



# Social Media News Release

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## Restoration Work Is Cause for Optimism on Road to Restoring an Impaired Chesapeake Bay

*Chesapeake Bay Program's "Bay Barometer" highlights restoration progress and evolving science and illustrates lag times between work and results*

The Chesapeake Bay Program's analysis of the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed reveals a resilient ecosystem that continues to face challenges from excess nutrients, chemical contaminants and ever-increasing resource demands. The *Bay Barometer*, released today, offers a science-based snapshot of long and short term health trends and watershed-wide progress by partners toward a healthy Bay ecosystem.

Though indicators of ecological health continue to reflect the reality of an impaired Bay, our restoration work actions and efforts to reduce the flow of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment into rivers and streams give Bay officials cause for optimism. Similarly, new data provides insights on lag times across the watershed, or that period of time that occurs between restoration work and visible improvements in water quality. While lag times mean it will take time to see restoration results, they also give us reason for optimism: our actions do have an impact. Finally, CBP's new method for tracking the attainment of water quality standards in tidal segments of the Bay applies the most up-to-date science to historical data, offering a long-term perspective on how the Bay's waters have changed since 1985.

## Facts

The following are some highlights of the 2012-13 *Bay Barometer*.

### *Some Positive Signs*

- American Shad, fish that are very sensitive to polluted waters, are returning in increasing numbers to spawn James, Potomac, Rappahannock, Susquehanna and York Rivers;
- Adult female crab population increased in 2012 and population remains at a stable level, below target for abundance but well above the level at which they would be considered 'overfished'; and,
- Rockfish continue to appear in healthy numbers, based on the latest coast-wide assessment.

### *Some Indicators of Impairments*

- 29 percent of the Bay's tidal areas met water quality standards under CBP's newly-revised indicator;
- 74 percent of 92 tidal areas analyzed were positive for chemical contaminants; and,
- Underwater grasses in the Bay declined for a third year in a row overall, even as large grass beds like those at Susquehanna Flats continued to show resilience.

### *Restoration Accomplishments*

- 2012 estimates show that CBP partners are 25, 27 and 32 percent of the way to meeting the 2025 goals for reducing nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads to the Bay;
- 285 more miles of forested buffers planted, largely planted by rural landowners;
- 2,231 acres of wetlands created or re-established
- 34 more miles of streams opened for migratory fish to reach necessary spawning grounds;
- 18 new public access sites opened, giving people more opportunities to enjoy waterways; and,
- Harris Creek oyster reef construction and seed planting of spat was completed.

### *Factors to Consider*

- 2012 was a near-average year for flow of fresh water from rivers to the Bay.



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- The number of people in the watershed increased to

## Issues

Determining the current health of the Bay and its tributaries is as complex as the ecosystem itself. Factors such as annual rainfall, river flow and the increasing need to meet demand for resources to support a growing population—food, housing, infrastructure—mean we have to understand the complex science if we are to bring the Bay into balance. The Chesapeake Bay Program's role is to offer the public all the data, in its most clear form, so that each person can assess the health of our waters, fisheries and habitats and the progress that partners and communities are making toward a restored ecosystem.

## Importance

Looking at data over time helps scientists understand natural variations as well as the long-term effects of restoration efforts. The data provided in the 2012-13 *Bay Barometer* reflect the Bay's health over the course of many years, and in some cases, decades. The publication provides a snapshot of the best available information from 2012 and 2013 on the Bay's health and current efforts to protect and restore our national treasure and its watershed. Additionally, news bullets and "Learn the Issues" sections offer readers some context of other relevant work taking place in the watershed.

## Quotes

"Bay Program partners have made significant strides in moving us ever closer to a healthy, restored Bay watershed. Although we would like to see more immediate results from our actions, we will have to exercise persistence and patience as the actions we take to rebuild balance and resilience back into this complex ecosystem take effect and show up in the data from our monitoring networks. The Chesapeake Bay Partnership will continue to report health and restoration information each year, work to improve our science and reporting systems and look forward to observing the gains we will achieve from the work we are doing today."

- Nick DiPasquale, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program Director

"Restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed for generations is truly a collaborative effort. As the Chesapeake Bay Program partners work to lay the groundwork for that future, not only will we continue our determination to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution but we will also need to work together to protect valuable resources and restore our habitats, fisheries and local waters. In the end, whether we are talking about urban or agricultural lands, we all must do our part for the health of our waters and our environment."

- Keith A. Anderson, Chair, CBP Principals' Staff Committee and Director, D.C. Department of the Environment

## Additional Information

Full data and information can be found at "[Track the Progress](#)" on [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net). Visit our "[Bay Resource Library](#)" for videos, images and maps related to this release.

## Images

Find photos on [CBP's Flickr site](#).

## Videos

- [Bay 101: Stormwater Runoff](#)
- [Bay 101: Striped Bass](#)
- [Bay 101: American Shad](#)
- [From the Field: Monitoring Water Quality](#)
- [From the Field: Rebuilding Oyster Reefs in Harris Creek](#)
- [From the Field: Winter Dredge Survey Counts Blue Crabs](#)