods, their communities and the local environment that surrounds them. It is also at this level that decisions are made every day that affect land use, infrastructure, water quality and the environment. Depending upon the decisions made, these actions will either systematically advance efforts to protect the health of the Bay or incrementally impair the Bay Program's ability to achieve watershed-wide restoration objectives. Therefore, the Community Watershed Initiative Strategy seeks to address three key needs at the community watershed level in order to promote watershed protection and restoration:

- **Strengthening the partnerships** between the Chesapeake Bay Program partners, local governments and community watershed efforts will enhance collaboration in efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds.
- **Improving access** to information and technical and financial assistance that assist community watershed efforts.
- **Building organizations and improving organizational skills** is a key to success at the community watershed level. By serving as a catalyst and a resource, the Chesapeake Bay Program can assist in the development, growth and success of local community watershed efforts.

Implementing This Strategy

In order to address these identified needs and to further the implementation of this strategy, we recommend the creation of the ***Community Watershed Task Force of the Chesapeake Bay Program***.

I. Task Force Mission and Composition

The Community Watershed Task Force will provide overall coordination for implementation of this Strategy. Where appropriate, the existing committees of the Chesapeake Bay Program will implement the activities recommended in the initiative.

The Task Force will:

- **provide a point of contact within the Chesapeake Bay Program for community watershed efforts.**
- **determine the type of assistance the Bay Program can provide to existing community watershed efforts as well as newly-forming community watershed efforts.**
- **seek to ensure that the Bay Program and its partners have in place mechanisms to address the goals, objectives and needs of community watershed efforts and, at the same time, that community watershed effort leaders understand their connection and contribution to the Bay Program's goals and objectives.**
- **be established for a two-year implementation period, after which they will provide recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council on how best to continue the Community Watershed Initiative and to integrate small watershed support efforts within the Chesapeake Bay Program.**
- **include participants with Bay-wide or local watershed experience, and involve the chair or a designee of each existing Bay Program subcommittee, representatives of selected community watershed organizations and local governments from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia, regional non-profits, signatories to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement, Chesapeake Bay Program advisory committees and other relevant parties.**

II. Task Force Objectives and Priorities

OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHEN AND ENHANCE EXISTING STRUCTURES OF FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL ASSISTANCE

Findings: An array of programs currently exist at all levels that could be focused to provide assistance to community watershed efforts. However, many of these programs currently are not able or were not intended to specifically address the partnership-building emphasis of this strategy.

Action: The Task Force shall undertake an evaluation of the relevant activities of the committees of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its state, federal and local partners with the goal of strengthening or developing mechanisms that build partnerships between federal and/or state providers and community watershed efforts. Wherever possible, specific projects and issues well suited for collaborative efforts should be identified which could include efforts to restore riparian forest buffers, submerged aquatic vegetation, fish passage or broader issues related to land use decision-making and watershed planning.

OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES

Findings: Community watershed efforts are often limited by both the amount and type of funding they receive. Although there is an increasing amount of funds available for watershed-based work, the funding is not always in a form easily available to small watershed efforts. In addition we recognize that funding support for emerging community watershed efforts for planning, facilitation, and staff is critically needed to nurture the growth and success of community-based efforts. These emerging efforts can also benefit from assistance which helps them develop the organizational structure sufficient to sustain program development and implementation.

Actions: The Task Force should:

- seek methods of funding which minimize administrative costs, so that watershed organizations can benefit fully from the amounts available while at the same time maintaining reasonable accountability requirements.
- evaluate relevant funding sources to explore the applicability of current public mechanisms to community watershed efforts and explore ways to better utilize existing funds for community-based efforts without diminishing current implementation programs.

- identify potential partnerships that would improve access to private funding sources.
- address organizational needs including technical assistance in meeting requirements to receive funding (e.g. IRS recognition of non-profit status.)
- incorporate into the *Chesapeake Bay Program Subcommittee Budget Guidance* consideration of community watershed-scale projects.

OBJECTIVE 3: ENSURE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM TOOLS, INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES ARE RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY WATERSHED EFFORTS

Findings: We recognize that much of the data and information produced by the Chesapeake Bay Program is not in a form relevant, usable or accessible by community watershed efforts.

Actions: The Task Force should create a clearing house function within the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partner jurisdictions to ensure that program information and activities are available to community watershed efforts. The clearing house should use all possible means of distribution to make the information widely accessible and focus on the following:

- a guidebook, directory or similar mechanism, should it be determined that one does not currently exist, of state and federal programs relevant to community watershed management and planning.
- source and kinds of practical information to community watershed efforts on topics relevant to their projects which could include map preparation, water quality monitoring and data interpretation, habitat protection techniques and other needs identified by the Task Force.
- the use of forums for communication between community watershed organizations, local governments, soil and water conservation districts and resource specialists to share direct experience in these activities with others working to promote watershed protection; and
- hands-on projects or case histories or projects that support Chesapeake Bay Program goals and can be implemented in a variety of subwatersheds by those organizations that wish to undertake them.

