



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

HJR 640 FUNDING STUDY COMMITTEE

MAY 12, 2005

STATEMENT OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

GOOD MORNING (AFTERNOON) MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE. I AM ANN JENNINGS, VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY AS YOU BEGIN CONSIDERING HOW TO PERMANENTLY FUND THE CLEAN UP OF VIRGINIA'S RIVERS, STREAMS AND THE BAY.

I FIRST WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PERSONALLY SAY "THANK YOU" FOR YOUR WORK DURING THE 2005 SESSION. I HOPE THAT YOU SAW OUR PUBLIC "THANK YOU" IN THE RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH ON THE DAY OF THE RECONVENED SESSION, APRIL 6TH.

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION REMAINS GRATEFUL FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP ON THIS CRITICAL AND PRESSING MATTER.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION OF A 50 MILLION DOLLAR DOWNPAYMENT TO UPGRADE SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE NUTRIENT POLLUTION, THE NUMBER ONE THREAT TO THE HEALTH OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY.

WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE CONTINUED LEADERSHIP OF SECRETARY MURPHY AND SECRETARY BLOXOM, WHO HAVE MAINTAINED A HIGH LEVEL OF ATTENTION AND DEDICATION TO VIRGINIA'S WATER QUALITY NEEDS.

CBF STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE CONCLUSION OF HOUSE AND SENATE LEADERS, WHO DURING THE 2005 SESSION DECLARED THAT CLEAN WATER IS NOT A OPTION BUT AN OBLIGATION AND THAT FUNDING FOR NATURAL RESOURCES IS A CORE FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT.

AS YOU WELL KNOW AND AS SECRETARY MURPHY AND RUSS BAXTER CLEARLY LAID OUT EARLIER THIS MORNING, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF LEGAL REASONS WHY VIRGINIA IS OBLIGATED TO RESTORING OUR LAKES, STREAMS, RIVERS AND THE BAY - FROM CONSENT ORDERS OUTLINING COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL LAW, TO SEVERAL STATE LAWS, AND THE COMMONWEALTH'S COMMITMENT UNDER THE CHESAPEAKE 2000 AGREEMENT.

BUT CERTAINLY THERE ARE OTHER IMPORTANT, PERHAPS MORE COMPELLING REASONS FOR PROVIDING CLEAN WATER – TO PROTECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND HEALTH OF OUR CITIZENS, TO MAINTAIN THE STATE’S DIVERSE AND VIBRANT ECONOMY, TO SECURE A LEGACY OF CLEAN WATER FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN. THIS WILL NOT BE AN EASY OR INEXPENSIVE TASK. BUT GIVEN WHAT IS AT STAKE, I URGE YOU TO FIND A SOLUTION. FAILURE TO REACH A CONSENSUS, I HOPE, IS NOT AN OPTION.

MY MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY IS QUITE SIMPLE. AS YOU WORK TO FIND WAYS TO FUND RESTORATION OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY AND VIRGINIA’S STREAMS AND RIVERS, YOU HAVE CBF’S SUPPORT AND THE SUPPORT OF VIRGINIANS ACROSS THE STATE -- FROM RURAL SHENANDOAH VALLEY, TO THE URBAN CRESCENT, TO THE EASTERN SHORE.

WHY CAN I SAY THAT SO CONFIDENTLY? CBF HAS TALKED AND WORKED WITH LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF VIRGINIANS OVER THE PAST YEAR – FIVE HUNDRED OF WHOM RALLIED AT THE CAPITOL LAST JANUARY IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR CLEAN WATER. THOSE CONVERSATIONS OFFER A NUMBER OF “GUIDING PRINCIPLES” I HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER AS YOU MOVE FORWARD.

WE KNOW THAT CITIZENS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH CONSIDER POLLUTION OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY AND LOCAL RIVERS AND STREAMS A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM, ONE THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THAN THE ECONOMY, CRIME, EDUCATION, AND TAXES. VIRGINIANS, OVERWHELMINGLY, SUPPORT YOUR ACTION LAST SESSION TO APPROPRIATE 50 MILLION DOLLARS TO REDUCE POLLUTION IN RIVERS, STREAMS AND THE CHESAPEAKE BAY.

VIRGINIANS ACCEPT THAT WE ARE ALL PART OF THE PROBLEM AND MUST BE PART OF THE SOLUTION. VIRGINIAN’S CAN ACCEPT PAYING THEIR SHARE OF THE BILL FOR BRINGING THE CHESAPEAKE BAY AND VIRGINIA’S RIVERS BACK TO HEALTH.

