



**2007 Report to the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council
December 5, 2007**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007 the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) has been active in advancing and promoting accelerated implementation of watershed restoration activities particularly in light of changing land use and development patterns throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. Since the last meeting of the Executive Council, about fourteen months ago, LGAC membership met in each jurisdiction represented on the committee, expanded its outreach to other advisory committees, state government, and engaged in straight forward discussion with grassroots watershed restoration organizations from across the region. The Local Government Advisory Committee traveled throughout the watershed, meeting in Leesburg, VA, Washington, DC, York, PA, Shepherdstown, WV and Annapolis MD.

By oath and function our members work close to the people and are accountable at the local level. Our job at home is to govern to the best of our collective ability. One of our duties as an advisory committee is to provide, on an annual basis, specific recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council. Unlike prior annual reports the 2007 Report contains only two focused recommendations: **1) Ways and means to enhance opportunities with bay partners that will strengthen local ownership, collaboration and action. 2) Realization and recognition that local governments and the citizens they represent have a crucial role in land use decisions that impact growth patterns throughout the watershed region.**

The Report's recommendations include an emphasis on the importance of local government in land use decisions; and, that collective informed actions of local governments are crucial to improving water quality throughout the region.

Base upon this work and collaborations with other advisory committees LGAC is pleased to offer the following Annual Report with specific recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay Program.

INTRODUCTION

To foster local ownership, collaboration and action by investing in capacity building on the local level LGAC suggests strengthening linkages to local elected and appointed officials in the following ways. However, with these recommendations, it is almost serendipitous that when such good things have been accomplished by the scientists in understanding the causes of impaired water quality and have recommended methods to mitigate that; at the same time several recent reports suggest that any progress made has been off-set by land use trends and associated development patterns.

The Honorable Secretary John Griffin, the Chairman of the Principal Staff Committee, with considered wisdom asked all three Advisory Committees to coordinate their advice and recommendations to the Executive Committee on “ *In order to more effectively manage the large scale Bay restoration activities, particularly, in the context of current land use and development patterns, how can the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners provide opportunities to strengthen local ownership, collaboration and action?* ” . In response to this

request, the leadership of the Advisory Committees convened to share thoughts, perspectives and develop a collaborated response.

The common theme that emerged was to foster local ownership, collaboration and action by investing in capacity building on the local level. In this context, capacity building means better positioning local governments and their constituencies to make well-informed decisions on land use that protects local water quality. As you know, it is those land use decisions that lessen out all the good done by cleaner sewer treatment and agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP). Local government can maintain the status quo or be major partners in augmenting the technical advances. However, it must be remembered that our public utilities and authorities, increasingly are expected to pay for the treatment plants upgrades, and since we personally face the rate-payers daily when grocery shopping, we need to remember that citizens will support decisions that protect the water quality of the stream in their backyard.

The evolving LGAC Local Action Plan (to engage a circuit rider) encompasses as well as reinforces the common theme formulated in the collaborative response. The plan focuses at the local level to bring knowledge and education (STAC), communication and awareness at the community level (CAC) and connection as well as accountability since (LGAC) comprised of elected officials serve at the pleasure of the electorate.

RECOMMENDATION #1:

To counteract these trends local elected and appointed officials must be engaged. It is widely recognized that local government has a direct involvement and responsibility for land use, storm water management, as well as other necessary infrastructure such as water and sewer.

However, based on human nature, some local governments must see an essential connection between broader Bay restoration and local decisions before they can attempt to strengthen collaboration and action. There is a unique opportunity and need for a jurisdictional-specific technical assistance shareholder and broker to reach out and help local government. This is particularly true for communities not currently seeking assistance with policies and programs that improve water quality.

This shareholder/broker or circuit rider can facilitate communication and information sharing among locally elected officials and provide a local forum for existing technical assistance (Federal, state and local nonprofit organizations) providers to present options available to local government. This approach will incorporate a follow up commitment whereby the broker/shareholder will be a mentor to ensure real local results.

This approach acknowledges that local governments, which are close to and generally very accessible to the public, feel direct pressure from the interests of the citizenry most directly and sometimes dramatically. If local interests are not mobilized, it can be difficult to garner public

support to change land use development practices that significantly and directly impact water quality.

Up, down and across the watershed there is a significant population variation in the communities under local government. There is also a diverse social and cultural mix in communities that comprise the region. Each locality has its own existing assets, resources and programs that address planning, water supply and waste water management, storm water management and stream restoration, plus a myriad of jurisdictional specific programs.

The reality is that fundamentally our well established system of government is three tiered. This form of rule has been in place for a long time and has changed slowly and only incrementally. Each leg of the stool provides support and functions in its own jurisdiction. Unlike the broad state and Federal laws, local governments have well defined statutory limits of authority and boundaries within which their authority applies.

At the grassroots level, big brother and bureaucratic behavior is not very effective. Similarly, local officials assimilate knowledge better from one another than from state or Federal bureaucracies. The Environmental Protection Agency should recognize local governments as partners and advocates with them in the protection of the environment. To that end, the agency and states should recognize the variety of environmental problems faced by communities and the need for diverse, multifaceted alternatives to meet local environmental needs.

