

Thank you for preparing the latest Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and providing an opportunity for public comment.

You have done an admirable job identifying appropriate Goals and Outcomes, however greater attention and concrete, interim goals to create and improve public access should be added.

The Agreement appropriately recognizes the essential need for public access, but fails to seek a commitment from the signors to assure meaningful access becomes a reality. There are seven state level jurisdictions entering into this agreement with a goal of adding 300 new public access sites. This sounds admirable but because of the vagueness does not call on any of the individual jurisdictions to do anything. Is the goal of 300 to be divided evenly amongst the participants or is it on a per capita or geographic area distribution?

Public access is recognized as an essential aspect of improving the watershed. From the Principles section:

Engage citizens to increase the number and diversity of people who support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities . . . and

Explore the application of social science to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management, and decision-making.

The introduction to the Goals and Outcomes section further emphasizes the critical role that citizen access must play in the success of this Agreement. Specifically:

Environmentally literate citizens are stewards of the Bay's healthy watersheds. Better water quality means swimmable, fishable waters for Bay residents and visitors. Increased public access to the Chesapeake inspires people to care for critical landscapes

Despite the recognition of the essential role that public access will play to the success of the Agreement, Public Access appears as an afterthought with an overly ambitious and ill-defined goal.

A condition has been allowed to exist that removes the majority of the public from any interest in the great public and natural resource that is the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Reversing this condition is essential to the success of the agreement and willing implementation of the programs that will be necessary to achieve the goals.

The signors should be called on to:

- Respect the public's right to use the public's resources;
- Create public access as part of public improvements adjacent or over water;
- Actively remove impediments to public access that have been allowed to the benefit of private riparian owners;
- Require public accommodations wherever private development will benefit from the public's resources; and
- Assure that the public know that they are welcomed and encouraged to use the natural resources we are all called upon to protect.

We need all the people to support these initiatives. But if the primary beneficiaries are the privileged riparian owners, how do the leaders expect any broad based support to achieve the other goals outlined in the agreement?

Thank you again for your efforts and the opportunity to submit these comments.

Very truly yours,

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