

# DIVING INTO RECEIVED PUBLIC FEEDBACK & HOW IT'S PROPOSED TO REVISE THE WATERSHED AGREEMENT

Management Board Meeting  
September 11, 2025

# AGENDA

## General Overview

## Summary of Themes and Suggested Revisions

- Thriving Habitats and Wildlife: Ken Hyer, USGS
- Clean Water: Jess Blackburn, Stakeholders' Advisory Committee
- Healthy Landscapes: Cassie Davis, NY DEC
- Engaged Communities: Leila Duman, MD DNR

## Feedback for Management Board Discussion

## Questions

# FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

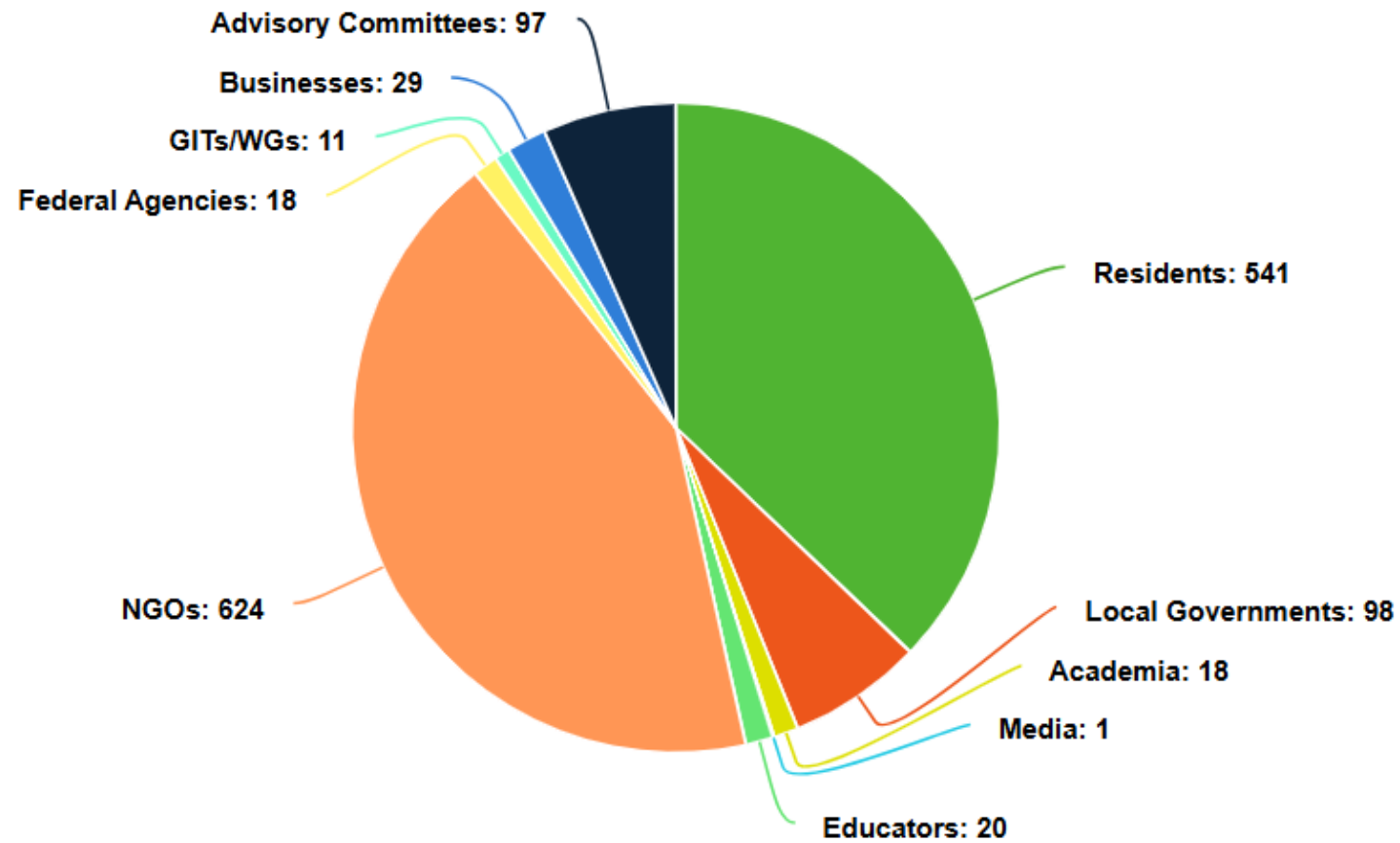
Public feedback period ran from July 1—September 1.

1,465 unique pieces of feedback

381 individual feedback emails.

Action alerts:

- 1,114 emails from Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- 1,047 emails from Environmental America



# FEEDBACK BREAKDOWN

- 623 comments from NGOs
- 545 comments from watershed residents
- 98 comments from 12 local governments units
- 97 comments from 4 advisory committees
- 29 comments from 4 private businesses
- 20 comments from K-12 educators
- 18 comments from 2 colleges/universities
- 18 comments from 1 federal agency
- 11 comments from 1 Goal Implementation Team and 1 Workgroup
- 1 comment from media



# THRIVING HABITATS AND WILDLIFE GOAL

Oysters – 56 comments

Fish Habitat – 53 comments

Wetlands – 53 comments

Stream Health – 32 comments

SAV – 23 comments

Blue Crab Sustainability – 15 comments

Fish Passage – 9 comments

Brook Trout – 7 comments

- Concern that targets are lower than in the previous Agreement for several outcomes.
- Requests for more details that will ultimately be included in the Management Strategies.
- Multiple calls to consider adding outcome/target/other reference to invasive species, primarily blue catfish.
- Strong support for the Brook Trout and Fish Passage outcomes.



# CLEAN WATER GOAL

- Would like to see the Bay TMDL, Phase III WIPs and even MS4s better reflected throughout the Agreement.
- Outcomes/targets need to be written in plain language.
- Toxics Contaminants Mitigation Outcome needs more actionable targets.
- More reference to agriculture and non-point sources are needed throughout the Agreement.
- More monitoring for water quality, including for shallow waters, and for other parameters like toxins

**Reducing Excess Nitrogen,  
Phosphorus and Sediment –  
111 comments**

**Water Quality Standards  
Attainment & Monitoring – 42  
comments**

**Toxic Contaminants Mitigation  
– 38 comments**



# HEALTHY LANDSCAPES GOAL



Protected Lands – 102  
comments



Healthy Forests and  
Trees – 35 comments



Land Use Decision  
Support – 34 comments



Adapting to Changing  
Environmental Conditions  
– 29 comments

- Concern that targets are lower than those reflected in the previous Agreement.
- Some terms are unclear, e.g., community trees, community greenspace.
- Better articulate the role of local governments in this work.
- Concern that language lacks specificity, e.g., changing environmental conditions.
- Strong support for new Protected Lands targets but confusion over lack of metrics.



