

**ANNAPOLIS — Maryland has submitted its final “pollution diet” plan, which details how the state will achieve Chesapeake Bay pollution reduction goals five years earlier than mandated by the federal government.**

The state's plan aims to reduce nitrogen by 21 percent, phosphorus by 18 percent and sediment by 12 percent “from the wastewater, urban runoff, septics, agriculture and air pollution sectors,” by 2020 instead of 2025, five years ahead of the Environmental Protection Agency's deadline, according to a news release.

The plan, which was submitted Friday, includes detailed timelines, scheduled goals of projects and programs, options for how the state will implement and enforce controls, and preliminary estimates on costs and funding.

Maryland missed the original Nov. 30 deadline to submit its final watershed implementation plan to the EPA in order to review an extensive amount of public comment, said Dawn Stoltzfus, spokeswoman for the Maryland Department of the Environment.

New York was the only Chesapeake Bay watershed state that had not submitted its final plan as of Friday afternoon.

EPA Spokesman David Sternberg said Maryland requested extra time to make sure its plan met the required pollution reductions necessary for restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

It does not appear there will be consequences for Maryland's late submission, Sternberg said.

Stoltzfus said the state received sophisticated responses from the public, which were “extremely useful” in the revision process.

The plan was revised by Gov. Martin O'Malley's Bay Cabinet and staff from several state departments, including the Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources.

During the 45-day public comment period from Sept. 24 to Nov. 8, the state held four public meetings that 315 citizens attended.

The state received 113 sets of comments from 750 individuals, two petitions with 1,000 signatures and 100 e-mails with concerns and suggestions.

Stoltzfus said the public was mainly concerned with how the state would execute the plan, which was explained in detail in its revised version, giving the EPA and citizens reasonable assurance that goals would be met.

Maryland is one of six watershed states along with Washington, D.C., that were required to submit plans to put limits on harmful pollutants that enter the bay.

The EPA is requiring each state and the district to reduce harmful nitrogen and phosphorus levels by 25 percent, and sediment levels by at least 16 percent by 2025 as part of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load.

The goal of the "diet" is to have 60 percent of restoration practices on the ground by 2017, and 100 percent of the practices in place by 2025.

The plan is required under federal law by President Obama's Chesapeake Bay Executive Order. It allows the EPA to implement strict restoration deadlines on states and to enforce penalties if they do not meet their goals.

In September, Maryland and the district were the only jurisdictions to submit plans that were on target in regards to nutrient and sediment levels, and only minimal changes were required to

their drafts in order to meet pollution cap levels.

The seven individual plans will be incorporated into a finalized plan by the end of the year.

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