AT A GLANCE

Agriculture

- 👎 Cover Crops
- 👎 Forest Buffers
- 👍 Wetland Restoration
- 👍 Grass Buffers

Urban/Suburban

- 👎 Nutrient Management
- 👍 Stormwater Management
- 👍 Septic System Management

Wastewater

- 👍 Nitrogen Reduction
- 👍 Phosphorus Reduction

For more detailed information on the progress Virginia has made in these areas, see the chart on the back of this sheet.

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

The Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams are polluted—evidenced by algal blooms, oxygen-deprived dead zones, and water that is too often unsafe for swimming. To clean up our waters, we must reduce the nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution that causes these problems. Pollution sources include animal waste and farm fields; runoff from urban and suburban development; wastewater treatment plants and septic systems; and air pollution from cars, trucks, and power plants.

The history of Chesapeake Bay restoration is full of long-term goals set—then missed. Most recently, in 2000, the Chesapeake Executive Council promised to restore the Bay's health by 2010, but in 2008 the Chesapeake Bay Program acknowledged it would fail by a wide margin. This failure triggered two actions. First, the Executive Council charted a new course for the Chesapeake Bay's recovery by committing to short, two-year goals, or "milestones," to reduce pollution to local rivers, streams, and the Bay. Second, science-based pollution-reduction targets and the state plans (Clean Water Blueprints) to achieve them were completed in December 2010.

Setting the Milestones

In May 2009, the Executive Council released their first milestones, a set of measures to be implemented by 2011 that would accelerate the pace of restoration and put the states on a trajectory to achieve full implementation by 2025. Ensuring that the states and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency not only set effective milestone goals, but actually achieve and enforce them, is critical to the success of the Clean Water Blueprints.

As such, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Choose Clean Water Coalition are collaborating to evaluate and publicize milestone progress. The intent: to ensure that the deadlines for Bay cleanup are met, in part, by holding the states accountable for achieving their milestone commitments. This analysis of Virginia's 2011 milestone progress is the first outcome of this collaboration.

Milestone Progress

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 and phosphorus pollution reductions and offer important lessons for implementation moving forward. The table (see reverse) lists the selected practices along with their 2011 milestone goals, the percentage of the goal that was achieved, the percentage of the 2025 goal met, and lessons learned. Data were provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office.

Transparency and Accountability

Greater transparency and accountability by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state agencies are required to ensure quality data and continued progress toward the milestones. Areas of concern include data sources, units of measurement, baseline estimates, and milestone commitments. In certain instances, we identified the need for greater accountability in the quality of both milestone and historic implementation data.

Assessment of Virginia's Progress on Selected Pollution-Reduction Targets for the 2011 Milestone

AGRICULTURE	2011 MILESTONE GOAL	MILESTONE PROGRESS	PROGRESS TO 2025 GOAL	LESSONS LEARNED
Total Cover Crops *acres/year*	157,000	50% 🔴	41%	A new, proposed state planning program for farmers (the resource management program) must incorporate and increase this practice.
Forest Buffers *acres*	10,000	53% 🔴	22%	To achieve goals for this critically important practice, Virginia should increase farmer incentives.
Wetland Restoration *acres*	36	550% 🟢	4%	Field verification would help ensure the quality of the reported data.
Grass Buffers *acres*	2,000	1,254% 🟢	18%	Focus and funding contributed to success with this practice.

URBAN/ SUBURBAN	2011 MILESTONE GOAL	MILESTONE PROGRESS	PROGRESS TO 2025 GOAL	LESSONS LEARNED
Nutrient Management— Urban *acres/year*	133,000	29% 🔴	11%	Enforcement of a new state law should increase this practice.
Stormwater Management BMPs *acres*	49,000	616% 🟢	76%	Quality of historic data suggests the need for better tracking and accountability.
Septic System BMPs *systems*	806	3,537% 🟢	15%	Enforcement of existing laws contributed to success with this practice.

WASTEWATER	2011 MILESTONE GOAL	MILESTONE PROGRESS	PROGRESS TO 2025 GOAL	LESSONS LEARNED
Nitrogen Reduced *pounds*	233,000	2,072% 🟢	78%	Commitment in 2005 to reducing nitrogen and phosphorus from wastewater and funding contributed to success with this practice.
Phosphorus Reduced *pounds*	126,000	465% 🟢	100%	

Source: EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office 🟢 Goal met or exceeded 🔴 Goal not met

Conclusion

Overall, Virginia met six out of the nine milestone practices selected for evaluation. While achievements in grass buffers, septics, and wastewater are notable, Virginia must redouble its efforts in cover crops, forest buffers, and urban nutrient management to stay on track to achieve 60 percent implementation by 2017 and full implementation by 2025. Additionally, Virginia must continue to help localities implement and track pollution-reduction practices on urban and suburban land.

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