# ENGAGED COMMUNITIES GOAL



Student  
Experiences/School  
District Planning: 52  
comments



Public Access – 33  
comments



Stewardship – 24  
comments



Local Leadership – 19  
comments

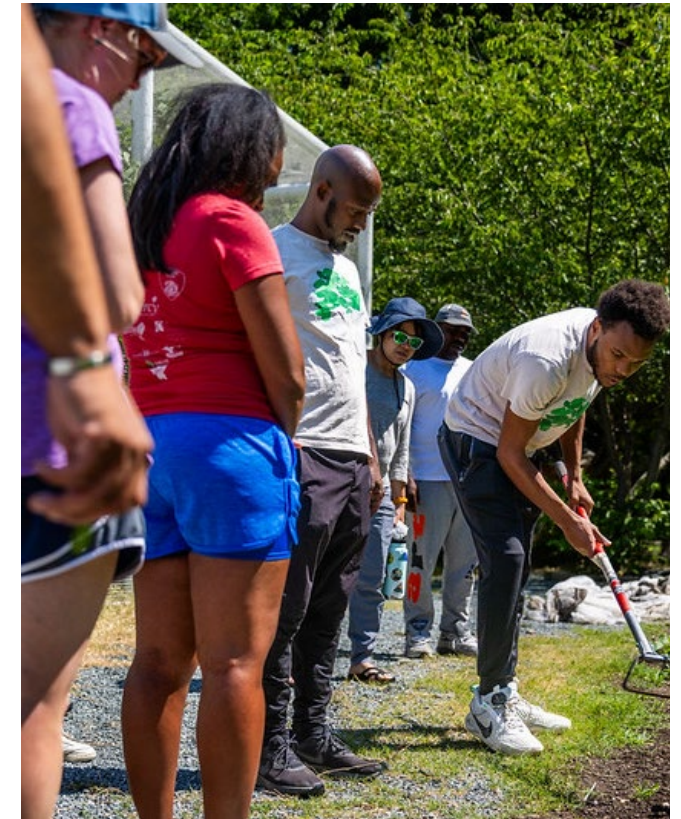


Workforce – 19  
comments

- Support for Workforce outcome but request for concrete metrics and baselines.
- Revise outcomes/targets to be more plain language, e.g., “comprehensive and systemic approach.”
- Engage with parochial, private and other types of K-12 schools beyond public.
- Include a measurable target for the Stewardship Outcome.
- Concern that Public Access target is too low.
- Build in a 10-minute walkability analysis to determine new public access sites.
- Consider revising the Local Leadership target to be more targeted and measurable.

# FEEDBACK REQUIRING MANAGEMENT BOARD DISCUSSION

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# CONSISTENT TIMEFRAME ACROSS ALL OUTCOMES/TARGETS

*“Agree on a consistent presentation of 2035 or 2040 expectations for all outcomes – how confusing and challenging it is to a reader that outcomes have all these different formats for expression. Make it public friendly, make it consistent. Translate expectations to one common check-in point.”*

Proposed Action: Management Board to discuss at September meeting.



# REMOVE TARGETS THAT DO HAVE A DEFINED METRIC

*“The continued inclusion of placeholders, instead of specific values, prevents signatories from being able to assess the resources required to achieve the outcome, making it difficult for partners to determine if the target is realistic and achievable. The continued inclusion of placeholders also makes it more difficult for partners to hold ourselves accountable and to clearly communicate with the public and key stakeholders. It is critical to determine a path forward for outcomes with placeholders.”*

Proposed action: Will be discussed by Management Board at their September meeting.

# INCLUDE THE INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION COUNCIL AS A SIGNATORY

*“Embrace the benefits of Indigenous Knowledge and honor the sovereignty of Tribal Nations. Including Tribal Nations as full partners is an essential strategy for achieving the Chesapeake Bay Program’s restoration objectives.”*

Proposed action: The Principals’ Staff Committee will be recommending a path forward on this request to the Executive Council.



# STRONGER REFERENCES TO AGRICULTURE NEEDED THROUGHOUT AGREEMENT

*“More explicitly include the Agriculture industry - It appears that the revised Watershed Agreement only lightly touches on the importance of the Agriculture sector in this work. We encourage CBP to consider including agriculture-related work more prominently throughout the revised Watershed Agreement.”*

Proposed action: Reviewing proposed edits from commenters on where to include more reference to agriculture and farmers throughout the revised Agreement.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE ARE LACKING FROM THE AGREEMENT

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*“We believe this draft revision reflects a step backward, not forward, as it fails to meet the climate change-driven challenges of today and our future.”*

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Proposed action: The Management Board has recognized that a framework for changing environmental conditions is an important aspect of managing our goals and this should be reflected in our work. How can this framework be reflected in the Agreement in addition to the Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions Outcome? Can we add a sentence in the Management Strategies section that states every outcome will consider changing environmental conditions in their management strategies?

