



Backgrounder

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In June 2014, the Chesapeake Executive Council, which includes leaders from six states and the District of Columbia, and representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, signed the landmark *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. This restoration, conservation and stewardship accord contains ten interconnected goals and thirty-one measurable, time-bound outcomes that will help create a healthy ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay Program's Goal Implementation Teams have developed draft management strategies that outline our plans to meet those thirty-one outcomes. The twenty-five strategies are grouped into five themes that align with Bay Program partners' vision, described in the Watershed Agreement: **Engaged Communities, Abundant Life, Clean Water, Climate Change** and **Conserved Lands**.

About Engaged Communities



Nearly 18 million people live, work and recreate within the boundaries of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and the population is continuing to grow. We all rely on the services provided by our natural world to survive and thrive—and we can all play a role in supporting a healthy and vibrant ecosystem.

Local action is vital in the long-term health of the Bay watershed. Thousands of individuals, organizations and local governments across the region are already involved in restoring the lands and waterways in their communities. Joining forces with these dedicated stewards helps us align and achieve our common goals. When we engage with even more people across the region, our collective efforts will reach further than ever before.

Opportunities that allow people to connect with and learn about their environment help build lifelong commitments to protecting the Bay and its surroundings. As the future leaders of the watershed, it is imperative that the millions of students who live in the region are provided with educational experiences that help them understand and enjoy the natural world. Public access points create opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to fish, swim and connect with nature, fostering a desire to conserve and restore these treasured areas.

Just as resiliency in nature depends on diversity, the resiliency of the Bay restoration effort depends on building a larger, broader and more diverse community of stewards who move our work forward. With a strong community of environmental stewards and local leaders working alongside us, our conservation, protection and restoration work will be more successful than ever before.

Associated Management Strategies

Citizen Stewardship

Tens of thousands of individuals across the watershed take personal action and donate their time and talent to our shared goals, bringing the local action that moves our work forward. Activities that connect residents to their environment and create opportunities for local action help ensure long-term support for the Bay restoration effort. But it is difficult to track, coordinate and fund the different programs that exist, and many of these programs are not designed for maximum impact. Bay Program partners committed to increasing the number and diversity of trained and mobilized volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to enhance the health of their local watersheds. Our strategy includes developing the means to measure progress and results of stewardship programs, providing assistance to organizations to develop and implement successful programs, expanding the number and diversity of citizen volunteers, and empowering local residents to become citizen leaders.

Local Leadership

The long term success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort depends on local actions. There are more than 1,800 units of local government in our region, some of which are already taking steps to restore and protect their local rivers and streams. By working together to engage and facilitate local governments and others, we will leverage resources and ensure better outcomes. The health of the watershed is related to local priorities including land use policies, community health, economic development and tourism. Bay Program partners committed to increase the knowledge and capacity of local officials on issues related to water resources and in the implementation of economic and policy incentives that will support local conservation actions. Our plan to achieve this outcome includes developing and expanding training and leadership opportunities, facilitating peer to peer interactions among local officials, improving the availability and accessibility of informational resources, and identifying and improving key sources of information for local leaders.

Public Access Site Development

Our watershed is rapidly urbanizing, and physical access to the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams is very limited. A variety of factors limit the ability of people to interact and connect with the natural beauty of the region on a daily basis, which can affect quality of life and local economies. Increasing public access fosters a shared sense of responsibility and increased stewardship for the natural world. To connect more people with local waters, Bay Program partners committed to adding 300 new public access sites, with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing, where feasible. Our strategy to achieve this outcome involves a variety of approaches, including sustaining funding for development and maintenance of public access sites, supporting more detailed assessments of potential new sites, filling gaps in access along water trails, assessing issues and needs related to urban public access and annually tracking progress toward the goal of 300 new sites.

Environmental Literacy

More than three million students in kindergarten through 12th grade live in the Bay region, and the future well-being of our watershed will soon rest in their hands. The Watershed Agreement's Environmental Literacy Goal and its three

outcomes aim to enable these students to graduate with the knowledge and skills to protect and restore their local watershed. The Student Outcome will continually increase students' age appropriate understanding of the watershed with at least one meaningful watershed educational experience in elementary, middle and high school. Our strategy focuses on infusing environmental content into state and local standards, supporting training and networks for educators and promoting authentic student experiences related to the watershed. The Sustainable Schools Outcome will continually increase the number of schools in the region that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on their local watershed, environmental and human health through best practices, including student-led protection and restoration projects. Our strategy includes promoting certification programs and best management practices while engaging with and supporting key stakeholders. The Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome will, for each jurisdiction, develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy for all students in the region that includes policies, practices and voluntary metrics that support the environmental literacy goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement. Our strategy includes identifying and supporting the necessary tools, resources, programs and policies for all students to achieve science, citizenship and environmental literacy by graduation.

Diversity

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to diverse communities with a rich variation of cultures and perspectives—but diversity is often overlooked in conservation and restoration efforts, which results in fewer programs reaching underrepresented and underserved communities. Bay Program partners committed to identifying minority stakeholder groups—of all races, income levels, faiths, gender, age, sexual orientation and disabilities, along with other diverse groups—that are not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities, as well as creating meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage them in our efforts. To achieve this outcome, our strategy is to improve our communication and outreach efforts, expand employment opportunities for underrepresented individuals and communities and promote environmental justice through the meaningful involvement and fair treatment of all people.