

NEWS

Total Maximum Daily Load: A pollution diet for the Chesapeake Bay

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According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a comprehensive “pollution diet” established on Dec. 29, 2010. “This TMDL includes accountability features to guide sweeping actions to restore clean water in the Chesapeake Bay and the region’s streams, creeks and rivers,” states the EPA website.

The TMDL for the 64,000-square-mile bay watershed was required under the federal Clean Water Act and responded to consent decrees in Virginia and the District of Columbia from the late 1990s.

The TMDL identifies the necessary pollution reductions from major sources of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment across the bay jurisdictions and sets pollution limits necessary to meet water quality standards. Bay jurisdictions include Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The TMDL set bay watershed limits of 185.9 million pounds of nitrogen, 12.5 million pounds of phosphorus and 6.45 billion pounds of sediment per year. This equates to a 25 percent reduction in nitrogen, 24 percent reduction in phosphorus and 20 percent reduction in sediment.

The TMDL was designed to ensure that all pollution control measures needed to fully restore the bay and its tidal rivers would be in place by 2025.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

What is the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint?

In 2010, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and co-plaintiffs settled a lawsuit with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that included a Clean Water Act provision called the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load or TMDL, which provides science-based, enforceable limits on the amount of pollution entering the Chesapeake in order to remove the bay from the federal "dirty waters" list.

In addition to the settlement, the six bay states and the District of Columbia agreed to develop individual plans and milestones to achieve those limits by 2025, and the EPA committed to holding them accountable and imposing consequences for failure, if necessary.

Together, the limits, plans, milestones, and consequences make up the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint.

Source: Chesapeake Bay Foundation