



Chesapeake Bay Program

WETLANDS PROTECTION AND RESTORATION GOALS

Wetlands, both tidal and nontidal, play a critical role in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, a role that was recognized by the Chesapeake Bay Program in the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and in the 1989 Chesapeake Bay Wetlands Policy. The maintenance of existing wetlands and restoration of wetland acreage and function are critical to sustaining habitats for breeding, spawning, nesting, and wintering living resources, including those living resources vital to the regional economy. Wetlands also play a valuable role in keeping the Bay healthy by retaining nutrients and minimizing the impacts of flooding.

IN 1989, WE COMMITTED in the Chesapeake Bay Wetlands Policy to a no net loss goal and to take steps to achieve a long-term goal of a net resource gain in acreage and function. We reaffirm the no net loss goal for the watershed, recognizing that the no net loss must be for both acreage and function. We maintain our commitment to protect existing wetlands to the maximum extent practicable. In addition, we reaffirm our commitment to the following ongoing implementation actions:

- ◆ To reduce the losses of wetlands from regulated activities by encouraging more preliminary consultations to avoid or reduce wetland impacts early in the planning process.
- ◆ To compensate for unavoidable wetland losses from regulated activities by requiring permittees to mitigate for wetland losses in a manner that encourages replacement of both acreage and function.
- ◆ To encourage non-regulatory measures to protect and manage wetlands outside of the scope of regulatory programs.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DIRECTIVE is to develop strategies to achieve the protection and restoration of the wetlands resource, to establish a quantifiable wetland restoration and preservation goal and to define methods to measure our success in meeting that goal.

THEREFORE, WE DIRECT THAT the following specific actions be undertaken by the Chesapeake Bay Program:

- ◆ Evaluate, and supplement as necessary, current wetland tracking and accounting mechanisms, including the need for the development of new databases or other new information collection techniques to improve our ability to evaluate our progress in protecting and restoring wetlands. That effort shall include the following actions:
 - By June 1998, identify a strategy to complete wetland status and trends in the Bay watershed wetlands every 5 years. This strategy shall provide the means to obtain measurable data and information that will accommodate the broad-based needs of the Bay Program and the local governments in the Bay watershed. It shall include an evaluation of the validity and reliability of new inventory technologies as assessment tools, their cost effectiveness, and the utility of potential tools and technologies for assessment purposes.
 - By January 1999, complete the National Wetlands Inventory Program mapping of the entire watershed to provide a modern benchmark to quantify the nature and extent of wetlands in the Bay drainage basin.
 - Complete and publish a wetlands status and trends report for dissemination to the public by January 2000, and every 5 years thereafter.

Based upon our characterization of wetland resources as noted above, the Chesapeake Bay Program, in coordination with other public and private entities, shall:

- ◆ By the annual Chesapeake Executive Council meeting in 1998, develop jurisdiction-specific strategies for achieving net gain goals. At a minimum, the strategies should include a plan for restoring every acre of wetland lost each year with an acre of wetland of similar ecological value. Upon development of a quantifiable goal, the jurisdiction-specific strategies will be updated in 2000, and every 5 years thereafter.
- ◆ By the annual Chesapeake Executive Council meeting in 1999, establish a quantifiable goal for a net gain in wetlands acreage and function based upon the results of wetland trends reports, assessment of regulatory and non-regulatory programs, and local interests. This goal will acknowledge and reflect information used to establish Maryland's Wetland Recovery Goal of 60,000 acres and any similar goals which may be set in the interim by the other jurisdictions.

WE FURTHER COMMIT to assisting local governments and community-based watershed efforts through the development of tools and information. This commitment shall include:

- ◆ Augmenting wetlands assessment projects completed in the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania with an additional pilot project in Virginia to be completed by July 1998.
- ◆ Drawing upon the lessons from the pilot projects, completing and publishing a community-based approach to wetlands preservation and restoration no later than January 1999.
- ◆ Targeting community-based approaches for wetland management to ensure that priority technical-assistance, and assistance in defining measurable preservation and restoration goals, can be provided to interested communities. Priorities for responding to local requests for assistance will be determined by the Bay Program after consultation with local governments and others in order to ensure the most effective use of limited technical assistance resources.

BY THIS DIRECTIVE, we reaffirm our commitments made in the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and the 1989 Chesapeake Bay Wetlands Policy to take steps to achieve a net resource gain as a long-term goal for wetland restoration in the Chesapeake Bay basin, recognizing the role wetlands play in the overall health of the Bay and its living resources. We, the undersigned, agree to further our efforts through this directive.

DATE: October 30, 1997

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