

# Draft Chesapeake Bay Program DEIJ Statement

## CBP Vision from the 2014 Watershed Agreement

Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders.

## Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

Just as natural ecosystems depend on biodiversity to thrive, the long-term success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort depends on equitable, just, and inclusive engagement of all our communities living throughout the watershed that engages all dimensions of diversity, such as (delete regardless of) race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, national origin, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, age, physical abilities, veteran-status, gender, sexual identity, or other factors.

The impacts of discrimination and continuing disparities disproportionately burden communities of color, indigenous and low-income communities both economically and environmentally. This limits access to clean water and clean air, fish and wildlife, and conserved lands and results in disproportionate impacts from threats to human health and the environment, such as climate change and pollution. These cultural, racial, and social disparities will only be exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19 and further demonstrate the CBP's need for an explicit and tangible commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice.

At the Chesapeake Bay Program, we believe the full diversity of people who live and work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have a right to benefit from and help guide the future of an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, clean air, abundant life, conserved lands, access to the water, and a vibrant cultural heritage.

We are committed to embracing diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in all areas of the Chesapeake Bay Program to achieve our mission. Specifically, we commit to:

- Create specific workplans that intentionally incorporate accountability mechanisms for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in our organizational structure, leadership, policies, strategic goals, (delete workplans) and program delivery (delete including) by linking performance evaluations, grant-making, funding decisions, restoration, and conservation activities to those workplans.
- Engage, recruit, and retain leadership, staff, appointees, and volunteers that reflect the diversity of people living within the Chesapeake Bay region.
- Foster a culture of inclusion, respect, and mutual learning within the Chesapeake Bay Program by leveraging change management training and empowering new voices and perspectives in our outreach, engagement, and internal decision-making.
- Develop long-term relationships and partnerships with organizations run by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities that result in increased collaborative planning to inform decision-making and generate co-benefits.
- Ensure the benefits of our science, restoration, and partnership programs are equitably and fairly distributed and do not have adverse disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities, especially low-income and historically under-represented communities and people of color.
- Continue to learn and share best practices as an organization in our evolving understanding of how best to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

Explanation of track changes above suggested by Virginia Governor Northam's Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, Dr. Janice Underwood. Her comments are also copied below. The following link provides more information about Dr. Underwood and her work in

Virginia: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/about-us/>

- This is a strong document and reflects genuine DEI, and social justice work. Bravo to whoever wrote this! Seriously, this is strong.
- The first bullet needs an accountability metric --it sounds good but there is not a clear path as to how to get there...this could be an easy fix by rearranging this sentence to read:

Create specific workplans that intentionally incorporate accountability mechanisms for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in our organizational structure, leadership, policies, strategic goals, and program delivery by linking performance evaluations, grantmaking, funding decisions, restoration, and conservation activities to those workplans.

- Right now this document lacks relevance to the current public health crisis that will undoubtedly exacerbate inequities for communities of color. Therefore I would include statements that speak to COVID-19 urgency or language embedded that relate the need for this document even more because of the global pandemic. For your consideration, I offer something like this: These cultural, racial, and social disparities will only be exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19 and further demonstrate CBP's need for an explicit and tangible commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice.
- I would remove "regardless of race...." This is typical of colorblind statements of diversity. Instead revise with inclusive language that suggests that you want to see and include these dimensions visibly: Just as natural ecosystems depend on biodiversity to thrive, the long-term success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort depends on equitable, just, and inclusive engagement of all our communities living throughout the watershed that engages the many dimensions of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, national origin, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, age, physical abilities, veteran-status, gender, sexual identity, or other factors.