



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Edward Rendell, *Governor*
State of Pennsylvania
Chair of the Chesapeake Executive Council

FROM: Kathleen McGinty, *Secretary*
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Chair of the Principals' Staff Committee

DATE: November 8, 2005

RE: **2005 Wetlands Evaluation**

Background

This memorandum provides an update on the 2005 Wetlands Evaluation and outlines the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) decisions concerning for next steps.

The Chesapeake Bay Program recognized the importance of wetlands in *Chesapeake 2000*, which charged the signatory states to "achieve a net resource gain by restoring 25,000 acres of tidal and not-tidal wetlands" by 2010. The agreement further stated "we will evaluate our success in 2005." In response to this commitment, the Chesapeake Bay Program established the Wetlands Evaluation Task Group and charged them to assess progress and recommend adjustments necessary to ensure a balanced, sustainable approach.

The evaluation found that significant progress was made between 1998 and 2004, with a combined total of nearly 60,000 wetland acres restored, created, or enhanced in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Although the cumulative progress exceeds the 25,000-acre goal, tracking data reported by the States

indicated that 17 percent of progress toward the *Chesapeake 2000* wetland goal is in the form of actual gains in wetland acreage and 83 percent is in the form of enhancement of existing wetland acreage. While wetland enhancement projects are ecologically beneficial, they result in a functional gain rather than an acreage gain.

Decisions

Based on the findings of the 2005 evaluation and the recognition that wetlands improve water quality, protect communities from flooding and shorelines from erosion, and provide high quality fish and wildlife habitats, the PSC has decided that the Chesapeake Bay Program Partners should focus restoration efforts on a wetland acreage gain of 25,000 acres for the remainder of the decade. At the same time, it is important that we continue the progress on enhancing existing wetland acreage. The PSC has committed to an additional 40,000 acres of functional gains. The attached Principals' Staff Committee Guidance details those decisions.

FOCUS ON WETLAND ACREAGE GAIN FROM 2005–2010

The role of wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem has been recognized in the *1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, the *1989 Chesapeake Bay Wetlands Policy, Directive 97-2, Wetlands Protection and Restoration Goals*, and the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement. *Chesapeake 2000* directed the partnership to evaluate progress in 2005 on non-regulatory wetland restoration in the watershed and make adjustments necessary to ensure a balanced, sustainable approach.

Based on the findings of the 2005 evaluation and our recognition that wetlands improve water quality, protect communities from flooding and shorelines from erosion, and provide high quality fish and wildlife habitats, we hereby reaffirm our commitment to wetlands restoration and protection in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and will aggressively pursue the resources necessary to focus our restoration efforts on wetland acreage gain for the remainder of the decade.



- During the course of the 2005 Wetland Evaluation, we found that significant progress was made between 1998 and 2004, with a combined total of nearly 60,000 wetland acres restored, created, or enhanced in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia and the District of Columbia.
- Tracking data reported by the States indicate that 17 percent of progress toward the Chesapeake 2000 wetland goal is in the form of actual gains in wetland acreage and 83 percent is in the form of enhancement of existing wetland acreage.
- WE will focus on accelerating wetland acreage gain by committing to the following in the signatory states between 2005–2010:
 - *Acreage gain (reestablishment/establishment) of 15,000 additional acres of wetlands*
 - *Functional gain (enhancement/rehabilitation) of 40,000 additional acres of wetlands*
- WE commend and accept the offer by the headwater states of Delaware and New York to contribute an additional 3,500 acres of wetland acreage gain by 2010.
- WE agree to adopt the standard federal tracking definitions being used to track wetland acreage gains and functional gains towards the national wetlands goal.
- WE agree to target wetland restoration in areas that have high potential for water quality and other habitat benefits, or are located in watersheds draining to first and second order streams.
- WE agree to work with the Living Resources Subcommittee to track wetland protection beginning in 2006, assess progress in 2007, and develop a new CBP wetlands protection acreage goal based on data assembled from federal, state and local government agencies and non-government organizations by 2008.
- WE agree to seek priority for funding through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Assistance Network to maximize delivery of programs that provide incentives for wetland restoration and protection. Such programs include: the Wetland Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Conservation Securities Program, Rural Legacy, Growing Greener, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife.