



The Army's Chesapeake Review

State of the Bay Patuxent River Oil Spill Is Contained

As disastrous as an April oil spill at the Chalk Point power plant near Benedict, MD, could have been, a team of environmental experts was able to contain the damage and clean the oiled Patuxent River shoreline, resulting in fewer numbers of fish and wildlife killed, said Kent Mountford of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Mountford described the spill and containment measures to the Chesapeake Bay Program Implementation Committee meeting in Annapolis on May 18.

The spill resulted from a cracked oil pipe about three feet under the Patuxent River marsh at the mouth of Swanson Creek in southern MD. By the time the leak was discovered, about 110,000 gallons of oil had bubbled out, fouling fishing nets and marsh creatures, and threatening a population of diamondback terrapins that breed in the area.

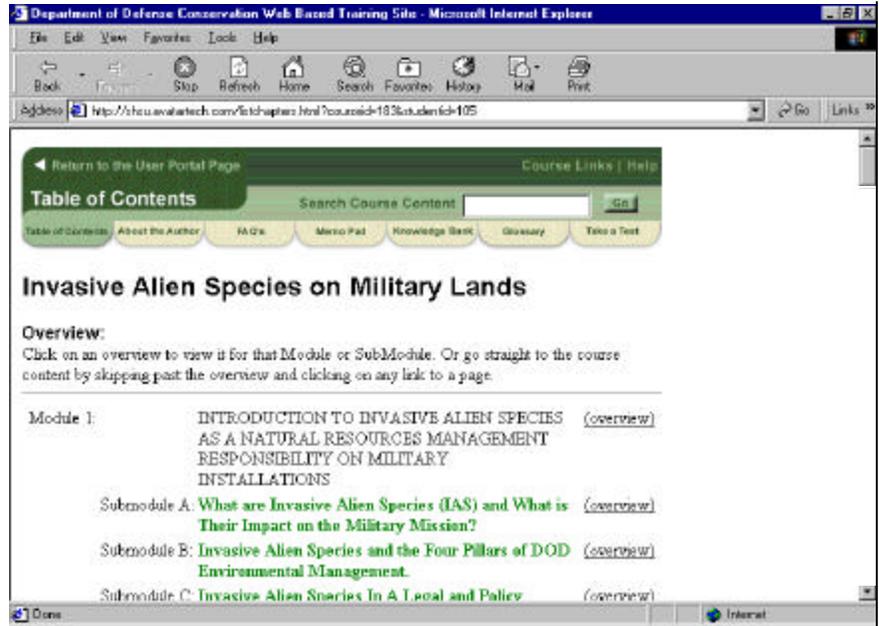
Rich with marshy creeks and sandy beaches, the Patuxent River shoreline is teeming with life. Diamondback terrapins use several areas of its beaches, particularly near the mouth of Swanson Creek, for breeding. The area is also heavily commercially fished. Small marinas and restaurants are an integral part of the local economy and provide livelihood for area residents.

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Chesapeake Bay Legislative Update How Does Legislation Affect Mid-Atlantic States?

HB = House Bill SB = Senate Bill
SJ = Senate Joint Resolution

The following legislation has recently been adopted by the U.S. Congress or by the general assemblies of MD, PA, or VA. This new legislation represents some of the major initiatives of the



Mr. Larry Mango of the U.S. Army Environmental Center and Dr. Terry Bashore of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented the DoD Conservation Web Based Training at the workshop. This page is from the presentation, and the Web site can be accessed at <<http://shsu.avatartech.com>>.

