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CARDIN SAYS AGGRESSIVE ACTION NEEDED TO RESTORE THE HEALTH OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Annapolis, MD – U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Water and Wildlife Subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW), led a hearing today in Annapolis to receive a status report on the health of the Chesapeake Bay and recommendations on the reauthorization of the Chesapeake Bay Program administered by the Environmental Protection Agency. Full statements and testimony will be available at <http://epw.senate.gov>.

“The Chesapeake Bay is in trouble. There are millions more of us, and the size of our impact on the Bay watershed has grown twice as fast as our population rate. As we move closer to submitting legislation to reauthorize the EPA’s Chesapeake Bay Program under the Clean Water Act, it is clear that significant action is needed to make significant improvements. Merely fine tuning the program will not be good enough to achieve the level of success required to control pollution, to restore water quality, and to see the living resources of the Bay return in abundance,” **said Chairman Cardin.**

“Time is not on our side. The longer we wait to take aggressive action to curb control pollution and restore water quality, the steeper the task ahead. A recent report from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science finds that the ecological health of the Chesapeake Bay remains poor. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are unhealthy primarily because of pollution from excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment entering the water. The main sources of these pollutants are agriculture, urban and suburban runoff, wastewater from sewage treatment plants, and airborne contaminants. The Bay continues to have poor water quality, degraded habitats and low populations of many species of fish and shellfish.

“Despite the recent findings, without the Chesapeake Bay Program, the health of the Chesapeake would undoubtedly be worse than it is today. In fact, the Bay Program has played a critical role in stemming the tide of pollution. The Bay Program is a model for the National Estuaries Programs that are helping curb pollution from Casco Bay in Maine to San Francisco Estuary in California. Any success that these programs have had is because, like the Chesapeake Bay Program, they focus on the entire watershed, they involve all the key stakeholders, and they are based on sound science.

“The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure and vital to the health of our region’s economy. Building on our success in the last Congress during which we secured the largest infusion of federal funds ever for pollution abatement in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, I look forward to

working with the President Obama and the EPA as partners in crafting new solutions to the persistent problems we face.”

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership that, since 1983, has coordinated the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Partners include the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, representing the federal government; and participating advisory groups.

Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in North America, with a length of 200 miles and 11,684 miles of tidal shoreline, more than the entire U.S. West Coast. About 100,000 streams and rivers thread through the Chesapeake’s 64,000-square-mile watershed, which is home to almost 17 million people. The Chesapeake Bay supports more than 3,600 species of plants, fish and animals.

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