



Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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August 18, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan,

Since its founding in 1984, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) continues to work cooperatively, and on a nonpartisan basis, to advise the Chesapeake Executive Council on restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not traveled throughout the watershed as we typically do, but continue to meet virtually with agency representatives, thought leaders, and local practitioners to discuss issues impacting the ecosystem and local communities. As your citizen advisors, we represent the perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders and we embrace the shared value of a healthy and sustainable watershed.

We thank the Executive Council for its leadership to ensure the Chesapeake Bay Program federal funding continues to support the Partnership's effort. As you know, the states and the federal agencies rely heavily on the funding Congress allocates for scientific integrity, monitoring and implementation of watershed restoration and protection. Your help in advocating for full federal funding exemplifies the importance and strength of the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership.

As the Chesapeake Executive Council prepares for its 2020 annual meeting, the Citizens Advisory Committee offers our attached recommendations and insights on the inherent intersection of the quality and resiliency of human health, economy and the environment, including (1) Public Health and the Environment, (2) Compliance and Enforcement, and (3) Restoration Economy. We believe that now more than ever maintaining the progress of watershed restoration and protection is critical. We urge you to continue to hold the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers as a high priority.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,

Matt Ehrhart
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: Chesapeake Executive Council



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Citizens Advisory Committee
TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

2020 Citizens Advisory Committee Annual Recommendations
(Issued July 21, 2020)

The following statement was developed on behalf of the Chairs of the three Advisory Committees:

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.

As a result of our quarterly meetings over the past year, hearing from a variety of state, federal, and local representatives, NGOs and representatives of business and industry, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) respectfully offers the following recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council:

(1) Public Health and the Environment

The Citizens Advisory Committee believes there should be more focus on the intersection of public health and the environment. The COVID-19 pandemic draws attention to the need for a holistic approach to foster healthy communities and advance policies and programs that reduce chemical and other environmental exposures that negatively affect human health. When communities have the tools and resources to be resilient during disasters they are better prepared to address a public health crisis like COVID-19 or climate justice. Additionally, the past few months have again demonstrated the importance of increasing land conservation, parks, and outdoor areas that are part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals. The CAC intends to explore this environmental health intersection and environmental inequalities by hosting a virtual expert panel in the coming months. We look forward to sharing the findings and recommendations with you and your staff.

We strongly support the Executive Council's endorsement of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Statement. With regard to related actions to move the Partnership toward the tenets of the statement, we offer these two recommendations:

- **We encourage you to consider a multi-disciplinary approach to environmental health by engaging your environmental and public health agencies together to discuss creating an integrated system that can track crucial information about the environment and how it relates to public health across all communities.**
 - **This approach might start with an analysis of the relationship between degraded water quality and public health in traditionally underserved or marginalized communities by summarizing probable causes and considering future targeting of investments.**



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

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- **Additionally, the Chesapeake Bay Program could support the jurisdictions in this effort by providing data on state and federally funded investments in water quality protections in Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income communities.**

(2) Compliance and Enforcement

We recognize that there will be long-term financial impacts on state and local budgets resulting from budget reallocations and a reduction of revenue. This reality will make it difficult to increase implementation of new water quality management practices in the near future. Given the impact that compliance has on the health of local waterways, including drinking water supplies, we believe there is a critical link between regulatory compliance and human health. This is important when considering the cascading impacts of public health particularly to vulnerable populations.

- **We encourage you to maintain your agency compliance staff and prioritize equitable enforcement of regulations in an effort to not lose ground on water quality progress and honor the public duty to protect human and ecological health. In anticipation of economic impacts of the pandemic, as one example among many, communities with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) regulations could experience significant financial restraints on future implementation of their permits, but compliance support will prevent backsliding.**

(3) Restoration Economy

At this time when there is a national debate on the balance between public health and the economy, the CAC believes now is the time to once again reframe the debate away from this false dichotomy. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed restoration effort supports many essential positions, from first responders to waste water treatment operators, as well as many other positions that became more important to society, such as public park staff, as families across our region adjust to lockdowns and social distancing measures. The health and economy discussion misses some critical information. For example, we were surprised to learn at our last CAC meeting that the Chesapeake Bay Program does not track or regularly report the number of jobs supported by the millions of dollars expended by the Federal, State and Local governments each year on watershed restoration efforts. For instance, the means by which environmental jobs support the economy and how environmental protection prevents more costly clean-ups after an ecosystem is compromised would be helpful to know. To help shift this debate and support Governors, legislators, and other partners to more effectively advocate for Chesapeake Bay and River funding:

- **We encourage the Chesapeake Bay Program to track and report the number of federal, state and local jobs associated with its funding to demonstrate the dual power of watershed protection and restoration economy.**

Finally, we understand that the recent pandemic and associated economic impacts will put pressure on relaxing the Bay TMDL deadlines. The Citizens Advisory Committee wishes to inform the Executive Council that we remain committed to the 2025 schedule.



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