

Watershed Agreement

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PREAMBLE

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is one of the most extraordinary places in America. The nation's largest and most productive estuary and its vast network of streams, creeks and rivers hold tremendous ecological, cultural, economic, historic and recreational value for the region and its citizens. Its more than 180,000 miles of creeks, streams and rivers flow through six states and the District of Columbia. Nearly 18 million people live, work and play on the diverse landscape draining into this magnificent body of water.

To restore and protect this national treasure, the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership (the Partnership) was formed in 1983 when the Governors of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency signed the first Chesapeake Bay agreement. That agreement recognized the "historical decline of living resources" in the Chesapeake Bay and committed to a cooperative approach to "fully address the extent, complexity, and sources of pollutants entering the Bay." For the past 30 years, this regional partnership has implemented policies, engaged in scientific investigation, and coordinated actions among the states, the federal government and the District of Columbia. The Partnership is recognized as one of the nation's premier estuarine restoration efforts.

Much progress has been made, but there is more to do—especially in the face of continued challenges such as changes in population, loss of farm and forest lands and changing environmental conditions. Through this Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Agreement), the Partnership recommit to the Bay watershed restoration effort that continues to be guided by science and the lessons learned from our experiences.

One of the most important lessons learned from the past three decades is that, while watershed-wide partnerships help to coordinate and catalyze, implementation happens locally. Local governments are key partners as are individual citizens, businesses, watershed groups and other non-governmental organizations. Working together to engage, empower and

facilitate these partners will leverage resources and ensure better outcomes.

Watershed restoration and protection efforts have shown that measurable results coupled with firm accountability yield the most significant results. The Partnership stands ready to embrace new ideas, technologies and policies that will help meet its goals. The Partnership is committed to improving verification and transparency of its actions to strengthen and increase public confidence in its efforts.

The original agreement laid the foundation for a cooperative program that will now include New York, West Virginia and Delaware, as well as the original signatories, as full partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Executive Council. Due in part to a 2009 Presidential Executive Order, more than 12 federal agencies have also reaffirmed and augmented their longstanding and shared commitment to restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

This Agreement acknowledges that the Partnership cannot address every issue at once and that progress must be made in a strategic manner, focusing on efforts that will achieve the most cost-effective results. Watershed restoration and protection have the potential to become integral drivers of the region's economy. To that end, the Partnership is committed to achieving restoration success while maximizing the economic benefits to local communities across the region. The signatories to this voluntary Agreement commit to achieving the goal of restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its living resources.

VISION

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.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles are an overarching framework by which the Partnership commits to operate. They encompass the Partnership's collective core values and are intended to help guide us in our work as the Partnership develops policy and takes actions to achieve the Agreement's goals and outcomes.

THE PARTNERSHIP WILL:

- Work collaboratively to achieve the purposes of this Agreement.
- Achieve goals and outcomes in a timely way and at the least possible cost to our citizens.
- Represent the interests of people throughout the watershed fairly and effectively, including a broad diversity of cultures, demographics and ages.
- Operate with transparency in program decisions, policies, actions and progress to strengthen public confidence in our efforts.
- Adaptively manage all levels of the Partnership to foster continuous improvement.
- Seek consensus when making decisions.
- Use place-based approaches, where appropriate, that produce recognizable benefits to local communities while contributing to larger ecosystem goals.
- Engage our citizens to increase the number and diversity of people who support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities necessary to achieve the goals and outcomes of the Agreement.
- Explore the application of social science to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management, and decision-making.
- Promote environmental justice through the meaningful involvement and fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in the implementation of this agreement.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

The commitments contained in this section are the goals and outcomes the signatories collectively will work on to advance restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its watershed. The goals articulate the desired high-level aspects of our vision; while outcomes related to each goal are the specific, time-bound, measureable targets that directly contribute to achievement of the goals. Signatories will participate in achieving the outcomes of this Agreement in the manner described in the "management strategies development and implementation" section below.

