

## **Chesapeake Bay Program: Keystone Commitments to Restore the Bay**

In June 2000, the Chesapeake Bay Program partners adopted the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement, serving as both a strategic plan and a forward looking vision of the future of the Chesapeake Bay - a vision that includes abundant, diverse populations of living resources, fed by healthy streams and rivers, sustaining strong local and regional economies, and our unique quality of life.

To fulfill this vision, *Chesapeake 2000* aims to improve water quality, restore vital habitats such as marshes, forests and underwater grasses, and implement sensible harvest levels aimed to keep the Bay's intricate ecosystem balanced. Likewise, *Chesapeake 2000* recognizes that conditions in the water are inextricably linked to conditions on the land. A broad public stewardship must encompass sound land use practices to protect the health of local waterways and the Bay. Without improvements in each of these areas, the Chesapeake Bay estuary will continue to function well below its potential.

The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement, which details nearly 100 commitments, is one of the most aggressive and comprehensive watershed restoration plans ever developed. The Chesapeake Bay Program partners are committed to achieving these important commitments, and to pursuing all possible sources of supportive funding.

Several broad—or keystone—commitments are critical to leaving a healthy, sustainable Bay to future generations. keystones are commitments that if accomplished will provide the greatest collateral benefit supporting the accomplishment of many associated commitments. They reveal some of the critical links and interrelationships among our elements of work.

Identifying keystones enables the Bay Program partners to focus their efforts on critical and imminent needs, and to make the best use of our management and assessment capabilities. Annually evaluated by the Bay Program's Implementation Committee, these keystones may change as goals are met and new opportunities for progress present themselves.

To accomplish such a comprehensive restoration plan for an ecosystem as complex as the Chesapeake Bay requires the full engagement of restoration leaders, citizens and all stakeholder groups throughout the watershed. Effective communication is paramount. Overarching, pervasive and essential to all our efforts is the commitment to “make education and outreach a priority in order to achieve public awareness and personal involvement on behalf of the Bay and local watersheds.” Without this, our goals cannot be met.

And the partnership must be broadened. To achieve the nutrient and sediment reductions so necessary for restoring the Bay's water quality and living resources, the Chesapeake Executive Council has signed a water quality memorandum of understanding with the Governors of New York, Delaware and West Virginia to work in concert. Efforts to improve water quality must come from every part of the 64,000 square mile watershed.

Bay Program managers are challenged to pursue work on many restoration fronts with an eye to how that work supports or is supported by the keystones. Reflecting our current strategic focus areas, the keystone commitments are...

## *-Keystone Commitments-*

### **LIVING RESOURCE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

#### **Oysters**

- By 2010, achieve, at a minimum, a tenfold increase in native oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, based upon a 1994 baseline. By 2002, develop and implement a strategy to achieve this increase by using sanctuaries sufficient in size and distribution, aquaculture, continued disease research and disease-resistant management strategies, and other management approaches.

#### **Multi-species Management**

- By 2007, revise and implement existing fisheries management plans to incorporate ecological, social and economic considerations, multi-species fisheries management and ecosystem approaches.

### **VITAL HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

#### **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation**

- By 2002, implement a strategy to accelerate protection and restoration of SAV beds in areas of critical importance to the Bay's living resources.

#### **Watersheds**

- By 2010, work with local governments, community groups and watershed organizations to develop and implement locally supported watershed management plans in two-thirds of the Bay watershed covered by this Agreement. These plans would address the protection, conservation and restoration of stream corridors, riparian forest buffers and wetlands for the purposes of improving habitat and water quality, with collateral benefits for optimizing stream flow and water supply.

#### **Wetlands**

- By 2010, achieve a net resource gain by restoring 25,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands. To do this, we commit to achieve and maintain an average restoration rate of 2,500 acres per year basin wide by 2005 and beyond. We will evaluate our success in 2005.

#### **Forests**

- Conserve existing forests along all streams and shorelines.

### **WATER QUALITY PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

#### **Nutrients and Sediments**

- By 2010, correct the nutrient- and sediment-related problems in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries sufficiently to remove the Bay and the tidal portions of its tributaries from the list of impaired waters under the Clean Water Act.

### **SOUND LAND USE**

#### **Land Conservation**

- Strengthen programs for land acquisition and preservation within each state that are supported by funding and target the most valued lands for protection. Permanently preserve from development 20 percent of the land area in the watershed by 2010.

#### **Development, Redevelopment and Revitalization**

- By 2012, reduce the rate of harmful sprawl development of forest and agricultural land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed by 30 percent measured as an average over five years from the baseline of 1992-1997, with measures and progress reported regularly to the Chesapeake Executive Council.

### **STEWARDSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### **Education and Outreach**

- Beginning with the class of 2005, provide a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience for every school student in the watershed before graduation from high school.

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