



A Path Forward for the Bay Program Beyond 2025



*May 2024 Meeting
Frostburg, MD*

Anna Killius
Executive Director
Chesapeake Bay Commission

The Chesapeake Bay Program: Who we are & what we do

Chesapeake Bay Program



Chesapeake Bay Agreements

40 Years of Refining and Amending

- 1983 – First Agreement (signed)
- 1987 – Revised Agreement (signed)
- 1992 – Agreement Amendments (signed)
- 2000 – Chesapeake 2000 Agreement (signed)
- 2014 – Chesapeake Watershed Agreement (signed)



2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

1 Vision, 10 Goals, 31 Outcomes



Sustainable
Fisheries



Toxic
Contaminants



Land
Conservation



Vital
Habitats



Healthy
Watersheds



Public
Access



Environmental
Literacy



Water
Quality



Stewardship



Climate
Resiliency

Each goal included between one and five outcomes. While the goals focus on the big picture, the outcomes are specific, measurable targets that contribute to achieving each goal.

Why Beyond 2025?

Outcome Attainment as of 2023

- At least 11 have timebound targets for 2025
- Two had pre-2025 deadlines
- Emerging challenges and change
- New science and learnings

 OUTLOOK ON COURSE	 OUTLOOK OFF COURSE
Blue Crab Abundance Outcome	Wetlands Outcome
<i>Blue Crab Management Outcome (Completed)</i>	Black Duck Outcome
Oysters Outcome	Brook Trout Outcome
Forage Fish Outcome	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Outcome
Fish Habitat Outcome	Forest Buffers Outcome
Stream Health Outcome	Tree Canopy Outcome
<i>2017 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) Outcome (Complete)</i>	2025 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) Outcome
Fish Passage Outcome	Diversity Outcome
Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome	Toxic Contaminants Policy and Prevention Outcome
Local Leadership Outcome	Toxic Contaminants Research Outcome
Protected Lands Outcome	Students Outcome
Land Use Methods and Metrics Development Outcome	Climate Adaptation Outcome
Land Use Options and Evaluations Outcome	 OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN
Public Access Outcome	Healthy Watershed Outcome
Sustainable Schools Outcome	Stewardship Outcome
Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome	
Climate Monitoring and Assessment Outcome	

2022 Executive Council Charge



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.**



Two-Phased Approach

By EC2024

1

Steering Committee proposes scope and breadth of plan

After EC2024

2

Bay Program implements plan



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Phase 1: Product

1

Where we are

Summary of where we are with the 2014 Watershed Agreement

- Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response, Charting a Course to 2025, Chesapeake Progress: Outcome Attainability , and more

Where do we want to be

Vision

Impact assessment

- The right outcomes for our goals and the right goals for our vision
- Our Partnership's ability to positively impact each goal and outcome

What we do

Assessment of our overall partnership

- Partnership Structure
- Governance and Adaptive Management

How we work

Path Forward

Recommendation on what to do with the Watershed Agreement post-2025 Recommendations on the Partnership

Phase 1: Process

Steering Committee

- Jurisdiction/Feds/ACs/GITs/+
- Monthly Meeting Frequency

Public Input &
MB/PSC Review

Report to the EC

December 2024

Evaluator

Source Material

Small Groups (SC + Experts)

- People, Climate, Clean Water, Shallow Habitats, Healthy Watersheds
- Active from Nov '23 to April '24

Findings (5 One-Pagers x 5 Groups)

- Vision, Value, Vanguard Ideas
- Impact to Agreement, Partnership

ERG (Independent, Contracted)

- Evaluation plan scoped by SC
- Active from Sept '23 to July '24

Evaluation Report

- Document Review and Interviews
- Findings and Considerations for Steering Committee

Phase 1: Timeline

	January				February				March				April				May					June							
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4				
Small Group Recommendations	Discuss & Draft								28/29	1-pagers				28															
ERG Evaluation Plan	Content Analysis Discussions Interim Draft Report																			19	25	Draft Final Report					27		
Steering Committee Draft																Drafting		25	Drafting			30	Drafting		27				
Public Feedback																													
Approval Process																								25					



	July					August				September				October					November				December										
Week	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4			
Small Group Recommendations																																	
ERG Evaluation Plan																																	
Steering Committee Draft						25				Revise		25																					
Public Feedback	Dependent on Draft Release																																
Approval Process	MB / PSC Review										17					MB?	MB? PSC										?						

