

## **1. Statement of Need**

The issues facing the Chesapeake Bay are multi-faceted, and agriculture, historically, is the largest nutrient load source to the Chesapeake Bay. Equally, it is clear that agriculture can and will be part of the solution that results in overall water quality improvements. Progress will not be achieved without substantial efforts from the agricultural sector. Conservation stewardship that improves the health of the Bay will be happening on agricultural lands in significant measures. It is critical that the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership be advised directly by farmers and other agricultural industry stakeholders who have an in-depth understanding of farming operations and best management practices for agricultural conservation. Driven by a request from the leaders of the state agricultural agencies in the Chesapeake Bay region, and upon discussion of the Agricultural Advisory Committee Action Team and their respective leadership, it has been determined that there is a need for the agricultural sector, including urban agriculture, to be more actively engaged in providing policy recommendations to the CBP partnership's Executive Council, the Principals' Staff Committee, and the Management Board in order to accelerate the adoption and implementation of conservation practices and management strategies.

## **2. Charge**

The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) advises the CBP partnership's Executive Council, the Principals' Staff Committee, and the Management Board on strategies and opportunities for the diverse agricultural operations of the Chesapeake Bay watershed to more effectively meet Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and conservation goals. The AAC facilitates greater engagement of the agricultural sector in the decision-making process of the CBP partnership. It also serves as a voice for producers and industry to CBP leadership to increase understanding of agricultural production and conservation, including urban agriculture. The AAC should focus its work on high-level policy issues, ensuring that its scope complements, but does not overlap, the technical work being conducted by other CBP partnership bodies.

The AAC Chairperson or member designee shall participate on the Principals' Staff Committee as a non-voting member.

The AAC does not constitute a Federal Advisory Committee for purposes of any federal law or regulation.

## **3. Organizational Structure**

### **a. Composition:**

#### **i. Voting Members**

Voting membership is composed of fourteen (14) voting members representing a cross-section of production systems and geographies across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Membership will be open to agriculture practitioners including producers (farmers), agribusiness

representatives, and technical professionals who assist farmers with funding and implementation of their conservation efforts.

Membership includes two (2) appointed members from each Chesapeake Bay jurisdiction (New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia) by the Secretary or Commissioner of Agriculture in the respective jurisdiction and two (2) appointed members for Washington, District of Columbia by the Director of the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). **Each appointing entity is strongly encouraged to appoint at least one producer per jurisdiction** and to diversify appointments to ensure a cross-section of the agricultural sector is represented.

Within the CBP partnership structure, Advisory Committees are composed of non-state and non-federal individuals and the AAC will follow that example.

ii. **Guest Members**

As needed, the AAC may vote to appoint guest members to serve for a defined period of time for specific purposes. Selection criteria shall be based upon the needs and interests of the AAC consistent with the provisions of Section 3.c and budgetary considerations. Such guest members shall not be eligible to vote but may participate in all other activities and functions of the voting members. Guest members shall not be counted when determining the presence of a quorum.

**b. Leadership**

Officers of the AAC shall be selected from among the voting membership with a quorum present. The Officers shall consist of a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson. Officers shall be selected at the initial meeting of the AAC and every eighth quarterly AAC meeting thereafter when required. Officers shall take office upon election. The term of leadership shall be 2 years. It is intended the Chairperson role shall rotate among the jurisdictions.

The Chairperson presides over meetings of the AAC and serves as the primary representative of the AAC to the Executive Council, Principals' Staff Committee, and Management Board.

A Vice Chairperson shall be elected in the same manner as the Chairperson. The Vice Chairperson shall serve as Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson. In the event the Chairperson is unable to continue to serve, the Vice Chairperson shall assume the Chairperson's duties until a new Chairperson is elected at the next quarterly AAC meeting.

The Executive Committee of the AAC shall consist of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and the immediate past Chairperson. The Executive Committee is authorized collectively to represent AAC on issues arising during the interval between quarterly meetings, on matters that require expeditious action. Any action taken by the Executive Committee shall be communicated to the entire AAC before and/or during the next quarterly meeting.

Any member of the AAC, the CBP partnership's Executive Council, the Principals' Staff Committee, and the Management Board may ask for a topic to be placed on an AAC agenda.

**c. Criteria for Membership**

- i. Has knowledge about the agricultural industry and the challenges related to the protection, conservation, and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including local water quality;
- ii. Has knowledge or experience with farm production systems in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and some knowledge of the CBP partnership;
- iii. Will proactively coordinate with their agricultural network to represent the diverse views and needs of the agricultural sector to the AAC;
- iv. Will regularly update their agricultural network on the goals and progress of the CBP partnership;
- v. Is able and willing to attend regular quarterly meetings;
- vi. Is not a registered lobbyist; and
- vii. Voting members will live and/or work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

**d. Term of Office**

Voting members shall hold office for a term of four years or until their successors are appointed by the authority outlined in Section 3.a.

An AAC member who misses two consecutive meetings will be contacted by the Chairperson. After four consecutive absences, the AAC Executive Committee will seek to replace the member.

**4. Meetings**

Meetings of the AAC shall be held quarterly and scheduled at the convenience of the AAC members. At least one meeting each calendar year will be held in-person. AAC voting members will be reimbursed for their travel expenses to in-person meetings. All meetings shall be open to the public and posted to the CBP partnership's calendar of events in advance.

Annually, the AAC will host the Secretary or Commissioner of Agriculture from each Bay jurisdiction and the Director of DOEE to ensure information exchange.

The AAC shall work by consensus, but if a vote is needed, a quorum is required. A quorum is 50% of appointed voting members. The decision-making process and the associated roles and responsibilities of the AAC will follow the CBP partnership's [Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program](#).

#### **5. Amending Bylaws**

Revisions to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member of the AAC. Bylaws shall not be altered, amended, or repealed, nor shall any new bylaws be adopted unless written notice of such is given at least thirty days prior to calling a vote. These bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by a two-third vote of the AAC membership. Any amendments to the bylaws should comport with the CBP partnership's [Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program](#).

The AAC shall create their own guiding principles and code of ethics for inclusion in the bylaws within the first year of formation.