DoD & EPA Partner to Expel Invasive Species

On June 7-8 at Fort Meade, MD, the DoD Legacy Resource Management Program, U.S. EPA, and the DoD Chesapeake Bay Program hosted a workshop on non-indigenous species in the Mid-Atlantic. Speakers from 13 agencies presented their concerns about the invasive species. These agencies are working together to develop strategies for battling the problem. In addition to each of the military services, participating agencies included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. National Park Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Over the two-day period, several main subjects were discussed. The first day focused on defining the issue, agency roles, programs focusing on the problem, and needs to adequately address concerns. Major non-indigenous species in the Mid-Atlantic were also discussed, as well as implementation and mitigation strategies. On the second day, the discussion on implementation and mitigation strategies was continued, followed by a summary of future needs and assessments. The seminar ended with a discussion among all of the organizations about possible actions to be taken regarding non-indigenous species.

Non-indigenous species are plants and animals that are foreign to a land. They are also called colonizers, imported species, aliens, weeds, and pests. Only one percent of non-indigenous species are harmful to their surroundings. That one percent is called invasive species. Invasive

Chesapeake Bay Program signatories for the year 2000 so far.

Federal Legislation

The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act (CBRA) was reauthorized in March 2000, providing increased funding up

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Patuxent River Oil Spill

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At one point, over 900 people worked on the oil spill cleanup. Catwalks were installed to preserve the surface of the marsh from their heavy boots. To get oil off the beaches and marshes, crews used a variety of devices. They anchored booms to the shore to contain the spill. Special backhoes, known as "crawlers," that leave a light footprint dug ditches to drain the marsh. The wind created by airboats was used to blow oil toward recovery sites. Skimming devices collected surface oil.

While the shallow oil was easy to see and attack, Mountford said the deeper, thicker oil was more troublesome. The oil forms tar balls, which accumulate on beaches or are buried in the sand. He said the crews were especially concerned about getting rid of as much tar as possible before it interfered with diamondback terrapin breeding. "We dug pits in the sand to assess breeding habitats of diamondback terrapin. In some areas we found oil in tens, hundreds, even thousands of parts per million—that would kill turtle eggs." He said crews buried the end of large hoses in the sand to flush out oil and tar, which came up in clumps.

Thousands of yards of absorbent material were used to absorb oil. Mountford said three million pounds of waste was recovered from the water, including oil and oil-contaminated gear. The muck was trucked to incinerators and a landfill.

By the time the damage was contained, some fishermen's nets and a number of marshes were oiled on the opposite side of the Patuxent. The spill reached about five miles south, to

Sheridan Point. While Mountford said the number of fish killed was less than anyone expected, the toll was heavy. "What we lost is all the marsh fauna, all the little critters in that area."

Mountford estimated the cleanup and removal operation cost \$40 million to \$50 million. Remediation is the next step. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the incident.

Invasive Species

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species are quick spreading, choking, and parasitic, and they are considered to be dangerous when introduced in a foreign environment. These destructive species compete with the more favorable native plants and animals for resources such as soil, light, space, and pollinators, resulting in a reduction of the indigenous population. By causing the decline of native plants that prevent soil erosion, some pests can bring about a soil erosion problem. There are, however, other non-indigenous species that have been proven to prevent erosion.

It has cost environmental organizations more than \$137 billion to control invasive plants alone, and the plants are spreading at an increasing rate. The threat to native plants and ecosystems is becoming more apparent as the invaders spread further throughout the United States. Some of the invasive species cause diseases in native plants, including the chestnut blight, lobster disease, and fish and shellfish disease, while other invaders encourage insect infestation, including beetles killing trees, and gypsy moths destroying foliage. Other negative effects of these alien species include a loss of water and timber

quality in the Mid-Atlantic. For example, cheat grass (*Bromus secalinus*) changes the fire cycle from one fire every 60-100 years to one every 3-5 years. In addition, watersheds are being invaded by non-indigenous plants and animals such as the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) that destroy many of the watershed's native species.

