

# **Chesapeake Bay Program: Reflections and Directions**

## **A Conversation with the Federal Water Quality Association**

Jeff Lape, Director  
Chesapeake Bay Program  
February 24, 2010

### **Context and Background**

The Chesapeake Bay Program has been a hallmark of watershed efforts for the better part of thirty years. Sanctioned through Section 117 of the Clean Water Act, Federal and State partners have been working to restore and protect the living resources, habitats and water quality of the Chesapeake Watershed and Bay.

Annually, the Bay Program issues the *Bay Barometer*, a comprehensive assessment of Bay Health and the restoration progress of the Partnership. While there are examples of individual success stories, the sobering data shows that the overall health of the Bay did not improve in 2008. The Bay continues to have poor water quality, degraded habitats and low populations of many species of fish and shellfish.

A primary cause of the unhealthy Bay and tributaries is because of pollution from excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and sediments. The main sources are agriculture, stormwater, wastewater, and air deposition. The *Bay Barometer* report affirms the need to take bolder actions, develop new tools and involve a wider network of partners to achieve improvements.

The President's Executive Order (May 12, 2009), EPA's chairing of the Executive Council, and the upcoming Chesapeake Bay TMDL all bring greater attention to and Federal leadership to the Chesapeake Bay.

In January 2010, Administrator Lisa Jackson took over the helm of the Chesapeake Executive Council from Governor Tim Kaine and announced that EPA will initiate new federal rulemakings to help control polluted runoff from cities, suburbs and farmland to the Chesapeake Bay and its network of streams and rivers. On May 12, 2010, the Federal Leadership Committee will issue a comprehensive implementation strategy that will demonstrate greater Federal leadership and action. And, in December 2010, EPA will issue a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Nitrogen, Phosphorus and sediments that will establish target allocations for the entire 64,000 square mile watershed. Based on existing draft target loads, the six States and the District have begun to develop "watershed implementation plans" (WIPs) that will ultimately demonstrate how the States will achieve the TMDL. EPA has described the "expectations" for these WIPs as well as potential "consequences" if the States' WIPs do not achieve the expected reductions by 2025. It is our objective that these ongoing efforts and new initiatives will help protect and restore this national treasure for our benefit and the benefit of future generations.

### **Discussion Questions**

Watershed programs like the Chesapeake Bay and Lake Champlain have been at this for the better part of thirty years. What have we learned? What are the successes that need to be replicated? What has not worked?

Given the important and different roles of and responsibilities of the Federal, State and local partners, what is the ideal role for Federal leadership? What are the kinds of explicit actions should the Federal government take to foster greater progress?

Is the Bay Program setting an unreasonable expectation that Bay health will change on a year to year basis? Are there some other intermediate measures of environmental progress that can be used to demonstrate progress?

Broadly speaking, the TMDL anticipates a needed reduction of Nitrogen and Phosphorus loads of 30% and 10% respectively from the current (2008) loads. As difficult as these reductions will be, how do we achieve and maintain these reductions in the face of continued growth?

Advances in technology hold promise for continued reductions in nutrients and sediments in the Chesapeake Watershed and Bay. What does the future hold for key sectors?

- publicly owned treatment works
- onsite sewage disposal systems (e.g. septics)
- storm water resource management
- home-based activities
- air deposition

How do we factor climate change into our near and long term plan for watershed and bay restoration?

What does the future hold for watershed management in the U.S.?

What roles will the Water Environment Federation and member associations play?

### **For more Information**

Jeffrey Lape

Director, Chesapeake Bay Program

410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109

Annapolis, Maryland 21403

phone: (410) 267-5709

[www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net)



### **Want Clean Water?**

(Six things everyone can do around the home)

- Don't fertilize your lawn
- Keep all runoff on your property
- Volunteer for a watershed group
- Use phosphorus-free dish detergent
- Drive your car less
- Pick up after your pet