



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Beyond 2025:

A CRITICAL PATH FORWARD FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

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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.

EC Charge

“recommend a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* beyond 2025”



Phase 1 – by EC 2024
*Scope & breadth of what
should be undertaken*



Phase 2 – after EC 2024
Execute plan

Charting the Course Beyond 2025



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

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. July - August.
- Steering Committee agreed on final report September 26.
- PSC Chair drafted a new charge based on the report.



Summary of Feedback Received

60-day public feedback period: July-August

81 total responses

538 unique responses

1814 individual action emails from Chesapeake Bay Foundation

82 individual action emails from Waterkeepers Chesapeake Supporters



Overarching Themes from Public Feedback

- **Enhanced accountability and evidence-based** restoration practices.
- **Conservation as a focal area** and integration into pillars of restoration and science.
- **Address local and regional priorities** of climate resilience, environmental justice, and other “emerging” issues.
- **Importance of collaboration** and balancing needs across all partners.
- **Inclusive public engagement** to foster greater transparency and trust.
- **Technical assistance and financial support** to sustain and grow local implementation activities.

Outline

Part I: Critical Path Forward Beyond 2025

Part II: Recommendations for the
Chesapeake Bay Program

Part III: Source Materials



Part I:

- 1 Affirm the partnership's commitment to work together in partnership meet the goals of the *Watershed Agreement*. Direct partnership to continue implementation of existing goals. Direct PSC to make every effort to propose specific amendments to *Agreement*, including outcomes, by end of calendar year 2025.
- 2 Keep the partnership strong. Simplify and streamline structure and processes.

Part I: REVISIONS

Recommendations for Consideration

- 1
 - Direct partnership to continue implementation of existing goals.
 - Timing of Agreement amendments – Every effort to complete by end of 2025
 - Adherence to Governance and Management Framework
- 2
 - Effective coordination, collaboration, inclusion when streamlining.

Part II:

Additional Recommendations

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.
-

Part II: REVISIONS

Additional Recommendations

SCIENCE

- Explicit mention of toxics and emerging contaminants
- Added language towards nutrient imbalances and non-point source issues.
- Revised language and additions for social science

RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

- Revised explanation of "conservation."

PARTNERSHIP

- Clarified “systems” approach.

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

Key Dates

- July 31st All comments posted, SC reviewing feedback, Revision team drafting edits
- Sept 12th Update provided to MB
- Sept 17th Update provided to PSC, guidance to Co-Chairs, discussion of next steps
- Sept 26th Steering Committee meeting reached consensus on the report
- Sept 27th Draft EC Charge shared with MB and SC members
- Oct 2nd (now) Virtual briefing for PSC members and staff – 4:15pm
- Oct 10th MB meeting, receipt of final SC report
- Oct 25th PSC meeting, receipt of final SC report, decision on EC action in response

An underwater photograph showing several green aquatic plants with small leaves on thin stems. Two small, slender fish with yellow and black stripes are swimming in the blue water. Sunlight rays are visible filtering down from the surface, creating a dappled light effect on the plants and water.

Thank You
Questions?