

2026 – 2027 Chesapeake Bay Program Pilot¹ PSC Priority Setting Framework

The Watershed Agreement establishes the foundation for Partnership priorities through its Goals, Outcomes, and Targets. Building on that foundation, this document outlines a framework for the PSC to identify and elevate priorities within the Agreement that warrant focused PSC attention, as well as addressing emerging issues beyond its scope. The priorities, informed by the EC's charge and direction, recommendations from the Advisory Committees, and input from the Goal Teams will strengthen the partnership by:

- **Aligning partners around shared strategic direction/initiatives** - Annual priority setting ensures federal agencies, states, and other partners are working toward the highest-impact outcomes while operating within their respective authorities and missions.
- **Focusing limited resources** - By identifying a small set of top priorities, the PSC helps direct funding, staff time, and policy attention toward actions most likely to advance restoration goals while avoiding any potentially redundant activity.
- **Supporting adaptive management** - Yearly priorities allow the partnership to respond to new science, emerging risks, and implementation challenges.
- **Clarifying expectations and accountability** - Clear priorities provide a reference point for workgroups, goal teams, and leadership to measure progress and report results.
- **Signaling leadership intent internally and externally** - PSC priorities communicate what matters most to implementing partners, funders, Congress, and the public.

Priority criteria – To be elevated and accepted as a partnership priority, initiatives must have a direct impact on accelerating Watershed Agreement implementation and should generally be scoped with the following in mind.

1. Time-sensitive: The priority initiative requires focused collaborative effort to accomplish because of near-term factors.
2. Emergent in nature: The priority initiative represents a significant barrier to Outcome attainment for multiple jurisdictions and requires enhanced coordination.
3. Enhanced collaboration: Initiative demands engagement from multiple Goal Teams and requires enhanced collaboration amongst technical and implementation bodies and/or provided explicit agency from program leadership to take on the work.
4. Beyond annual deliverables: Unique from existing deliverables (e.g., annual monitoring or technical reports, such as the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Advisory Report)

Annual priority identification mechanics– Priority setting will be conducted on an annual schedule and will follow a bilateral prioritization process [once this section is finalized, EPA will provide a visual]. Implementation of priorities is not required to be completed within an annual cycle but should generally avoid implementation periods longer than 3 years.

1. Priority Introduction: PSC members introduce motions to identify potential partnership priorities for approval in November. Motions would generate an action for priorities to be identified. Potential priorities may be sourced from PSC member delegations, Goal Teams, and/or through Advisory Committees' engagement. [September PSC "Summer" Meeting]
2. Priority Development: Priorities are detailed with relevant workgroups, coordinated amongst Goal Team chairs and Support groups, and tracked by relevant PSC interests. As part of the

¹ As CBP has not previously implemented and managed a prioritization process, CBP will conduct an annual review of the process and will adapt it based on feedback from those involved in identifying, promoting, managing or tracking priorities

priority development process, resource needs and recommended actions to be taken by the PSC are identified. [September-October]

3. Priority Acceptance: PSC members seek consensus on a nominated set of priorities. Upon designating a priority, PSC members should articulate how their organizations will be able to contribute to advancing the priority through means of resource mobilization (financial or staff) and/or enhanced CBP leadership or attention. [November “Fall” PSC Meeting]
4. Priority Consent Directive - EC members seek consensus on the package of priorities for implementation by the Chesapeake Bay Program [December EC]
5. Priority Implementation - Implementation begins by Goal Team and Workgroups.
 - a. The Goal Team responsible for implementing the priority develops an implementation plan that is submitted to the PSC at their first meeting following the annual EC meeting. [January “Winter” PSC Meeting]
 - b. PSC receives priority updates at each PSC meeting (Spring, Summer, Fall)].

Tracking existing PSC priorities – The Governance and Operations (GO) workgroup is responsible for tracking PSC-identified priorities and coordinating with Partnership leads to track progress and oversee reporting to the PSC. GO is also responsible for managing a system or platform that enables full transparency to the Partnership so PSC reps and their designees can monitor on-going and completed priority actions in real time.