



Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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July 24, 2018

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) has worked cooperatively and on a nonpartisan basis to advise the Chesapeake Executive Council on restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We travel throughout the region meeting 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 all of us embrace the shared value of a healthy and sustainable watershed. The CAC is honored to offer the following annual recommendations on progress and opportunities toward meeting the water quality, habitat, and stewardship goals that guide the collective efforts of Chesapeake Bay watershed recovery.

First, we commend the Executive Council's 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 heavily rely 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.

Additionally, we are thankful for the Partnership's commitment to transparency and accountability as demonstrated by the jurisdictions' verification programs for Best Management Practices; pleased to hear that most of the Bay Program partners will remain co-located in Annapolis for continued coordination; and hopeful about the new diversity outcome which will enhance the Partnership by increasing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Lastly, we are encouraged by the progress made thus far toward the Bay watershed goals- as illustrated by expanding underwater grass beds and some water quality measures. As we reflect on the hard work and new information resulting from the Midpoint Assessment of the Bay TMDL, and as we look to the effort that remains in this last phase toward the 2025 goals,



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the CAC has identified three priority opportunities for your consideration: (1) Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plans and Local Planning Targets; (2) Forest Buffers and Wetlands; and (3) Environmental Education and Literacy. Attached is our report of recommendations.

The Citizens Advisory Committee encourages you to be bold, creative, and devoted to the care of the rivers of the Chesapeake Bay as a healthy watershed supports human and ecological health, our regional economy, and our quality of life.

Respectfully submitted,



Paula Jasinski
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee



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2018 Citizens Advisory Committee Annual Recommendations
(Issued July 24, 2018)

As a result of our quarterly meetings across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed 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.

I. Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plans and Local Planning Targets

The CAC is encouraged to see in the EPA's Expectations for Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) that all the jurisdictions remain committed to achieving the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Watershed Agreement)* Goals by 2025. We acknowledge and congratulate you on your exceptional work to incorporate Best Management Practice (BMP) verification programs. The cleaning-up of historical BMPs and future verification practices ensures that you have more accurate information for targeting and refining future implementation. It also engenders confidence among citizens that their tax dollars are being spent efficiently and accountably to protect human health and the environment.

While this new information may make it clear that more effort is needed to meet the 2025 commitment for clean water protection, we think it is responsible governance and smart business practice to have a better understanding of the accounting of actions on the ground. Now that the Partnership has a new, more accurate Bay model decision tool, we are better equipped than we have ever been to make targeted, intentional management decisions that will accelerate a reduction in pollution and ensure appropriate equitable effort among the jurisdictions and among the sectors. To this end,

- **We encourage the jurisdictions to continue with the development of programmatic infrastructure and financial support for meaningful BMP verification as a part of implementation of Phase 3 WIPs, particularly in accounting for growth and land use changes as stated in the EPA Expectations document;**
- **We recommend the jurisdictions integrate *Watershed Agreement Outcomes* into the water quality restoration plans as a way to incentivize practices that offer corollary ecological benefits and to encourage meaningful participation in local planning targets supporting local economies and communities.**



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II. Forest Buffers and Wetlands

Creating and protecting forest buffers and wetlands offer two of the most cost-effective opportunities for achieving co-benefits for water quality, habitat and living resources. Providing trees as forest buffers along our shorelines reduces erosion, protects local waterways, communities, drinking water sources, and human health from exposure to harmful bacteria and emerging contaminants in polluted runoff. Yet, the Chesapeake Bay Program website reports that every day we lose 70 acres of trees in the watershed and the most recent *Chesapeake Bay Barometer* reported that for the last few years the number of miles of newly planted forest buffers has been in decline; in 2015 we only reached 7% of the annual goal.

Both tidal and non-tidal wetlands are the kidneys of our watershed. They provide water quality and habitat benefits, along with filtering groundwater before it returns to aquifers. Tidal wetlands protect shorelines and help mitigate urban and agricultural flooding which is increasingly important in adapting to the frequency and intensity of storms related to climate change. Approximately, ninety-eight percent of the 85,000 acreage goal for wetlands in the *Watershed Agreement* call for restoration on agricultural lands. We are woefully behind on this goal as well, as the *Bay Barometer* reports only 9% of this outcome has been achieved.

The CAC recognizes the multiple challenges associated with wetland and forest buffer implementation, among them interagency coordination, landowner technical assistance, fluctuating commodity prices, consistent staffing and funding. We support the Chesapeake Executive Council's Agricultural Technical Assistance Directive and are hopeful this will advance forest buffer and wetland implementation on agricultural lands. Based on what we have heard from communities and experts around the watershed, we strongly encourage the jurisdictions to:

- **Develop programmatic, policy, and financial capacity for increasing forest buffers and wetlands in the Phase 3 WIPs and two-year milestones;**
- **Include technical assistance and education on multi-functional forest buffers like nut and fruit trees as riparian production crops on agricultural lands- as some U.S. jurisdictions and Central American countries have done with great success;**
- **Meet with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to encourage the prioritization of buffer and wetland practices to advance water quality goals;**
- **Communicate to local implementers the co-benefits and cost savings that buffers and wetlands provide in protecting drinking water sources and flood mitigation;**
- **Reformulate state funding vehicles such as Section 319 Clean Water Act Grant Programs and State Revolving Loan Funds for forest buffers on non-agricultural lands;**
- **Simplify the information and process the states provide for landowners to find and apply for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE), and other conservation practices.**



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III. Environmental Education and Literacy

The CAC has always been a strong advocate for environmental literacy both in schools and in informal settings. We understand that there was a proposed Executive Council Directive for environmental literacy that did not move forward with full support by all the jurisdictions. For those jurisdictions that are able to advance the actions outlined for environmental literacy:

- **We encourage you to also consider going further and including elements of workforce development and training to support the next generation of stewards with options for living wage environmental careers such as: storm water control; water and waste water operations; construction and maintenance of green infrastructure; stream rehabilitation; and pollution control and cleanup.**

For those jurisdictions that do not yet have the capacity to pursue all the actions in the Environmental Literacy Directive:

- **We strongly encourage you to at least meet the baseline of participating in the conferencing of high-level leaders every two years to discuss progress of the *Watershed Agreement* Environmental Education goal and outcomes. Participation will increase understanding which can begin to build capacity based on the successful models used in other jurisdictions.**



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