

CHESAPEAKE BAY

Official: Pa. 'clearly behind' in reaching pollution goals

Brian Witte *Associated Press*

A senior environmental official in Pennsylvania said Tuesday that his state is "clearly behind" in reaching goals of cutting pollution that flows downstream into the Chesapeake Bay by 2025, weeks after heavy rains brought a stunning amount of debris into Maryland.

Patrick McDonnell, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, made the comment at a meeting in Baltimore of officials from six states in the bay watershed. Maryland officials last week had blasted Pennsylvania and other upstream states, accusing them of not doing more to stop pollution flow.

"We are clearly behind in terms of midpoint assessment, but we've taken that as opportunity to double down, and as I said this is about local water quality," McDonnell said, after a reporter asked about criticism directed at Pennsylvania.

In earlier remarks at a meeting of the Chesapeake Executive Council, McDonnell said Pennsylvania officials are focusing on prioritizing resources to improve environmental steps in farm communities. While Pennsylvania is not contiguous with the nation's largest estuary, McDonnell said state officials want to improve water quality, and "we are absolutely committed to the reduction of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, in our backyard and the benefit that that ultimately leads to within the Chesapeake Bay."

Will Baker, president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said McDonnell's admission was "the most



Last week, debris washed into Maryland waters from record rainfall. Patrick McDonnell, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection said that the state was "behind in terms of midpoint assessment" when it comes to local water quality at a meeting held in Baltimore which focused on Chesapeake Bay health. *Brian Witte, Associated Press*

definitive comment by a senior official in Pennsylvania" that the state is behind in cleanup goals.

"Now, we need to hold their feet to the fire," Baker said.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, who was re-elected the chairman of the council, said last week that upstream states need to do more to prevent pollution from entering the waters of the Susquehanna River, which flows south into Maryland. On Tuesday, he said it was positive to have representatives from the six states at the table talking about making progress on pollution-reduction goals.

Hogan noted that council members reaffirmed their commitment to developing

a Watershed Implementation Plan for the Conowingo Dam. Last month, engineers opened the dam gates, sending tons of water and debris downstream after heavy rains.

Hogan also said he was not pleased with the response that Exelon Corp., the owner of the dam, gave after the state asked for assistance in cleaning up debris in the state's waters. The company committed \$25,000 to the Chesapeake Bay Trust and said it would make resources available to help clean up debris, an amount Hogan said was a "drop in the bucket." The governor also criticized a lawsuit filed by the company in which it argues it should not be held responsible for the pollution that flows through the dam.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars is a drop in the bucket and nowhere near the kind of money we think they should put up," Hogan, a Republican, said. "They've now sued the state of Maryland, but we're going to try to make sure that they're a major part of the solution, so

no we're not pleased with the response."

A statement from Exelon on Tuesday cited scientific and environmental impact studies which show the debris and pollution come from upstream sources. The company said it routinely removes debris from around the dam and voluntarily removed 600 tons of debris which has flowed from upstream sources to the dam in 2018.

"It is clear, prior to the recent storms, there was limited debris around the dam. The debris currently in the Chesapeake Bay is a direct byproduct of record rain in the region," Exelon said in its statement.

The Chesapeake Executive Council includes the governors of the six bay watershed states, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the mayor of the District of Columbia.

The watershed covers 64,000 square miles and includes Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.



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