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Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

December 12, 2013

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
District of Columbia
Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 316
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Citizens Advisory Committee 2013 Report of Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council

Dear Honorable Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council,

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) strives to provide advice on Chesapeake Bay watershed policies and programs focusing on areas where the partnership can improve, highlighting successes, and offering a broader citizen perspective of key issues that CAC believes are important. We wish to recognize the hard work of the Chesapeake Bay Program partners on the development of the draft Chesapeake Bay Agreement (Agreement). Below are some key issues that we believe should be included in the next Agreement.

- (1) Governance:** We wish to express our concern over the nature of the Agreement that allows for the jurisdictions' discretion to participate in the goals and outcomes. We understand that there will be periodic progress reports issued to the public, but reporting information will only be available for the jurisdictions who decided to participate in certain outcomes. The result is that all of the citizens of the watershed will not be fully informed about their local waterways. We believe all citizens have the right to know, for example, if their local waterway remains healthy or is degrading. If a State decides not to participate in the Healthy Watersheds outcome (and it is their right to do so under the construct of this draft Agreement), then the citizens in that State are not afforded the same level of information that tells them if it is safe to swim or recreate in their river. Similarly, they will not know if they should take action to protect their river from further harm. The success of watershed recovery cannot be met by government alone. We must also rely on collaborations of citizens, local governments and the private sector if we are to accelerate implementation of our collective goals. **We believe all the jurisdictions should commit to all of the goals and outcomes that apply to their region so every citizen knows the health of their local waterway and can benefit from as many partners as possible working toward restoration and protection.**



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

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- (2) **Accountability:** We call to your attention the section in the draft Agreement on Principles. The Principles are the framework in which the Partnership commits to operate. **Operating with Transparency** will be critical in helping to maintain public confidence and the expenditure of tax payer's money for the restoration effort. As we have stated in the past this is particularly important in transparent reporting of progress, including verification of on-the-ground Best Management Practices (BMPs) reported to the Bay computer model.
- (3) **Environmental Literacy:** Environmental education -- in the classroom and outdoors -- serves not only a critical stewardship purpose, but advances Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. This prepares students for college and future careers in the growing job markets for renewable energy generation and energy efficiency, recycling and waste management, water supply, and other resource management, to name only a few. This is particularly important in urban communities where there is high demand for career development and job training to complement environmental stewardship. We are encouraged to see an Environmental Literacy goal, but we recommend the outcome be strengthened from merely counting an "increase [in] the number of students participating in teacher-supported Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences..." If we do not engender a strong environmental ethic in our youth, we cannot expect them to be environmental stewards of the future. **We recommend that by 2017 every school student in the watershed before graduation from high school be provided at least one MWEE at each of the elementary, middle and high school levels.**
- (4) **Toxic Contamination Goal:** We have been briefed by NOAA, EPA and USGS researchers on the "Technical Report on Toxic Contaminants in the Chesapeake Bay and its Watershed: Extent and Severity of Occurrence and Potential Biological Effects". We learned that toxics remain a widespread problem that affects fisheries, public health and water quality. The statement of Vision in the draft Agreement states, "The Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders". Ultimately, to the citizens of the Bay watershed this means, the water is safe for recreation and the fish are safe for consumption. We believe not including a toxics contaminant goal in the Agreement is a glaring omission, particularly since there are emerging threats like endocrine disruptors that have impact on fish and human health. **We recommend you re-instate the proposed Toxic Contaminant goal.** This includes the Research Outcome to "Assess planned research and opportunities for new research to improve knowledge of the effects of contaminants of emerging concern on the health of fish and wildlife by 2015 so future strategies can be considered" and the Reduction Outcome to "Identify existing and new practices and an implementation schedule by 2015 to reduce loadings of PCBs and mercury to the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed".
- (5) **Climate Change:** Climate change is not openly recognized in the Agreement, but is referred to using the euphemism "changing environmental conditions" or "changing system". Regardless of your belief of the causes of climate change, science is showing that it is occurring. We understand that climate change is a sensitive political issue and this caused it to be downplayed in the Agreement. However, we believe that an Agreement that seeks to guide restoration for more than the next decade should openly recognize the need to adapt to climate change. Integrating climate change into all the Management Strategies will hopefully yield implementation practices that look to the future of changing conditions. **As your citizen advisors we believe climate change will be a determining factor of whether we are successful in meeting our goals. We will be carefully watching how the management strategies are developed and implemented.**

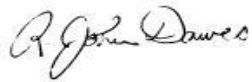
In our first set of comments on the draft Agreement we recommended the sediment capacity behind the **Conowingo Dam** be included. The decision was to not include it. It is difficult for us to know how this issue will be collectively addressed if there is no goal or outcome associated with it. Therefore, we are compelled to continue to bring the issue of the Dam before you and remind you to consider the cost of inaction in addressing the sediment storage behind the Conowingo Dam.

The new Bay Agreement should be a forward thinking, dynamic document that truly provides the framework for achieving the vision of a clean Chesapeake Bay watershed. As you consider the elements of this Agreement and prepare for releasing it for public comment, we want to remind you of the operating Principle in the Agreement to **Represent the Interest of the People**.

Lastly, this should be a strong commitment as you and your staff collect comments from your constituents. We encourage you to think ambitiously since this Agreement will guide the partnerships' restoration efforts for more than the next decade. We support you to act boldly on behalf of the health of your rivers and the quality of life the citizens enjoy because of them.

The Citizens Advisory Committee welcomes the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues in detail. Thank you for your continued leadership in the protection and restoration of the nationally treasured Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. John Dawes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

R. John Dawes
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee