

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
Chesapeake Bay Commanders Conference  
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Thanks, Mike Miller. ADM Miller was my legislative aide until about a month ago. And I want to congratulate him again on his new job here as superintendent of the academy. It's a hard job. He has to live here on the bay in Annapolis. He has to go to virtually every Navy football game. He gets a big house. He gets to deal with some of our very brightest and most motivated young people and he gets to be paid for all this. I know I have the best job in the Navy and the Marine Corps, but I'm sort of getting suspicious that Mike Miller may be number two and coming up fast.

So anyway, thank you again and thank you so much for hosting this conference and for the contributions that the Naval Academy, the faculty here and the staff – their contributions to Marine research on and on behalf of the Chesapeake.

Governor O'Malley, thank you so much for being here today. Lisa Jackson - I'm so glad that both of you are here to illustrate the partnership that we have in addressing the issues that face the Chesapeake and help stress the national imperative of keeping this bay clean and productive for future generations of Americans.

We all recognize that what happens in the Chesapeake Bay is not just a concern for the people of the Chesapeake Bay. It affects our entire country. It affects every American, just as surely as what happens in the Gulf of Mexico affects us all. Both are national waters. Both are national treasures. And the impact of both goes so much further than just simple environmental concerns. The bay, the Gulf, they're all interconnected. What happens to the ecosystem here affects the economy. What happens to the ecosystem here affects the culture of the Mid-Atlantic. And what happens to the ecosystem here deeply affects the lives of everyone living around its shores. We have to pay constant attention to our national waters and we shouldn't wait for a crisis to galvanize our efforts.

Here in the Chesapeake, I think that lesson has been very clearly learned. Because of the leadership of the states bordering the Chesapeake, and in partnership with the federal government and the leadership of this president, we are slowly changing the practices of the past and making the bay cleaner and better for our future.

In making that commitment to the Chesapeake Bay, we are returning to our roots as a maritime nation. For over two centuries, we have been protected by our waters. We have been sustained by their bounty and now it's our turn to protect them. Defense of the bay is a key component for the Department of the Navy and for the Department of Defense.

It's on the shores of the Chesapeake, at Yorktown, that we earned the right to call ourselves a nation. It is on the bay, in 1862, that Monitor met Virginia and forever changed the nature of naval warfare. It is from this bay that countless thousands of servicemen and servicewomen have shipped off to a dozen conflicts in order to preserve freedom around the world. And it is on this bay, here at the Naval Academy, that we educate the future leaders of the Navy and the Marine Corps.

I'm particularly happy, though, that we've got every service represented at this conference. Because every service has a presence on the bay, from Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground to Langley Air Force Base to the Marine Corps base at Quantico in the central bay, and Norfolk Naval Base in the south. Every one of our armed services has a responsibility to preserve the Chesapeake for those who follow.

Department of Defense efforts are focused on things like producing nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment in storm-water runoff. It's also focused on preservation and stabilization of the shoreline to reduce erosion. There are 68 Department of Defense installations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and what we do on each of them matters and make a difference. And the cumulative effects of our efforts will have a noticeable effect towards meeting the principles laid out last year in President Obama's executive order on Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration and the goals of the Chesapeake Bay federal strategy.

Across all our installations, we're upgrading our wastewater treatment plant, like the ones at Webster Field and Pax River. We are implementing broader lead construction standards in all our buildings in order to minimize runoff.

And we're implementing low-impact development practices on construction projects to further reduce storm-water flow. We are introducing pervious pavers to our parking lots, which are a large contributor to runoff and, as you know, parking lots abound on military bases. The new lots, some of which are located right here on the Naval Academy, allow rainwater to naturally get back into the ground water table rather than being collected and piped into the bay.

We're buying more hybrids and electric cars and vehicles to reduce our nitrogen footprint and reduce emissions that end up in the bay through air deposition.

And we are committed, through our partnership with states and local communities, to reducing erosion, through the establishment of buffer zones and shoreline preservation projects such as the one underway at Indian Head, along the Potomac River and along Mattawan Creek. These projects both improve overall water quality and enhance or improve existing wildlife habitats.

As we move towards the goals that we've set, I'm confident that every person here – every person in the audience, as commanders and as representatives of installations across the Chesapeake – will look for and enact additional measures to improve water quality, reduce runoff and conserve the shoreline.

This is preeminently a team effort. Leading our team at the federal level is EPA administrator Lisa Jackson. She was appointed by the president to chair the Federal Leadership Council and coordinate the efforts of dozens of local, state and federal organizations, each charged with a piece of bay preservation.

She is a native of New Orleans. And I've spent a little time with Lisa in New Orleans and I now know what it means to travel with a rock star. People would say, hey, Lisa, who is that with you? And that was when she was down there with President Obama.

She came to this job with an incredible wealth of experience: 16 years with EPA in New York and D.C., service as New Jersey's environmental protection commissioner. She's also no stranger to trying to get disparate agencies to work together because she was chief of staff to the governor of New Jersey.

Lisa Jackson, Administrator Lisa Jackson, thank you for taking on this leadership role. Thank you for being here today and coming up to talk to us.