# Agricultural Advisory Committee: Shaping Chesapeake Bay Policy

## Introduction

Agriculture now holds a formal seat at the table in shaping the future of the Chesapeake Bay. Our mission is to bring practical, real-world agricultural solutions that align with the Chesapeake Bay Program’s updated vision for 2025 and beyond—one grounded in sustainability, economic viability, and clean water.

## Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement: Revised Vision

To achieve a resilient, sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed—characterized by clean water, healthy wildlife, protected working lands, preserved cultural heritage, and equitable access to natural resources.

## Core Principles

• Place-based targeting of actions  
• Cost-effective implementation  
• Science- and data-informed decision-making  
• Empowerment of local leadership  
• Transparency and public accountability  
• Adaptive management and continuous improvement  
• Innovation through new technologies and approaches

## Summary of Watershed Agreement Goals & Outcomes

### Thriving Habitat and Wildlife

• Restore 1,800 acres of oyster reefs  
• Improve 3% of non-tidal stream health every 6 years  
• Reconnect 150 miles of aquatic habitat every 2 years  
• Protect brook trout and wetlands  
• Achieve 196,000 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) Bay-wide by 2035

### Clean Water

• Continue reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment through 2030 and beyond  
• Strengthen water-quality monitoring and assessment methods  
• Implement and verify best practices under Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs)

### Healthy Landscapes

• Protect 1.5–2 million acres of ecologically/culturally significant land by 2040  
• Prioritize forest buffers, wetlands, agricultural lands, and open space  
• Implement climate adaptation strategies in at least 7 subwatersheds by 2040

### Engaged Communities

• Add 100 new public access sites by 2040  
• Expand ADA accessibility and recreational infrastructure  
• Increase environmental career awareness and school-based watershed education

## Agricultural Relevance in the Revised Agreement

• Strong emphasis on place-based BMP targeting, aligning with committee recommendations  
• Endorsement of innovative technologies and performance-based practices, supporting manure transport and credit frameworks  
• Priority on measurable, cost-effective outcomes, supporting targeted Tier 1 BMP strategies

## Suggested Policy Priorities for the Agricultural Advisory Committee

### 1. Targeted Tier 1 BMPs in Priority Watersheds

• Encourage Nutrient Management Plans and Conservation Plans meeting ‘T’ soil loss tolerances  
• Promote stream exclusion practices (stream access limitation rather than full exclusion)  
• Encourage adoption of the 4Rs of Fertilizer Stewardship (Right source, rate, time, and place)  
• Focus financial and technical assistance on high-impact subwatersheds (e.g., Lower Susquehanna, Shenandoah)

### 2. Support for Innovative Manure Conversion & Transport Technologies

• Integrate soil health credits into future Bay models  
• Invest in technologies such as drying, composting, pelletizing, and bioenergy conversion  
• Develop inter-county and interstate infrastructure for efficient manure transport  
• Establish a Bay-model-approved framework to credit nutrient reductions from manure export  
• Promote pay-for-performance programs tied to verified nutrient reductions

## Alignment with the 2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

### Tier 1 BMPs

• Clean Water Goal: Supports reduction of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment  
• Stream Health Outcome: Advances science-based land and livestock management  
• Core Principles: Aligns with place-based, cost-effective approaches  
• Healthy Landscapes Goal: Supports protection of working lands contributing to water quality

### Manure Conversion & Transport

• Reducing Excess Nutrients Outcome: Promotes innovation and verifiable outcomes  
• Adaptive Management Principle: Encourages use of new technologies and flexible policy models  
• Changing Conditions Goal: Invests in infrastructure and nature-based solutions (Soil Health)  
• Management Strategy Framework: Advocates for crediting non-traditional conservation practices (Soil Health)

## Supporting Research & Reporting

### 1. “How Well Are Ag Practices Helping the Chesapeake Bay?”

• Author: Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal (via USGS) – January 23, 2024  
• Key Finding: Over $2 billion invested in ag BMPs since 2014, yet little consistent evidence of water-quality improvement  
• Quote: “We lack a coordinated effort to…produce findings about the relationship between agricultural conservation practices and water quality response.”  
• Note: A new small watershed monitoring initiative has begun; results expected over the next decade  
• Link: https://www.usgs.gov/news/state-news-release/how-well-are-ag-practices-helping-chesapeake-bay

### 2. “Monitoring the Effectiveness of Conservation Practices in Small Agricultural Watersheds”

• Source: USGS Chesapeake Bay Activities – April 2, 2024  
• Summary: Pilot monitoring in five small watersheds (e.g., Hammer Creek, PA) evaluates practices like cover crops and stream fencing  
• Note: Data collected includes real-time nutrient and sediment levels  
• Link: https://www.usgs.gov/centers/cba/science/monitoring-effectiveness-conservation-practices-small-agricultural-watersheds

### 3. “Building Trust to Boost the Bay”

• Author: Karl Blankenship, Stroud Water Research Center – June 5, 2024  
• Summary: Highlights trust-building through local stream improvements and visibility; drives greater farmer participation in BMP adoption  
• Link: https://stroudcenter.org/news/building-trust-to-boost-the-bay/