There are many pathways for the intentional or unintentional release of invasive species into the United States. These entrances include altered water courses, accidental release, ballast water in ships, smuggling, imported parcels such as fishing bait, biological specimens, soil, and in packaged wood from abroad. To reduce the likelihood of non-indigenous species entering the United States, many laws, regulations, and executive orders have been issued. Some of these regulations include prohibitions on bringing certain pests into the United States and Customs checks at ports of entry into the country. The regulation of invasive species is a four-step program, beginning with the pulling together of agencies, followed by prevention, control, and restoration.

Prevention is the most important and vital part of the program. By detecting invasive species before they arrive in the United States, the problem is eliminated before it becomes hazardous. There are Customs checkpoints at all of the major United States ports of entry to help in early detection. Incoming vehicles are prohibited from carrying certain organisms, and their crew leaders are obligated to fill out paperwork declaring their cargo upon entry. At these ports, humans, dogs, and x-ray machines are used to inspect the cargo. Domestic surveys are also used to ensure the legality of imported

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This newsletter is produced by HORNE ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC. under Contract No. DACA31-97-D-0051 for the U.S. Army Environmental Center (USAEC). Please contact Janmichael Graine, USAEC by e-mail, <Janmichael.Graine@aec.apgea.army.mil> or by telephone, (410) 436-7113, DSN 584-7113 with any questions, comments, or installation success stories.

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The newsletter is distributed via U.S. Mail and e-mail. It can also be viewed on the Army Chesapeake Bay Program home page. The home page address is <www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/env/cbi/index.htm>. If you want to be on the distribution list, contact Alison Cooley, HORNE ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC., at <acooley@horne.com>, or call (703) 641-1100.

Invasive Species

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materials. The parcels are treated with hot water dips and sprays and methanol bromide fumigation. If hazardous organisms are detected, they are burned. With the recent passage of the Plant Protection Act by Congress, the penalty for smuggling invasive species was increased from \$1,000 to \$250,000 to discourage offenders from importing illegally. That Act is presently awaiting approval by the President of the United States.

To help eliminate problems associated with ballast water, ships have the option of exchanging their water 200 miles from entry into port, away from preserves and sensitive environmental areas, or keeping their ballast water on board while at dock. Anchors and tanks should be cleaned at a safe distance from the port of entry.

Controlling the spread of invasive species is, perhaps, the most difficult part of the program. It is a complicated issue because of the rapid spread of the organisms. Once an invasive organism is introduced into the environment, it becomes very difficult, costly, and time-consuming to control. Existing control methods consist of insecticides, chemical sprays, mechanical removal, burning, biological controls, and planting more native plants. It is important when considering control methods to be assured that the cure is not worse than the problem.

There are several challenges regarding invasive species control that must be considered. These include an increase in world trade and lack of funding for invasive species control, public awareness of the issue, and lack of knowledge about the species that are invasive.

Various programs have been implemented to resolve the problem at hand. Some existing control programs include the eradication of the Eurasian ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*), brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*), Chinese mitten crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*), Asian swamp eel (*Synbranchidae*), and the green crab (*Carcinus maenas*). These programs are put into action by regional panels around the United States that work as mini task forces. These groups develop action plans, coordinate regional activities, and if their state management plans are approved, they are provided with grants.

Many federal facilities lack knowledge about which organisms are beneficial and which are harmful to the environment. Educated environmental teams support federal land managers in fighting alien organisms and in learning which organisms can be controlled.

Restoration is an effective solution to the invasive species problem. Restoration includes planting more native species to lower invasive growth and the introducing of certain kinds of indigenous animals to eliminate alien species. The native organisms can eliminate the invasive ones by overcoming their numbers and using resources that the invaders need for survival. This aids in restoring damaged areas by improving the land's defense against soil erosion and disease.

Many useful ideas for solutions were presented and discussed at the seminar. The workshop demonstrated that the problem is just beginning to be addressed through partnerships and interagency coordination and that there is still a long way to advance in the battle against invasive species.

—Michelle Williams Tober

FAC Highlights Important FACts

Federal Agencies Committee (FAC) meetings were held March 30 and May 11 at the Chesapeake Bay Program Office in Annapolis, MD. During these meetings, the FAC heard announcements and workgroup updates, and it reviewed action items toward the accomplishment of commitments within the 1998 Federal Agencies Chesapeake Ecosystem Unified Plan (FACEUP).

Conferences

A seminar on conservation landscaping for federal facilities, sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Army, and the Chesapeake Bay Program, has been rescheduled for Sept. 11—15, 2000. The seminar will be held at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV. Discussion of a recent Executive Order, *Greening the Government*

through Leadership in Environmental Management, has been added to the seminar. Call Alison Cooley of HORNE ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC., at 703-641-1100 for more information.

Federal Agency Actions

- Kelly Holland of the General Services Administration (GSA) presented strengthened language for GSA's model lease provisions for federal agencies in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The lease language is designed to provide a means for Chesapeake Bay stewardship goals to be considered in the issuance of leases by or to federal agencies in the watershed. The new language has been approved by GSA's Regional Administrator and can serve as a model for other agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD), to use when creating their own lease provisions for Chesapeake Bay stewardship. GSA is also providing employee training on the design and construction of ecologically friendly buildings. A copy of the provisions may be obtained by calling Heather Wells of the Chesapeake Bay Program at 410-267-5720.
- The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is beginning an intensive review of its science program over the next five years. The USGS will develop a new science plan that incorporates the commitments in the Chesapeake 2000 agreement (still under development). The plan will address science areas such as sediments, hydrology, and habitat.
- The DoD, under its Legacy Resource Management Program, is performing an analysis of invasive species at 20 military installations within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The study, being conducted by Dr. Stephen Ailstock at Anne Arundel Community College, examines a number of different invasive species, with a focus on *Phragmites*.
- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is beginning a project under TEA-21 to reconnect habitat areas that have been separated by roadways. Specially created tunnels or underpasses will allow certain species of wildlife to migrate to new habitat areas that were previously

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FAC Highlights

Important FACs

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inaccessible due to fences, walls, or traffic movement. The FHWA will target the bog turtle as its first species.

- Allison Wiedeman, U.S. EPA, presented proposed revisions to the *1994 Toxics Strategy* that the Chesapeake Bay Program's Toxics Workgroup is currently revising. The revisions include new federal facility point-source reduction and prevention goals. One such goal is the zero-release of toxics from federal facilities into tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, toward which progress could be made by a number of new commitments. The FAC debated reducing annual releases and offsite transfers of Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) chemicals by 10 percent annually, eliminating toxic impacts in certain regions, eliminating certain mixing zones for toxics, and developing a list of chemicals of concern as a basis for other toxics reduction goals.
- Rick Cooksey of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) presented information about a new Potomac River Partnership, which includes the USFS, George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, MD Department of Natural Resources, VA Department of Forestry, and Ducks Unlimited. The partnership is conducting a large-scale watershed stewardship program in the Potomac River basin, which uses a business plan to direct project results. The three targeted watersheds, which are seriously impaired, are the Monocacy River, Antietam Creek, and Shenandoah River. A training aspect of the program will educate local communities on how to make improvements to their watersheds.
- The FAC was introduced to Glenn Kinser, who is the Potomac River Navigator under the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. Mr. Kinser announced several new projects that have been funded for the Potomac, including a leadership training course called Leadership Potomac, and a study on water use problems in WV stemming from earlier flood conditions.

