

**Citizens Advisory Committee
Report to the Chesapeake
Executive Council
2001**



Chesapeake Bay Program

A Watershed Partnership

Citizens Advisory Committee To the Chesapeake Executive Council

2001 REPORT (Issued September 2001)

CHESAPEAKE 2000 AGREEMENT

In 2000, the CAC placed a priority on providing input into the new Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement that was signed by the state and federal partners in June 2000. CAC participated throughout the drafting process, focusing on the importance of addressing land conservation and land conversion in the Agreement. The priority which the CAC placed on the Agreement consumed much of its time and effort during that year. The CAC will place a similar priority on monitoring the progress towards achieving the goals of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement.

Since the signing of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement, CAC has become concerned with an apparent weakening by some signatories on implementation of the land preservation goal (20% of the Bay watershed). To that end, CAC communicated to the EC members its resolve that an additional one and one-half million acres within the watershed be permanently preserved. This is the baseline assessment represented to the public as the equivalent for the 20% figure. Clearly, the goals of restoring and protecting the Chesapeake cannot be achieved without immediately addressing the issues of land preservation, and the companion issue of land conservation.

CAC applauds the reaffirmation of the Bay Program partners commitment to the restoration efforts through the signing of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. While this Agreement and the preceding Agreements that it encompasses set an ambitious agenda, we believe that with focused commitment they can be achieved. Throughout the drafting of the Agreement, CAC advocated three priority areas: sound land use and preservation goals; continued emphasis on public engagement and support of the program; and a

recommitment to the focal point of the 1987 Agreement that the partners will achieve and maintain a 40% reduction in nitrogen and phosphorous. CAC members feel that these three areas should continue to be the priority areas of emphasis as we enter into the implementation phase of this Agreement.

CHESAPEAKE BAY TOXICS STRATEGY

It is with pride that we note the release of a Chesapeake Bay Toxics 2000 Strategy which will do much to achieve the goal of “zero release” of chemical contaminants from point and non-point sources into the Bay. The CAC played an essential role in the final language in the Strategy, with members’ participation in workshops through direct comments to the Implementation Committee providing the impetus for a stronger, more cohesive document. This Strategy was signed by the Executive Council on December 12, 2000

LIVING RESOURCES

The status of the living resources of the Chesapeake Bay is perhaps the most visible indicator of the health of the Bay to the public. It is a reflection of the success of all other components of the restoration effort. For these reasons, living resources continue to be a focus of our attention.

The CAC continues to be concerned over the near critical crisis of the blue crab population. To the public, the blue crab has become an icon for the health of the Bay.

We are pleased to see measures implemented to assure the long-term abundance of the blue crab in the Chesapeake and restoration of a sustainable fishery. We recognize that restrictive harvest controls are painful to those who harvest or eat crabs, but are hopeful that their sacrifices today will pay off with a healthier resource in the near future. CAC is also expressing similar concerns about the over harvesting which confronts the horseshoe crab population. We urge you to foster better strong management practices for these

living resources that ensure that these stocks are returned to sufficient levels that can support both the ecological and economic roles that this unique species plays in the Bay's ecosystem.

The status of another Bay signature species, the American oyster, continues to be troublesome. With population levels at less than 2% of their historic status, it is clear that our management focus must shift. CAC is optimistic that new approaches such as reconstructing oyster reefs that are protected from harvest hold promise for the future. We encourage the members of the EC to continue to support such efforts and maintain sanctuaries where oysters can grow and reproduce.

The CAC is very pleased with the commitment in Chesapeake 2000 to developing the means to manage living resources in a multi-species context. We strongly support the efforts of the Bay program partners in the recent year to address this very complex issue. It is evident that much must be done to achieve this commitment and we feel that it is imperative that the signatories to Chesapeake 2000 dedicate the fiscal resources and scientific expertise necessary to develop the information base to successfully implement multi-species management regimens. In the year since the signing of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement many other programs have been initiated to address the living resources commitments. Work is well underway on the Ballast Water policy to help prevent the unintentional introductions of exotic species as well as a number of other initiatives.

PROGRAM COMMITMENT AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

As the Executive Council's citizen advisors, we cannot stress strongly enough the need for continuity in the Chesapeake Bay Programs' ongoing partnership efforts to restore and protect the Bay. As the most successful estuary restoration program in the country, if not the world, it is imperative that funding levels and political commitment be maintained and increased, lest the fruit of so many years achievements be lost and the laudable goals we have set not be achieved. That commitment must begin with strong, active, and visionary leadership from the Executive Council.

