



SUMMARY OF 2024 ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

STAKEHOLDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Recommendation #1: Articulate Engagement Opportunities with the Advisory Committees. The Stakeholders' Committee recommends that the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) begin 2025 by releasing a statement on the Advisory Committees. Such a statement could affirm the unique role of each individual Advisory Committee, highlight opportunities for collaboration with the full partnership, clarify the duties of the Advisory Committee Chairs as non-voting members of the Management Board (MB) and PSC, and document plans for deeper collaboration.

Recommendation #2: Confirm Accountability to Water Quality Targets. The Stakeholders' Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Bay Program to commit by the end of 2025 to a new deadline for implementation of the existing Watershed Implementation Plans as a part of the revision of the Watershed Agreement. Additionally, we recommend revising the water quality accountability framework to include a new near-term deadline for the Bay TMDL and a nonpoint source pollution reduction strategy. The Stakeholders' Committee emphasizes the importance of responsibility to and accountability for the jurisdictions to meet all of the water quality and living resources goals of the Watershed Agreement and the Bay TMDL, including the Conowingo Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

Recommendation #3: Support Locally Driven Watershed Plans that Incorporate Land Conservation. The Stakeholders' Advisory Committee recommends the jurisdictions approach their next phase of Watershed Implementation Plans to support locally driven river basin strategies to delist a target number of rivers by a future date with interim milestones along the way. This approach should include initiatives to engage communities, officials, watershed and conservation groups, land trusts, and local service providers to incentivize and allocate funds for the protection of tributaries with an emphasis on existing forests and wetlands. We uplift this important healthy watersheds consideration from the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee's Small Group Findings to elevate conservation and stewardship as key guiding pillars for the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Recommendation # 4: Increase Engagement of Community-Based Organizations by Lowering Grant Barriers. The Stakeholders' Advisory Committee recommend the Chesapeake Bay Program partners convene a forum and action-oriented workgroups with members of the Stakeholders' Committee and include agency leaders, prevalent bay watershed foundations, and federal and state contractual, budgetary, and financial officials to identify and implement institutional and procedural changes to grant application and administrative requirements that lower barriers for Community-Based Organizations. Since our 2022 report on Equitable Access to Grant Awards and Administrative Practices, we have heard that entities distributing Chesapeake Bay related funding pass through non-negotiable federal and state requirements as provisions of administering grants. A clear understanding of where grant reporting requirements originate, a conversation about barriers and potential solutions, and the identification of administrative flexibility could help to increase engagement of Community-Based Organizations, thereby advancing the Watershed Agreement's Stewardship and Diversity Outcomes.

SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Partnership should integrate public perspectives and participation to the greatest extent possible. Without the full consent, support, and participation of the public, restoration of Chesapeake Bay and its watershed will always be an

uphill battle. There are several ways in which public engagement can be further enhanced, most of which already exist. One is through greater engagement between CBP management and the CBP Advisory Committees, especially those representing local governments, stakeholders, and the agricultural community.

2. The Partnership should articulate engagement opportunities with the advisory committees. Building on the momentum started earlier this year, the Stakeholders' Committee recommends that the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) begin 2025 by releasing a statement on the Advisory Committees. Such a statement could affirm the unique role of each individual Advisory Committee, highlight opportunities for collaboration with the full partnership, clarify the duties of the Advisory Committee Chairs as non-voting members of the Management Board (MB) and PSC, and document plans for deeper collaboration.

3. Likely climate change impacts can and should be built into all CBP planning and implementation efforts. Climate change will impact many, if not most, CBP goals and outcomes in interconnected ways that have yet to be fully identified or explored. Several recent STAC workshops and reports have considered likely climate change impacts and made recommendations for mitigation and adaptation. Consideration of climate response may actually accelerate achievement of some CBP outcomes. STAC is prepared to help identify and prioritize climate change impacts and responses.

4. The Partnership should elevate the importance of living resources in its program goals. Conservation and restoration of living resources throughout the Bay and its watershed are often among the highest priorities for the public. While water quality is an important prerequisite for improved living resource habitat, achieving water quality goals does not guarantee living resource restoration. The quality of shallow water habitat is particularly important for many species of concern, for example. A locally focused and holistic approach to prioritizing living resource conservation and restoration is needed, including clear articulation of desired outcomes and metrics.

5. The Partnership should expand its capacity for flexible responses to changing conditions and improved understanding, embracing adaptive management approaches at multiple program levels to improve the CBP's capacity to learn while doing. STAC believes that the CBP Strategy Review System (SRS) can serve as a basis for this expansion through revision, re-organization, and re-evaluation on a regular basis, assessing not only the capacity to address current outcomes but also whether the outcomes themselves need reassessing or revising.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Recommendation #1: Building on the momentum started earlier this year, LGAC recommends that the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) begin 2025 by releasing a statement on the Advisory Committees. Such a statement could affirm the unique role of each individual independent Advisory Committee, highlight opportunities for collaboration with the full partnership, clarify the duties of the Advisory Committee Chairs as non-voting members of the Management Board (MB) and PSC, and document plans for deeper engagement with the Advisory Committees.

Recommendation #2: As the partnership moves into Phase II, LGAC's feedback on the draft Beyond 2025 Steering Committee report is more relevant than ever. Local governments continue to be critical partners in protecting and restoring local waterways. Several of the key issues raised by LGAC in Phase I have not been fully resolved and therefore LGAC recommends the following in Phase II: ● investing in plain language communication materials to more effectively engage constituents ● increasing technical and administrative assistance to local governments and their partners ● convening key stakeholders to discuss how to balance conservation efforts and development pressure throughout the watershed.