



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

This review summarizes several evaluations conducted by the Office of Inspector General in response to a congressional request. We evaluated how well the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working with its Chesapeake Bay partners in cleaning up the Bay.

Background

The Chesapeake Bay is North America's largest and most biologically diverse estuary and provides the region economic and recreational benefits. Nutrient and sediment overloading is the primary cause of water quality degradation. EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office is charged with coordinating federal, State, and local partners to plan and implement strategies to meet the restoration goals of the Bay.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2008/20080714-08-P-0199.pdf

EPA Needs to Better Report Chesapeake Bay Challenges – A Summary Report

What We Found

Despite many noteworthy accomplishments by the Chesapeake Bay partners, the Bay remains degraded. This has resulted in continuing threats to aquatic life and human health, and citizens being deprived of the Bay's full economic and recreational benefits. Through its reporting responsibilities, EPA could better advise Congress and the Chesapeake Bay community that (a) the Bay program is significantly short of its goals and (b) partners need to make major changes if goals are to be met. Current efforts will not enable partners to meet their goal of restoring the Bay by 2010. Further, new challenges are emerging. Bay partners need to address:

- uncontrolled land development
- limited implementation of agricultural conservation practices
- limited control over air emissions affecting Bay water quality

EPA does not have the resources, tools, or authorities to fully address all of these challenges. Farm policies, local land development decisions, and individual life styles have huge impacts on the amount of pollution being discharged to the Bay. EPA needs to further engage local governments and watershed organizations in efforts to clean up the Bay.

What We Recommend

In four prior reports, we made recommendations to the Region 3 Regional Administrator to address individual sector needs (agricultural, developing lands, air deposition, and wastewater). In this summary report, we are making additional recommendations on overall issues to the EPA Administrator.

We recommend that the EPA Administrator improve reporting to Congress and the public on the actual state of the Chesapeake Bay and actions necessary to improve its health. We also recommend that the Administrator develop a strategy to further engage local governments and watershed organizations to capitalize on their resources, tools, authorities, and information to advance the mission of the Chesapeake Bay, and provide the Chesapeake Bay Program Office with the opportunity to comment on proposed rulemaking related to pertinent air issues. EPA concurred with all of the recommendations in this report.