



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

Comments of Matthew J. Ehrhart, Pennsylvania Executive Director
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
09 April 2008

Opening Remarks

Ladies & Gentlemen, I welcome you here today for the announcement of the Pennsylvania Fair Share for Clean Water Funding Plan. I'm Matt Ehrhart, PA Executive Director for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I am joined here by my friends and colleagues from the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, The Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association, the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, and the Pennsylvania Builders Association for this important announcement.

Over the past year and a half there have been a lot of meetings and discussion about how to address the water quality improvement mandates for the Chesapeake Bay, in particular, and Pennsylvania streams generally. We have come to the point in time where we can no longer talk about solutions. We must make solutions happen. The wastewater treatment facilities have and are receiving new permits with stringent, water quality driven limits. Agriculture is being asked to make dramatic changes to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement signed by Pennsylvania. PA's building and development community faces uncertainty about how meet the requirements of capped nutrient loads while meeting the Commonwealth's need for economic growth.

We stand before you today, united by the need to act NOW. Pennsylvania must provide equitable assistance to these sectors as they shoulder the burden of restoring and maintaining water quality. The funding needs to start flowing in the next fiscal year. Instead of increasing funding over the past years to position these sectors to meet the forthcoming mandates, wastewater treatment upgrade funding and agricultural funding has been cut. The introduction of the REAP tax credit last year was a single, significant step in the right direction – but it is not enough. Our nutrient trading program is not the functional, robust trading system it must be. This is critical to provide options for wastewater treatment facilities and essential to addressing future economic growth and development.

We are calling on the Rendell Administration and the Pennsylvania General Assembly to prioritize \$170 Million in the upcoming budget year to address the problems now: \$100 M in matching funds for wastewater treatment plant upgrades, \$35 M in the REAP program, \$15 M in matching grants for agricultural improvements, \$10 Million to restore fundamental cuts in critical state agricultural budgets, and \$10 Million to County Conservation Districts to provide the necessary

technical support to implement agricultural solutions. Similar funding levels for the next seven years, as outlined in the fact sheet, are necessary. These stakeholders need to plan and build now, we can no longer delay action if we are to meet the mandates before us.

I'd like to introduce Joel Rotz, State Governmental Relations Director for the PA Farm Bureau.
Robert J. Fisher, Pennsylvania Builders Association.
Susan Fox Marquart, Executive Director for PACD
John Brosious is Deputy Director for the PA Municipal Authorities Association.

Acknowledge PA Association of Realtors.

Conclusion

As you've heard from my colleagues, we must act now. These mandates are facing the communities, farmers, and future homeowners and businesses of Pennsylvania right now.

These improvements will occur first and foremost in Pennsylvania streams and waters – to the benefit of Pennsylvania citizens, before they meet the needs and mandates of the Chesapeake. Cleaner streams yield cleaner, cheaper drinking water, improved recreation opportunities, improved agricultural operation, improved tourism opportunities, and a legacy of clean water for our children.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of numerous stakeholders in these discussions, who have all helped bring us to this point. I also want to thank the administration and the numerous legislators whose interest and concern for this issue have initiated discussions and proposals on this critical topic.

Today we call on our elected officials to make these funding and policy changes a reality. We must act now to provide equitable assistance to Pennsylvania's citizens, as they strive to meet these mandates.

Thank You.