While recent reductions in the Bay Programs budget may have forced a refocusing of funds on priority areas, further reductions could threaten to reduce the gains of the past decade. Earlier this year, CAC worked diligently with Bay program partners and Bay Congressional delegations to restore funding that had been omitted from the initial budget request to Congress. It is important to recognize that with the new Chesapeake Restoration Act that some of the previously “optional” programs such as the Small Watershed Grants initiative have now become codified as part of the Bay Program’s formal obligation. Appropriate base funding must be provided to carry out these additional responsibilities in an effective manner and we cannot continue to rely simply on ad-ons to appropriations. We have already seen reductions in several Bay Program areas, and we must be vigilant to prevent erosion in other areas. All federal agencies must continue contributing to the Bay restoration efforts and must be discouraged from making budget reductions in Bay-related monitoring and restoration programs. We are extremely pleased at the U.S. Park Service’s substantial investment in the Water Trails initiative to not only improve the accessibility the Bay’s waterways but to provide educational opportunities as part of this access. CAC supports an increase in the amount of the annual appropriation to meet the \$30 million authorized by Congress because the commitments which lie ahead are simply bigger than the current funding affords. This is a small step towards meeting the true annual costs of implementation.

CAC applauds the efforts of all the Bay Program since the signing of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement to conduct an introspective evaluation of the structure and function of the various components. In some cases, this has led to significant restructuring to meet the demands of the Agreement, but other program areas continue to struggle with adaptation. We are pleased and encouraged that the budget process has initiated efforts to streamline the process based on a priority set of parameters. However, we are disappointed at the pace at which this process has evolved. We strongly encourage the Bay Program leadership to place a high degree of priority on this in the future.

As representatives of a broad cross section of the Bay watershed citizens, we must again emphasize the importance of programs that engage the public in restoration efforts. These programs may be viewed as “feel good projects” by scientists and managers whose job is

to develop scientifically-based solutions to the Bay's problems. However, in the absence of the public *active and meaningful* support, funding and implementation will suffer substantially in the long run. Bay restoration will not be accomplished through government programs alone and indeed, some of the biggest gains may be made by governments acting as catalysts for programs to occur.

COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATION

We must also stress the importance of maintaining public confidence and support of the program. It is imperative that the Chesapeake Bay Program revitalize its efforts to engage the public in the restoration and strive to make advances in opening access to the Bay's resources to a broader diversity of the public. The signing of the Chesapeake 2000 was a shot in the arm for public awareness, but its recognition will be short lived if communication and education components of the Bay Program are not adequately supported. We must not lose sight of the fact that the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts were initiated by grassroot support for the program and that continued support from the public and the private sector will be necessary just to maintain what we have achieved. Public education, youth education, cooperative partnerships and other innovative means to accomplish this must be initiated and supported.

BAY PROGRAM BUDGET:

With the Chesapeake Bay Program budget scheduled for significant reductions in FY 2001, several CAC members took time to visit with their Congressional representatives and their aides to explain the progress being made in the Bay Program and the tasks which continue to lie ahead. Along with the efforts of other organizations and individuals, funding was restored to FY 2000 levels, to include moneys earmarked for Small Watershed Grants. CAC has taken a similar interest in the "Chesapeake Bay Watershed Nutrient Removal Assistance Act" which would provide up to \$660 Million in matching federal grants for wastewater treatment plant upgrades and the reauthorization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Chesapeake Bay Office. That bill would provide NOAA with additional resources – up from \$2.5 to \$8.5 million per year – to enhance current activities and carry out several new initiatives.

CAC YOUNG DELEGATES PROGRAM:

At the suggestion of CAC member Neil Wilkie and the cooperation of the Chesapeake Bay Program Budget Steering Committee, CAC added four young, non-voting, delegates in 2001. Each Bay jurisdiction selected one student to bring a new perspective to Bay issues to CAC's deliberations and to introduce the commitments of restoring and protecting the Chesapeake to a generation which will inherit the Bay. The program has been measurably successful with the young delegates actively interacting with CAC members and attending other Bay Program subcommittee meetings.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

At Our November 2001 meeting, the members of CAC began a facilitated strategic planning process to determine how best the Committee can be of assistance in helping the Bay Program achieve the Goals of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. This ongoing process will be carried forth by an ad hoc committee which will review the inputs from the November meeting and make recommendations for any possible changes to the CAC's bylaws. Clearly evident from the strategic planning sessions is CAC's desire to focus on what the members feel are the "Big Three" commitments from the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement:

- 40% nutrient Goal.
 - To reduce nutrient inputs to the Bay, to maintain the nutrient cap, and to delist the Bay and its tributaries from the impaired waters classification.
- Sound Land Use
 - To assure a Region-wide 30% reduction in harmful sprawl
 - To assure a Region-wide land preservation goal of 20%
- Community Engagement
 - To assure that the Bay Program increases efforts to disseminate information to the public and shareholder organizations and insure their inclusion in the decision making process.

CAC'S COMMITMENT

As in past years, individual CAC members were integrally involved in aspects of work of almost all of the Chesapeake Bay Program's numerous subcommittees. In 2000 and 2001, CAC members were instrumental in areas including Budget Steering, Nutrient Trading, Toxics, Communication and Education, Living Resources, small watersheds, general program implementation, and many others. It is difficult to quantify the contributions of the thousands of hours that these volunteer to invest in the Chesapeake Bay Program. Suffice to say, the unique independent perspective that CAC members bring to a process dominated by government agencies is invaluable to keeping the Bay Program on a course that is more reflective of the general public's will and desires.