OBJECTIVE 4: ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY-WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS TO UNDERTAKE SUSTAINED RESTORATION EFFORTS

Finding: The ultimate success of community watershed efforts will be largely dependent on their abilities to sustain themselves independent of any support they may receive from the Chesapeake Bay Program or its partners. Assistance can take the form of issue specific technical or financial assistance or it can be through ongoing training and information sharing to help an organization become more effective. In addition, organization to organization contact which promotes mentoring and information sharing can benefit such efforts. Further, the issue of building organizational capacity is relevant to areas where community watershed efforts are absent or in early stages of development. Building an infrastructure of efforts in areas where they do not currently exist will also yield long-term local and bay-wide results.

Actions: The Task Force will address the following priority areas:

- Access to technical assistance to assist efforts in developing an organizational structure that will allow them to receive and use financial and technical assistance.
- The development of a catalog of existing community watershed efforts in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in terms of the issues addressed and the geographic areas covered in order to identify areas which might benefit from more intensive community watershed efforts.
- The promotion of forums, meetings, web-based information sharing and other methods of linking community watershed efforts for the purpose of sharing success, information and strategies for building successful organizations or efforts which could set the stage for a more formalized mentoring program.
- The development and use of self-evaluation techniques that will enable community watershed efforts to measure their progress and success in a form that can be easily communicated to the Chesapeake Bay Program partners, local officials, the press, other organizations and the public.
- The continued use of existing Chesapeake Bay Program recognition programs to promote community watershed efforts.

Expectations for This Strategy

This strategy focuses on the building of partnerships between community-based efforts and the Chesapeake Bay Program. The following guidance is offered to inform Chesapeake Bay Program participants and potential community-based partners as to what they should expect as this strategy is implemented.

The Chesapeake Bay Program will encourage:

- Community watershed efforts that address and support the goals of the CBP.
- Community watershed efforts that are collaborative efforts with interested organizations and adjacent localities. Community-based efforts can share watershed data, coordinate capital improvement budgets with watershed protection strategy priorities, facilitate community-based watershed planning efforts, among other things, to strengthen local level efforts.

Community watershed efforts should anticipate that:

- The Chesapeake Bay Program will recognize that many of the community watershed efforts are beneficial to the wider-scale initiatives of the Chesapeake Bay Program as pieces of a larger restoration effort.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program will work with community watershed organizations and local governments to identify the linkages that exist between their goals and those of the Chesapeake Bay Program.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program will seek to make relevant Chesapeake Bay Program information, tools and data more user-friendly and accessible to community watershed organizations and local governments.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program will strengthen the communication with community watershed efforts in order to utilize their knowledge and perspectives across the entire watershed.

Conclusion

The Chesapeake Bay Program is defined by its efforts to restore water quality and living resources. Cooperation and partnerships among the participating states, federal agencies and a broad range of stake holders is the defining element of its success. Through these cooperative and integrated efforts, the Chesapeake Bay Program has endeavored to protect habitat, improve water quality, minimize the adverse environmental impacts of land use and development, provide quality environmental education, facilitate public access to the Bay and its tributaries and encourage public participation in the restoration. We believe that this strategy, if fully implemented, will advance all of these efforts in a way that is meaningful to the thousands of community watersheds within the basin.

APPENDIX I

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DIRECTIVE NO. 97-3



COMMUNITY WATERSHED INITIATIVE



The restoration of water quality and living resources is the principal goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Through the cooperative efforts of the Bay Program partners, we have endeavored to strengthen and coordinate our actions to protect our living resources, ensure clean and healthy water, minimize the impacts of land use and development, provide quality environmental education, allow for public access to the Bay and its tributaries and encourage public participation in the restoration campaign.

The development of our tributary strategies for nutrient reduction has been the cornerstone of our water quality effort. The full implementation of those strategies will continue to be the focus of our efforts in the future. Local governments, watershed groups, and citizens are key partners in the sustained implementation of our tributary strategies and in the achievement of our broader Bay Program goals and commitments.

Our multijurisdictional covenants to restore the Chesapeake Bay are now more than two decades old. Many specific goals and commitments have been developed that allow us to focus our efforts and measure our progress. We recognize that supporting community-based watershed planning and engaging local organizations, citizens, and local governments will strengthen the foundation for continued progress toward a healthier Chesapeake Bay by integrating the various programs and goals of water quality improvement, habitat restoration and growth management. We believe that successful implementation of many of these initiatives will only happen if there is active involvement of the community at the subwatershed scale; therefore, the Executive Council commits to launching the Community Watershed Initiative as a way to encourage and support the application of our commitments at the local level.

