Summary of The State of the Chesapeake Bay
From *The State of the Chesapeake Bay, A Report to Citizens of the Bay Region*
June 2002, Chesapeake Bay Program, Environmental Protection Agency

Status of Bay's Resources

- Blue crab: Abundance of mature female blue crabs in 2002 and 2001 is at or near historic lows. Loss of habitat (underwater grasses) and low oxygen levels are primary culprits.
- Striped bass: "Restored" from historic lows in the 1980s through the imposition of harvest quotas.
- Oysters: Current oyster harvests are approximately 8 percent of the harvest highs recorded in the 1950s. Causes of decreases: over-harvesting, dwindling habitat, pollution, diseases.
- Underwater grasses: In 2000, survey data shows these grasses had increased to 69,126 acres from a low of 38,000 acres in 1984. Bay Program goal: 114,000 acres.
- Wetlands: Virginia has lost 42 percent of it original 1.85 million acres of wetlands in the Bay watershed. 40% of the Bay watershed's wetlands occur in Virginia.
- Exotic species: Introduced exotic species are upsetting the natural balance. Examples include: nutria, Asian clam, mute swans, phragmites.

2002 Progress Report

- Underwater grasses: 38,000 acres in 1984, 69,000 acres in 2000, goal: 114,000 acres.
- Nutrients: Reduction of pollution loads to the Bay from 1985 to 2000:
    - Phosphorus: Load declined by 8 million pounds, but goal was 10.3 million pounds
    - Nitrogen: Load declined by 53 million pounds, but goal was 77 million pounds
- Oyster habitat: As of 2001, more than 50,000 acres designated oyster sanctuaries, 330 acres of habitat (reefs) have been constructed.
- Blue crabs: Blue crab abundance is below average and has declined in recent years.
- Chemical releases: Between 1988 and 1998, industries reduced chemical releases by 67 percent. Goal is "zero release."
- Waterfowl: Increase in several species with 12 of 21 monitored species meeting year 2000 population goals.
- Riparian forest buffers: In 2001, 628.5 miles of riparian forest buffers were planted in the watershed. Of those 102.5 miles were in Virginia. This brings watershed to a total of 1,298 miles or 65% of the Bay Program goal of restoring 2,010 miles by 2010.

Growth Levels in the Bay Watershed

Despite the reductions in nutrients and increases in underwater grasses and riparian forest buffers, the Bay's fisheries and wildlife still suffer. We are making progress, but part of the problem is that the Bay's watershed is continuing to develop. The development adds more pollution sources. The Bay Program identifies sprawl patterns of development as the most damaging. Growth statistics for the bay watershed:

- Population:
  - 1970: 11,342,157
  - 2000: 15,710,840 (38% increase from 1970)
  - 2020: 17,800,000 (projection: rate of growth is about 300 new residents/day)

- Housing Units:
  - 2000 to 2020: 1.7 million new homes (projection)
  - New homes potentially will consume more than 600,000 acres of farm and forest land.

- Vehicle miles traveled:
  - 1985 to 1997: 41 % increase in vehicle miles traveled, but clean car technologies led to an 18 % decrease in nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions.
  - 2000 to 2020: 32 % increase in vehicle miles traveled (projection)