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## Local Government Advisory Committee

to the Chesapeake Executive Council

November 11, 2025

Governor Wes Moore  
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council  
Office of the Governor  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Moore,

As Chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), I represent the collective voice of local elected officials throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. LGAC was created by the Chesapeake Executive Council through the 1987 *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*. LGAC's mission is to share the views and insights of local elected officials with state and federal decision-makers and to enhance the flow of information among local governments.

The Chesapeake Bay Program's four advisory committees act as two way streets to bring expert advice and boots on the ground insight in, while serving as ambassadors out into their networks of farmers, local governments, citizens, and scientists.

Over the past nearly 40 years, LGAC has offered recommendations on a range of issues. However, the following long-term priorities have remained consistent:

- Funding and technical assistance for local governments
- Communication and engagement with local governments
- Workforce development and training for local governments
- Alignment of state and federal plans with local government priorities
- Meaningful engagement with the Bay Program's advisory committees

Based on LGAC members' diligent work over the last year, I am pleased to present the attached 2025 Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council. We look forward to discussing these recommendations at your annual meeting and to collaborating with your staff to address them.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Marty Qually, Adams County, PA  
Local Government Advisory Committee Chair

CC: Chesapeake Executive Council  
Dan Coogan, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program



Chesapeake Bay Program  
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

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ALLIANCE  
for the Chesapeake Bay

## 2025 Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council



Each year, the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) collectively invests a significant amount of time and effort to understand the many issues affecting our local governments' ability to participate in and more fully benefit from watershed restoration and conservation efforts. Based on our work in 2025, LGAC offers the following recommendations for the Chesapeake Executive Council's consideration.

### **Revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement**

In 2025, LGAC provided significant input and guidance related to revising the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. At both the [March LGAC Quarterly Meeting](#) and the [June LGAC Quarterly Meeting](#), members discussed and provided feedback on early drafts of the revised *Agreement* goals and outcomes. During the public feedback period, LGAC members engaged with their respective county associations, municipal leagues, and other local government associations to collect feedback on the draft revised *Agreement*. LGAC also [created a one-page fact sheet](#) specifically tailored for local officials, [hosted a webinar for local governments](#), and participated in several conference sessions to discuss the draft *Agreement*. Collectively, LGAC members directly engaged more than 120 local officials and communications materials reached an estimated 8,000 additional local officials. This outreach culminated in [LGAC's comments on the draft revised Agreement](#) which were submitted to the Management Board and shared with the Principals' Staff Committee.

**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.

LGAC members are eager to consult on the creation of communication materials for local governments and stand ready to work with federal partners, state partners, the Local Leadership Workgroup, and others to draft and share these materials with local governments across the watershed.

### **Land Use and Conservation**

In 2024, the Executive Council elevated conservation as a pillar of the Chesapeake Bay Program's work. LGAC [raised the question of how conservation is defined](#) and the Principals' Staff Committee [suggested convening](#) LGAC and relevant Goal Implementation Team and Workgroup members to foster meaningful discussion. LGAC was pleased to host this convening during our [June LGAC Quarterly Meeting](#), which included significant

participation from state and federal partners and a robust discussion around how to better achieve a balance between conservation and development pressure. During the two-day meeting, LGAC members reiterated the importance of local land use authority and the need for state and federal partners to continue to respect that authority. Conversation also focused on how effective land use planning leads to more focused, cost-efficient and sustainable land preservation and economic development; two issues that are often presented as at odds with each other. In light of changing economic and environmental conditions, state and federal partners must address both economic and environmental sustainability.

**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.**

LGAC members remain interested in supporting the Bay Program's efforts around land use and conservation and stand ready to consult on how to ensure that data/tools/resources are relevant for local governments.

### **Regulatory Barriers and Streamlining Solutions**

LGAC has played a strong role in the effort to streamline the governance, structure, and accountability of the Chesapeake Bay Program. We applaud these efforts, but they must not stop with the Chesapeake Bay Program Office; there is an urgent need to streamline the broader operations of local, state, and federal governments that impede the planning, design, permitting, funding, installation and maintenance of best management practices. In 2024, [LGAC explored regulatory sandboxing](#) as one way to test out newly streamlined processes.

The [September LGAC Quarterly Meeting](#) was focused on the need for streamlining government operations and included discussions around specific opportunities for efficiency, such as expedited reviews of construction permits for restoration projects, pay for success programs that can increase cost-effectiveness, the use of new technologies like artificial intelligence, pre-permit meetings between state agencies and local governments, multi-sector collaboration with private and non-profit partners, and more.

**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.**

We applaud Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and other Bay Program partners who have already implemented some of these efficiency strategies. LGAC stands ready to support state and federal partners by providing guidance and advice on how new, streamlined processes can be most effective for boots-on-the-ground watershed restoration partners like local governments.