



Protecting And Restoring The Bay

A healthier Bay would be an economic boon to Maryland and the other five watershed states. Over the last three decades, Maryland and Virginia have suffered more than \$4 billion in cumulative annual losses because of the decline of industries related to oyster harvesting. Further, the decline of crabs in the Bay between 1998 and 2006 has meant a cumulative loss of about \$640 million to Maryland and Virginia. According to estimates from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Bay currently provides benefits of at least \$107.2 billion annually to the six-state region, which would skyrocket by over \$22 billion per year if the Foundation's Bay health goals were reached, with \$4.5 billion of that benefit going to Maryland.

With a watershed covering 64,000 square miles, we must protect the Bay and improve its health while protecting our vulnerable coastal communities from the effects of climate change. To preserve and protect the Bay, **John will:**

- **Uphold Maryland's commitment to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement with our neighbors, which has fallen in priority under the Hogan administration.** Currently, the Bay and surrounding watershed are overseen through a cooperative effort by governments of DC, the six watershed states, and the EPA. There is also the Chesapeake Bay Commission, an interstate compact and legislative commission representing lawmakers in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, an agreed-upon directive describing desired environmental goals and the processes necessary to reach them between Maryland and the other two states, was updated in 2014, but the policies and goals have yet to be fully renewed while Hogan has been in office except minor amendments added in 2020. Maryland deserves a governor that honors the state's environmental commitments to its people and its neighbors.
- **Reduce runoff of nitrogen and phosphorus.** Maryland has improved its runoff problem in recent years but still has a long way to go. An increase in urban, suburban and agricultural land use has raised the amount of nutrients and sediment entering streams and rivers while at the same time lowering the water supply. This leads to things like algal blooms that create low oxygen "dead zones" and sediment build-up that can suffocate oysters and destroy habitat. Our state did not meet mandatory agricultural nitrogen reductions in 2019 and we're far behind meeting reductions for 2025. The most significant contributor to nitrogen and phosphorus pollution is agricultural fertilizer runoff, but stormwater, wastewater, and air pollution contribute as well.
- **Stop the historic level of overfishing and oppose relaxation of current oyster fishery and sanctuary rules.** Oysters and shad populations have yet to rebound from historic

overfishing. The native oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay has declined due to a combination of over-harvesting, disease and habitat loss. Over-harvesting has removed large volumes of oysters from the Bay, destroying healthy reefs by scraping them away with dredges, which now limits oyster beds to flat, thin layers of dead shell and other live oysters on the bottom of the bay, offering less surface area for reef-dwelling organisms to live. Restoration efforts in the Bay must include managing oyster harvest, establishing oyster sanctuaries and strategies to overcome disease. Fishery managers recently proposed relaxing oyster harvesting restrictions and the DNR under Hogan has been much more open to reducing restrictions on harvesting, so it's important to have a Governor in office that will oppose rolling back restrictions.

- **Regulate farm operations around manure and chemical fertilizers to improve water quality and reduce farm pollutants, which will eliminate “dead zones” and allow the recovery of the Bay’s native wildlife, like its oyster population.** The poultry industry in Maryland has long impacted the Chesapeake Bay due to nutrient and sediment runoff from poultry waste both onsite at poultry farms and in fertilizer applications on crops at other farms. Agriculture is the biggest source of runoff on the Eastern Shore, contributing the bulk of the nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment that leads to dead zones, smothering of oysters, depletion of bay grasses and even flesh-eating diseases, 2019 saw 900 million pounds of raw manure produced by Delmarva’s 609 million chickens, most of which was disposed on already phosphorous filled farmland, leading to run-off into public waters.
- **Introduce regulations to reduce poultry waste that pollutes the Bay, including finally passing the Poultry Litter Management Act so corporate poultry producers must clean up after themselves.** Delmarva poultry operations, while an important source of jobs and economic driver on the Eastern Shore, produce unregulated ammonia emissions that end up polluting waterways as fans blow ammonia waste out of chicken houses. Despite this, the Maryland Department of Environment does not require the inexpensive, common sense methods to mitigate ammonia emissions like planting trees, shrubs and tall grasses near escape fans. The Poultry Litter Management Act proposed in 2016 would have required corporate poultry such as Perdue, Tyson, & Mountaire to pick up excess manure instead of leaving the burden on individual farmers and taxpayers, but didn’t make it very far. As governor, I’ll work with the legislature as well as direct our state agencies to create more regulations cutting down on poultry waste and finally pass the Poultry Litter Management Act.
- **Restore the limits on poultry pollution introduced by Governor O’Malley and halted under Hogan.** Hogan campaigned against rules reducing pollution associated with chicken manure and halted limits introduced by Governor O’Malley while replacing them with his own regulations. Under his administration, MDE has purposefully stalled and drafted improper regulations for legislation passed by the General Assembly causing years of delay in implementing stronger standards. As governor, my administration will work with the legislature and support their proposals around poultry regulation, not slow walk protections that ensure the health of our invaluable natural assets like the Bay.
- **Support Maryland’s farmers in advancing sustainable agriculture practices.** Maryland farmers feel the impacts of climate change firsthand as drought and other extreme weather impact crops. At the same time, Maryland farms are currently demonstrating how regenerative agriculture can benefit the environment and the farm. By integrating the perspectives of farmers in state planning, promoting local farms, and

accelerating healthy soil use and natural carbon sequestration, we can support Maryland farmers and lead the country in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.