IC Highlights

Meeting Announcements

Implementation Committee (IC) meetings were held on April 6 and May 18 at the Chesapeake Bay Program Office in Annapolis, MD. Highlights from these meetings include the following:

- Carin Bisland, U.S. EPA, discussed the Model Land Development Principles. The principles include measures to reduce impervious surface and minimize storm water runoff associated with new development. The Land, Growth, and Stewardship Subcommittee is currently working on guidance to retrofit developed lands with low impact development techniques.
- Several speakers updated the IC on point-source cap maintenance:
 - ◆ Allison Wiedeman, U.S. EPA, presented year 2000 point-source nutrient loading estimates based on newly analyzed 1998 data. New total nutrient load estimates are down from previous estimates due to nutrient reduction efforts taken in PA and VA.
 - ◆ Cy Jones, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and member of the MD Cap Policy Workgroup, spoke about the methodologies that MD is developing to allocate allowable point-source nutrient loads between wastewater treatment plants. The workgroup has been evaluating three major methods of allocation based on fairness and consistency with biological nutrient reduction agreements.
 - ◆ John Murtha, PA Department of Environmental Protection, discussed the PA nutrient reduction strategy. Unlike VA, MD, and the District of Columbia, PA's nutrient reduction strategy focuses on non-point sources because there is an abundance of agriculture in the state.
 - ◆ Allison Weideman closed the update with a discussion of industrial point-source nutrient discharges in the Bay. The bad news is data corrections since 1997 have revealed higher levels of

industrial nutrient loads. The good news is significant reductions by 2004 are predicted.

- The *Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management* guidance document is now available from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. Receive a copy by calling 410-267-5660.
- The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee is sponsoring four workshops this year: (1) Low Impact Development: Planning, Design and Implementation; (2) Optimizing Benefits from Wetlands Restoration; (3) Animal Feeding and Manure Management: The Potential for Environmental Impact; and (4) Optimizing Benefits from Stream Corridor Restorations.
- Frank Dawson, Living Resources Subcommittee, said that the subcommittee is reevaluating their mission in light of the C2K Agreement. They will concentrate on five major activities: monitoring, habitat restoration, planning and coordinating, modeling and research, and outreach and education. The subcommittee is also changing workgroups based on the agreement.
- Bob Summers, chair of the Toxics Subcommittee, presented an outline of the Toxics 2000 Strategy, which commits to actions for meeting toxic reduction goals in the Chesapeake 2000 Bay Agreement. Summers said the 2000 strategy includes commitments that are stronger and more measurable than those developed for the 1994 toxics reduction strategy. Summers said the Bay Program is committed to meeting the goal of eliminating chemical contaminants from all controllable sources to levels that result in no toxic or bioaccumulative impact on living resources that inhabit the Bay or on human health. A final Toxics 2000 Strategy will be presented to the Executive Committee in the fall of 2000.
- Summers said a draft report on the objectives, capabilities, and limitations of a water quality model is being prepared. The report will provide recommendations on how the Chesapeake Bay Program should integrate modeling and monitoring activities.

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IC Highlights

Meeting Announcements

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■ Each state in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that has signed the Chesapeake Bay Agreement is committed to reducing its nutrient load by 40 percent to improve water quality. Virginia is working to meet its nutrient-reduction goal and then sustain the resulting benefits with a “cap maintenance” strategy. Chesapeake Bay Program representatives in VA are involving elected officials in development of the maintenance strategy. Colin Powers of VA said state farmers, wastewater treatment plants, and other participants have been especially helpful in reducing nutrient runoff to meet the reduction goal. “People have done an incredible job coming together,” he said. Not yet having a watershed model has been a problem for states as they develop their cap strategies because it affects their ability to define the magnitude of nutrient loads. But Powers said he is confident VA will meet its deadline of Jan. 1, 2001, for a final strategy.

State of the Bay Rappahannock Friends & Developers Change Storm Water Techniques

The Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), an organization dedicated to stewardship of the Rappahannock River, turned a shortfall in their watershed strategy into a positive effort to benefit the river and the Bay for years to come. John Tippett of FOR told the Implementation Committee that the Rappahannock had been showing high levels of anoxia due to increased nitrogen. FOR identified storm water as a major contributor of nitrogen to the Rappahannock watershed and initiated a partnership with developers to improve storm water management techniques. FOR focused on creating a guidebook for developers that highlights a series of case studies about developers who have gone beyond the required storm water standards and the money they saved using new storm water techniques. The storm water management techniques discussed in the guidebook are part of an overall

low-impact development approach that reduces storm water flow by minimizing impervious surfaces and infiltrating storm water on-site using grading and vegetation.

