



Citizens Advisory Committee

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August 21, 2019

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan,

Since its founding in 1984, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has worked cooperatively and on a nonpartisan basis to advise the Chesapeake Executive Council on restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As your citizen advisors, we represent the perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders and all of us embrace the shared value of a healthy and sustainable watershed. Thank you for meeting with the Advisory Committee Chairs in June to discuss recommendations in advance of the 2019 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting.

Since the Executive Council's August 7, 2018 meeting, the Citizens Advisory Committee has met in Virginia, the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania to discuss restoration progress and challenges with state and federal agencies representatives, thought leaders and local practitioners to discuss issues impacting the ecosystem and local communities. Among our topics were panel discussions on the Conowingo Dam and Agricultural Practices and Verification.

Additionally, the members have submitted comments to the jurisdictions on their draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs). We still have some concerns about the WIPs from a number of states whose drafts exhibit shortfalls on details to accelerate implementation, close funding gaps, and verify and track management practices. We will continue to follow the progress of the Phase III WIPs once the final documents are available and implementation is underway.

The CAC offers the following annual recommendations on progress and opportunities toward meeting the water quality, habitat, and stewardship goals that guide the collective efforts of Chesapeake Bay watershed recovery. We have identified three priority opportunities for the Executive Council's consideration: (1) use of new technology for verification of practices; (2) increased coordination to accelerate the forest buffer outcome; and (3) expansion of environmental education to support green careers. Attached is our report of recommendations.



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

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Thank you for leadership of the Executive Council and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Respectfully submitted,



Matt Ehrhart
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee



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TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

2019 Citizens Advisory Committee Annual Recommendations
(Issued August 21, 2019)

As a result of our quarterly meetings across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed over the past year, hearing from a variety of state, federal and local representatives, NGOs and representatives of business and industry, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) respectfully offers the following recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council.

I. Use of New Technology for Verification of Practices

The CAC acknowledges and congratulates the jurisdictions' work to incorporate Best Management Practice (BMP) verification programs. As we stated last year, robust verification builds confidence among citizens that their tax dollars are being spent efficiently and accountably to protect human health and the environment. Since the protocols for verification were finalized by the partnership, new technologies have become more sophisticated and available. This could help reduce some of the burden on staff resources needed on the ground. **We recommend the states use viable and increasingly available technological tools like satellite imagery to help with verification of practices. We also encourage the Bay Program partnership to prepare communication messages to help the general public understand that verification may result in less credit being given for past practices.**



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II. Increased Agency Coordination to Accelerate the Forest Buffer Outcome

The lack of progress on the forest buffer commitment has been a perennial concern for the Committee. We continue to learn about the challenges and opportunities to accelerate progress beyond a mere 6% of the annual target. We understand the draft State Watershed Implementation Plans rely heavily on buffers to meet their goals for water quality. We fully support this approach, given forest buffers provide significant additional benefits, such as flood protection, climate resiliency, source water protection, wildlife protection, and natural area public parks.

One of the challenges in securing increased forested buffers on the ground is a lack of coordination and prioritization among the federal agencies that provide technical assistance to farmers. There is a significant amount of funds in the Farm Bill and the states should be well poised to take advantage of it to help meet the water quality goals and other benefits forest buffers provide. **We recommend the Executive Council engage with the Secretary of Agriculture and other high level USDA officials so this critical need can be highlighted and direction and leadership can be provided.**

III. Expansion of Environmental Education and Support for Green Careers

Thank you to Governor and First Lady Northam for hosting the Environmental Literacy Summit this year. This is a meaningful follow-up from last year's Executive Council meeting and we look forward to acceleration and further institutionalization of environmental education initiatives across the Bay region.

As we have been following environmental education over the years, we recognize that it is not only important for the K-12 students, but for adults as well. Environmental education and environmental literacy become critical when seeking to garner citizen support for state and local funding for environmental protection and restoration, for example at times when rate increases for water treatment facilities are necessary for upgrades.

We see an opportunity to expand on some local examples to combine adult environmental education and workforce development for green careers. This can be done in programs at community colleges and through nonprofits, such as Civic Works, that train returning citizens for living wage green jobs. **We recommend the Executive Council expand and support programs and incentives to advance the important objectives of environmental education and green workforce development in unison. We further recommend that underserved areas, inner city and rural schools, and communities receive increased attention as a means of broadening environmental experiential opportunities where needed.**



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