Why a Recommendation on the Watershed Agreement?

What does the EC Charge say?



- this EC charges the 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
- 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.
- 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.



Core Guides for the Partnership

- GOALS:** **2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement**
The written agreement of goals and outcomes guiding our efforts to achieve a healthy estuary and watershed
- STRATEGIES:** **Strategy Review System**
The process we use to adaptively manage our work to achieve our outcomes
- GOVERNANCE:** **Governance and Management Framework**
The organizational function and governance of the Chesapeake Bay Program

Agreement-related Findings from Small Groups and ERG

- Develop a logic model that connects goals, outcomes, and activities/outputs based on a theory of change.
- Ensure all goals and outcomes benefit the people of the watershed.
- Refine goals and outcomes to adapt to the future condition of the Bay watershed.
- Consolidate/combine goals or outcomes to improve focus, efficiency, and comprehensive planning.
- Refine outcomes in need of more specificity or depth, like *Diversity, Land Conservation, and Public Access*.
- Refresh time horizons to meet the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load, consider phased approach across the TMDL's 92 tidal segments, and use monitoring and modeling when tracking progress.
- **Consider additional Signatories: Agencies, NGOs, Local Governments, Tribes.
- **Consider new outcomes: soil health, regenerative agriculture, and scale adaptation.

****Stickiest proposals**

Discussion: Reflections on Agreement-related Proposals

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New, Amended, or Unchanged Agreement?

- The current Agreement, signed in 2014, was the result of a 5-year drafting process.
- Allows for **adaptive management** “at all levels of the Partnership to foster continuous improvement.”
- “As the signatories identify new opportunities and concerns, Goals or Outcomes **may be adopted or modified**” (2014 CBWA, p. 3)
 - **Goals:** changes or additions to be approved by the Executive Council
 - **Outcomes:** changes or additions to be approved by the Principals’ Staff Committee and will be open for public input before finalized; significant changes or additions will be raised to raised to the Executive Council for approval

New, Amended or Unchanged Agreement?

- ***We're making progress*** – Our current Agreement is not fundamentally flawed or failing. We continue to make significant progress under its guidance.
- ***We're not pressing "pause"*** - Major plans and investments are in place and should continue even as we discuss how to optimize our future performance.
- ***Amendments could help close the gap*** – Findings by small groups & ERG suggest that some changes rise to the level of agreement refinements.
- ***The Agreement was built for change*** – The Agreement can be amended and has successfully been amended.
 - 2020 – PSC approved edits to three outcomes: *Diversity, Fish Passage, and Land Use Methods and Metrics*.
 - 2022 – EC approved modifications to replace *citizen* with more accurate and inclusive descriptions: *public, individuals, community, youth, and everyone*.

Proposed Agreement Recommendation and Timeframe

By 2025 EC meeting (end of 2025):

- High-level updates to the 2014 Watershed Agreement
 - Focus on Vision, Preamble, Principles, Goals, Management Strategies sections
- Reaffirm commitment to Partnership & continued collaboration

By 2026 EC meeting (end of 2026):

- Reaffirm, refine, refresh Outcomes
- Commit to the renewed Partnership

Chesapeake Bay Commission's Guidance on Path Forward



As an Executive Council Member:

- **What is the best path forward:** a new Agreement, a phased update of the existing Agreement, or no changes beyond new deadlines?
- **What are the core elements or values of a healthy watershed** that are critical to deliver as a Partnership?

As State Decision-makers:

- **How can we maintain momentum** over the next 2-3 years as we continue planning for beyond 2025?

Thank you!

Anna Killius

akillius@chesbay.us

www.chesbay.us

