

MARYLAND BRIEFING

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CHEESAPEAKE BAY

Underwater Grasses Show Growth Spurt

The acreage of underwater grasses in the [Chesapeake Bay](#), a key indicator of the estuary's overall health, increased slightly last year but still remained far below goals set by scientists, according to a report released yesterday.

The grasses covered nearly 65,000 acres of the Chesapeake last year, according to the report from the [Environmental Protection Agency's](#) Chesapeake Bay Program. That was a 10 percent increase over the 2006 figure, which had been the lowest since 1989.

But it was still far short of the goal -- 185,000 acres -- set by the federally led Chesapeake cleanup effort. The report says that grass beds grew in the upper Chesapeake, near the mouth of the [Susquehanna River](#). But they decreased in the middle and lower bay, a drop scientists blamed on dirty water and rising temperatures, which can render the bay slightly too warm for one important grass species.

-- [David A. Fahrenthold](#)