SOME OTHER KEY FINDINGS CBF HAS IDENTIFIED IN TALKING TO VIRGINIANS:

- **THERE IS GENUINE EXCITEMENT AND ENERGY THAT WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE PROBLEM, DEVELOPED SOLUTIONS, AND, IF IMPLEMENTED, WE CAN BRING THE BAY BACK. VIRGINIAN’S ARE WILLING TO PAY IF THE FUNDING GOES TO IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS THAT WORK. VIRGINIANS WANT TO KNOW THAT THE FUNDING IS GOING TO “ON-THE-GROUND” SOLUTIONS THAT WILL DIRECTLY RESULT IN WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS.**

- **WE LEARNED THERE IS A PRESSING NEED FOR A STABLE, CONSISTENT FUNDING SOURCE. WHILE THE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FUND HAS BEEN OUR CRITICAL LINK TO THE PROGRESS MADE THUS FAR, THE INSTABILITY OF THE FUND – ONE YEAR THERE ARE TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS AVAILABLE AND THE NEXT YEAR THERE IS NOTHING – HANDICAPS THE COMMONWEALTH’S EFFORTS BEYOND JUST A LACK OF FUNDS. WITHOUT A STABLE SOURCE OF FUNDING, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND FARMERS CANNOT ADEQUATELY PLAN FOR THEIR CONSTRUCTION NEEDS – TO UPGRADE SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS OR INSTALL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES. WE OFTEN HEARD THAT FARMERS GAVE UP TRYING TO SECURE STATE FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION PRACTICES, HAVING REPEATEDLY APPLIED AND BEEN TURNED AWAY DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS. IT IS SIMPLY NOT ACCEPTABLE TO HAVE VIRGINIA’S FARMERS WILLING TO TAKE ACTION ON THEIR LAND TO ADDRESS RUNOFF PROBLEMS – FARMERS WILLING TO DO THEIR PART -- YET HAVE INSUFFICIENT STATE FUNDS TO ASSIST IN THAT EFFORT.**
- **THERE IS ALSO SUPPORT FOR TARGETING SOLUTIONS THAT PROVIDE THE “BIGGEST BANG FOR THE BUCK.” BY TAKING SUCH AN APPROACH, WE CAN REAP THE BENEFITS OF CLEAN WATER SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. AND, AS DELEGATE LIGAMFELTER – A MEMBER OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION -- IS AWARE, WE KNOW WHAT WILL GET US THE GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE LEAST FUNDING. THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION’S REPORT ON COST-EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING NUTRIENT POLLUTION CLEARLY LAYS OUT THE BEST PRACTICES.**
- **WE ALSO HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR THAT IF A FEE IS ESTABLISHED, EXEMPTIONS SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND THAT THE COLLECTION OF ANY NEW FEE SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE.**

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT YOU WILL WRESTLE WITH A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT ISSUES IN THE COMING MONTHS AS YOU WORK TO DEVELOP A LONG-TERM FUNDING SOLUTION TO VIRGINIA’S WATER POLLUTION CRISIS. I HOPE THESE FEW LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNED WILL ASSIST YOU IN THAT REGARD.

IF THIS COMMITTEE CAN AGREE UPON ONE OR MORE APPROACHES THAT WILL PREDICTABLY, YEAR AFTER YEAR, PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FUNDING – PERHAPS, HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS – TO FUND VIRGINIA’S CLEAN UP PLANS, THE COMMONWEALTH WILL, WITHOUT DOUBT, BE A LEADER IN THE BAY REGION, AND ACROSS THE NATION, IN RESTORING OUR WATERS.

IN CLOSING, I OFFER ANY ASSISTANCE THAT THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION CAN PROVIDE TO THE STUDY COMMITTEE. WE ALREADY HAVE EXTENDED TO DELEGATE CALLAHAN AN OFFER FOR THE STUDY COMMITTEE TO MEET AT THE BAY FOUNDATION'S PORT ISOBEL ISLAND EDUCATION CENTER, LOCATED NEAR TANGIER ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY. WE HAVE ALL THE AMENITIES NECESSARY TO HOST THIS COMMITTEE AND OTHER ATTENDEES FOR AN OVERNIGHT STAY. AS I BELIEVE DELEGATE COX CAN ATTEST, PORT ISOBEL PROVIDES BREATHTAKING VIEWS IN A RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE SETTING – A PERFECT LOCATION TO HOLD A MEETING.

WE WILL ALSO HAVE A NUMBER OF OUR STAFF WORKING ON THE FUNDING ISSUE OVER THE COMING YEAR AND WE HAVE AGAIN RETAINED THE SERVICES OF MAY FOX AND CHARLIE GUTHRIDGE IS ASSIST US IN THIS EFFORT. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL ON ANY OF US FOR ASSISTANCE.

I THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY. I AGAIN THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO THIS ISSUE. AND, I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU.