

Protecting the Forests of the Chesapeake Watershed

Looking Beyond Traditional Programs

The Challenge

As a direct result of publishing *The State of Chesapeake Forests* report last year, the Chesapeake Executive Council signed Directive 06-1 committing to develop goals and a framework for forest conservation. These goals and framework were to “look beyond traditional programs” and “accelerate the conservation and stewardship of our most valuable forests.”

The Solution

On December 5, 2007, the Executive Council adopted the following policy statement on the importance of forests: “It is our intent to maximize the area of forest by discouraging conversion of the most valuable forests and giving priority to forests in land conservation programs. Further, we recognize the importance of working forests and will ensure that public policies and market-based incentives help families retain and manage these forests sustainably.” In addition, they committed to:

- Permanently protect 695,000 acres of forest from conversion by 2020, targeting forests in areas of highest water quality value;
- accelerate reforestation and conservation: increase the number of communities with expanded tree canopies to 120 by 2020; restore riparian forest buffers at a rate of 900 miles/year;
- work ...to create or augment dedicated sources of local funding, such as through ballot initiatives, for the conservation of forests important to water quality... support these through incentive programs (e.g., state matching grants);
- track and assess forest land cover change at the county and township scale;
- set of implementation strategies and actions identified by each state and the federal agencies that address key elements of forest conservation.

These goals and framework look beyond traditional programs and accelerate the conservation and stewardship of our most valuable forests.



Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council sign the Implementation of Directive 06-1 Protecting the Forests of the Chesapeake Watershed. From left to right: MD Secretary of Natural Resources, DE Secretary of Agriculture, Virginia Governor, Maryland Governor, EPA Administrator (signing), DC Mayor, USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission Delegate, and Pennsylvania Governor.

Resulting Benefits

- Chesapeake forests prevent millions of pounds of nitrogen and other pollutants from reaching the Bay each year. The Bay’s two primary pollutants, nitrogen and phosphorus, fuel algal blooms, starving aquatic flora and fauna by reducing available oxygen.
- Forests protect and filter drinking water for 75 percent of the Bay watershed’s residents (more than 11 million people).
- Forests and urban tree canopies catch air pollutants that can cause asthma, cancer, and other health problems and cool our cities, reducing ozone and energy use.

Sharing Success

- Having the leaders in this region send out this message is a powerful form of sharing our success.
- The policies signed by the Executive Council empower local governments, community groups, and land trusts to work as equal partners in their significant roles in forest and urban tree canopy conservation.



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