Develop and Implement a Framework for a Climate Adaptive Bay and Watershed of the Future (Recommendation 1)

Climate change is rapidly and significantly altering the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. As detailed in the CESR report, it is infeasible to return the Bay to its pre-colonial state. Therefore, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) must work with partners and communities to envision a Bay of the future and enact climate adaptive measures to support a healthy system given anticipated changes. To tackle the wide scope and impact of climate challenges, such as increased storm flows, temperatures, sea levels, and storm events, and the widespread impacts these changes will have on habitats and people, the CBP needs to embrace an overall climate strategy and the capacity to support it.

Impact to how we work: Adapt partnership structure and increase capacity to effectively advance integration of climate considerations in all aspects of the partnership's work.

- Evaluate CBP structure and institute adaptations that would facilitate the important work of the partnership while prioritizing climate change and promoting cross-partnership work to accelerate implementation of climate adaptation measures across outcomes.
- Enhance CBP knowledge and capacity to apply scientific capabilities to respond to climate vulnerabilities, for example, by expanding the climate science support team, integrating climate science into BMPs, and promoting climate education in training materials.
- Apply decision science (e.g., structured decision making) at all levels of the CBP to support cooperative problem solving and improve outcomes under conditions of uncertainty.

Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement: Evaluate existing and proposed Bay Agreement goals for alignment with climate change projections and multiple benefits.

- Develop new goals that are compatible with anticipated future climate conditions and that support a healthy, equitable, and resilient Bay.
- Establish more holistic climate adaptation goal(s) and set numerical outcomes. Numeric outcomes are essential for assessing meaningful progress towards a healthy Bay.

General Level of Effort: High

- Anticipate 3+ years of time to obtain the scientific data and conduct the community engagement necessary to update the Bay Agreement goals using climate projections and local perspectives.
- Commitment of partnership time, resources for completing new assessments, and dedicated staff time to enhance coordination, structure new adaptive management processes, and conduct community engagement.

How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):

- Develop system for engaging watershed communities, collaboratively setting new goals prioritizing climate adaptation strategies, and identifying indicators of progress.
- Identify climate projections, research, and data/vulnerability assessments that could help inform setting of climate-adapted goals, outcomes, management strategies, and indicators; Develop new vulnerability/impact assessments of projected climate change (complete 2035 climate assessment).