

## **PSC RESPONSE to the LGAC 11-18-24 letter to the Executive Council**

March 14, 2025

Daniel Chao  
Chair, Local Government Advisory Committee  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E  
3265 S. Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007

Re: Principals' Staff Committee Response to the LGAC Recommendations

Dear Chairman Chao,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) and as Chair of the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), I want to thank you and the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) for your thoughtful recommendations (letter dated November 18, 2024). In addition, I would like to express my gratitude for the advice offered during the private EC session and the subsequent public meeting and thoughtful presentations all three Advisory Committees have offered during recent Management Board and PSC meetings. We are pleased by the increased engagement we've built between our respective committees over this past year, such as intentional time set aside on meeting agendas to amplify your expert advice and engagement with members. We hope you have seen significant improvement in the ways the Program has tried to incorporate and consider your feedback.

The PSC very much appreciates the opportunity to respond to these recommendations and stands ready to assist LGAC in fulfilling its annual priorities. Please find as follows the PSC's responses to each of LGAC's recommendations. The PSC and the larger CBP partnership look forward to working with LGAC on implementing these recommendations.

### **LGAC Recommendation 1: The Partnership should articulate engagement opportunities with the Advisory Committees.**

*Building on the momentum started earlier this year, LGAC recommends that the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) begin 2025 by releasing a statement on the Advisory Committees. Such a statement could affirm the unique role of each individual independent Advisory Committee, highlight opportunities for collaboration with the full partnership, clarify the duties of the Advisory Committee Chairs as non-voting members of the Management Board (MB) and PSC, and document plans for deeper engagement with the Advisory Committees.*

### **PSC Response to Recommendation 1:**

The PSC agrees the roles of the Advisory Committees are critical and their unique member perspectives make the partnership stronger and better informed. As part of the EC Charge, *Charting a Course Beyond 2025*, the partnership is actively engaged in a review of the structure, governance, and process components of our work. It is our intent that this review explores ways to better consider and

factor in the advice of the Advisory Committees into the partnership's collaboration, processes, and decision making. The PSC invites the Advisory Committees' specific suggestions on how to more effectively and formally engage the Advisory Committees into the partnership's efforts going forward beyond 2025. This should include clear affirmations of the roles and responsibilities of the Committees and their members, who serve on a voluntary basis. We understand LGAC is already engaging in these conversations, and we welcome and will continue to seek input from all Advisory Committees to ensure that the definitions are reflective of your Committees' mission, scope of work, and talents. We also recommit to the practice of building in specific consultation with Advisory Committees during the Beyond 2025 Phase II process and continuing to program agenda time at future PSC and Management Board meetings to interact with the Advisory Committees. Finally, we encourage ongoing interaction between the Advisory Committees and Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) as the need arises.

**LGAC Recommendation 2: As the partnership moves into Phase II, LGAC's feedback on the draft Beyond 2025 Steering Committee report is more relevant than ever.**

*Local governments continue to be critical partners in protecting and restoring local waterways. Several of the key issues raised by LGAC in Phase I have not been fully resolved and therefore LGAC recommends the following in Phase II:*

- *investing in plain language communication materials to more effectively engage constituents*
- *increasing technical and administrative assistance to local governments and their partners*
- *convening key stakeholders to discuss how to balance conservation efforts and development pressure throughout the watershed.*

**PSC Response to Recommendation 2:**

The PSC agrees that our partnership continues to face the challenges cited in your letter and we appreciate the opportunity to work with LGAC, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Local Leadership Workgroup, the Strategic Engagement Team, and other stakeholders to collaborate on ways to meaningfully engage local governments across the watershed in restoration efforts going forward.

As you note, effective communication is critical to inform broader communities beyond those already engaged in our work. We welcome your suggestions to help us achieve this, particularly as we go through the Phase II process. We would like to propose a collaboration with LGAC and communications professionals, including those at the CBP Office and at EPA, to effectively translate the science and create a "leave behind" plain-language flyer explaining the *Agreement*, once the revisions are finalized.

The partnership also agrees on the need for increased technical and administrative assistance that local partners can access, but each signatory has indicated they have their own established and trusted pathways for information flow from the state to the local level, and that additional resources would be most useful. One form of technical assistance the partnership anticipates being able to provide in the near future are updated CBP tools, which through the Phase II process we anticipate being able to more effectively share with decision makers. We welcome LGAC's continuing feedback on capacity needs and how to address them, particularly during this time of change and structural revision.

The partnership acknowledges that balancing restoration with conservation is our intent, as reflected in the 2024 EC Charge that elevated conservation as a pillar of the Program. To allay any concerns, we would like to offer clarity that the term "conservation" covers a broad spectrum of options

appropriate to different situations. Recommendations from the Protected Lands Workgroup and the Healthy Watersheds GIT to elevate conservation were not meant to pose a programmatic prohibition against development, but rather a way to emphasize intentional work to preserve existing land and resources and protect the partnership's investments in environmental and human health. Recognizing that land use planning is a local role, we hope to work closely and in concert with LGAC to share CBP tools such as the 1-meter-high resolution data, Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment, and other dashboards and decision support tools meant to help inform discussions and decisions. Given that local governments have land use decision making in their purview, the PSC recommends we convene meaningful discussions between LGAC and the Protected Lands Workgroup, Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, land trust representatives, and Healthy Watersheds GIT representatives, with the recognition that some of the names and roles may be changed through the Phase II process but that our intent to center this important topic remains steadfast. The sharing of knowledge, data, and perspectives will help us better achieve the balance between conservation and development pressure.

Finally, we wish to applaud LGAC for embracing sandboxing as suggested in STAC's *Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response* report and becoming informed about its parameters and definitions. Some of the signatory states have begun to explore pay for performance strategies as one approach, but as partners we have not spent enough time truly understanding the full spectrum of sandboxing options and how they could be deployed. It may be that we need to conclude this Phase II process, so we have a better sense of the revised Outcomes and Goals before launching more fully into exploring sandboxing. However, the PSC underscores the need for innovation if we are going to find cost-effective solutions that provide multiple benefits from the investments and sandboxing can be one management approach we deploy going forward. As you recommend, it must be carefully managed, and we would welcome input from LGAC and the other existing Advisory Committees as well as the forthcoming Agricultural Advisory Committee.

We thank you again for your commitment to restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its local waterways as well as for your past and continued participation in the Beyond 2025 process. Your ongoing engagement and expertise in local government needs and perspectives are invaluable contributions that make our partnership stronger and more successful as we amend the *Agreement* for the future.

Sincerely,

Josh Kurtz  
Chair, Principals' Staff Committee