The challenge to LGAC is to find what is effective in each state for involving local governments and to see what that common ingredient is to have a meaningful perspective on the state and federal level. This course can overcome the lack of connections among and between governments. The disconnect between state and local government can be very real sometimes.

Local government officials, both elected and appointed, are connected to their community. They live, work, shop, socialize and worship there. Remember: The principle function of local government is to reflect current community needs and expectations and to develop effective management strategies and processes to meet the needs of their residents, ratepayers and the many other people who use local government services and facilities.

RECOMMENDATION #2

It is well recognized the population of the Chesapeake Bay watershed is approaching 17 million people and will increase. We are all part of the Megalopolis – of the Mid Atlantic Region, where population growth is readily surpassed by land consumption. At a recent meeting of the Implementation Committee, the Chesapeake Bay Program staff reported the Watershed Population between 1950 and 2000 respectively changed from 8.1% to 15.7% and is projected to continue to grow each year between 1.1% and 1.8% through 2030. Staff also noted statistics about Population Growth and Development between 1990 and 2000 as follows: Population 8.2%; Land Conversion 25% and Impervious Surfaces 41%. It is this natural growth that has eroded some of the advances the bay partners strived hard to achieve. It is time, indeed, to accelerate implementation of land use practices that reduce or greatly lessen environmental impacts.

Since the last LGAC annual report was given to the Executive Council in September 2007, members have been grappling with the effort to reorganize the Chesapeake Bay Program structure. LGAC members have met with state agencies, other Advisory Committees, the Bay Implementation Committee and watershed organizations to better engage local government in accelerating implementation efforts in the greater bay watershed.

Frankly, this past year has been one of proposing internal change for the implementation of Bay Program strategies. This process was broad and involved considerable outreach and consultation. This for the most part it was an internal process to the Bay program partners and our partners respectfully recognized a significant and important role for local government.

From a local government perspective, we are not being involved enough. For example, it was suggested that localities could take the initiative to require tree/forest plans in their conservation plan, but we are unable to get legislative authorization from the state to do so, rendering any such requirement unauthorized and thus perhaps subject to legal challenges.

Local Government provides a varied range of functions and services which benefit all people living, working, doing business and visiting communities in the watershed region. Everyone benefits from effective and efficient local government operation locally to provide representation, improve quality of life of the citizens and make localities more attractive for people to enjoy.

2007 LGAC MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP

In 2007 the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) has been active in advancing and promoting accelerated implementation of watershed restoration activities particularly in the context of current land use development patterns throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. Since the last meeting of the Executive Council, about fourteen months ago, LGAC membership met in each jurisdiction represented on the committee, expanded its outreach to other advisory committees, state government, and engaged in straight forward discussion with grassroots watershed restoration organizations from across the region. Our members met quarterly in order to refine ways to accelerate implementation efforts and provide a local government perspective on policy development within the greater Chesapeake Bay region.

The Local Government Advisory Committee traveled throughout the watershed, meeting in Leesburg, VA, Washington, DC, York, PA, Shepherdstown, WV and Annapolis MD. In Virginia, the committee convened a facilitated workshop to develop ways to better engage local government. In Washington, the committee met jointly with the Citizens Advisory Committee to discuss growth and development issues and in Annapolis representatives of the committee presented to the Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee regarding outreach to local government. The LGAC work session in York, PA engaged elected officials, land conservancy representatives, the Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper and area newspaper editors in a discussion of how best to reach the public regarding environmental matters related to water quality.

In West Virginia LGAC members from each jurisdiction participated on a panel at the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum regarding local government's role in the implementing the Chesapeake Bay 2000 agreement.

By oath and function our members work close to the people and are accountable at the local level. Our job at home is to govern to the best of our collective ability. One of our duties as an advisory committee is to provide, on an annual basis, specific recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council

Virginia Members

The Honorable Penny Gross- LGAC Chair, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Kandy Hilliard- Stafford County
The Honorable Gerry Hyland- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Sally Thomas- LGAC VA Vice-Chair, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mr. William Whitley- Gloucester County Administrator

Washington, DC Members

Ms. Diane Davis- LGAC DC Vice-Chair, District Department of the Environment
Ms. Maureen McGowan- District Office of the City Administrator

Maryland Members

The Honorable Ellen Moyer- Mayor of Annapolis City
The Honorable Kelly Porter- Seat Pleasant City Council
The Honorable Marilyn Praisner – LGAC MD Vice-Chair, Montgomery County Council
The Honorable Robert C. Willey- Mayor of Easton
The Honorable Mark Guns – Cecil County Board of Commissioners

Pennsylvania Members

The Honorable Philip Briddell- LGAC PA Vice-Chair, York Township Commissioner
The Honorable A. Carville Foster- Springfield Township Supervisor
The Honorable Russell Pettyjohn- Mayor of Lititz Borough
The Honorable Ann Simonetti- President, Marysville Borough Council
Mr. James Wheeler- Director of Environmental Affairs, PA State Assn of Township Supervisors
The Honorable Kenneth J. Wingo, Jr. - Potter County Commissioner

CONCLUSION

The Local Government Advisory Committee members are committed to using their time and experience in local government affairs for the maximum benefit of the Chesapeake Bay restoration. Thank you for your consideration of this annual report.