**Local Government Engagement Initiative: Common Agenda**

**The Local Government Engagement Initiative** (Initiative) is a forum for the Jurisdictions, EPA, and other Key Messengers, to collaborate in the development of strategies and tools to 1) inform local governments about the Midpoint Assessment and 2) enhance local government engagement in the development and implementation of Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (Phase III WIPs). The first phase of this work will occur from September 2016 through December 2016. Additional work will take place throughout 2017 and 2018.

Participants in the Initiative recognize the need to:

* Accurately and clearly inform local governments about progress being made towards clean-up of the Chesapeake Bay, including water quality trends, improvements to models, etc.;
* Engage local governments, or their representatives, in developing the Phase III WIPs, which will serve as the guide for clean-up actions to be undertaken between 2018 and 2025; and
* Seek buy-in of local governments – especially elected leaders – to implement actions to reduce water pollution at the local level.

Our goal is to ensure that local governments are actively engaged in the development and implementation of Phase III WIPs. We believe that every local government official[[1]](#footnote-1) in the Bay watershed should have access to accurate and reliable information about the Chesapeake Bay clean-up effort and has a clear understanding of the role of local governments in meeting the pollution reduction goals established in the 2010 Chesapeake Bay TMDL (Bay TMDL).

We, the participants in the Local Government Engagement Initiative, see value in working together to develop answers to the following questions:

1. What needs to be communicated?
2. When?
3. To Whom?
4. For what purpose?
5. What is the best format for delivery?
6. Who are the (best) messengers?
7. What tools and/or resources are needed?

**Joint Approach**

With support from the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), we will:

* Develop a roadmap and schedule to guide individual, jurisdiction-specific plans to communicate with and engage local governments in Midpoint Assessment and Phase III WIP development and implementation;
* Collaborate with one another during development of jurisdiction-specific plans for engaging local governments in the development and implementation of Phase III WIPs;
* Develop messages that resonate with local governments for use by individual jurisdictions and other trusted sources in communicating with local governments; and
* Provide local government officials and staff, and their representatives, with timely and relevant information, including information that will enable them to actively engage in the development of Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, should they wish to do so.

**Roles, Responsibilities and Primary Points of Contact**

This is a partnership for our collective benefit. Our success is dependent on each of us participating willingly and fully in this Initiative.

LGAC Staff – LGAC staff is responsible for coordinating the Initiative. This includes scheduling and facilitating meetings, checking in regularly with participants, collecting information from participants, coordinating delivery of professional services from consultants and making sure that participant’s needs are being met. Contact: Mary Gattis, LGAC Coordinator

LGAC Membership – LGAC members provide guidance to staff and the participants as needed, as well as provide feedback on jurisdiction specific communications/engagement strategies and messaging, and identify trusted sources for sharing information. The Chair is responsible for providing regular updates to the Principals Staff Committee. Contact: Brianne Nadeau, LGAC Chair

Jurisdictions – Jurisdictions participating in this Initiative are responsible for developing a jurisdiction specific (“individual”) strategy for enhancing communication with local governments and providing input on a watershed-wide (“collective”) strategy. Each jurisdiction’s appointed representative to the Initiative will willingly share information, such as draft strategies and presentation materials, seek input and guidance through the Initiative and take advantage of the services available through this Initiative.

* Delaware Contact: Jen Walls, DNREC
* District of Columbia Contact: TBD
* Maryland Contact: Jim George, MDE
* New York Contact: Wendy Walsh, Upper Susquehanna Coalition
* Pennsylvania Contact: Nicki Kasi, DEP
* Virginia Contact: Joan Salvati, DEQ
* West Virginia Contact: Alana Hartman, DEP

EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO) – the CBPO is responsible for providing technical guidance, particularly as it relates to the Bay TMDL’s Midpoint Assessment, and resource support for the Initiative. PPOC: Lucinda Power and Rich Batiuk

Key Messengers – Key Messengers are those entities that the Jurisdictions rely on to assist with delivering communications and engaging local governments around the Midpoint Assessment and Phase III WIP. This may include state associations of municipalities and counties, nongovernment organizations such as the Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, Chesapeake Stormwater Network, and others.

As participants in this Initiative, we concur with this common agenda and agree to:

* Select a point person to participate in this initiative;
* Share information about local government engagement communications strategies and tools;
* Help develop communications strategies and tools that can be used collectively, by the group;
* Participate in email communications, meetings and conference calls throughout this process; and,
* Serve as messengers to local government officials, when appropriate.

We must ensure that local government officials are not getting contradictory or confusing information about the Bay TMDL, and that partners in this work coordinate efforts. By working together we will be more effective, conserve limited resources and maximize our collective impact.

**Background**

The Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL) is a comprehensive “pollution diet” to guide necessary actions to restore clean water in the Chesapeake Bay and the region’s streams, creeks and rivers. The Bay TMDL was established in 2010 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and it covers the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed, including all or portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The Bay TMDL is designed to ensure that all pollution control measures needed to fully restore the Bay and its tidal rivers are in place by 2025, with practices in place by 2017 to meet 60 percent of the overall nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment reductions. By 2017, the EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Program will have conducted a Midpoint Assessment “check-in” to evaluate what progress has been made, account for new or additional pollution reduction practices, incorporate any new scientific tools or analysis and update pollution targets as needed.

Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) are the roadmaps for how the Bay jurisdictions, in partnership with federal and local governments, will meet their pollution targets. Phase I and Phase II WIPs were developed in 2010 and 2012. Phase III WIPs will be developed in 2017.

Improving water quality will require implementation over multiple decades, with local governments in lead roles.

With more than 1,800 units of local government in the Bay watershed, a unified strategic approach to engaging local governments is needed.

1. Local Government Officials refers to elected and appointed officials and senior staff. This definition is consistent with the term as it is used in the Local Leadership Management Strategy and Workplan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)