# INCLUDE REFERENCES TO THE BAY TMDL

*“The 2014 Agreement and 2020 amendment specifically refer to the pollutant limitations set in the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) as the Water Quality Goal’s North Star. Yet, the Draft neglects to mention that “the TMDL is driving nutrient and sediment reductions, ..., and establishes the foundation for water quality improvements embodied in the Agreement.” 2014/2020 Bay Agreement, Water Quality Goal and Outcome. In fact, the Draft only refers to the TMDL in passing on the very last page of the document ignoring that the 2025 WIP Outcome identified in the 2014 Agreement and 2020 Amendment has been the primary objective of the Bay Partners for fifteen years.”*

Proposed action: Mention the Bay TMDL in a general way in the Preamble and then more detailed in the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome. Add in a paragraph to the Preamble that explains how the Watershed Agreement relates or exists besides the Bay TMDL, the Accountability Framework and Executive Order 13508.

# CLEAR, UNDERSTANDABLE LANGUAGE NEEDED THROUGHOUT AGREEMENT

*“All stakeholders impacted by the Chesapeake Bay need a clear baseline and understanding of key buzz words used throughout the draft Revision in order to operate from a level playing field. “Conserve(ation)” is used throughout the document in description of goals as well as outcomes. However, under the goal of “Healthy Landscapes” there is an outcome of “protected lands” (page 13). What is the difference between conserving versus protecting lands or resources?”*

Proposed action: Would it be possible to include a glossary, or at the very least, an acronym guide in the revised Agreement? Or include as Management Strategy actions the development of definitions for critical terminology?

# FORMATTING AND EDITS NEEDED TO AGREEMENT STRUCTURE

*“Minor reorganization, expansion, and simplification might help. If the last part of the preamble addressed the unresolved issues and the vision statement followed to point the way forward, they would set the stage for the rest of the Agreement to show how to achieve program goals in a realistic, challenging, but ultimately successful way. A final summary section also might be added to tie together all the preceding elements of the revised Agreement, recognize remaining challenges, and end on a hopeful note. In other words, the Agreement needs a story line.”*

Proposed action: Consider moving the “Management Strategies” section ahead of the Goals and Outcomes section. Provide consistent formatting throughout the Agreement, e.g., include titles for all targets.



# INCLUDE ACCOUNTABILITY

*“Setting goals and tracking progress holds partners accountable for their work (P3), ...” **How so? What are the consequences to partners who miss their goals?”***

Proposed action: This is a voluntary agreement. The partnership is currently exploring what additional accountability measures would be applicable and appropriate given the voluntary nature of the partnership (and Agreement). There is an Accountability Framework in place and agreed to by the partnership for the water quality goals. However, the partnership needs to clarify what they mean when they say "accountability framework"-- water quality vs. SRS.

# REFRAME VISION

*“The statement, as it is, appears to include all the appropriate elements. However, as just an individual who enjoys the resources the bay offers, I did not feel engaged enough by it to necessarily pursue action in support of the vision. A personalized approach to the vision may garner more traction by the public at large.”*

Proposed action: “We envision a Chesapeake Bay region where clean waters flow freely, wildlife thrives, and farms and forests stay healthy and productive. It’s a place where people from all walks of life feel connected—to their communities, to the land, to the bay, and to the rich cultural heritage that makes this region unique. Together, we’re building a future that’s resilient, sustainable, and full of possibility—where everyone can enjoy and protect the Bay’s natural beauty, today and for generations to come.”

# REORGANIZE PRINCIPLES

*“Many of the bullets in the Principles section could be grouped under similar themes for organizational purposes and to ease reading.”*

Proposed action: The review team agrees with this feedback and would like to consider organizing Principles into relevant categories.



Outcome leads and Review Team members continue to meet to refine recommendations.



During the week of September 15, small review teams will meet to begin making suggested red-lined revisions to the revised Watershed Agreement.



Final recommendations for Agreement revisions due to Rachel Felver from outcome leads and Review Team members by Friday, September 19.



Additional mark-ups added to the Agreement and send out to the Review Team for fatal flaw review.



Red-lined version uploaded to chesapeakebay.net on September 23.



Recommendations in red-lined version to be discussed and approved to move forward at September retreat.



Final consensus on revised Watershed Agreement to occur at October Management Board meeting.

## WHAT NEXT?

QUESTIONS?

AND PLEASE  
THANK THE  
REVIEW TEAM!

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