



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Update on Implementing the EC Charge on Tribal Partnership

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Brian Hamilton
Tribal Program Manager
EPA Region 3

2025 Executive Council Charge

- *Principals' Staff Committee is charged with working with federally recognized tribal nations to develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership.*



Chesapeake Executive Council
*Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee:
Tribes as a Formal and Enduring Partner in the
Chesapeake Bay Program*

Whereas Indigenous knowledge and guardianship are vital to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed;

Therefore, acknowledging the sovereignty of the federally recognized tribal nations within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this Chesapeake Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee to work with those federally recognized tribal nations to develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, recognizing that the partnership operates under a "Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program." This work shall be done in alignment with current efforts to fulfill the "Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course Beyond 2025," Item #2.

In developing recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee shall direct research into relevant governance matters, including but not limited to partner responsibilities and expectations, pathways for designating and identifying partner representatives, and formal channels for partnership, including signature on the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

As part of its recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee may prepare a draft memorandum of understanding with the federally recognized tribes within the watershed outlining Chesapeake Bay Program partner expectations and commitments, recognizing budgetary and resource needs and constraints.

Furthermore, the Principals' Staff Committee shall explore opportunities for advancing and respecting Indigenous guardianship and Indigenous knowledge within watershed restoration planning and implementation.

Impetus for the 2025 Executive Council Charge

- The Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC) signed and submitted a resolution to the Chesapeake Bay Program in January 2025 (modified in July 2025), requesting the following:
 - **Include the Indigenous Conservation Council as a signatory to the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement** to support Tribal Nations in their right to exercise their treaty rights and serve as full partners in its protection and restoration;
 - **Establish and fund an Indigenous Guardianship Program** as a priority within the Agreement's revised goals and strategies that would direct funding to the ICC as a new jurisdictional Signatory partner to be sub-granted to Tribal Nation members to build their tribal capacity; and,
 - **Expand the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) with an additional standing seat committed to sharing and honoring Indigenous science** within the partnership and building the engagement of Indigenous scientists to enhance the effectiveness of the partnership and respect for Indigenous science.

Activities Underway

- Signatory Team established to implement EC charge and develop recommendations, in collaboration with the federally-recognized tribes, for PSC review and approval – first meeting scheduled for January 21.
- EPA is working with the Indigenous Conservation Council to identify federally-recognized tribal representatives to meet with the signatory team as the recommendations are developed. Targeting first week of February to have a meeting between the signatory team and tribal representatives.

Name	Affiliation
Brian Hamilton, Lucinda Power, Keith Bollt	EPA (Lead/Coordinator)
Kevin McLean	VA DEQ
Leila Duman	MD DNR
Claire Jantz	PA DEP
Marel King	CBC
Holly Walker	DNREC
Julia Wakeling	DOEE

Recommended Scope of Work*

- Establish signatory partner definition, roles and responsibilities, and expectations
- Identify pathways and processes for designating partner representatives, including signatories to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement
- Engage and solicit feedback from the tribes on their:
 - Expectations of a signatory partner and level of participation in the partnership
 - Vision for how an Indigenous Guardianship can support the Agreement's goals and outcomes, and vice versa
 - Role within the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
- Signatory team develops recommendations, in collaboration with the federally recognized tribes, to the PSC on how to meet EC charge
- ❖ Ultimately, the recommendations should address and respond to the three ICC requests.

****Needs further discussion/refinement by signatory team***

Timeline

- **January – March 2026:** Convene team, collaborate with tribes, draft recommendations
 - **April 7, 2026:** Present draft recommendations to the PSC at their quarterly meeting
 - **June 30, 2026:** PSC finalizes and approves recommendations (to meet July 1 deadline)
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Thank you! Questions?

