

The Targeted Watersheds Grant Program was proposed in 2002 by the Bush Administration to encourage successful community-based approaches to protect and restore the nation's watersheds. This competitive grant program provides needed resources to those watershed organizations whose restoration plans set clear goals and objectives with special consideration given to water quality monitoring, innovation, a public education component and strong community support. The Christina River Basin Clean Water Partnership is a wonderful example of partnerships in action working together to identify real problems in real places and then fixing them. In the 2003 selection process, the first year of funding in the Targeted Watersheds Grant Program, the Christina Basin application was the highest ranked application from over 170 submittals. This impressive milestone and the award of \$1 million in Federal grant funds was a testimony to the multi-state, multi-organizational effort that is working diligently to improve the water quality conditions in the Christina Basin. At stake is the health of an environmentally and economically significant residential, agricultural, and industrial watershed that provides numerous recreational opportunities and serves as a primary source of drinking water for many of its over 500,000 residents. However, there is no time to rest. With the implementation push provided by the Targeted Watershed grant and the pending completion of the high flow Total Maximum Daily Load study in early 2005, the partners and residents of the Christina Basin must have a renewed commitment to achieve the water quality management goals established for the Christina Basin.

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Good morning - it is a pleasure to represent EPA Region III at today's forum. I wish to convey greetings from our Regional Administrator Donald Welsh who, being a resident of the Christina watershed, had hoped to be with you but a previous commitment required that he be back in Philadelphia today. I wish to thank Jerry Kauffman and the others for their work in putting this forum together and for the invitation to EPA to join you here this morning.

I will take the opportunity of being a stand-in speaker today to open with some small personal history and a huge thank-you. For a significant portion of the past four years, it has been my pleasure to have played a small part in the Christina story, serving on the Christina River Basin Water Quality Management Committee and being the Region III coordinator for the development of the low flow Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis for the Christina Basin. During this time, I was fortunate to meet and work with a number of exceptional people from a variety of state, local and public organizations, many of whom are here today. It is very appropriate for me to begin my short talk with an acknowledgment to all who have labored so successfully to bring an effective organization together to work on Christina Basin issues. To the state agencies, the Delaware River Basin Commission, the Chester County Water Resources Agency and Chester County Conservation District, the many Watershed Association members, municipal and other organizations as well as our hosts today - the Water Resources Agency here at the University of Delaware - you have done a great job.

There is a common outline for speaking which features the three-point plan. Our time this morning is limited so I have appropriately modified this to the two-point version. My message to you this morning focuses on two key words - Celebration and Commitment.

Someone very conveniently subtitled the EPA portion of this agenda with the notation that the Christina Basin Watershed Initiative was ranked first in the nation. That is something we can all celebrate. Back in 2002, the Administration announced the Targeted Watershed program as one of its key environmental initiatives. This program was proposed to encourage successful community-based approaches to protect and restore the nation's watersheds. This competitive grant program provides needed resources to those watershed organizations whose restoration plans set clear goals and objectives, with special consideration given to water quality monitoring, innovation, public education and strong community support. We are encouraged that Congress is continuing to support this program as the 2004 selections were announced this summer and increased project funding is planned for 2005. We are especially proud in Region III to have had four watershed projects selected for funding under this program and look forward to additional projects in 2005.

For the 2003 phase of the Watershed Initiative program, more than 170 applications were forwarded to EPA by the states. After going through an initial Regional review, the remaining nominations underwent a national review and 20 projects were selected for funding. And yes, the Christina Basin Watershed Initiative proposal did emerge as the highest rated project and received \$1 million in federal funding last year.

Why Christina Number 1? On the environmental and water quality side of the equation, the Christina stands as an impressive watershed. A watershed undergoing population growth but a watershed that retains some outstanding agricultural lands. A significant source of drinking water for residents in the watershed. Exceptional recreational waters, including the first

watershed-based nationally designated wild and scenic river, the White Clay Creek. But many watersheds can match or even surpass the Christina's environmental resources. Again, why Number 1?

Quite simply, the staff of the organizations working in the Christina Basin made it easy. The valuable and attractive environmental resource side of the equation is balanced with an equally impressive set of governmental and organization resources. Who would not be attracted to an organization framework that has successfully brought neighboring states to work together with numerous local and regional offices, laying aside political boundaries to show that the axiom 'a watershed does not recognize political boundaries' is true. The criteria established for Watershed Initiative project selection - clear watershed management goals and objectives, innovation, commitment to water quality results, strong public support and education outreach - were clearly met and remain true today. Building on some already notable achievements, the Christina Basin Clean Water Partnership formed to prepare the Christina Basin Watershed Initiative proposal outlined a carefully crafted plan to continue successful project evaluations and studies, many of which you will hear about later today. Number 1? - it was a slam-dunk. You have every reason to celebrate.

But when you are Number 1, a realization comes upon you. While you are taking a brief pause to celebrate that success, you quickly realize that something comes with that achievement. Everyone is looking at you; everyone wants to see what you can accomplish. People are expecting you to deliver - and to deliver at a level that one would expect from the best. My second point today is to ask all here to have a renewed commitment to fulfilling this expectation.

This commitment challenge extends to all involved in the Christina Basin. Yes, it was nice to attain recognition. Yes, that money sure does help. Yes, it was great to see people reaching across state and municipal lines to work together to improve water quality. But there is much work that remains to be done. The funding provided by the Watershed Initiative grant is but a small amount compared to what has been estimated as the total costs needed to restore water quality in the Christina Basin. Next Spring, a high flow TMDL is scheduled to be established that will likely set a new level of implementation needs for the Basin. One of the first things that you learn in the water quality improvement field is that it takes a long time for the water quality improvements that you are seeking to be attained. This Basin has a history of good work and improvements are being seen. But to fully meet the goals and objectives established for the Christina Basin will require much additional work. We must build upon what has been started and keep the Christina Basin in the forefront of watershed management programs.

At EPA, our strategic planning objectives are placing increasing emphasis on watershed-based improvements. We are seeking to identify watershed areas where water quality standards are being attained and waters that have been previously identified as impaired are being restored. The Christina Basin needs to be one of those areas that meets these strategic goals. That will take commitment - a commitment not just to what is already underway but also to move ahead with new efforts. We need a sustained commitment to success. EPA Administrator Governor Michael Leavitt in announcing one of this year's Watershed Initiative selections stated that "With these watershed projects, we take a critical step forward in providing clean and safe water for every American." You have taken that critical first step, and more, in the Christina Basin. I

urge and challenge all of you to remain steadfast to see that the remaining steps are completed.

Yes, you can celebrate but please keep, and renew, the commitment to improved water quality in the Christina Basin.

In closing, I come full circle to end with another personal note and to add a hope. One of my first events in working in the Christina Basin was attending a similar forum to today's meeting at the Ashland Nature Center, which as I recall was approximately four years ago. It was a great introduction to the issues in the Basin. We have now moved four years ahead and some great progress has been made. I hope that as another four year period passes by that we can point toward another meeting in 2008 and ask again how are we doing. In 2008, the studies funded by the Christina Watershed Initiative project will be completed and we can evaluate their success and determine if the plan that they have formed to serve as a guide for implementation work in the Basin is being sustained in the Basin. We can assess whether this great partnership that has been formed still possesses the energy, resources and commitment to keep the Christina Basin Number 1. It will give us all another opportunity to celebrate. I hope that the partnership will pick up on this challenge and plan for such a meeting.

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the day here learning about the Christina Basin.