

## Stakeholders' Advisory Committee Feedback on CBP Governance and Accountability

Insights collected by Sara Ramotnik during "office hours" with Committee members the week of July 21, 2025

Theme	Concern	Opportunity/Solution
<b>Decision Making</b> to address perceptions of political commitment and broad stakeholder engagement	(1) CBP leadership is not well engaged with their appointed advisors	(1) Create more touch-points with the Advisory Committees: (a) faster response letter to annual recommendations. Often by the time ACs get responses, decisions have already been made and the partnership has moved on; (b) If the PSC sends an AC recommendation is for a workgroup to address, then provide support to the workgroup to prioritize it among its workload; (c) codify in the Governance Document more frequent meetings between signatory delegations and their appointees <i>before</i> key decisions are final, for example the Chair of the EC meets annually with leadership of the Advisory Committees prior to the annual EC meeting.
	(2) Consensus can drive decisions to the least common denominator	(2) Jurisdictions that op-out of an <i>Agreement</i> Outcomes should have the default designation as "stand-aside" on the consensus continuum when decisions are being made about that Outcome.
	(3) Leadership levels approve status quo moving up from the bottom of CBP hierarchy rather than setting ambitious policy	(3) While agency staff are trusted advisors to the PSC/EC, decisions should be made based on ambitious policy and <i>Agreement</i> principles instead of status quo or what is possible with current resources: (a) Encourage the PSC/EC to have unscripted conversation to set a collaborative Bay Watershed policy agenda; (b) create "State Bay Czars" to coordinate the jurisdictions' overall policy across levels of the

		partnership, liaison with related state agency leads, and report back to the EC.
	(4) Lack of understanding of on-the-ground implementors' realities and challenges	(4) Create a mechanism to lower barriers for implementors like NGOs and local governments to participate in workgroups and GITs (consider outreach touch points and/or participation stipends).
<b>Transparency</b> to address perceptions of Trust	(5) Lack of transparency on partnership budgetary decisions	(5) Create an open process for collaborative budgetary decisions that signify partnership priorities and allow signatories to determine where funding needs to be funneled based on an informed big picture of discretionary funding.
	(6) Rosy communications about progress	(6) Encourage plain language reporting of progress and the implications of it on the <i>Agreement</i> Goals and Outcomes: (a) Objectively communicate progress with more context of the broader goal, trends in monitored observations, and trends in funding; (b) include what decisions are made around the realities of factors, including the intersection of decisions based on science and political feasibility.
	(7) Uncertainty about which signatories are pursuing what Goals and Outcomes	(7) Make it easy to find which signatories are opting-in/opting-out of each of the <i>Agreement</i> Outcomes. Explain why signatories are opting-out and if those issues are being addressed on the jurisdiction level and how.

<p><b>Accountability</b> to address perceptions of Credibility</p>	<p>(8) Uncertainty of incentives to meet <i>Agreement</i> Goals and Outcomes and the consequences of falling short of the Targets</p>	<p>(8) To manage public expectations and the credibility of the CBP, clearly and plainly articulate in the Governance Document (a) the authority the <i>Agreement</i> wields as an interstate accord for collaborative watershed policy, a driver for implementation, and the effective integration of the <i>Agreement</i> principles; (b) the role of EPA in enforcement of the Clean Water Act, the role of EPA and at the Bay Program - and the distinction / intersection of the two. There seems to be recent new thinking on EPA's role now as opposed to when the TMDL and Accountability Framework were established. For example, the 2014 <i>Agreement</i> links the water quality goals to the Bay TMDL. The revised draft <i>Agreement</i> is silent on the TMDL. This is causing confusion.; and (c) the consequences (to whom and by whom) of Outcomes that are repeatedly "off course" on progress, particularly those under the clean water goal and practices in the State WIPs.</p>
	<p>(9) Uncertainty of the authority of EC actions at annual meetings and the expected support to achieve them (prior to Beyond 2025 phases)</p>	<p>(9) In the Governance Document, clearly and plainly articulate the differences in EC actions (Directives, Resolutions, Statements, etc...) and the resultant resources that should be expected to meet the call to action: (a) Ensure resources are shifted to support the achievement of EC Directives following their issuances. Since EC Directives are signed by all members, should they be considered as an amendment to the <i>Agreement</i>? If not, clearly articulate the relationship between Directives and the <i>Agreement</i>. (b) Re-examine the</p>

		<div>reporting pathway, consequences for falling short, and participation on action teams/ task forces created to meet EC Directives, etc...</div>
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