As part of the process to develop the guidebook, FOR investigated what was preventing developers from using low impact development techniques. FOR found that the local government was hesitant to approve these new techniques because they were not familiar with them. FOR hopes that the guidebook will help to remove this roadblock by spreading the word about the value and cost savings of low impact development techniques.

Mr. Tippett noted important points that FOR learned while creating the guidebook:

- A local advocate is critical when attempting to make changes in an established system. The advocate should be someone who is willing to take the new guidance and get people working with it.
- It is essential to take time to build relationships with your partners.
- Every attempt should be made to identify and remove roadblocks to progress.
- It helps to have a demonstration site to share with your partners.
- The FOR guidebook is available at www.crrl.org/community/for/pages/grogreen.html.

Legislation

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to \$30 million per year through 2005 for the Chesapeake Bay Program, under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency — a \$10 million increase per year. The Chesapeake Bay Program was first authorized by the Clean Water Act amendments of 1987. Activities were expanded in 1992 to develop and implement improvements in the overall Bay watershed.

The CBRA has been the highly successful federal-state-local regional compact directing and coordinating cleanup and restoration activities in the Bay. The legislation also establishes within the Environmental Protection Agency a “Small Watershed Grants Program” for the Chesapeake Bay region. These grants will help organizations and local governments launch

a variety of locally designed and locally implemented projects to restore relatively small pieces of the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed. In addition to these items, the reauthorized CBRA also includes language pertaining to the fulfillment of Chesapeake Bay Program commitments. Federal agencies that own or occupy land in the Bay watershed are now required to meet the commitments that they agreed to in the overall Bay Agreement, as well as in the Federal Agencies Chesapeake Ecosystem Unified Plan.

Maryland Legislation

Nutrients and Toxics Pollution

HB 327 expands the Department of Agriculture’s cost-sharing poultry matching service to include all live-stock manure, and establishes a cost-sharing rate for livestock manure. The bill eliminates a cap on the amount of available state cost-sharing funds and eliminates requirements of immediate implementation of nutrient management plans for agricultural operations that use state cost-share funds for the preparation of nutrient management plans. HB 823 establishes a task force on the environmental effects of the gasoline additive methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE) to determine and assess the environmental and health risks associated with ground and surface water contamination from MTBE, and to recommend a plan to minimize and counteract these risks. SB 513 revises the requirements for participation in the Brownfields Revitalization Incentive Program by authorizing the Department of Business and Economic Development to provide loans and grants to specified persons for environmental site assessments of proposed brownfields sites.

Living Resources

SB 417 authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to grant permits to persons before allowing them to catch oysters with a power dredge in specified counties. Persons permitted to catch oysters with a power dredge are then prohibited from harvesting oysters by any other method on specified days. HB 1305 requires the Department of the Environment to adopt specific guidelines on vessel ballast water management, requires

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Legislation

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specified persons to complete and return a form relating to vessel ballast water management, and specifies penalties for violations. HB 1254 requires the Department of Natural Resources to establish a program to study the impact of recreational watercraft on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) beds, including designated SAV beds for the study, certain required evaluations, and a report of the study results.

Smart Growth and Open Space

SB 207 (HB 284) is a result of Governor Glendening's Smart Codes initiative, which is designed to provide developers and jurisdictions with incentives to invest in existing communities, rather than building in undeveloped areas that are vulnerable to urban sprawl. The bill requires the adoption of the MD Building Rehabilitation Code to strengthen MD's existing communities and provides for the enforcement of the Code. SB 208 (HB 285) requires the Office of Planning to draft model land-use codes for infill and smart neighborhood development, and to circulate the models and guidelines with state and local units. HB 301 requires a local agency to submit a statement to the MD Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation of the total current development rights on agricultural land that are subject to an easement to the Foundation upon local approval. SB 244 provides state tax credits for employers who provide their employees with either cash benefits for commuting or a guaranteed ride home.

