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July 1, 2015

Governor Terry McAuliffe, Chair  
Chesapeake Executive Council  
Office of the Governor  
Richmond, VA

Re: LGAC 2015 Annual Report and Recommendations

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

On behalf of the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), I am pleased to present our 2015 Annual Report and Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council. Through this report we seek to not only raise issues we believe hinder local governments' ability to implement watershed protection and restoration efforts, but more importantly to offer suggestions for addressing these issues. The recommendations herein were carefully crafted with full consideration given to the resource limitations we all face.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and other members of the Executive Council who have demonstrated a commitment to "acknowledge, support and embrace local governments and other local entities in watershed restoration and protection activities" in accordance with the Principles of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Specifically, the members of LGAC want to acknowledge the following Chesapeake Bay Program partnership initiatives of the past year:

1. Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative

Riparian forest buffers have one of the highest efficiency rates for pollutant removal at one of the lowest costs. Maximizing implementation of this low-cost BMP will help us meet our shared goal of achieving the pollution limits established in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL.

2. \$5,000,000 in Federal Funding for Local Implementation

The federal funds which were made available for local implementation are desperately needed. Unfortunately, this level of funding represents but a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed to address the urban stormwater load alone. We ask for your continued support in seeking an increase in this vitally important source of federal funding.



3. Management Strategy Development

We are grateful to the vast number of people, staff and volunteer, who have been engaged in developing management strategies to achieve the Goals and Outcomes outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. We are particularly grateful for the effort that has gone into engaging local governments and identifying critical roles local governments must play in future initiatives.

States and localities face enormous challenges in achieving the water quality improvement goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program. We agree that protecting the health of our environment and our people, and providing for long-term economic prosperity throughout the watershed, is in all of our best interests. However, if we are to succeed, we all must become better advocates for clean water. We ask that you join us in seeking greater support for the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed from our Congressional Delegation. We need their voices, funding and votes to restore and protect this national treasure.

I look forward to discussing our report with you and the other members of the Executive Council.

Sincerely,



Janine Burns  
Supervisor, Mathews County

Attachment

LGAC Annual Report to the Chesapeake Executive Council

Cc: Nick DiPasquale, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program



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## Annual Report to the Chesapeake Executive Council July 2015

The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) frequently discusses ways in which federal, state and local partners can work more effectively to achieve our collective vision of a healthy and vibrant Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Our ability to realize this vision depends substantially upon how well local governments (a) understand what is required of them, (b) are equipped to improve water quality by doing such things as implementing effective stormwater management programs, upgrading wastewater treatment plants to minimize nutrient discharge, and (c) working with the agricultural community to minimize runoff from farming activities.

LGAC recommends the Executive Council take the following actions to address these issues and advance Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts.

### 1. Enhance Communication

In order to achieve our collective vision of a healthy and vibrant Chesapeake Bay Watershed, communication with local government must be enhanced. States must keep local governments informed of decisions, actions and challenges associated with their Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs). Regularized communications, perhaps written status reports issued on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, could include summaries of ongoing communications between the jurisdictions and the Environmental Protection Agency regarding WIP implementation; extent of progress made towards achieving two-year milestones; training opportunities; replicable local program models; applications of technical innovations; and other matters. The reports should be submitted to statewide county, municipal and other public member organizations which could serve as conduits for distributing the information to local officials.

### 2. Align Priorities Strategically

It is imperative that local, state, and federal priorities be better aligned if the 2017 and 2025 pollution reduction targets set forth in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL are to be achieved. Very little, if any, alignment of priorities with respect to the two-year milestones is evident. Hence, when targets are not met, the blame rests squarely on the shoulders of jurisdictions who developed the milestones while, in fact, jurisdictions often have limited control over implementation. Unfortunately, the consequences of missing targets will be felt most severely by local governments who ultimately bear the burden of implementation. LGAC suggests, at the minimum, that local governments be substantively engaged in the development of milestones in order to better align priorities and improve the likelihood of achieving reduction targets.

### 3. Convene a Watershed-wide Symposium on Financing.

LGAC recommends a watershed-wide symposium on financing be convened to identify steps necessary to accelerate the implementation of sustainable stormwater management financing. It will be important the symposium address financing options for both municipal systems and extensive ditch-based systems, ubiquitous in some rural areas.

#### 4. Provide Uninterrupted Long-term Funding

Strategies to improve water quality will require implementation over multiple decades with local governments in lead roles. To be successful, local governments will require robust and reliable financial assistance from state and federal sources.

LGAC specifically recommends:

- Dedicated funding in each jurisdiction's budget for Water Quality Improvement. Local governments need the financial assistance of their federal and state partners to meet the pollution reduction limits established in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL.
- Dedicated funding for capital improvements to stormwater systems. Whether it be urbanized local governments that are faced with centuries-old infrastructure in desperate need of repair and/or replacement, or rural governments grappling with the need to develop such infrastructure, additional funding is needed to help address these important environmental infrastructure requirements. In order to accommodate a growing population in a way that minimizes pollutant loads associated with growth, local governments need dedicated funding for infrastructure installation, including future upgrades, as well as supplemental funds for on-going costs associated with lifecycle repair and replacement.
- Robust funding for best management practices to reduce runoff from farming activities. Local governments fully support their agricultural producers and respect agriculture as a valued land use. As much as local governments are quickly realizing the importance of implementing low-cost agricultural BMPs, so too should the agricultural sector. Executive Council support for funding programs, including agricultural cost-share programs that help farmers implement BMPs, is essential so that all those who contribute to water pollution are also tasked with its improvement.
- Federal government engagement. To perform many of the functions necessary to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, LGAC believes it essential for the federal government to bear an equitable share of the financial burden. More than ten years ago, a Blue Ribbon Panel appointed by the Chesapeake Executive Council estimated an overall cost of just over \$27 billion associated with Chesapeake Bay Cleanup efforts. To-date, the lion-share of these costs are being incurred by local governments. To our knowledge, the recommendations of this Panel never received serious consideration nor has there been any attempt to update this estimate. As an initial action, LGAC recommends that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Transportation review local government funding programs to prioritize and/or streamline funding for projects that incorporate green infrastructure into capital improvements. We further encourage the Executive Council to reiterate the President's Executive Order compelling federal facilities to participate willingly in the payment of any stormwater fees associated with their stormwater contributions.

As your advisors on issues related to local government engagement, we stand ready to assist the Bay Program Partners in achieving our collective vision for a clean and healthy Chesapeake Bay Watershed.