

NEWS RELEASE

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Federal agencies release draft reports required by Chesapeake Bay Executive Order

FOCUS IS ON INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

Washington, D.C. – Federal agencies today released the seven draft reports required by President Obama's Executive Order on the Chesapeake Bay, which contain a range of proposed strategies for accelerating cleanup of the nation's largest estuary and its vast watershed.

The draft reports collectively call for increased accountability and performance from pollution control, habitat protection and land conservation programs at all levels of government, including an expanded use of regulatory authorities to address pollution control and additional voluntary and market-based solutions – particularly when it comes to habitat protection and land conservation programs. Federal agencies are also proposing new ways to harness the latest innovations in science and technology. The proposed actions are in response to overwhelming scientific evidence that the health of the Chesapeake remains exceptionally poor, despite the concerted restoration efforts of the past 25 years.

“Communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed expect and deserve rivers and streams that are healthy and thriving,” said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, chairperson of the Federal Leadership Committee and the federal representative to the Chesapeake Executive Council. “We need bold new leadership, collective accountability by all contributors to the Bay's problems, and dramatic changes in policies using all the tools at hand if we are to fulfill President Obama's goal for clean water throughout the region. These reports bring us a step closer to achieving the vision we all share for the future of the Chesapeake Bay.”

The draft reports are the first step in the creation of a new strategy for restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay and waterways in the region, as defined by the Executive Order. The reports include a variety of strategies and options for addressing issues such as water quality, public access, landscape conservation, climate change, scientific monitoring and the protection of living resources. Along with today's public release, the draft reports were also submitted to the Federal Leadership Committee that is coordinating work on the Executive Order. The draft reports are available at <http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net>

On May 12, President Obama issued Executive Order 13508 on Chesapeake Bay Restoration and Protection, the first-ever presidential directive on the Bay and the first environmental Executive Order by President

Obama. The order established a Federal Leadership Committee, chaired by EPA, and with senior representatives from the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Interior and Transportation.

During the past 120 days, 10 federal agencies collaborated to develop the draft reports. The recommendations in the reports were shaped by consultations with the six states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the District of Columbia, as well as suggestions from stakeholders and the public. Successful restoration of the Chesapeake Bay depends on the involvement of federal, state and local governments; the private sector; nonprofit organizations; and the watershed's 17 million residents. The draft reports were released to engage the public in the process outlined in the Executive Order.

The draft report on water quality includes some of the more significant potential changes to existing programs. In this report, EPA proposes to develop new regulations for the Chesapeake Bay to significantly reduce runoff pollution from urban, suburban and agricultural sources. The report also relays EPA's intention to hold the states in the watershed more accountable for controlling pollution, through increased oversight, enforcement activities and new policies. Urban and suburban runoff pollution is the fastest growing source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay, while agricultural runoff is the largest.

During the next 60 days, the Federal Leadership Committee will evaluate the proposals in the draft reports and consult with Bay jurisdictions to refine the recommendations for meeting key challenges to the Chesapeake Bay's health. On November 9, the Federal Leadership Committee will release a draft strategy that integrates the seven reports. Release of a draft strategy and revised reports will initiate a 60-day public comment period that concludes in early 2010. A final strategy will be completed by May 12, 2010. However, the agencies will be moving forward in a number of areas before the strategy becomes final.

"We have an urgent obligation to citizens of today and generations of tomorrow to restore the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, and this Executive Order puts new weight behind our work," Jackson said. "We're moving quickly and transparently on a comprehensive strategy that will get real results for the Bay."

For more information on the Executive Order, visit <http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net>

The federal departments and agencies working on the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Defense, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey.

The Chesapeake Bay is one of the most extraordinary places in America. The unique estuary is the largest in the nation and third largest in the world. Its 64,000-square-mile watershed spans parts of six states – Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia – and the entire District of Columbia. The Bay and its watershed have remarkable ecological, economic, recreational, historic and cultural value to the region. Economists have estimated the Bay's value at more than \$1 trillion, and its bounty includes over 500 million pounds of seafood per year. Supporting more than 3,600 species of plants, fish and other animals, the Chesapeake is home to 29 species of waterfowl and is a major resting ground along the Atlantic Flyway. The most recent scientific analysis of water quality concluded that the Chesapeake Bay is only attaining 21 percent of its goals.

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