The management strategies, further described in the next section of this Agreement, articulate the actions necessary to achieve the goals and outcomes identified below. This work will require effort from many, including all levels of government, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, watershed groups, businesses and individual citizens. Local government will continue to play a unique and critical role in helping the Partnership realize the shared vision for the Chesapeake Bay. As the Partnership identifies new opportunities and concerns, goals and outcomes may be adopted or modified.

While the goals and outcomes are described here by topic areas, they are interrelated. Improvements in habitat and water quality lead to healthier living resources. Environmentally literate citizens are stewards of the Bay's healthy watersheds. Better water quality means swimmable, fishable waters for Bay residents and visitors. Increased public access to the Chesapeake inspires people to care for critical landscapes

and honor the region's heritage and culture. Healthy fish and shellfish populations support a vibrant economy for a spectrum of fishing-related industries. The signatories emphasize that all aspects of the ecosystem are connected and acknowledge that the following goals and outcomes support the health and the protection of the entire Bay watershed.

Any changes or additions to goals are approved by the Executive Council. Changes or additions to outcomes are approved by the Principals' Staff Committee, although significant changes or additions will be raised to the Executive Council for approval. Proposed changes to goals and outcomes or the addition of new goals or outcomes are open for public input before being finalized. Final changes or additions are publicly posted to the Bay Program website.

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GOALS & OUTCOMES

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Habitat loss, poor water quality non-native and invasive species, toxics and fishing pressure continue to threaten the sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay's fisheries. Sustaining fish and shellfish populations contributes to a strong economy and maritime culture and supports a healthy ecosystem for all Bay watershed residents.

Goal: Protect, restore, and enhance finfish, shellfish and other living resources, their habitats and ecological relationships to sustain all fisheries and provide for a balanced ecosystem in the watershed and Bay.

Blue Crab Abundance Outcome:	→	Maintain a sustainable blue crab population based on the current 2012 target of 215 million adult females. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.
Blue Crab Management Outcome:	→	Manage for a stable and productive crab fishery including working with the industry, recreational crabbers, and other stakeholders to improve commercial and recreational harvest accountability. By 2018, evaluate the establishment of a Bay-wide, allocation-based management framework with annual levels set by the jurisdictions for the purpose of accounting for and adjusting harvest by each jurisdiction.
Oyster Outcome:	→	Restore native oyster habitat and populations in 10 tributaries by 2025 and ensure their protection. Continually increase finfish and shellfish habitat and water quality benefits from restored oyster populations.
Forage Fish Outcome:	→	Continually improve the capacity to understand the role of forage fish populations in the Chesapeake Bay. By 2016, develop a strategy for assessing the forage fish base available as food for predatory species in the Chesapeake Bay.
Fish Habitat Outcome:	→	Continually improve effectiveness of fish habitat conservation and restoration efforts by identifying and characterizing critical spawning, nursery and forage areas within the Bay and tributaries for important fish and shellfish and use existing and new tools to integrate information and conduct assessments to inform restoration and conservation efforts.



GOALS & OUTCOMES

VITAL HABITATS

Pressures from increasing needs for land and resources have resulted in fragmentation and degradation of many habitats across the watershed while also challenging the health of many Bay watershed species. Conserving healthy habitats and restoring the connectivity and function of degraded habitats is essential to the long-term resilience and sustainability of the ecosystem and the region's quality of life.

Goal: Restore, enhance, and protect a network of land and water habitats to support fish and wildlife and to afford other public benefits, including water quality, recreational uses and scenic value across the watershed

Wetlands Outcome:	→	Continually increase the capacity of wetlands to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Create or re-establish 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhance function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands by 2025. These activities may occur in any land use (including urban) but primarily occur in agricultural or natural landscapes.
Black Duck:	→	By 2025, restore, enhance and preserve wetland habitats that support a wintering population of 100,000 black duck, a species representative of the health of tidal marshes across the watershed. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.
Stream Health Outcome:	→	Continually improve stream health and function throughout the watershed. Improve health and function of 10 percent of stream miles above the 2008 baseline for the Chesapeake Bay watershed. *Note: a 2008 baseline will be established by 2015.
Brook Trout:	→	Restore and sustainably reproducing brook trout populations in Chesapeake headwater streams with an 8 percent increase in occupied habitat by 2025.