



Please confirm your Bay Journal subscription - [Click Here to Learn More](#)

[Home](#) | [February 2010](#) | [Clean water forum unites efforts at all levels](#)

## Clean water forum unites efforts at all levels

### Organizers seek greater controls on pollution entering the Chesapeake

By Rona Kobell

The first annual conference of the Choose Clean Water Coalition did not lack for big names.

First came U.S. Rep. Frank Kratovil, who represents Maryland's Eastern Shore and is in one of the nation's tightest re-election races, talking about the economic challenges for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. Then came his colleague, Rep. Elijah Cummings, with a rousing call to action to protect the Bay for generations yet unborn. Much of the rest of the Congressional delegation followed: Maryland's Rep. John Sarbanes, Sen. Benjamin Cardin, Rep. Chris Van Hollen and Rep. Donna Edwards; Virginia's Rep. Rob Wittman and Rep. Gerry Connolly, and the District of Columbia's Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton.

But the conference also brought together names not widely known: environmental activists that toil for small river and stream groups; ecology scientists, mid-level policy-makers and attorneys. They came to learn more about what they could do to protect the Bay's waterways and push for tighter pollution rules.

It was an impressive turnout for a group that formed just nine months ago with a mission to push for greater controls on pollution entering the Bay from agriculture and urban sources. Organizers hoped that the 250 people who crowded into the Renaissance M Street's meeting rooms for the coalition's Chesapeake Bay Restoration Conference over three days in January would leave Washington, D.C., feeling energized, better informed and committed to the cause of clean water. A main priority of the coalition is to pass the Cardin Bill, which includes generous financial assistance for Bay cleanup programs.

Roy Hoagland, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's vice president for restoration, called the conference a "fantastic success" on those fronts. The CBF, along with the National Wildlife Federation and the Piedmont Environmental Council, co-chair the Choose Clean Water Coalition.

"There was a very high-energy level in terms of the participants in the conference," he said. "They felt positive about the Bay and clean water as an issue relevant to them, and it set the standard for getting additional levels of engagement throughout the watershed."

The conference session topics mixed well-known legacy Bay issues, such as stormwater pollution and what to expect from TMDLs, with emerging issues such as natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale region of Pennsylvania and nutrient trading for agriculture. Speakers included Riverkeepers, scientists, policy-makers and environmental activists.

Among the highlights was EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson's announcement that the agency would be initiating rule-making on stormwater runoff and concentrated animal feeding operations to reduce pollution coming from urban areas and agriculture. Although the federal rules would not take effect if states implement their own pollution-control laws, Jackson stressed the move is a change from past practices and shows the Obama administration's commitment to a clean Bay.

"This is not a moment, but the beginning of a sustained effort that will be hard and easy at the same time," Jackson told the crowd. "We've set the stage for the most rigorous program to date (for cleaning the water)."

Steve Bieber, water resources technical manager for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, said he found the

Font Size: [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

#### Tools:

[Print Version](#)

[Mail to a Friend](#)

[Send Comments](#)

#### Images:

(Click thumbnails for full-size image)



#### Related Articles:

- [Clean water advocates could hit mother lode with mine ruling](#)
- [Water demands may leave rivers high and dry](#)
- [Most streams, many wetlands could lose protection](#)

stormwater presentations most informative. It reaffirmed his belief that unregulated sources of pollution remain the biggest challenge to cleaning up the Chesapeake.

"Regulated sources, like wastewater plants, are largely on track to meet Bay goals, or where they are lagging, EPA rule-making is presently under way to get them on track," said Bieber, who worked on a variety of watershed programs for the Maryland Department of the Environment before moving to his current job. "Unregulated sources, on the other hand, are going to need more of a push from groups like the coalition to get where they need to be and ensure there is equity in the approaches used to restore the Bay."

Conference organizers Hillary Harp Falk and Ryan Ewing also sought to engage the younger generations through social media. They set up a Facebook page, and several people, including the Anacostia Watershed Society's Brent Bolin, tweeted from the conference. A YouTube channel is broadcasting Cummings' speech, among other highlights. Ewing said the organizers reached out to environmental bloggers to increase exposure.

But Norfolk State biology professor Camellia M. Okpodu didn't see enough young people-or enough people of color.

"I'm looking around the room," she said in a question to speaker Theresa Pierno of the National Parks Conservation Association, "and I'm wondering, 'is clean water just a white person issue?'"

Later, Okpodu said, if she were grading the conference, she would give it a B+ or and A-. "But I would have given it an A if included a diverse audience of the people who are affected by these issues. It was almost like singing to the choir," she said. "My problem was that there were no young people in the room. They should be here. If we don't convince them that this is something they have to do, we're all about to retire."

Ewing said the coalition has reached out to a diverse swath of interests, from rural to urban and suburban, and he did believe the group represented the people who live in the watershed.

Ewing expects the conference to be an annual event, and is likely keep its Washington location. Next year, he said, they may hold it while Congress is in session so that even more members can attend.

---

**Rona Kobell is a former writer for the Baltimore Sun. Read [more articles by this author](#).**

---

Have a comment on this article? [Send it](#) to the Editor

**Tools:**

 [Top of Page](#)

 [Print Version](#)

 [Mail to a Friend](#)

[HOME](#) | [BACK ISSUES](#) | [CALENDAR](#) | [SUBSCRIBE](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [ABOUT US](#)

The Bay Journal is published by Chesapeake Media Service for the Chesapeake Bay Program.

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | © Copyright 2010 - Bay Journal