



SPECIAL TRIBUTARY STRATEGY FOR FEDERAL LANDS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



I. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Chesapeake Bay Program's restoration efforts, Federal agencies formed a partnership with the District of Columbia (the District) government to create this *Special Tributary Strategy for Federal Lands in the District of Columbia*. The goal of the *Special Strategy* is to reduce the amount of nutrients, principally nitrogen and phosphorus, entering the tributaries of Chesapeake Bay. Chesapeake Bay Program signatory states are also developing tributary strategies to reduce the flow of nutrients to the Bay.

Nutrients and sediments entering Chesapeake Bay profoundly impact water quality, living resources, and recreational uses of Chesapeake Bay. Water clarity is reduced when excess nutrients cause algal blooms that block sunlight from reaching critical Bay grasses known as submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). As SAV declines, so does the food, shelter, and nursery grounds for many aquatic species including the blue crab, finfish, and waterfowl. Sediments from erosion also silt boating channels. Controlling stormwater runoff, a major source of nonpoint source pollution, and point source discharges of nutrients is critical to protecting and restoring Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Many Federal agencies work with the District government to manage environmental challenges in the District. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the District of Columbia are two of six signatories to the 1983 *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* that created the Chesapeake Bay Program. Other signatories are the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body. In the 1987 *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, Chesapeake Bay Program partners set a goal to reduce the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus entering the Bay by 40% by the year 2000. In the 1992 *Amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, partners agreed to maintain the 40% goal beyond the year 2000 and to control nutrients at their source—upstream in the tributaries.

This *Special Strategy* is the first comprehensive effort to address the activities on all the Federal lands in the District and their impacts on water quality and the Chesapeake Bay. It is a direct result of the *Agreement of Federal Agencies*

on *Ecosystem Management in the Chesapeake Bay*, signed by 29 Cabinet-level and senior Federal officials on July 14, 1994, under the auspices of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Federal Agencies Committee. In the 1994 *Agreement*, under the general category of Nutrient Reduction, these officials agreed to "commit to do our share to meet the goal to reduce by 40% the loading of nutrients to the Bay by 2000 through:

- ◆ supporting the goals and action items of the tributary strategies as they are affected by Federal lands and programs;
- ◆ developing by December 31, 1995, a Special Tributary Strategy for Federal lands in the District of Columbia, where the Federal Government is a major landholder;
- ◆ delivery of Federal assistance by integrated resources planning on a watershed basis to deal with nonpoint sources of pollution, consistent with the 1993 *Agreement* between the USDA and the Chesapeake Bay Program."

The Chesapeake Bay Program jurisdictions of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia are developing their own strategies to reduce nutrients in the tributaries, but the District needs this *Special Strategy* to complement its own. Federal agencies and other partners have worked to restore the Anacostia River and its watershed. The decades-long struggle to clean up the Potomac River is well documented. However, there is no comprehensive or uniform strategy to specifically address nutrient loadings from all Federal lands in the District.

This *Special Strategy* is adopted for the following reasons:

1. Federal lands account for approximately 40% of the total land area in the District.
2. Nearly all of the sensitive low-lying, riparian, or shoreline areas of the Potomac River, the Anacostia River, and Rock Creek in the District are Federally owned.

3. The District could not unilaterally address the complexities and challenges of pollution prevention and reduction on Federal lands. See the District of Columbia's *Tributary Nutrient Reduction Strategy for the Restoration of the Chesapeake Bay* (the District Strategy), November 1995, pages 2 and 24.
4. The Federal government believes it is important to adopt stricter standards for reducing loadings. These Federal agencies will focus on pollution prevention and abatement. All Federal agencies need to make the same commitments as the Chesapeake Bay Program signatory states and the District.

Therefore, this *Special Strategy* acknowledges and complements the 1983 and 1987 *Chesapeake Bay Agreements* and amendments, the District of Columbia's *Tributary Nutrient Reduction Strategy*, and the *Agreement of Federal Agencies on Ecosystem Management in the Chesapeake Bay*.

The policies voluntarily developed and accepted by the

Federal agencies in this *Special Strategy* present a consensus on uniform stormwater management. These policies are essential to reducing nutrients and toxics. This *Special Strategy* encourages comprehensive participation in stormwater pollution prevention planning and facilitates regulatory compliance. Apart from this *Special Strategy*, the EPA issues several stormwater permits to the District to cover stormwater discharges. Facilities must file a notice to be covered by one of these permits. Some, but not many, Federal facilities will need to file notices and develop subsequent stormwater pollution prevention plans. Additional information on stormwater permits is contained in Appendix B.

This *Special Strategy* is a voluntary agreement. It does not relieve Federal facilities from any legal permitting requirements. However, implementation of this *Special Strategy* will provide Federal facilities with the plans necessary to comply with most anticipated permit requirements.

II. AGREEMENT COMMITMENTS

In 1993, the District of Columbia embarked upon a Tributary Strategy in accordance with the 40% nutrient reduction goal agreed upon by the Chesapeake Executive Council of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). The District issued its *Tributary Nutrient Reduction Strategy* in November 1995. The July 14, 1994, *Agreement of Federal Agencies on Ecosystem Management in the Chesapeake Bay* specifically commits Federal agencies to create this *Special Tributary Strategy for Federal Lands in the District of Columbia*.

The Federal government owns approximately 40% of the land in the District. The Federal agencies that own, oversee, or assist with the management of lands, facilities, and natural resources in the District will assist the District government and the CBP in reducing the flow of nutrients to the surface waters of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

We, the undersigned representatives of the Federal agencies, resolve to: exercise stewardship to protect the environment; assist the government and the residents of the District of Columbia; and carry out the following part of this *Special Tributary Strategy for Federal Lands in the District of Columbia*:

1. STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION PLANS AND MANAGEMENT

We will perform a complete review of stormwater pollution prevention plans for the lands and facilities that we own or manage. If such plans are not already in place, we agree to write complete and detailed plans and to submit them to the District Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) for review. The plans shall address storage capacity for the initial one-half inch of rainfall for total impervious surface area. Best Management Practice (BMP) retrofits and implementation feasibility assessments shall be a part of such plans. BMPs should emphasize, to the extent possible, natural features. We also agree to comply with applicable District and EPA stormwater permits. (Completion by December 31, 1997, respectful of any permit requirements. DCRA as lead.)

2. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

We will perform a complete review of nutrient management plans for the lands and facilities that we own or manage. If such plans are not already in place, we agree to write and implement complete and specific plans in accordance with Chesapeake Bay Program principles of nutrient management. Plans will be reviewed by the Chesapeake Bay Program's Nutrient Subcommittee. *(Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] to issue guidance recommendations by July 31, 1996. Implementation of plans by July 31, 1997. NRCS as lead.)*

3. LANDSCAPING

We will encourage the development and implementation of landscaping practices and designs that are both economically and environmentally beneficial, in accordance with the Presidential Memorandum on Environmentally and Economically Beneficial Practices on Federal Landscaped Grounds issued on April 26, 1994. Reducing the use of nutrients and pesticides and improving habitat and wildlife opportunities are the principal goals. *(Currently ongoing. National Arboretum, ARS, and the District Cooperative Extension Service as co-leads.)*

4. FEDERAL FUNDING

We will participate fully in convening and attending an annual workshop focusing on Federal financial assistance vehicles such as grants, loans, in-kind services and related interagency agreements available to the District of Columbia and to Federal agencies that further the goals of this Special Strategy. We will pursue Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) abatement, upgrades to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant, construction of BMP Retrofits, and similar projects. We will work to assure compliance with Federal stormwater permitting requirements. *(First meeting to be held by December 31, 1996. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA as co-leads.)*

5. FEDERAL FACILITY SITE ASSESSMENTS

We will conduct and participate in at least one Federal facility site assessment per year through the year 2000 on Federal properties in the District of Columbia. Issues such as nutrient management, turf management, nonpoint source pollution control and landscaping will be stressed in these site assessments. The site assessments will follow the format of the Federal Facility Site Assessment Protocol developed by the Federal Agencies Committee (FAC) of the Chesapeake Bay Program. *(Ongoing. National Park Service and Chesapeake Bay Program's FAC as co-leads.)*

6. EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We will fully participate in convening and attending an annual technology transfer workshop designed to assist Federal agencies with improving urban nutrient management and stormwater controls. *(First workshop to be held by December 31, 1996. DCRA as lead.)*

7. COORDINATION, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

We will fully participate in a coordination and communication group of Federal and District of Columbia agencies. The group will share information, provide assistance, and improve interagency coordination regarding the environmental and natural resources management of Federal lands in the District of Columbia. The group will ensure that the commitments of this Special Strategy are being met. The group shall meet at least semiannually and be responsible for providing an annual progress report to the signatories of this document. *(Initial report to coincide with the 1997 Biennial Progress Report of the Federal Agencies Ecosystem Agreement. Chesapeake Bay Program's FAC as lead.)*

DATE March 25, 1996

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