



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION III
Chesapeake Bay Program Office
410 SEVERN AVENUE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21403

Mr. Martin Nohe, Chair
Chesapeake Bay and
Water Resources Policy Committee,
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4239

DEC 17 2007

Dear Mr. Nohe:

Thank you for your letter of October 31, 2007 regarding your concerns about the proposed reorganization of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). I would like to clarify that local governments will be integral to any new organizational structure that I recommend to the CBP's Principal's Staff Committee (PSC). The intention of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO) has never been to marginalize or limit local governments in a reorganized CBP. In fact, given the importance of local involvement in implementation activities we are looking to strengthen local government involvement.

I understand the confusion about the role of local government and citizen involvement in the CBP under the proposed reorganization structure that was sent out. This confusion came about because the discussion regarding local governments and citizen involvement was not documented in the meeting notes. In addition, the selected option showed no clear path for local government or citizen participation. This oversight was not intentional and the portrayal of a reduced role for local governments is not accurate.

At the October 5, 2007 adhoc PSC Reorganization meeting, there was a lot of discussion about the importance of local level involvement in the CBP. Participants recognized that local government and community level actions are extremely important. The majority of participants asserted that the CBP needs to directly hear local perspectives as it develops policies and actions. The question is where and how can the CBP best solicit the community level participation (knowledge, expertise, and information) in its policy debate and decision-making.

At the meeting, there were three basic positions presented regarding local and community level involvement. Some participants argued that the local governments, citizens, and watershed groups would be most effective if they were represented on the Policy Board and other standing committees or task forces as appropriate. This argument focused on the idea that they could shape the actions and policies as decision-makers by participating on decision-making bodies much more effectively than as members of advisory committees.

Other participants argued that local governments, citizens and watershed groups operate

best in an advisory capacity. They believe that the time commitment required by sitting on regular meetings of the Policy Board or any of the other committees was too great for the average citizen or local government official. They also believed that the role of advisory committees provides more strength (in numbers) than having a few representatives on the Policy Board or other committees spread throughout the organization.

The third position was offered by the Commonwealths of Virginia and Pennsylvania; they assert that contact with local governments and community groups could best come through the states. The rationale was that the states are much more closely connected to the local level than the overall CBP.

At the end of the October 5 meeting, we agreed to solicit the opinions of the Advisory Committees on the first two positions. My staff is coordinating with Jessica Blackburn, ACB's liaison to CAC and LGAC, to solicit their opinions.

Recognizing that there is great value in local government participation, the CBPO welcomes COG's input, especially Dr. Ted Graham's thoughts on designing local government participation into sectors such as urban and rural, and his additional thoughts on the different types of local government participation needed in policy and technical issues. I encourage Dr. Graham to continue working with Theresa Martella of my staff to develop options.

The CBPO hopes this letter addresses your concerns. We look forward to working with you to identify the best way to operationalize local government participation in the CBP. Please feel free to contact Deputy Director, Diana Esher, at 215-814-2706 or esher.diana@epa.gov if you have any more comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Lape", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Jeffrey Lape, Director
Chesapeake Bay Program Office

cc: Edward U. (Ted) Graham, Ph.D., P.E, Washington Council of Governments
Diana Esher, Deputy Director, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program
Members, Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee