



CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE JANUARY 10, 2005

Good afternoon. My name is Russell Pettyjohn, Mayor of Lititz in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and Chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) to the Chesapeake Bay Program.

For the sake of time, I am going to briefly review four key messages the Local Government Advisory Committee wishes to convey to you today:

- 1) We urge you to **endorse the report of the Blue Ribbon Finance Panel report** and aggressively **promote the creation of the Financing Authority** so urgently called for in this report;
- 2) We ask that limited governmental **funds emphasize implementation of cost-effective measures** rather than additional research and study of the Bay;
- 3) We encourage the **Executive Council to expand its membership** to include the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and the headwater states of Delaware, New York, and West Virginia; and
- 4) We are frustrated by the stagnation in appointments being made to the LGAC and ask that the **Executive Council move to appoint new members to the LGAC** where vacancies now exist.

Allow me to elaborate on each of these major points. The Blue Ribbon Panel Report reflects a major shift in public policy deliberations regarding the Bay's restoration. Gone is the pretense that existing programs and a flat \$20 million a year federal appropriation will do the job. The report rightly elevates the urgency and magnitude of what it will take to restore the Chesapeake Bay -- a sustained, multi-billion dollar funding stream. The only feasible approach to managing such a huge initiative is through the creation of a Chesapeake Bay Financing Authority. We urge each of you to work with your Congressional delegation to authorize this Authority and with both state and federal lawmakers to provide funding to launch its efforts.

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For the past few years, LGAC has expressed its desire to see that funding is directed to a greater extent on implementation activities and to a lesser extent on studying the Bay's problems. We therefore applaud the Blue Ribbon Panel report which asserts that a new Financing Authority would be "*simple and flexible, allowing jurisdictions in the watershed to pursue a variety of concrete actions...*"

We recently toured a number of water quality and stream restoration projects in my hometown area of Lancaster County as part of our quarterly LGAC meeting, and I am amazed at how adept local partners can be in pooling resources to remediate degraded waterways, oftentimes spurring economic activity at the same time. We looked at projects that are literally reshaping stream channels so they can function properly for flood control and the filtering of pollutants. We looked at an alternative stormwater facility that is designed to filter runoff from an upstream agricultural landscape. We looked at a rehabilitated stream lined by a farm on one side and a township park on the other that is now a popular fishing spot thanks to the installation of rock structures, riparian plantings, and fencing. (This park is actually named the Warwick Township *Riparian Park*.)

All of these local projects happened because state, federal and local funds generated creative solutions that were designed and implemented by a local partnership of public agencies and private interests. The grants used for these projects were wise, long-term investments – for water quality, wildlife habitat, and the economy of the local area and that of the Chesapeake Bay. In more urban areas, we see the same energy directed at problems dealing with population growth and development.

Whether rural or urban, local governments are critical to the Bay restoration effort. The tributary strategies now under development will lay a great deal of responsibility on local governments to better manage sewage, stormwater, and forest and agricultural lands. Many of these management responsibilities are not supported by regulatory fees or tax dollars. Without seed money or implementation grant dollars, many great ideas and opportunities will flounder; business as usual will take place on our landscape and the Bay will not see improvement.

Should a Financing Authority be authorized, we ask that the Executive Council move quickly to create a task force charged with designing the structure of the Authority; furthermore, we ask that this task force consult with local governments about how to finance local projects. LGAC members have a wealth of experience in funding local initiatives and I urge the task force to tap this expertise at every opportunity.

One area that LGAC will be most interested in being engaged is in future investments in advanced nutrient reduction technology at wastewater treatment plants, which topped the Chesapeake Bay Commission's recent list of the six most cost-effective strategies for the Bay. Technology once considered cost-prohibitive for many communities is now an affordable option for larger treatment

plants. Even reductions to 8 or 5 mg/l of nitrogen at the smaller more challenging sites would reap significant nitrogen load reductions. The time has come to secure widespread adoption of these technologies by providing the finances necessary to get the job done as quickly as possible.

Regarding our third key message, it is time to fully recognize the role that agriculture plays in the Bay's recovery by inviting the US Agricultural Secretary to join the Executive Council. We believe this is warranted due to USDA programs that support agriculture in the Bay watershed. The needs of farmers in the Bay watershed differ greatly from the needs of farmers to our west and south. By having the Secretary of Agriculture engaged in policy discussions regarding these needs, Farm Bill programs can more fully support the goals of the 2000 Chesapeake Agreement and complement other land conservation programs.

Furthermore, the time has also come to invite the governors of New York, Delaware, and Virginia to join the Executive Council. In March 2003, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay completed an analysis of the participation of these headwater states in the Bay Program; it describes varying degrees of participation based on interviews with officials from signatory states and headwater states. If, in fact, a Chesapeake Bay Financing Authority succeeds in bringing new resources to the Bay watershed, an all-inclusive Executive Council should be considered.

Finally, members of LGAC express their frustration over continued delays to making appointments to the Local Government Advisory Committee. This committee is a voice for more than 1,600 local governments throughout the Bay watershed, yet current vacancies on the Committee diminish that voice. While we now have a full complement for Pennsylvania, we sorely need to restore our membership for Maryland (3 vacancies), Virginia (3 vacancies), and the District of Columbia (1 vacancy). LGAC meets four times a year and finds it difficult to function effectively with only partial representation from some of the jurisdictions. We respectfully request that these vacancies be filled immediately.

In closing, LGAC looks forward to playing an active role in the creation of a Chesapeake Bay Financing Authority. While much has been said about what needs to be done by 2010 and beyond, the Bay Program has been a tremendous catalyst for change in agricultural and urban restoration work. Let us learn from our past investments and move the Bay Program into an accelerated phase unmatched by any in history