



Chesapeake Bay Program

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DIRECTIVE NO. 97-3

COMMUNITY WATERSHED INITIATIVE



he 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

- improving water quality in the Bay and its tributaries as the critical link to restoring living resources.
- ◆ 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

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