

## How do we balance challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic with Bay restoration?

The COVID-19 pandemic has left local, state and federal governments scrambling to deal with unanticipated economic concerns, including a shift in budget priorities, record unemployment, certain economic sectors struggling to find their place in this new normal and the unanticipated costs of dealing with a public health crisis. However, the pandemic has also led to an enhanced appreciation of nature and our public lands.

It is proposed that the main topic of the 2020 Executive Council meeting be the watershed's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how we can use our current Bay restoration work to address the challenges to our environment, economy and public health. Clean water and air are a fundamental right for all beings in the Chesapeake region and beyond, and it's more important than ever to continue, and grow, our work at these times.

Bay restoration activities provide unique opportunities that we would be remiss to not take advantage of, to not only help with our economic recovery, but to ensure our water and air remain clean to sustain our quality of life. Each member would be asked to address their individual challenges as a result of the pandemic, and to participate in a larger discussion on how Bay restoration can help public health, the environment and the economy.

- Build a green workforce: Encourage jobs in environmental restoration and conservation that target underserved populations and are tied to the goals of the *Watershed Agreement* (e.g. forest buffers, drinking water, waste treatment and stormwater management). Highlight the importance of projects that address co-benefits.
  - Example: Forest buffer vocational training at Pennsylvania correctional institutions: [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/upon\\_release\\_inmates\\_in\\_pennsylvania\\_look\\_to\\_the\\_outdoors](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/upon_release_inmates_in_pennsylvania_look_to_the_outdoors)
  - Example: D.C. Rivercorps Program [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/river\\_corps\\_puts\\_young\\_adults\\_on\\_pathway\\_to\\_greener\\_future](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/river_corps_puts_young_adults_on_pathway_to_greener_future)
  - Example: READY Program in Lancaster, Pa. <https://www.allianceforthebay.org/our-work/key-program-focuses/reducing-stormwater-runoff/ready/>
  - Example: LGAC 2019 Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Workforce Development [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel\\_files/19528/2019\\_lg\\_forum\\_report.pdf](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/19528/2019_lg_forum_report.pdf)
- The pandemic has intrinsically been tied to areas that suffer from degraded air and water quality. How can we use this momentum to address the public health needs of our environmental justice communities, while at the same time taking steps to ensure our air and water remain healthy?
  - The Executive Council would be asked to sign a statement in support of DEIJ within the CBP.
  - Digital divide between underserved communities, rural and urban areas.
- Discuss innovative ways to target industries that need support, while at the same time reducing their impact on the Bay and local waterways.

- General: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2020/04/23/family-owned-farms-wineries-are-struggling-adapt-shutdown-continues/>
- Agriculture.
  - Dairy: <https://www.wlvt.org/blogs/berks/how-the-covid19-pandemic-is-impacting-pas-dairy-farmers/>
  - Poultry: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/coronavirus/bs-md-poultry-wicomico-20200501-7rtkga5kvncb7fonfgknmwc45m-story.html>
  - Maintaining the safety of our agricultural workers.
  - Addressing the growing need of food scarcity, production and distribution.
- Seafood.
  - Oysters: <https://www.wavy.com/news/business/oyster-farmers-hit-hard-by-coronavirus-closures/>
- Outside activities and utilizing our federal, state and local parks have become critical outlets for us during the pandemic.
  - The Executive Council would be asked to recognize the revised Forest Restoration Strategy, which will be signed by state foresters prior to the EC meeting.
  - Example: American Conservation Experience  
<http://www.usaconservation.org/programs/conservation-corps/>
  - Example: Maryland Conservation Corps  
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/mcc.aspx>
- Provides the opportunity to recognize those industries, organizations and/or individuals that work In Bay restoration and were deemed essential during the pandemic.
  - Examples: Wastewater treatment plant operators, Dam operators, Park rangers.
- Recognize the environmental benefits tied to the pandemic.
  - Discuss in the context with loss of life, disproportionate impact on underserved communities and severe economic hardship.
  - Growth of digital infrastructure from working at home.
  - Reduced air pollution.
  - Reduction in fossil fuel use.