

Press Release
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Group Aims to Rid the Delmarva Peninsula of Damaging Nutria
Media Briefing: Horn Point Laboratory, Cambridge MD
October 19, 2011, 10:00 am - Noon

The Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project will meet October 19, 2011 in Cambridge, Maryland to finalize their plan to eradicate nutria from the Delmarva Peninsula by December 2015. Members of the media are encouraged to attend the morning session from 10:00 am to noon at Horn Point Laboratory to learn more.

“Saving Maryland’s wetlands is one of my top priorities,” said U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, who introduced the *Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2011*, S. 899. “The gold standard in dealing with invasive species is complete eradication. The techniques being developed in Maryland give us real hope that we can put a permanent end to this incredibly destructive pest, thus saving countless acres of wetlands in Maryland, Louisiana, and other coastal states.”

Often described as an eating machine, the nutria is a semi-aquatic rodent introduced to this county from South America in the 1940's. Devouring up to 25 percent of its body weight in plants and roots per day, nutria have devastated wetlands in Maryland, Louisiana and other coastal states, turning them into barren mud flats. In Maryland alone, the cost to the state’s economy due to loss of wetlands in the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge was estimated at \$4 million dollars annually.

The federally funded Maryland Nutria Project, launched in 2000, has eradicated nutria from 150,000 acres in five counties. A similar program in Louisiana has resulted in the rehabilitation of 70,000 acres of wetlands.

"Although eradicating nutria is an extremely daunting task, it is merely a means to an end," said Leopoldo Miranda, supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office. "The ultimate goal is to safeguard and restore the ecological integrity of Chesapeake Bay wetlands."

Foraging by nutria damages or destroys the root mat that binds marshes together. When this network is compromised, marshes are quickly reduced to mudflats prone to erosion. This influences the Chesapeake Bay and other wildlife, which need healthy marshes to trap sediment and contaminants, and for nursery grounds for fish, crabs and other aquatic life.

"If you like crab cakes, you ought to be worried about nutria, said Steven Kendrot, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services and field supervisor of the nutria project.

The project has eliminated all of the major concentrations of nutria, leaving isolated small populations that can be harder to control.

"Wetlands are the essential nurseries of the Chesapeake Bay and nutria destroy wetlands. We're delighted that the partnership has been so successful because eradicating nutria is a critical part of our efforts to restore the Bay," noted John Griffin, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

The next step will focus on removing low-density populations on the Delmarva Peninsula's remaining 350,000 acres of potential nutria habitat. After this is accomplished, areas will be monitored vigilantly for 2 to 3 years before eradication can be proclaimed. Details will be reviewed during the partnership meeting. For more information go to: [Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project](#)

Directions to UMCES Horn Point Laboratory

From Baltimore: From the Baltimore (Maryland) Beltway, I-695, take I-97 south to Route 50/301 east to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Once on the Eastern Shore, stay on Route 50 to Cambridge, MD, crossing the Choptank River on the Frederick Malkus Bridge.

From Washington D.C.: Take Route 50 east from the Washington DC Beltway I-95/495, to Cambridge, MD on Maryland's Eastern Shore, crossing the Choptank River on the Frederick Malkus Bridge.

After the Frederick Malkus Bridge, go to 3rd stop light and turn right. Go one block and turn right again onto Washington St. (Rt. 343). Stay on this road for about 3.5 miles. Look for the UMCES sign on the right side of the road. Bear right on Horn Point Rd. Continue for about 1.5 miles. The entrance to the lab is flanked by two brick pillars with rams. Follow the driveway straight for ~0.25 miles to the meeting at the Arel Lecture Hall on the left. Park at/around the hatchery or Arel building.