

Dear Friends,

One of the biggest environmental challenges confronting this and future generations is restoring our most treasured asset: the Chesapeake Bay. Here in Maryland, we are leading the way in improving the health of the bay, but there is still work to be done. Critical to our success will be continued collaboration and innovation.

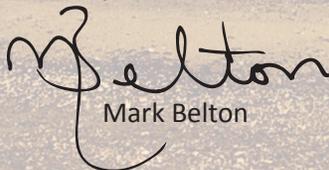
Recognizing this, bay states came together last month for the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council meeting. Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford attended the meeting, representing Governor Larry Hogan who was undergoing cancer treatments at the time. I was fortunate enough to attend the meeting, along with my colleague, Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles.

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe hosted the meeting with Washington D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission L. Scott Lingamfelter, and representatives from Delaware and Pennsylvania in attendance, demonstrating our renewed cross-watershed partnership. Members reviewed **BAY PROGRESS** and finalized **29 STRATEGIES** that will guide partner actions over the next decade to ensure we meet our established goals by 2025.

As we work to continuously enhance the process, Lt. Governor Rutherford led a discussion on innovative financing methods for bay restoration. Following the discussion, members of the Executive Council agreed to convene a summit next year on alternative ways to pay for the multibillion-dollar clean-up effort, including interstate trading and other public-private partnerships in order to accelerate restoration in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

The meeting was just one step forward in the journey we have ahead of us to improve the health of the bay, but it was a step in the right direction. Reinvigorating partnerships across the watershed, implementing measurable strategies based on science that hold partners accountable, engaging citizens and collaborating with stakeholders, and keeping innovation top of mind are the keys to restoring the bay. Our commitment to the bay is unwavering and unmatched and we will continue to lead these efforts.

Sincerely,



Mark Belton