

BACKGROUNDER

Beyond 2025 Process

In October 2022, the Chesapeake Executive Council [charged](#) the Principals' Staff Committee with recommending a critical path forward for meeting the goals and outcomes of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* through 2025 and beyond, incorporating new advances in science and restoration. The year 2025 was selected because many Watershed Agreement outcomes identified it as their target year for meeting objectives.

The partnership first presented [Charting a Course to 2025](#) to the Chesapeake Executive Council in October 2023. That document assessed the outcomes and offered recommendations to accelerate progress up to and beyond 2025. It was followed by [A Critical Path Forward for the Chesapeake Bay Program Beyond 2025](#), which put forward two high-level recommendations.

The first was to revise the 2014 *Watershed Agreement*—pursuant to the partnership's Governance and Management Framework—and make every effort to complete the review and revisions by the 2025 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting. The second was to develop a simplified, streamlined structure and governance process that supports all partners in achieving their commitments.

Over the past year, the Principals' Staff Committee, Management Board, Goal Implementation Teams and workgroups have all contributed to this process. Subject matter experts for each outcome assessed whether it should be updated, consolidated, removed, replaced or reclassified. The Management Board reviewed and discussed these recommendations and ultimately proposed a revised *Watershed Agreement*, which it sent to the Principals' Staff Committee in May 2025 for their review, discussion and approval.

After the Principals' Staff Committee approved the draft, it was released for a 60-day public feedback period. More than 2,000 unique comments were reviewed by subject matter experts across the partnership and incorporated into the final version of the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

The Revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*

The revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* includes four goals: Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife, Clean Water, Healthy Landscapes and Engaged Communities. Together, these four goals encompass 21 outcomes, many of which include measurable, time-bound targets that enable the partnership to track progress. Partners will work to achieve these goals, outcomes and targets by 2040.

Structure and Governance

The partnership formed a small team to develop recommendations on accountability and governance, while the Management Board created options for a revised organizational structure. The Governance and Accountability Team identified six challenging areas within the partnership, and the Principals' Staff Committee ultimately chose to focus on two of them: Priority Setting and Decision Making, and Roles and Responsibilities.

At its October 2025 meeting, the Principals' Staff Committee approved eight recommendations within these two focus areas, along with a revised structural framework that identified two priority focus areas: Program Leadership and Program Implementation. A team led by the Management Board Chair will implement the structure and governance revisions and report progress to the Principals' Staff Committee for final approval by July 1, 2026.