



Backgrounder

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The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Spanning more than 64,000 miles and encompassing parts of six states, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a unique ecological system that supports thousands of plant and animal species and nearly 18 million people living within its boundaries. A network of nearly 180,000 miles of streams, creeks and rivers wind through the surrounding land and eventually flow into the Chesapeake Bay, the largest and more productive estuary in the United States. To conserve, restore and protect this national treasure, federal and state leaders formed the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership. For more than 30 years, Bay Program partners have made considerable progress supporting fish and wildlife populations, reducing pollution and protecting lands and habitats—but there is still more work to do.

In June 2014, political leaders from six states and the District of Columbia, and representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Commission signed the landmark *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, with the vision of restoring clean water, abundant wildlife and a vibrant cultural heritage to the Bay, where citizens and stakeholders will have access to waterways and open space and be engaged in conservation and stewardship. For the first time, representatives from every jurisdiction in the watershed committed to full partnership in the Bay Program and our far-reaching, collaborative restoration efforts.

The Watershed Agreement contains ten interconnected goals and thirty-one measurable, time-bound outcomes that will help create a healthy ecosystem: they will lower nutrient and sediment pollution; ensure our waters are free of toxic contaminants; sustain fish and shellfish populations; restore wetlands, underwater grass beds and other habitats; conserve farmland and forests; boost public access to and education about the Bay and its tributaries; and increase the climate resiliency of the watershed's resources, habitats and communities. These goals are interrelated: improvements in water quality can mean healthier fish and shellfish; the conservation of land can mean more habitat for wildlife; and a boost in environmental literacy can mean a rise in stewards of the Bay's resources. The natural world is an interconnected system, and our work under the Watershed Agreement will take an integrated approach in supporting public health and the health of the watershed as a whole.

As we work toward accomplishing the goals of the Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program's Goal Implementation Teams have drafted management strategies that detail how we will achieve each of the thirty-one outcomes. These twenty-five draft management strategies outline our plans for implementation, monitoring and assessment and coordinating partners and stakeholders in our work toward restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The strategies are grouped into five themes that align with Bay Program partners' vision, described in the Watershed Agreement: **Clean Water, Abundant Life, Engaged Communities, Conserved Lands, and Climate Change.**