



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

[Concepts for Conservation Reform for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#)

The Chesapeake Bay suffers from severe nutrient overenrichment resulting in low dissolved oxygen and impaired clarity caused largely by algal blooms. Agriculture is a major source of nutrients. Strategies developed to reduce impairments indicate major acceleration of implementation of agricultural practices are needed along with incentives to implement new, innovative and potentially higher risk practices. Both require more research, education, technical assistance and funding.

The non-federal partners of the Chesapeake Bay Program convened a special "staff group" of attorneys, environmental and agricultural policy analysts and university (NIWQP) water quality and policy experts. More than 40 listening sessions were held with public and private stakeholders. A report with recommendations will be endorsed by the Governors of six states in November, 2005. The report contains numerous recommendations but focuses on five priorities. They include 1) establishment of a "Regional Stewardship Fund" for critical watersheds, 2) expansion of the Conservation Security Program nationally, 3) payments based on environmental benefits and ecological services, 4) funding for technical assistance and education, and 5) doing these in a way that enhances the economic viability of agriculture.

These recommendations and other more specific ones in the report will be supported by the state Governor's offices, proposed to Congressional delegations and used by the states and NGO's as starting points for discussions with other regions and interest groups. Land grant university water quality science/policy analysts provided much of the analysis that formed the basis of the report and recommendations.

Author: Tom Simpson

Coauthor(s): Ann Swanson - Chesapeake Bay Commission