



## CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

### *DIRECTIVE NO. 03-01*

# EXPANDED RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER GOALS

*W*e, the members of the Chesapeake Executive Council, hereby reaffirm our commitment to restoring the Chesapeake Bay, in part, by protecting and restoring riparian lands along the watershed's thousands of miles of stream and shoreline. Scientific evidence indicates that riparian forest buffers offer the greatest range of benefits of any riparian land use. Such benefits include improved downstream and instream habitats, reduced nutrient and suspended sediment levels and moderated water temperatures, and improved value such as foraging, migration, spawning, nursery and nesting habitat for a variety of wildlife. Based on this evidence, we support increased efforts in the conservation, restoration, and maintenance of forested riparian buffers.

WE ARE PROUD of the progress that each of our jurisdictions has made in achieving the goal set in 1996 fully eight years ahead of the 2010 schedule. To capitalize on the momentum we have created, we commit to the following:

- ❖ WE REAFFIRM OUR BELIEF that riparian forested buffers are critical to protecting the streams of the Chesapeake watershed, and as agreed to in the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement, we commit to a continued effort to maximize the miles of streambank and shoreline that are protected by any form of vegetated buffer, especially trees.
- ❖ WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY to further improve water quality and living resource habitat by continuing to establish forest buffers on the many miles of streams yet to be restored. Our long term restoration goal is beyond our current capacity, so we must seek new public-private partnerships, and encourage the participation of our headwater state partners. We appreciate that our ultimate goal must be to enhance streams and their riparian forests in the years beyond 2010, preserving these buffers over the long-term once they are established.
- ❖ WE FURTHER RECOGNIZE THAT URBAN TREE CANOPY COVER offers stormwater control and water quality benefits for municipalities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and can extend many riparian forest buffer functions to urban settings.
- ❖ WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM is uniquely positioned, as the premier watershed restoration program, to set ambitious goals and to marshal the resources necessary to achieve those goals, and we intend to continue to provide the leadership necessary to assure success.
- ❖ Building on our past commitments, WE COMMIT TO THE ADOPTION OF AN EXPANDED SET OF GOALS:
  - Enhance and sustain the integrity of aquatic ecosystems over the long term through conservation and restoration of forests along at least 70% of all streams and shorelines, which translates to about 26,000 miles of additional buffers in our jurisdictions with the near term goal of achieving at least 10,000 miles of riparian forest buffers by 2010. We expect that additional miles will be added to our near term goal based on the tributary strategies to achieve the nutrient and sediment allocations, due to be completed by April, 2004.
  - By 2010, work with at least 5 local jurisdictions and communities in each state to complete an assessment of urban forests, adopt a local goal to increase urban tree canopy cover and encourage measures to attain the established goals in order to enhance and extend forest buffer functions in urban areas.
  - Encourage increases in the amount of tree canopy in all urban and suburban areas by promoting the adoption of tree canopy goals as a tool for communities in watershed planning.

- ❖ WE THEREFORE DIRECT our agencies and we encourage our partners to begin immediately to accomplish the following:
  - Ensure, through monitoring and maintenance, that newly established forested buffers have a well-stocked stand of trees after 5 years.
  - Enhance and strengthen the restoration and conservation of riparian forest buffers, wherever possible, on public lands; and, in programs that protect private lands from development.
  - Advance our efforts to conserve existing riparian forests along all streambanks and shorelines in order to minimize loss.
  - Revise each Bay signatory's Riparian Buffer Implementation Plan with a focus toward the permanent protection of buffers and other program and policy opportunities for an enhanced buffer conservation and restoration program.
- ❖ WE FURTHER DIRECT our agencies and the Chesapeake Bay Program to seek ways to accomplish the following actions, which we believe will fundamentally enhance the ability to accomplish the goals stated above:
  - Ensure that an adequate level of technical service from state and federal agencies is available to landowners and communities for buffer restoration and conservation.
  - Provide for the continued use of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program as a critical component of riparian forest buffer restoration.

- Utilize existing federal and state incentive programs and develop new programs and partnerships to reach our riparian forest buffer restoration mileage goal and expand buffer widths beyond minimum requirements, promote the use of longer term contracts, encourage the planting of trees on a range of land uses, and emphasize maintenance of buffer vegetation and function.
- Use easements, tax policies, incentives, and other fiscal tools, to strengthen riparian forest conservation commitments.
- Target riparian forest buffer restoration for maximum water quality and wildlife habitat benefit, to the extent feasible, by seeking to increase contiguously forested stream corridors, protect headwater streams, target high nitrogen source areas, and integrate forest buffer restoration with fish passage, stream restoration, and living resource objectives.
- Promote the use of innovative restoration techniques, such as successional plantings, that increase wildlife habitat value and diversity.
- Expand the state of our knowledge about the role of urban tree canopy in supporting riparian buffer functions in cities and urbanizing communities. Develop science-based tools to quantify the benefits of an urban canopy for communities in the Bay watershed and research methods for crediting narrower buffers in urban areas.

December 9, 2003

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



\_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND



\_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



\_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



\_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



\_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION



\_\_\_\_\_