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TOWN OF BERLIN APPROVES GROUNDBREAKING STORMWATER UTILITY

Berlin, Md. (January 31, 2013) –The town of Berlin passed historic legislation on January 28 that will help reduce flooding and clean up area rivers and streams. The new ordinance will create a stormwater utility for Berlin, dividing the cost of managing stormwater among the town’s property owners and helping the town leverage federal and State grants for additional, related enhancements.

“I applaud Berlin for its progressive action in moving Maryland toward restoring our Chesapeake and Coastal Bays,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “Through this utility, the people of Berlin are doing their part to protect our State’s natural treasurers for generations to come.”

The utility will generate \$570,000 annually for capital projects to help curb flooding, reduce erosion and polluted runoff, and combat property damage. Berlin decided to institute a utility in response to a University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center (EFC) study on how the town should best handle stormwater and flooding issues.

The study – financed by the State’s Watershed Assistance Collaborative and Town Creek Foundation – showed that Berlin’s stormwater problems stem from inadequate infrastructure that cannot handle runoff nor protect against flooding. With no sustainable source of funding, the report recommended that the town divide the cost among all of its property owners in order to provide maintenance, upgrades and improvements to its stormwater conveyance system.

“Berlin moving forward with a stormwater utility represents a great success for the community and the region,” said EFC Director Joanne Throwe. “Although Berlin is not regulated by the State or federal government to manage stormwater, they are taking a proactive stance to address local flooding and regional water quality by setting up a dedicated financing mechanism to address these issues. This will set Berlin ahead of other communities and can be used as a model for others who want to address stormwater, whether driven by regulation or good stewardship.”

“I am very proud of the town council’s decision to unanimously support the creation of a stormwater management utility for our community. Although there remains much to do, we have accomplished the most critical and hardest part – getting started,” said Berlin Mayor Gee Williams. “Over time, I am confident our stormwater management utility will be another significant step in improving the water quality of our Maryland Coastal Bays watershed, which is critically important to not only our natural environment, but our local economy that is built on a foundation of agriculture and tourism.”

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its partners recognized that some jurisdictions don’t have the capacity to create large-scale, non-point source restoration and protection efforts. DNR along with other State and federal agencies created the Watershed Assistance Collaborative in 2008 to provide services and technical assistance to communities to advance restoration activities and projects. Partners include the Chesapeake Bay Trust, University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension Program, University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center, NOAA and the EPA. For the EFC’s full report, visit www.efc.umd.edu/berlin .

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The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is the state agency responsible for providing natural and living resource-related services to citizens and visitors. DNR manages nearly one-half million acres of public lands and 17,000 miles of waterways, along with Maryland's forests, fisheries and wildlife for maximum environmental, economic and quality of life benefits. A national leader in land conservation, DNR-managed parks and natural, historic and cultural resources attract 11 million visitors annually. DNR is the lead agency in Maryland's effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay, the state's number one environmental priority. Learn more at www.DNR.Maryland.gov.