THROUGH OUR EFFORTS TO DATE, WE HAVE:

- ◆ Committed, in the 1987 *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* and subsequent documents, to restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as an integrated ecosystem and adopted a series of goals related to living resources, water quality, land use, education, Bay access, and public participation that include:
 - reducing the nutrients reaching the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay by 40 percent by the year 2000,
 - implementing a basinwide toxics reduction and prevention strategy,
 - preserving and restoring streamside forest buffers,
 - removing stream blockages to restore migratory fish habitat,
 - protecting, enhancing and restoring tidal and non-tidal wetlands,
 - addressing land use, growth, and stewardship issues, and
- ◆ Committed, in the 1992 *Amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, to working in concert with local governments and citizens, to implement tributary-specific strategies that would meet main stem nutrient goals and achieve water quality requirements necessary to restore living resources in both the main stem and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.
- ◆ Recognized, through the Tributary Strategies and other land stewardship-related initiatives, that community-based watershed planning can yield positive results by strengthening the foundation for continued progress toward a healthier Chesapeake Bay, integrating various programs and goals for water quality, habitat restoration, and growth management at a subwatershed scale.
- ◆ Adopted in 1996, the *Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative*, which recognized the importance of engaging new

partners to assist in achieving the *Initiative's* goal of conserving existing forests along streams and shorelines and restoring riparian forests on 2,010 miles of stream and shoreline in the Bay watershed by 2010.

- ◆ Adopted in 1996, the *Local Government Participation Action Plan*, which identified the critical role of local governments in land use management, stream corridor protection and infrastructure improvements and committed to outreach, support and recognition of local government actions in support of the goals of the Bay Program.

TO FURTHER OUR COMMITMENT TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY-BASED IMPLEMENTATION, WE WILL:

- ◆ Convene an open and inclusive process within the Chesapeake Bay Program for the development of a Community Watershed Strategy that implements this Initiative, seeking the counsel of citizens, landowners, federal, state, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, business and industry and others.

THEREFORE, WE DIRECT THAT THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM PARTNERS DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WATERSHED STRATEGY FOR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CONSIDERATION AT THE 1998 ANNUAL MEETING THAT ADDRESSES EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- ◆ The acknowledgment that each subwatershed unit has a role to play in meeting Baywide goals for water quality improvement and habitat enhancement, but that the approaches they use must reflect the unique characteristics of the local watersheds and their human inhabitants.
- ◆ The integration at the subwatershed scale of Bay Program commitments related to nutrients, toxics, submerged aquatic vegetation, riparian forest buffers, fish passage, land growth and stewardship, local government involvement, public participation, and other applicable goals.
- ◆ The development of success criteria to enable local watershed partners to measure accomplishments.
- ◆ The identification and enhancement of mechanisms to assist local governments and watershed groups in obtaining necessary scientific information, technical expertise, and financial resources through education, training, and networking forums to better enable them to assess their local natural resources, implement environmentally-sensitive management practices, and accommodate sensible growth during their community watershed planning efforts.
- ◆ The identification of opportunities to link current state and federal efforts related to environmental, historical, cultural, and growth management programs to community watershed management and planning and impediments to such efforts, including recommendations for improvements.
- ◆ Guidelines for the delineation of subwatersheds that are community-defined, include a basin or a collection of basins, regardless of political boundaries, and are smaller in scale than the watershed of a major tributary.

DATE: October 30, 1997

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



George Allen

FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND



Pat N. Gledhill

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



Tom Ridge

FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Mamm Barry

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Carl M. Brown

FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION



W. Iqbal Khan

APPENDIX II

Definitions

- A **community watershed** is a basin or a collection of basins that is smaller in scale than the watershed of a major Bay tributary. By definition it is represented by the collaborative efforts of individuals, organizations, governments and others that have a common bond, mission or commitment related to the protection, restoration or enjoyment of their common watershed.
- **Community watershed efforts** ideally are partnerships among individuals, organizations and local governments. Collectively, they share a commitment to protect and restore their watersheds for community use and enjoyment and/or for its importance in the restoration of Chesapeake Bay. Whatever the makeup of the effort, the defining characteristic is that the organization is local or regional and dedicated to the sustained implementation of measures to protect, restore or enhance the environments of their watersheds.
- **Chesapeake Bay Program goals** refer to those goals, policies, objectives and actions as defined by the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, as amended, as well as directives and policy documents adopted by the Chesapeake Executive Council.
- **Chesapeake Bay Program** is the cooperative partnership among the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, representing the federal government; and participating advisory committees. The Chesapeake Bay Program was established by the 1983 Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

