

THE ROLE OF NONGOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

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A comprehensive and, to date, promising effort to address eutrophication in the most important estuary in the United States is notable not only for its technical sophistication but also for its ambitious public participation program. Early in the Chesapeake Bay Program, nitrogen and phosphorous were determined to be pollutants causing unacceptable levels of enrichment leading to eutrophication. Sources were partitioned and reduction strategies proposed and initiated for each major source. The major sources of nutrients were determined to be agriculture, sewage treatment plants and developed urban/suburban land. In 1987, the Bay State's governors signed an agreement to reduce nutrients by 40% by the year 2000. A major portion of the restoration effort is geared towards educating and involving the public in both policy decision-making and reducing pollution from farms, industry, sewage treatment plants and people's homes. The public, government, and scientists have worked together in a unique partnership to craft and implement the Chesapeake Bay Program.

One of the unique features of the Chesapeake Bay restoration program is the role nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) have played. A variety of NGO's have been involved in numerous capacities, from providing education and public awareness programs, to organizing lobbying campaigns, to creating forums to bring diverse points of view together around complex issues. In the Chesapeake Bay Program, NGO's have actually become program partners, receiving grant funds to carry out essential components of the restoration effort.

The media has also played a crucial role in the Chesapeake Bay Program. The media's ability to reach large numbers of people and to make complex and often arcane issues relevant and understandable to the public has been important to securing a broad base of public support.

This paper will examine the unique role of NGO's and the media in the Chesapeake Bay Program. It will describe how several types of NGO's are organized, how they operate, where their money comes from, and how they relate to the Bay restoration effort. It will also briefly describe how the media, particularly the press, has interacted with the Bay Program. Examples which illustrate the roles of NGO's and the media in the Chesapeake Bay Program will be used to assist conference participants to apply valuable new approaches in their own water resources management programs.