The Bay Blueprint

Accountable Restoration

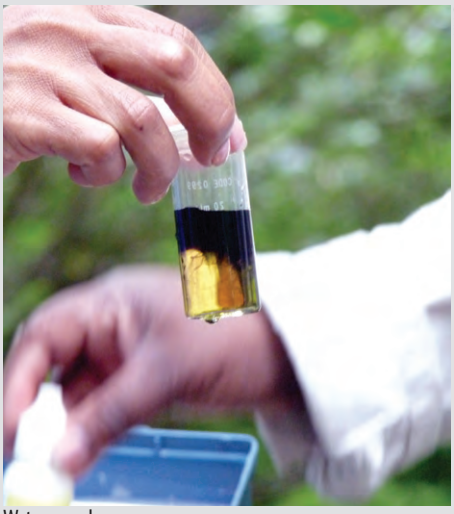
By Kristen Fleming

DNR

The Chesapeake Bay from Sandy Point State Park

For more than 30 years, elected officials, organizations and concerned citizens from across the Bay Watershed have worked to restore the Chesapeake. In the past, these clean-up efforts have been voluntary, and have made progress. Nevertheless, there is still important work to be done fully restore the Bay.

In 2010, when it was clear that Bay restoration progress continued to lag, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set limits to reduce three major pollutants from entering the water: nitrogen, phosphorus (nutrients) and sediment (soil). These pollutants come from all areas of the landscape including farms, cities, forests and lawns. Actions carried out on land to reduce these pollutants help prevent them from reaching rivers and streams and, ultimately, the Bay.



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Water sample

A New Model

In order to meet these new pollution limits called Total Maximum Daily Loads, (TMDL) each state in the Bay Watershed created a plan detailing the exact actions to be taken to limit pollution from entering our tributaries. This plan and all of its actions must be in place by 2025.

To ensure that Maryland is on course with its pollution reduction plan, the State and relevant agencies adopted two-year milestones. These targets, developed by the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, the Environment and Planning track progress toward the 2025 goal, allowing leadership to adjust actions if needed today…instead of a decade from now.

"By setting goals to be met way off into the future — when someone else would be in the leadership position and would need to deal with the implications of another failed goal — we were not doing what was best for the Bay," says Joe Gill, Secretary of DNR and Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program Principal Staff Committee. "Our milestones keep today's leadership accountable."

Turning the Tide... Today

The good news: we are at the defining moment of success, the critical point in time where the tide of restoration will finally turn. Maryland is leading the states in cleaning up the Chesapeake — consistently meeting our two-year milestones. The Chesapeake Bay Program announced this summer that we achieved our State's 2012-2013 pollution reduction goals, in large part due to cross-agency efforts such as planting cover crops and forest buffers along streams as well as upgrading wastewater treatment plants and septic systems.

Next up, the 2014-2015 milestones, which include 46 specific, measurable actions and associated goals for reducing pollution, restoring habitats, and fostering smarter, greener growth and living. In addition to State and local efforts, there are also actions that every citizen can take to improve water quality and protect aquatic life.

"All Marylanders are part of the problem, and all Marylanders must be part of the solution," says Donald Boesch, President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. "We must all play a role in implementing these actions and work together if we are to be successful." ■

dnr.maryland.gov/ccs

Kristen Fleming is the Division Director of Chesapeake, Coastal & Climate Policy.

Follow the causes, solutions and progress of these efforts online at *baystat.maryland.gov*

This website was designed to inform and engage citizens in restoring our State's most precious natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay.