Investing in Innovative Technologies for Chesapeake Bay Restoration

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Historically, the Chesapeake Bay has been one of the most productive estuaries in the world, providing tremendous habitat for fish and wildlife, as well as unparalleled economic and recreational opportunity. The past few years have been ones of leadership, innovation, enhanced coordination and accountability, marked by actions that will advance progress in restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Despite important restoration steps by federal, state, local and private partners and the benefit of our world-renowned science, sobering reports of Bay water quality conditions remind us of the significant challenges ahead. To combat these challenges Bay watershed states have developed strategies to reduce nutrient loads using accepted methods for pollution reduction, yet gaps remain and States are looking for new ideas to reduce nutrients. Maryland's Innovative Technology Fund was established with the goal of accelerating riverine, estuarine and coastal water quality restoration through the development of new innovative technologies to reduce nonpoint source pollution. A secondary goal is to support the development of successful businesses while creating green jobs in Maryland. At the 2007 Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council meeting, the State of Maryland and the Environmental Protection Agency agreed to promote investments in technologies that could accelerate Bay restoration efforts. Maryland is using this fund to develop new technologies, and improve approaches to implementing existing best management practices, that reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. The Innovative Technology Fund includes two tracks: one addresses the need for additional research and development, and the second supports fledging companies in industry and technology related to Bay restoration and protection. Both tracks leverage government and private sector funding. A number of projects have been supported under the Innovative Technology Fund that have developed best management practices to support restoration and pollution prevention within agriculture, urban stormwater, air deposition and natural filters. By supporting innovation, the State demonstrates their commitment to investing in research and development as a way to improve efficiency and maximize return on investment. The Innovative Technology Fund framework is currently under review to increase available funds and partnerships as well as expand the scope of best management practices eligible for funding. This presentation will cover the project selection process, supported projects, lessons learned and challenges to implementing the Innovative Technology Fund.

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