CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Virginia Milestones

2012-13 INTERIM PROGRESS

Choose Clean Water COALITION

AT A GLANCE

Agriculture

- Conservation Tillage with Continuous No Till
- Forest Buffers
- Grass Buffers
- Stream Access Control with Fencing

Urban/Suburban

- Traditional Stormwater Ponds
- Modern Stormwater Infiltration Practices
- Urban Stream Restoration

Wastewater/Septic

- Wastewater Treatment Plants

See the chart on the back of this sheet for more information. For more detailed information on all of Virginia's milestone goals, go to: www.epa.gov/reg3wapd/tmdl/ChesapeakeBay/EnsuringResults.html.

Virginia's Plan for Clean Water: Are They Making Progress?

There are signs that the Chesapeake Bay and our local rivers and streams are starting to recover. Underwater grasses and oysters have expanded in some areas, and the 2012 oxygen-deprived deadzone was the smallest in decades—due, in part, to pollution-reduction efforts. But, the system is still dangerously out of balance. We must continue our efforts to address the causes: nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution from a variety of sources including animal waste and fertilizer, runoff from urban and suburban development, wastewater treatment plants, and septic systems. In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Bay jurisdictions established science-based limits for these pollutants and state-specific plans to achieve them, together known as the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint. EPA and the states also committed to implement actions to achieve 60 percent of the needed pollution reductions by 2017 and 100 percent by 2025.

To ensure that restoration efforts remain on track to achieve these longer-term goals, the states and the District of Columbia have adopted two-year milestones that describe the practices and programs they commit to implement. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Choose Clean Water Coalition are collaborating to evaluate and publicize milestone progress because accountability is critical to success. Our first report, issued last year, evaluated progress toward achieving the first set of milestones that expired in 2011. This year we are evaluating the interim progress toward achieving the 2012-13 milestone commitments. Progress will be deemed satisfactory if, for the chosen practices, implementation relative to the goal is at least 50 percent.

Milestone Selection

We selected a subset of implemented practices within three pollution source categories—agricultural runoff, urban/suburban sources, and wastewater treatment—based on their potential to provide substantial nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution reductions and offer important lessons for implementation moving forward. Data were provided by EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office.

Verification and Transparency

The Bay restoration partners currently are developing tools for verifying implemented practices reported as part of progress toward Blueprint goals. This effort absolutely is needed. Our organizations continue to find evidence that calls into question the quality of the reported data. The public must have greater transparency of data sources, assurance that expired practices are no longer counted, and evidence that on-the-ground practices are actually verified. Verification of existing practices and a continued commitment to implementation are keys to success.

Local Level Accountability

To date, milestone commitments have been tracked only at the state level. Our organizations strongly believe that the 2014-15 milestones must be established at least at the basin level and ideally reported at the local (e.g., county) level. The states requested input from local partners on their clean-up plans so that they would better understand their role in the restoration process. Success will not happen without the knowledge of what is needed and what is being accomplished in our local communities to address both restoration of the Bay and our streams and rivers.

Assessment of Virginia's Progress on Selected Pollution-Reduction Targets for the 2012-13 Interim

AGRICULTURE	2013 TOTAL TARGET	1 YEAR PROGRESS/ 2 YEAR GOAL	% OF GOAL ACHIEVED[1]	LESSONS LEARNED
Conservation Tillage with Continuous No Till *acres*	532,010	-1,342/ 103,755	-1.3%	Reporting of this practice has declined during the milestone period. Virginia's program to capture such under-reported agriculture practices should be fully implemented, and assistance from federal agriculture agencies is essential.
Forest Buffers *acres*	20,467	778/ 1,839	42%[2]	Though achievement was less than 50%, we deemed Virginia "on track" because of steady progress through incentive programs, a vast improvement over the prior milestone period.
Grass Buffers *acres*	36,542	-10,176/ 1,807	-563%	Virginia is losing ground on grass buffers. The new "safe harbor" program will further exacerbate that problem by failing to call for grass buffers on pastureland.
Stream Access Control with Fencing *acres*	42,009	11,664/ 2,105	554%	Significant investments in farmer incentive programs have allowed Virginia to exceed its goal for this practice. Reevaluation of goals is encouraged.
URBAN/ SUBURBAN	2013 TOTAL TARGET	1 YEAR PROGRESS/ 2 YEAR GOAL	% OF GOAL ACHIEVED[1]	LESSONS LEARNED
Traditional Stormwater Ponds *acres*	169,649	15,190/ 11,355	134%	Virginia is exceeding its goals for traditional stormwater-control practices. However, Virginia is falling short on construction of critical infiltration practices. Investments from the new state Stormwater Local Assistance Fund could enhance implementation.
Modern Stormwater Infiltration Practices *acres*	6,090	281/ 4,452	6.3%	
Urban Stream Restoration *feet*	4,280	183,140/ 42	436,049%	Virginia has already surpassed this milestone. It should now reevaluate its 2025 commitment for this practice.
WASTEWATER/ SEPTIC	2013 TOTAL TARGET	1 YEAR PROGRESS/ 2 YEAR GOAL	% OF GOAL ACHIEVED[1]	LESSONS LEARNED
Wastewater Treatment Plants *# of permits meeting Blueprint requirements*	71	71/ 71	100%	Virginia has made tremendous strides in reducing nutrient pollution from wastewater plants.

1: Assessed by dividing the incremental progress from 2011 to 2012 by the incremental progress they committed to achieve between 2011 and 2013. If the number is negative, it means that implementation in 2012 was less than in 2011.

2: This is an exception to the 50% rule. Please see lessons learned for explanation.

On track Not on track

Conclusion

Virginia continues to make progress in implementing its Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint for five of the eight practices evaluated. Virginia falls short, however, on modern stormwater practices, grass buffers, and conservation tillage. It is expected that progress on wastewater improvements will continue; therefore, the current, as well as, the next administration must now focus on milestone commitments Virginia has yet to be fully successful with implementation. Continuing significant investments in farmer incentive programs and implementing a long-promised tracking program for under-reported agriculture practices is important. Virginia can also take a leadership role in reducing urban sources of pollution by accelerating development of local stormwater programs and fostering innovation in stormwater practices and financing. Virginia's efforts to report on milestone progress provide a clear path for making the adjustments necessary to succeed in restoring the Bay and our rivers and streams.

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