



February 9, 2026

Mr. Abel Olivo
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program's Stakeholders' Advisory Committee
Defensores De La Cuenca
3013 Parkway
Cheverly, MD 20785

Re: Principals' Staff Committee Response to the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee
Recommendations

Dear Chairperson Olivo,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) and as Chair of the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), I want to thank you and the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee (Stakeholders' Committee) for your thoughtful recommendations (letter dated November 12, 2025). The PSC greatly appreciates the opportunity to respond to your letter and stands ready to assist the Stakeholders' Committee in fulfilling its annual priorities. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude for the Stakeholders' Committee's active engagement and the advice offered during the private EC session at their December 2, 2025 annual meeting.

Please find as follows the PSC's responses to each of your recommendations.

Recommendation #1: Funding and Accountability to the Watershed Implementation Plans

- A. Ensure transparent and verifiable accountability for each jurisdiction's Watershed Implementation Plans with interim milestones and performance tracking.
- B. Demonstrate sustained financial support and innovative funding strategies to meet the Watershed Agreement commitments, including support for public-private cost-share and pay-for-outcomes programs.

PSC Response to Recommendation #1:

The PSC affirms that a strong, transparent, and accountable partnership is essential to sustaining public trust and achieving the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Regulatory programs, supported by voluntary and incentive-based approaches, remain foundational to restoration success.

The CBP partnership maintains an accountability framework to guide restoration efforts and assure progress toward the Clean Water Goal. The PSC is committed to upholding this framework through implementation of the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Sediment Outcome, Target 1: "Through 2030, signatories will continue to accelerate completion of all interim water quality planning targets by implementing Chesapeake Bay Watershed



Implementation Plans, two-year milestone commitments, and other innovative strategies to achieve and maintain reduced levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.”

At the January 29, 2025, PSC meeting, members further affirmed their commitment to transparency and accountability by agreeing to continue the use of programmatic milestones. The PSC endorsed the development of high-level milestone fact sheets at the close of each milestone period for presentation to the EC. These factsheets will highlight successes, identify barriers, and outline actions needed to overcome challenges in meeting programmatic and implementation goals. EPA will continue to evaluate milestones on a two-year cycle and track annual progress toward nutrient and sediment reductions through the evaluation of annual progress.

The CBP partnership will prioritize sustained engagement with federal, state, local, and non-governmental partners. These partnerships are critical to maintain core program funding, while exploring options to expand public-private cost-share programs, pay-for-performance outcomes, and other innovative financing mechanisms to accelerate on-the-ground implementation. In addition to ongoing EPA support, jurisdictions have demonstrated continued financial commitment, as well as new initiatives such as the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Fund, Maryland’s Whole Watershed Program, and Virginia’s Pay-for-Outcomes Nonpoint Source Pollution Reduction grant program.

Recommendation #2: Engagement with Jurisdictional Departments of Labor to Advance the Workforce Outcome

- A. We recommend that the Governors and DC Mayor of the Executive Council engage and collaborate with the existing expertise in their labor departments to better understand state and local workforce needs.
- B. We offer these suggestions for actionable steps:
 - Conduct a watershed-wide workforce study.
 - Develop tools to track workforce development.
 - Secure funding to support these efforts.

PSC Response to Recommendation #2:

The PSC appreciates the Stakeholders’ Committee’s strong support for the new Workforce Outcome under the Engaged Communities Goal and agrees that a skilled, living-wage environmental workforce is essential to long-term restoration success.

To advance this recommendation, the PSC will consider opportunities to engage labor and workforce agencies and encourage collaboration between environmental agencies, labor departments, and workforce development entities.

In addition, the PSC will task the Workforce Action Team with exploring the feasibility of conducting a watershed-wide workforce assessment to better understand current and future labor needs related to restoration, conservation, and environmental stewardship. As part of this assessment and through the development of Management Strategies, tools for tracking workforce



development progress and funding opportunities that can support data collection, program coordination, and career pathway initiatives should be identified and explored.

Recommendation #3: Collaborative Solutions for a “No Net Loss” of Forests

We recommend the partnership welcomes each jurisdiction’s Energy and Transportation agencies into the Bay Program, particularly the Healthy Landscapes workgroups and other related committees, to facilitate a coordinated approach to reducing loss of forests. Through engagement with these agencies, workgroups will be better equipped to explore collaborative solutions, appropriate for each jurisdiction, on innovative policies for a “no net loss” of forests for highway and data center projects.

PSC Response to Recommendation #3:

The PSC agrees that strengthening coordination with energy and transportation agencies is an important element to strive toward a “no net loss” of forests and sustaining the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement’s Goals related to clean water, healthy landscapes and thriving habitats.

To advance this recommendation and once the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team leadership is in place, they will explore convening a multi-state symposium bringing together state transportation, energy, and natural resource agencies, local governments, and other partners. With continued development expected in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this forum can discuss strategies like proactive afforestation, reclaimed mine lands, and local land use decisions. In addition, the forum can highlight existing policies or programs designed to prevent or mitigate forest loss that could be replicated, including examples such as Virginia’s Solar Mitigation Program.

Thank you for your dedication to restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed and your ongoing participation as we implement the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement now and into the future. Your recommendations will directly inform our ongoing efforts to strengthen accountability, build the restoration workforce, and protect the landscapes that sustain the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

Sincerely,

Jessica Shirley
Chair, Principals’ Staff Committee
Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection