



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Beyond 2025:

A CRITICAL PATH FORWARD FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

*SAV Workgroup
August 21, 2024*



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Context

The Chesapeake Executive Council Charge

Adopted by the Chesapeake Executive Council in October 2022, the charge directs the Principals' Staff Committee to recommend a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* beyond 2025.



Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course to 2025 and Beyond Adopted October 11, 2022

As the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership nears the 2025 date that the partnership set for several of the goals and outcomes under the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Watershed Agreement)*, there are many successes to celebrate. At the same time, emerging issues and changing conditions (e.g., climate change, growth, new scientific data) have impacted the levels of effort needed to meet our collective restoration priorities. We, as a partnership, remain committed to using the best available science in restoring the Chesapeake Bay as we accelerate toward the deadline and anticipate continued progress post-2025.

Thus, this Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) in recommending a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* leading up to and beyond 2025. The PSC is to report back to the Executive Council at our 2023 annual meeting with recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025. At our 2024 annual meeting, the PSC is to prepare recommendations that continue to address new advances in science and restoration, along with a focus on our partnership for going beyond 2025.

In undertaking such a process, the PSC should address the following considerations:

Science

- Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the *Watershed Agreement*.
- Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.
- Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions, increasing growth, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice considerations) to accomplishing the partnership's work under the *Watershed Agreement*, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.
- Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*.

Restoration




- Develop and begin to implement a communication strategy that identifies key partnership successes, associated ecosystem improvements and areas where more effort is needed.
- Provide snapshots of outcome attainability under the Agreement (e.g., which outcomes are likely to be met by the date(s) set by the partnership, which won't, and why) and options for communicating these snapshots to demonstrate progress in achieving our outcomes and the remaining work to be done, including gaps to be addressed.

Partnership

- Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.
- Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we
 - Are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders, and
 - Have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources.
- Based on this assessment, develop recommendations for potential improvement.

Outcome Attainability (as of 2023)

- 18 outcomes are considered on course.
- Two outcomes are uncertain pending upcoming data updates.
- 11 outcomes are off course and will not be met by 2025.

 OUTLOOK ON COURSE	 OUTLOOK OFF COURSE
Blue Crab Abundance Outcome	Wetlands Outcome
<i>Blue Crab Management Outcome (Completed)</i>	Black Duck Outcome
Oysters Outcome	Brook Trout Outcome
Forage Fish Outcome	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Outcome
Fish Habitat Outcome	Forest Buffers Outcome
Stream Health Outcome	Tree Canopy Outcome
<i>2017 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) Outcome (Complete)</i>	2025 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) Outcome
Fish Passage Outcome	Diversity Outcome
Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome	Toxic Contaminants Policy and Prevention Outcome
Local Leadership Outcome	Toxic Contaminants Research Outcome
Protected Lands Outcome	Students Outcome
Land Use Methods and Metrics Development Outcome	Climate Adaptation Outcome
Land Use Options and Evaluations Outcome	 OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN
Public Access Outcome	Healthy Watershed Outcome
Sustainable Schools Outcome	Stewardship Outcome
Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome	
Climate Monitoring and Assessment Outcome	

Charting the Course Beyond 2025



- Responds to the Chesapeake Executive Council charge.
- Recommendations by the Steering Committee.
- For consideration by Principals' Staff Committee.

Steering Committee Report Tackles

1

What we do – the goals and outcomes of the ***Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement***.

2

How we work together – the structure of the **Chesapeake Bay Program partnership**.



Process and Progress

Progress to Date

- Steering Committee convened; monthly meetings since June 2023.
- Contractor retained to evaluate partnership structure and efficiency.
- Five groups of subject matter experts developed findings for consideration.
- Public listening sessions with more than 165 total participants.
- Findings and considerations synthesized into one draft report.
- Draft report released for 60-day public feedback on July 1.



Expert Focus on Five Topics



Clean Water

Climate Change

Healthy Watersheds

People

Shallow Water Habitats

The Draft Report

Outline of Draft

Part I: Critical Path Forward Beyond 2025

Part II: Recommendations for the
Chesapeake Bay Program

Part III: Source Materials



Part I:

Recommendations for Potential Consideration by the Chesapeake Bay Program

- 1 Affirm the partnership's commitment to meet the goals of the 2014 *Watershed Agreement*. Propose specific amendments necessary to update and optimize.
- 2 Keep the partnership strong. Simplify and streamline structure and processes.

Part II:

High-level Recommendations for the Chesapeake Bay Program

SCIENCE

- Monitoring, Modeling, Analysis.
- Decision-making, resource allocation, communication.
- Knowledge-gaps: Climate, land use, social science.

PARTNERSHIP

- Streamline.
- Build capacity through local networks.
- Strengthen relevance to all communities.
- Communication and transparency.

RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

- Elevate conservation and nearshore habitats.
 - Review all goals, outcomes and strategies.
 - Holistic approach to maximize benefits.
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Part III:

Source Materials: Many and Meaningful

- 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*
- Chesapeake 2000
- Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program
- Achieving Water Quality Goals in the Chesapeake Bay: A Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response
- Enhancing Chesapeake Bay Partnership Activities by Integrating Social Science
- Retrospective on Lessons Learned from the Chesapeake Bay Program Strategy Review System's 3rd Cycle with Suggested Adaptations to Address Issues
- Advancing Monitoring Approaches to Enhance Tidal Chesapeake Bay Habitat Assessment
- Using Ecosystem Services to Increase Progress Toward, and Quantify the Results of, Multiple Chesapeake Bay Program Outcomes
- Charting a Course to 2025
- Rising Watershed and Bay Water Temperatures: Ecological Implications and Management Responses
- Enhancing the Chesapeake Bay Program Monitoring Networks
- Chesapeake Governance Study: Report of 2021 Decision-Maker Interview Results
- Recognizing Political Influences in Participatory Socio-Ecological Systems Models
- Linking Soil and Watershed Health to In-Field and Edge-of-Field Water Management
- Using Local Monitoring Results to Inform the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Model
- Cafe Summaries and Report Products from the Chesapeake Bay Program Strategy Review System's 3rd Cycle Biennial Meeting

A photograph of a body of water at sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, several weathered wooden pilings stand vertically in the water, their reflections clearly visible on the calm surface. The water is a deep blue, transitioning to a lighter blue near the horizon. The sky is a pale, warm yellow-orange, indicating the low sun. On the right side, there is a dense patch of tall, dry grasses. In the far distance, a dark line of trees or land is visible on the horizon.

Public Feedback

Public Feedback Process

- Public feedback open July 1– August 30.
- Anyone can submit comments by email to comments@chesapeakebay.net.
- Comments will be collected, reviewed and integrated as appropriate into the recommendations report by experts from Steering Committee.
- All comments received, as well as a redlined version of the recommendations report will be posted online at chesapeakebay.net/beyond2025.
- The final document will be reviewed by the Management Board and will inform the Principals' Staff Committee recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council.

Next Steps



Timeline

- July 1—Aug 30: Public Feedback Period
- September: Steering Committee Drafting Team reviews feedback and revises report.
- Sept. 17: PSC meeting
- Sept. 26: Steering Committee meeting; consensus on final report to PSC.
- Oct. 1-3: Individual briefings for PSC members on final report.
- Oct 10: Management Board meeting; approve report to send to PSC.
- Oct 25: PSC meeting to approve final report and action for the Executive Council meeting.
- Dec. 10: Executive Council meeting; approve recommendations and issue charge for 2025 and beyond.