Pennsylvania Legislation

The Commonwealth of PA's General Assembly meets year-round and is midway through its 2000 session. Therefore, a number of bills are still pending in the House and Senate.

Nutrients and Toxics Pollution

HR 361 directs the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee to evaluate the feasibility and advisability of establishing a voluntary trading program for water quality credits as an incentive for achieving point and non-point source pollution reductions

beyond those required by federal and state clean water laws. The bill also promotes cooperative, community-driven watershed management planning. HB 868 is designed to improve water quality by controlling and eliminating water pollution resulting from mining or from oil or gas extraction or exploration. The bill limits the liability that could arise as a result of the voluntary reclamation of abandoned lands, or the reduction and abatement of water pollution. The bill also aids in the protection of wildlife and the decrease of soil erosion. SR 80 is a resolution urging the Department of Environmental Protection to develop and establish new wastewater treatment technologies, such as drip irrigation, for on-lot systems and small flows.

Smart Growth and Open Space

SB 300 is an act that makes extensive changes to the PA Municipalities Planning Code by encouraging regional efforts to deal with local land use and growth management issues through joint planning and zoning. The act promotes the preservation of natural and historic resources and open space.

Virginia Legislation

Nutrients and Toxics Pollution

HB 404 increases the toxic-substance monitoring and reporting requirements for certain agencies, including the Water Control Board, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Health. HB 451 (SB 294) requires that permit applications for sewage discharge into surface-water impoundments contain notification from the local authority that the discharge will meet local zoning ordinances. HB 1282 requires the Water Control Board to encourage and establish requirements for wastewater reclamation and reuse as an alternative to wastewater discharge. SB 177 requires owners of relatively small, privately operated sewerage systems to obtain a discharge permit from the Water Control Board. The bill also requires facility owners to file a plan for protecting public health and the environment if the facility ceases operation. HB 1306 (SB 664) provides a non-refundable income tax credit, up to \$17,500, to individual or corporate landowners who maintain a forested

buffer zone along a waterway for 15 years. The House bill requires that the buffer zone be at least 35 feet wide, while the Senate bill requires that it be at least 50 feet wide. HB 1307, the Agricultural Stewardship Act, requires that agricultural water pollution controls be maintained by the owner or operator of the property.

Wetlands

HB 1170 (SB 648) requires a VA Water Protection Permit from the Water Control Board for certain activities in non-tidal wetlands. The Board is directed to use a regulatory approach to achieve no net loss of wetlands and a voluntary approach to achieve a net wetlands gain. The bill also clarifies that wetlands are "state waters" and requires the Board to seek a Section 404 Clean Water Act State Programmatic General Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Living Resources

HB 1305 establishes a Marine Habitat and Waterways Improvement Fund for improving marine habitat and waterways. The fund will consist of payments for the use or lease of easements in state-owned bottomlands. HB 1305 will also require fines for violating regulations regarding these lands. SJ 79 directs the VA delegation to the Chesapeake Bay Commission to continue studying ways to protect SAV.

Smart Growth and Open Space

HB 552 updates the Important Farmlands Law, which requires state agencies to evaluate the impacts of their actions on farm and forest lands. HB 568 removes the "sunset" date from the VA Code section that allows voluntary contributions of tax refunds to be applied toward open-space conservation. HB 1324 allows grants from the Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund to help localities acquire open-space easements. The bill removes the requirement that interests in open-space lands acquired by public entities be located in urban areas. HB 1326 allows charitable organizations that do not meet the requirements of the VA Conservation Easement Act to hold a conservation easement if it is co-held by another organization that does meet the requirements.

-Don Maglienti