

Foreword

In April 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III issued guidance entitled *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Dissolved Oxygen, Water Clarity and Chlorophyll a for the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries (Regional Criteria Guidance)*. The development of the *Regional Criteria Guidance* was the realization of a key commitment in the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement. In that agreement, the signatories (the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay commission and the EPA) committed to, “by 2001, define the water quality conditions necessary to protect aquatic living resources.” New York Delaware and West Virginia agreed to the same commitment through a separate six-state memorandum of understanding with the EPA.

The EPA, in the *Regional Criteria Guidance*, defined the water quality conditions called for in the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement through the development of Chesapeake Bay-specific water quality criteria for dissolved oxygen, water clarity and chlorophyll *a*. The EPA also identified and described five habitats, or designated uses, that provide the context in which the EPA Region III derived adequately protective Chesapeake Bay water quality criteria for dissolved oxygen, water clarity and chlorophyll *a*. Collectively, the three water quality conditions provide the best and most direct measures of the effects of too much nutrient and sediment pollution on the Bay’s aquatic living resource—fish, crabs, oysters, their prey species and underwater bay grasses. These criteria were developed as part of a larger effort to restore Chesapeake Bay water quality.

The *Technical Support Document for the Identification of Chesapeake Bay Designated Uses and Attainability (Technical Support Document)* was developed by the EPA and its watershed partners to be a companion document to the *Regional Criteria Guidance*. Because it describes the development and geographical extent of the designated uses to which the water quality criteria may apply, the *Technical Support Document* serves as a resource to the states to assist them in the development and adoption of refined water quality standards. Specifically, the EPA developed the *Technical Support Document* to help states in conducting use attainability analyses (UAA) which they may conduct as part of their water quality standards development and adoption processes.

The *Technical Support Document* is not law or regulation; it is guidance that states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed may consider in the development and adoption of revised water quality standards.

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