

National Estuary Program

Minority Outreach & Involvement Strategy



INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Coastal Bays National Estuary Program (NEP) is one of 28 NEPs across the country that receives EPA funding in order to work toward the restoration and protection of “estuaries of National significance” (Clean Water Act, §320). The Coastal Bays Program is a grassroots, multi-stakeholder collaboration working toward meeting this goal. However, approximately twenty percent of Worcester County’s population is made up of minorities, yet minority participation in the Coastal Bays Program is virtually non-existent. The Coastal Bays Program has stated a goal of fostering a community consensus, inclusive of all, on the desired future condition of the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed, a goal that is unachievable with one-fifth of the population under-represented in the Program. The challenge is to expand outreach and education efforts to specifically include minority populations of the coastal bays watershed by incorporating a proactive approach of informing citizens on how to participate in program activities.

The Coastal Bays Policy Committee tasked the program to develop and implement a minority outreach strategy. Consequently the Coastal Bays **Minority Outreach and Involvement Strategy** was developed, approved by the Policy Committee and includes these three objectives:

- Career and Job Training
- Environmental Awareness
- Stewardship and Involvement

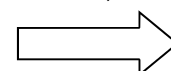
Within each of these areas are tremendous opportunities and partnerships to help achieve the goal of improving minority participation in the Program. Although the initial focus of the outreach efforts will be with the Maryland Coastal Bays NEP, a similar program is being implemented in both the Delaware Estuary and Delaware Inland Bays NEPs.

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In an effort to increase the involvement of low-income, minority, and non-English speaking populations in environmental careers, EPA Region III and other Coastal Bays Minority Outreach Steering Committee members will work closely with local schools, community colleges, and universities to recruit minorities, develop internships and environmental education opportunities.

EPA Region III’s contribution to the effort will be to work with **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** which is also the focus of Executive Order 13256 signed by the President in February, 2002. Its aim is to increase opportunities for HBCUs to participate in and benefit from Federal programs.

In so doing, Region III has expanded its **“Linking Environmental Academic Programs (LEAP)”**, a collaborative initiative pioneered with Lincoln University, an HBCU in Chester County, PA, to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) another HBCU, located in Queen Anne, MD (near the Maryland Coastal Bay Watershed).





DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION, CONT'D

The program is designed to strengthen the growth of mutually beneficial partnerships by promoting environmental education to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). The furtherance of the goals and ideals stated in the Executive Order provided the foundation for LEAP's expansion to UMES. EPA Region III was the lead in establishing this collaboration among the Regional office, UMES and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program. On June 12, 2007 the Region, UMES, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), the Maryland Coastal Bay Program, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) based on the original LEAP model. *The signing of the MOU was an important component to the successful establishment of the LEAP program at UMES. This will be a multi-year commitment of resources to the Maryland Coastal Bays Program to fund student interns who will gain hands on experience on coastal watershed restoration, management and policy implementation and outreach to the minority community within Worcester County, MD.*

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Students will have the opportunity to work with the three National Estuary Programs via internships and volunteering to help implement their EPA approved *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (i.e., habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, etc.)*. In return, students will work with minority communities by identifying environmental and related human health problems which can support EPA's commitment to environmental justice.

Linkages to EPA and other appropriate agencies and their programs can then be made to help mitigate problems in the watershed affecting these communities (i.e. ground water contamination, on-site waste water treatment systems, drinking water, flooding, etc.). This process will lead to more targeted program implementation ultimately supporting **EPA's National Strategic Plan:**

- Protect coastal and ocean waters (via CCMP Implementation)

- Sustain, clean up, and restore communities and the ecological systems that support them.
 - Facilitate the ecosystem-scale protection and restoration of natural areas.
 - Prevent pollution and promote environmental stewardship by the Public, and
- EPA's Regional priorities:**
- Watershed Restoration
 - Reducing Environmental Exposure to Sensitive Populations

PROJECT FUNDING

On May 18, 2007, EPA awarded UMES a grant of \$50,000.00 to fund the University's Eastern Shore Restoration and Education Program (ESREP). The purpose of ESREP is to provide 20 high school students (9th and 10th) with hands-on opportunities to explore coastal and estuarine systems, conduct restoration projects in the Coastal Bays and Lower Eastern Shore, and to provide internship opportunities.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

Office of Watersheds, Water Protection Division

David A. Greaves, (215) 814-5729, greaves.david@epa.gov

Ed Ambrogio, (215) 814-2758, ambrogio.edward@epa.gov

