

“Our duty is to use the land well, and sometimes, not to use it at all. This is our responsibility as citizens; but, more than that, it is our calling as stewards of the Earth. Good stewardship of the environment is not just a personal responsibility, it is a public value. Americans are united in the belief that we must preserve our natural heritage and safeguard the land around us.”

– George W. Bush, President, United States

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This report, developed by the Canaan Valley Institute,

- identifies the values and needs of Mid-Atlantic Highlands stakeholders;
- defines the environmental pulse or condition of the Mid-Atlantic Highlands;
- evaluates the stressors affecting this condition;
- identifies the human activities contributing to the stressors;
- highlights the factors affecting economic conditions;
- proposes opportunities for sustainable environmental stewardship; and
- presents an approach for implementing and evaluating a Highlands Action Program.

BACKGROUND

In the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of the Conference, accompanying Public Law 107-73, making Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs and

Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies (including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)), Congress expressed an expectation that the Administrator of the EPA will carry out the goals of the Mid-Atlantic Highlands Program. It calls for EPA to enter into agreements with state and federal agencies, as well as nongovernmental organizations like Canaan Valley Institute (CVI) to assist the Agency in carrying out those goals. Congress indicated that a federal program is needed in this region for collaborative monitoring, research, management, and restoration activities. CVI is specifically mentioned in the Congressional Report because of its extensive experience working with Mid-Atlantic Highlands stakeholders.

CVI has prepared this report for Congress and the EPA for two reasons: 1) to document the need for a Highlands Action Program and 2) to recommend an approach to implement a Highlands Action Program. Created to foster local decision making in

support of sustainable Mid-Atlantic Highlands communities, the Institute is committed to empowering stakeholders and increasing their ability to improve their quality of life.

Congress and the EPA have long recognized the environmental importance of watersheds. In addition, there is a growing recognition of the importance of collaboration among all levels of stakeholders to ensure responsible environmental stewardship. Because the Mid-Atlantic Highlands is comprised of three major watersheds on over 79,000 square miles, which affect water quality from the Potomac Highlands to the Gulf of Mexico, there is a need to establish a federal program that involves collaborative monitoring, research, management, and restoration activities throughout the Mid-Atlantic Highlands.

This report describes why a Mid-Atlantic Highlands Action Program is needed, and how it could be implemented to assist government agencies and citizens to

- tightly intertwine economics and cultural heri-

“We must improve the relationships among the federal government, states, and localities so that we are more often working together, rather than at cross-purposes, as we pursue responsible environmental stewardship.”

– Christine Whitman, Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

- tag with the environment;
- revitalize damaged ecosystems;
- sustainably practice environmental stewardship;
- protect special places;
- create long-term employment opportunities and improve the quality of life for those who live in and visit the region; and

- leverage funds for an underserved region.
- The Canaan Valley Institute has a successful history of building partnerships that are locally driven, but that include stakeholders from all levels of government as well as from the nonprofit, private, and academic sectors. These partnerships employ sound scientific methods to creatively and effectively manage natural re-

sources, improve communities, and develop economic opportunities.

CVI has benefited from the experience of established place-based programs, and the organization has incorporated lessons learned from successful federal efforts such as the EPA’s Chesapeake Bay Program, the National Estuaries Program, and the Great Lakes Program. Based on its experience and that of others, CVI has concluded that a science-stewardship approach combining top-down program policies and goal setting (a strength of EPA geographic-based programs) with the momentum of locally driven values, opinions, and needs is the desired approach for implementing the congressionally mandated Mid-Atlantic Highlands Action Program. The color themes distinguishing each section of this report relate to each element of this approach as illustrated in Figure 1.

The information and recommendations presented in this report are intended to help Congress, EPA, and other federal agencies as they decide on programs and priorities to guide the Mid-Atlantic Highlands in the 21st century.



Figure 1. This diagram illustrates the process by which the Highlands Action Program will operate. The Program is locally driven and incorporates government, private sector, nonprofit, and academic partners. Sound science and local stewardship go hand in hand. The color themes of each section of this report relate to the elements of this process.