

Comments to Draft Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

As a citizen of Hanover County, VA and mother to two boys, my concerns focus on the health of the environment where my family lives, works and plays as well as the environmental education provided by public schools. In addition, my husband, a Masters level open water swimmer and I, a triathlete, care deeply about the health of the James River.

1. **Be more aggressive in restoring Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAVs).** Our family has participated in the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Grasses for the Masses program for three years. Through this program, we have witnessed progress, but it is too slow. I am interested in the Bay states taking a more aggressive approach to helping study the most efficient and effective way of helping restore bay grasses so that our ultimate goal of 180,000 acres may be achieved. My son has learned about interdependence of species and the bay grasses are a prime example. Without them, other species of plants and animals may not survive.
2. **Concentrate public access to rivers and tributaries where it benefits the swimming community.** The triathlon and open water swimming communities host a large number of events every year in the bay states. Organizations that host these events choose locations based on ease of access, safety, scenery, and logistics. Following the event, feedback is provided by athletes and if successful, there is the potential to host events at the same locations year after year, therefore providing economic benefit to the area.
3. **Expand environmental education further.** As a former classroom teacher, I know there are countless ways to frame a lesson. In the Bay states, we should use our watershed knowledge and reframe our curriculum so teachers may present other subjects from a clean water framework. One meaningful watershed experience is not enough. Technology should be worked into this framework until cross-communication between schools and clean water experts becomes effortless.
4. **Ensure that the new Agreement includes goals specific to climate change.** Virginia also voted against inclusion of any outcome related to climate change, despite growing awareness of the impacts of climate change on Bay systems and the Bay region.

--Meredith Dash (Hanover County, VA)