



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

News Release

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Wetlands Play Critical Role in Bay's Health During Hurricane Season *More than 3,700 Acres of Wetlands Restored Last Year*

Last year, [Chesapeake Bay Program \(CBP\) partners restored 3,775 acres of wetlands](#) in the Bay watershed according to the program's habitat team tracking these efforts. This is the rough equivalent of 2,855 football-fields-worth of newly created or re-established wetland habitats. These 2011 efforts of federal, state and non-governmental partnerships build on the 14,795 wetland acres established from 1998 to 2010 and represent a solid start for the Bay jurisdictions toward meeting the goal of restoring 30,000 acres and rejuvenating 150,000 acres of these vital landscapes across the Bay's region by 2025.

Wetlands Restored in 2011

○ Delaware	123 ac.
○ Maryland	750 ac.
○ New York	625 ac.
○ Pennsylvania	254 ac.
○ Virginia	1,653 ac.
○ West Virginia	369 ac.

During the 2012 hurricane season, wetlands along the edges of streams, creeks, rivers and the Bay will play a critical role in healthy waters. Marshes and wetlands are the Bay's buffers, providing unique habitats for fish and wildlife while stabilizing shorelines and protecting properties from floods and wave action. In times of heavy rains, wetlands act like a sponge, soaking up and holding large amounts of flood and stormwater runoff and gradually releasing it over time. As runoff slowly filters through the wetland, nutrients, suspended sediments and chemical contaminants in the runoff are absorbed by the soils and plants before they can flow to nearby waterways. Wetlands are especially important in urban areas where development and impervious surfaces increase the velocity and volume of polluted stormwater runoff headed for local waters.

Annual data and impacts of the late storms in 2011 illustrate the important role wetlands have in the ecosystem. Last year, suspended sediment and algae in the Bay's waters resulted in only [five percent of tidal waters meeting CBP's goals for clarity](#), an all time low. Sediment-laden runoff was also a contributing factor in the [21 percent decline in acres of the Bay's underwater grasses](#) which need good water clarity to grow. Increased nutrients to the Bay meant [lower levels of dissolved oxygen](#). Finally, preliminary analysis showed that oyster beds across the region were inundated by silt, making it very difficult for oysters to survive. While wetlands alone are not going to stop excess nutrients and sediment from reaching the Bay, strong, healthy ones are clearly vital to reducing impacts of polluted runoff on other natural resources and supporting the Bay's resilience.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership that has coordinated and conducted the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. Partners include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; many federal agencies; and advisory groups of citizens, scientists and local government officials.

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Other resources

CBP Images available at: chesapeakebay.net/photos

Related videos:

- [Bay 101: Stormwater Runoff](#)
- [Bay 101: Waterfowl](#)
- [Bay 101: Bay Grasses](#)
- [Bay 101: Water Clarity](#)
- [Chesapeake Unscripted: What happens to stormwater runoff after it rains? \(York, PA\)](#)