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Pennsylvania



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to the Chesapeake Executive Council

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August 18, 2020

Governor Hogan, Chair
Chesapeake Executive Council
Office of the Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: LGAC 2020 Annual Recommendations

As Chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee, I represent the collective voice of local elected officials throughout the Chesapeake watershed. We support the vision of healthy local watersheds that has the added benefit of improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

This year has been and continues to be one of great challenges to all, including local governments. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted our economies, communities and health. Over the past several years, LGAC has advocated for more financial resources and technical assistance to local governments participating more fully in protecting and restoring water resources in our communities. We continue to urge this assistance.

Last year one of the LGAC recommendations to you was to convene a one-day summit of flood, climate and disaster experts to discuss ensuring that flood mitigation efforts and Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts work in conjunction with one another. While there was strong interest in organizing this Summit, planning has not begun and LGAC is here to help when it does.

LGAC again asks for consideration to fill its final open position for a New York representative.

I am pleased to present the attached 2020 Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council.

Sincerely,

Ann Simonetti, LGAC Chair

Cc: Chesapeake Executive Council
Dana Aunkst, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program

Enclosure



Jennifer Starr, Director of Local Government Programs/LGAC Coordinator
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Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council



August 2020

Each year LGAC explores issues affecting local governments' ability to participate more fully in realizing the Vision contained in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. What we learned over the last year is that local governments are concerned about healthy watersheds, flooding, infrastructure maintenance, growing economies, climate resiliency, and a variety of other issues that affect the health, safety and welfare of their constituents, as well as the health of the Bay. Without additional state and federal support, however, we will continue to fall short of our collective vision for an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Therefore, we recommend the Executive Council take the following actions to advance Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts at the local level.

Draw on the experience of the three Advisory Committees to the Chesapeake Executive Council

Bay resiliency is fundamental to the resiliency of the entire social-ecological-economic system on which we rely, and supporting that resiliency requires innovative science-based strategies to keep promoting activities that maximize returns on all of these elements. The three Advisory Committees to the Chesapeake Executive Council have a long history of providing guidance and support to the watershed partnership on behalf of the ongoing restoration effort. We stand together in offering our continuing support during the COVID-19 crisis as challenges and new opportunities arise. As important decisions are made, we hope that the watershed partnership will continue to draw on our collective expertise to maintain and continue progress toward an environmentally and economically sustainable bay with clean water and abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders.

Replicate and expand on a workforce development program modeled on the Civilian Conservation Corps and American Conservation Experience programs

Watershed communities are facing extraordinary challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic; one of which is loss of jobs and income. Simultaneously, watershed restoration efforts have slowed. The Civilian Conservation Corps, created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, hired the young and unemployed for projects in forestry, soil conservation and recreation. By 1942, the 3.4 million in Roosevelt's Tree Army had planted more than 3 billion trees, built hundreds of parks and wildlife refuges and completed thousands of trails and roads. The current Conservation Corps is designed to mentor youth, explore future outdoor careers, learn practical field skills and develop confidence in the field of conservation. An expanded Conservation Corps would offer the greatest, most straightforward path to encourage and ensure diversity in our ranks and future minority leadership in the Bay effort.

LGAC calls on the Chesapeake Executive Council to replicate and expand on these workforce development programs or others of a similar construct as a means to minimize unemployment and continue watershed restoration efforts.

Develop, guide and support policies and programs that advance environmental justice

Local governments are committed to ensuring a safe, vibrant and supportive community for all their residents. In light of the response to the systemic inequities nationwide and the role of local elected officials to support all populations, LGAC recommends jurisdiction development and support of policies or programs that promote equity, improve the environmental health and well-being of vulnerable communities and maintain the livability of the whole community. Policy-making decisions must ensure that the voices of each and every community throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed are valued, respected and heard; and, that vulnerabilities are considered and protected. Equity can be achieved by ensuring historically underrepresented communities are able to actively participate in the decision-making process and that regulations provide substantive protections. Examples of policies include, but are not limited to, collaborating with vulnerable communities to identify and remedy environmental hazards including vulnerability to flooding, conducting community engagement and assessments for siting or permitting of developments in vulnerable communities, using planning and zoning to prevent the siting of polluting facilities or infrastructure in environmentally burdened neighborhoods, targeting the development of environmental amenities such as green space, affordable renewable energy, resilient infrastructure, and brownfield cleanups in communities overburdened by environmental pollution, and encouraging the convening of a local task force or committee to assess inequity in environment health. LGAC recognizes that many of these policies need to be developed locally but the leadership of the Bay Program can provide standardized policies that also ensure compliance with the Bay Agreement.

Thank you for your time and attention. LGAC hopes its priorities align with yours for the successful restoration of the Bay. As your advisors on issues related to local government engagement, we stand ready to assist in achieving our collective vision for a clean and healthy Chesapeake Bay Watershed through the implementation of these recommendations.

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