Chesapeake Bay Program
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January XX, 2026

Marty Qually,
Chair, Local Government Advisory Committee
Commissioner, Adams County, PA
117 Baltimore Street, Room 201
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325

Re: Principals' Staff Committee Response to the LGAC Recommendations

Dear Chairperson Qually,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) and as Chair of the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), I want to thank you and the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) for your thoughtful recommendations (letter dated November 11, 2025). LGAC brings a critical local government perspective to every level of the CBP partnership and I want to personally thank you for diving in as its new Chair this year. Your commitment to the work of LGAC, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the entire watershed has made a tangible and positive impact on the work that we do and accomplish together. I would also like to express my gratitude for the advice offered during the private EC session at their December 2, 2025, annual meeting and LGAC's active engagement during recent Management Board and PSC meetings.

The PSC very much appreciates the opportunity to respond to these recommendations and stands ready to assist LGAC in fulfilling its annual priorities. Please find as follows the PSC's responses to each of LGAC's recommendations. The PSC and the larger CBP partnership look forward to working with LGAC on implementing these recommendations.

Recommendation #1: As the Chesapeake Bay Program begins to implement the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, two of LGAC's comments on the draft Agreement are worth reiterating:

- As with any complicated endeavor, the Bay Program should begin the budgetary process by estimating the total cost to achieve the revised Agreement's goals and outcomes. This process should include an evaluation of existing federal, state, and partner resources. With that information, the partnership can develop a fiscal plan addressing funding gaps, opportunities, and provide realistic financial expectations for local government partners.
- Local governments need clarity on what is expected of them and when. By early 2027, state-specific expectations should be communicated to local governments via tailored materials that are delivered in partnership with trusted local government liaisons.

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PSC Response to Recommendation #1:

The EC and PSC, as well as the Goal Teams and Workgroups, very much appreciate LGAC's valuable input into the Beyond 2025 process and specifically, to the revisions of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Agreement).* Your pragmatic advice on how to communicate in simple language and relate CBP's work to local governments made the revised *Agreement* more understandable and more implementable.

Thank you for highlighting LGAC's two comments on the draft Agreement in the recommendations letter to the EC. The PSC agrees that implementing and achieving the Goals and Outcomes under the revised *Agreement* will require coordination on our collective resources and activities. To that end, the CBP will soon begin drafting Management Strategies that are intended to coordinate partnership initiatives, prioritize resources, and clearly describe the efforts that will be undertaken by partners over the next six-year period to make progress towards achieving the *Agreement's* Goals and Outcomes. Critical to the Management Strategy development process is listing existing individual partner programs and human and financial resources committed to supporting and implementing these Goals and Outcomes. The Management Strategies will also describe where actions, tools, and financial support and technical assistance are needed to empower local governments (and others). We will need your advice and input as these Management Strategies are developed and implemented between now and 2040, and we encourage LGAC members to be active participants and advisors throughout this process.

To your second point on local governments looking for policy clarity, the PSC agrees that this clarity is needed to help effectively implement the *Agreement,* particularly at a local-government scale. The PSC commits to collaborating with LGAC members to co-write a 1–2-page local government implementation fact sheet tailored for each of the seven jurisdictions in the Bay watershed on the role of local governments in outcome attainment (seven total fact sheets) within six months of the completion of the CBP Management Strategies currently in development. In addition, we welcome help in sharing your respective factsheet across your jurisdiction.

Recommendation #2: The Chesapeake Bay Program should embrace conservation as an umbrella term that includes a spectrum of actions, such as land stewardship, ecosystem-based management, maintenance of existing best management practices, targeted land preservation, coordinated land use planning, and more. In collaboration with conservation and restoration partnerships, state and federal agencies can support local governments by 1) continuing to invest in publicly available land use data and tools, 2) providing technical assistance to help local governments utilize land use data and tools, and 3) incentivizing smart growth policies, like redevelopment, that support local economies.

PSC Response to Recommendation #2:

The PSC agrees that implementing people and nature-based conservation is a vital part of achieving our shared Goals and Outcomes under the revised *Agreement*. To your point, the partnership currently employs different definitions of the word "conservation." Thank you for inviting several CBP signatory and partner representatives to speak at your June 2025 meeting about what conservation means to each of us. As the CBP continues to elevate conservation, we will look to local governments to provide us with requests for specific land use data and tools. The goal is to generate data and develop tools that are needed and utilized by local governments in conservation planning and implementation. It may be beneficial for LGAC to meet with CBP's geospatial team in 2026 to better understand what land use data and tools currently exist, what additional data and tools may be needed, and the technical assistance necessary to effectively apply this information. After the meeting, the PSC looks forward to maintaining that two-way dialogue in the years ahead to 1) ensure that tools that CBP partners create are useful and in a form that can be used by interested local governments and 2) ensure that end users such as local governments know they exist and have the technical assistance to use them.

The PSC agrees that redevelopment and other smart growth policies are a win-win for the economy and the environment, and recognizes that incentivizing smart growth policies to impact local economies and help attain of *Agreement* outcomes is generally under the authorities of state and local jurisdictions. We welcome detailed, implementable, jurisdiction-specific legislative and policy proposals in the future for EC and PSC consideration.

Recommendation #3: Local, state and federal partners should streamline their processes, including permitting, to improve the effectiveness of watershed restoration investments without compromising environmental standards. LGAC suggests reviewing existing systems and processes to identify agency-specific opportunities to improve efficiency. Partners should ensure sufficient resources are dedicated to relevant agencies, and build transparency and/or regular auditing into processes to maintain high environmental standards.

PSC Response to Recommendation #3:

Streamlining to increase efficiency without compromising environmental quality or the legislative intent and legal requirements of federal and state permitting and other watershed restoration laws, regulations, and voluntary initiatives is a constant consideration for many members of the EC and PSC. The PSC also recognizes that streamlining, which helps local economies and attain *Agreement* outcomes, is generally under the respective authorities of specific federal, state, and local jurisdictions as required by law, rather than a collective partnership decision. We welcome detailed, implementable, signatory-specific legislative and policy proposals that the EC and PSC can consider to meet this shared goal.

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Thank you again for your hard work and commitment to restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its local lands and waterways as well as for your past and continued participation as critical advisors to the Chesapeake Bay Program. Your advice to CBP as current and former local government elected officials make our partnership stronger and more successful as we implement the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* together.

Sincerely,

Jessica Shirley
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Principals' Staff Committee
Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection