



Stakeholders' Advisory Committee  
TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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November 12, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore  
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council  
Office of the Governor  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Moore,

On behalf of the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee (Stakeholders' Committee) to the Chesapeake Executive Council, we are pleased to offer our annual recommendations in preparation for the 2025 Executive Council meeting. The Stakeholders' Committee represents a broad sample of stakeholders from across the Chesapeake Watershed, including experts in land use, water quality, and community engagement and representatives of land owners and businesses. Created in 1984, the Stakeholders' Committee continues to serve as independent volunteers bringing nonpartisan advice on restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Collectively, the Chesapeake Bay Program's four advisory committees act as two way streets to bring expert advice and boots on the ground insight in, while serving as ambassadors out into their networks of farmers, local governments, citizens, and scientists.

Over the past year, the Stakeholders' Committee has extensively contributed toward the [2024 Executive Council Charge: Charting a Course Beyond 2025](#), including providing advice on the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and the efforts to simplify and streamline the governance and structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program. We are proud of the partnership's hard work to meet the 2024 charge, we appreciate the efforts to engage with the public, and are honored to serve as your volunteer advisors.

The Stakeholders' Committee recommendations reflect the hallmarks of their recurring themes encouraging the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership to take bold, collaborative action in protection and restoration of our region's waterways, and to remain vigilant in measures of accountability and transparency. As you set the course for the next 15 years of watershed recovery, we offer these near-term recommendations: (1) Funding and Accountability to the Watershed Implementation Plans, (2) Engagement with Jurisdictional Departments of Labor to Advance the new Workforce Outcome, and (3) Explore Collaborative Solutions for a "no net loss" of Forests.

Respectfully Submitted,

Abel Olivo  
Chair, Stakeholders' Advisory Committee



## Stakeholders' Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

### **2025 Stakeholders' Advisory Committee Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council**

Since the October 2024 Executive Council meeting, the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee (Stakeholders' Committee) traveled throughout the watershed to meet with agency representatives, thought leaders, and practitioners. We learn from our diverse membership as well as from our members' networks within their communities and organizations about their economic and social connections to the health of their local waterways. We support the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Watershed Agreement)* and welcome your direction on ways you would like to engage with your advisors to fulfill the Vision and Principles that guide the achievement of the Goals, Outcomes and Targets.

#### **Recommendation # 1: Funding and Accountability to the Watershed Implementation Plans**

We acknowledge that the voluntary *Watershed Agreement* has advanced improvements in our local waterways and in the Chesapeake Bay and has served as a critical framework for aligning federal, state and private actions. The *Watershed Agreement* has been the guidepost for decades of effort. However, accelerating land use change, population growth, and changing environmental conditions continue to create persistent headwinds towards achieving the *Watershed Agreement* Goals, including meeting the Bay TMDL. Without the Bay Program partnership and the substantial public and private investments made to date, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed would be in much worse condition.

Maintaining a strong and transparent partnership that is accountable to the public and providing confidence in the program's capacity to achieve its long-term goals are critical. The jurisdictions' regulatory responsibilities - complemented by voluntary and incentive based programs - are foundational to the Bay Program's restoration framework and remain essential to sustaining long-term progress. Effective implementation and verification of existing regulatory programs, supported by adequate staffing, funding and technical capacity, are key to sustaining the foundation of the partnership. We provide the following recommendations to the Executive Council:

- A. Ensure transparent and verifiable accountability for each jurisdictions' Watershed Implementation Plans with interim milestones and performance tracking.
- B. Demonstrate sustained financial support and innovative funding strategies to meet the *Watershed Agreement* commitments, including support for public-private cost-share and pay-for-outcomes programs

## **Recommendation #2: Engagement with Jurisdictional Departments of Labor to Advance the new Workforce Outcome**

We commend the partnership for the *Watershed Agreement's* new Outcome for workforce development. This addition under the Engaged Communities Goal reflects a key element of stewardship that was previously missing and provides a logical connection between student environmental literacy and pathways to building the workforce for future generations to become environmental stewards within their communities. While community volunteer efforts have been a driver in advancing Bay Watershed recovery, living wage green careers are essential to accelerating this momentum. We encourage you to explore existing and new resources to lay a strong foundation for this new Outcome. Specifically,

- A. We recommended that the Governors and DC Mayor of the Executive Council engage and collaborate with the existing expertise in their labor departments to better understand state and local workforce needs.
- B. We offer these suggestions for actionable steps:
  - Conduct a watershed-wide workforce study.
  - Develop tools to track workforce development.
  - Secure funding to support these efforts.

## **Recommendation # 3: Explore Collaborative Solutions for a “no net loss” of forests**

The Stakeholders' Advisory Committee applauds the signatories for reaffirming the importance of conservation practices, land conservation easements, and increased public access in the revised *Watershed Agreement*. However, we are concerned that land conversion from the rapid growth of sprawling data centers, energy projects, and highway construction projects are accelerating land use changes that outpace our restoration and conservation efforts. Without a concerted effort to slow and mitigate deforestation and the increase in impervious surfaces, our collective water quality, habitat and conservation goals will continue to be challenged.

We recommend the partnership welcome each jurisdictions' Energy and Transportation agencies into the Bay Program, particularly the Healthy Landscapes workgroups and other related committees, to facilitate a coordinated approach to reducing loss of forests. Through engagement with these agencies, workgroups will be better equipped to explore collaborative solutions, appropriate for each jurisdiction, on innovative policies for a “no net loss” of forests for highway and data center projects.