



# Chesapeake Bay Program Update: Beyond 2025

June 5, 2025



**Chesapeake Bay Program**

# Chesapeake Executive Council Charges

- 2022 EC charge directed the Principals' Staff Committee to recommend a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* **by and beyond 2025**.
- 2024 EC charge charted a path forward for revising the *Watershed Agreement* by the end of 2025.



Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership  
Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course to 2025 and Beyond  
Adopted October 11, 2022

As the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership nears the 2025 date that the partnership set for several of the goals and outcomes under the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Watershed Agreement)*, there are many successes to celebrate. At the same time, emerging issues and changing conditions (e.g., climate change, growth, new scientific data) have impacted the levels of effort needed to meet our collective restoration priorities. We, as a partnership, remain committed to using the best available science in restoring the Chesapeake Bay as we accelerate toward the deadline and anticipate continued progress post-2025.

Thus, this Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) in recommending a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* leading up to and beyond 2025. The PSC is to report back to the Executive Council at our 2023 annual meeting with recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025. At our 2024 annual meeting, the PSC is to prepare recommendations that continue to address new advances in science and restoration, along with a focus on our partnership for going beyond 2025.

In undertaking such a process, the PSC should address the following considerations:

**Science**

- Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the *Watershed Agreement*.
- Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.
- Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions, increasing growth, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice considerations) to accomplishing the partnership's work under the *Watershed Agreement*, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.
- Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*.

**Restoration**

- Develop and begin to implement a communication strategy that identifies key partnership successes, associated ecosystem improvements and areas where more effort is needed.
- Provide snapshots of outcome attainability under the Agreement (e.g., which outcomes are likely to be met by the date(s) set by the partnership, which won't, and why) and options for communicating these snapshots to demonstrate progress in achieving our outcomes and the remaining work to be done, including gaps to be addressed.

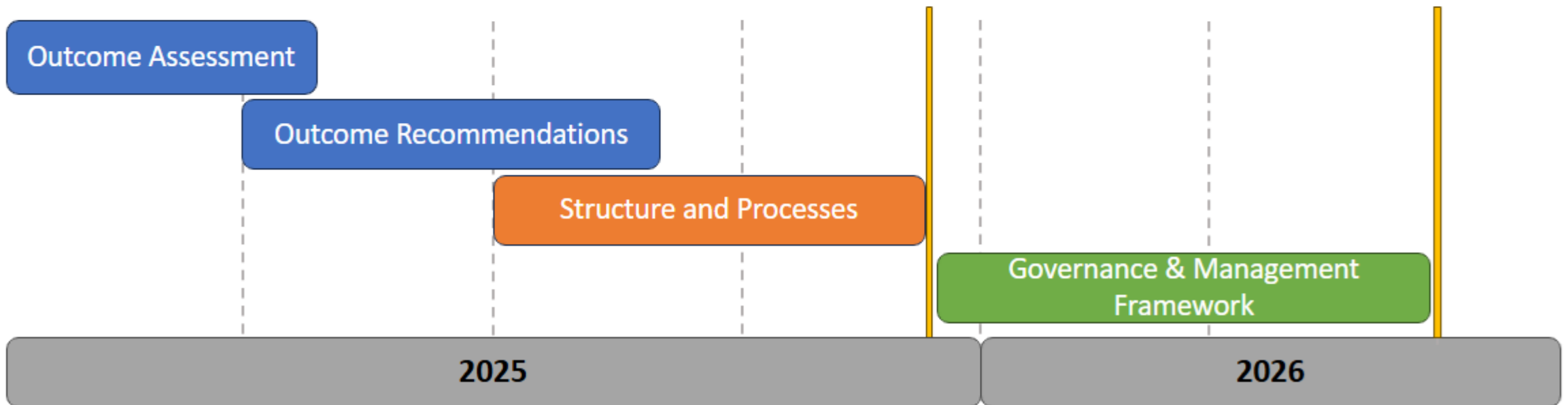
**Partnership**

- Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.
- Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we
  - Are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders, and
  - Have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources.
- Based on this assessment, develop recommendations for potential improvement.

# Specifically, the 2024 Executive Council Charge:

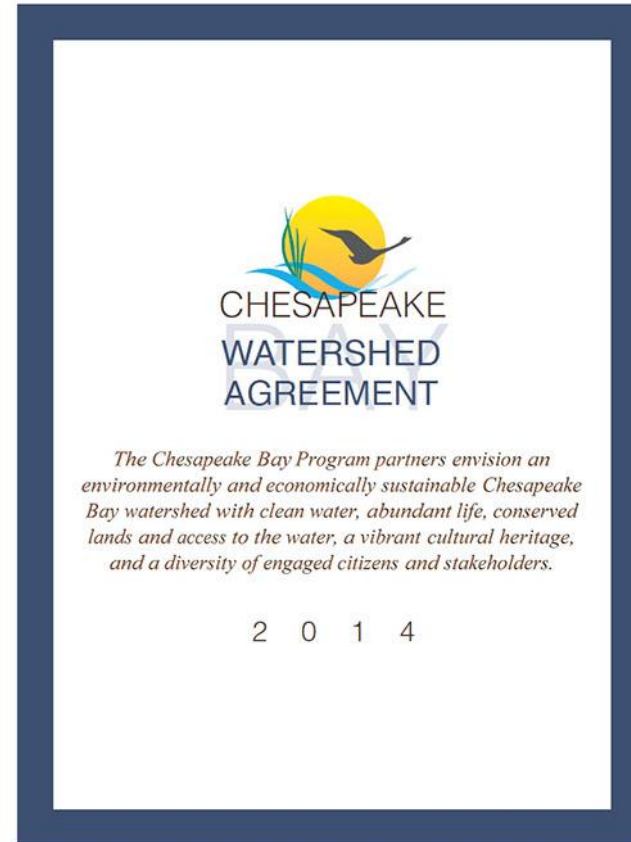
“...direct the Principals’ Staff Committee to complete the following by December 1, 2025:

1. Revisions to the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement with modifications to the existing vision, principles, preamble, goals, and **outcomes...**”
2. ...Recommending this simplified and streamlined **partnership structure and processes** to the Executive Council in as much detail as possible...”
3. Subsequent changes which incorporate this revised structure and processes into the **Governance and Management Framework** for the Chesapeake Bay Program do not need to occur until June 2026.

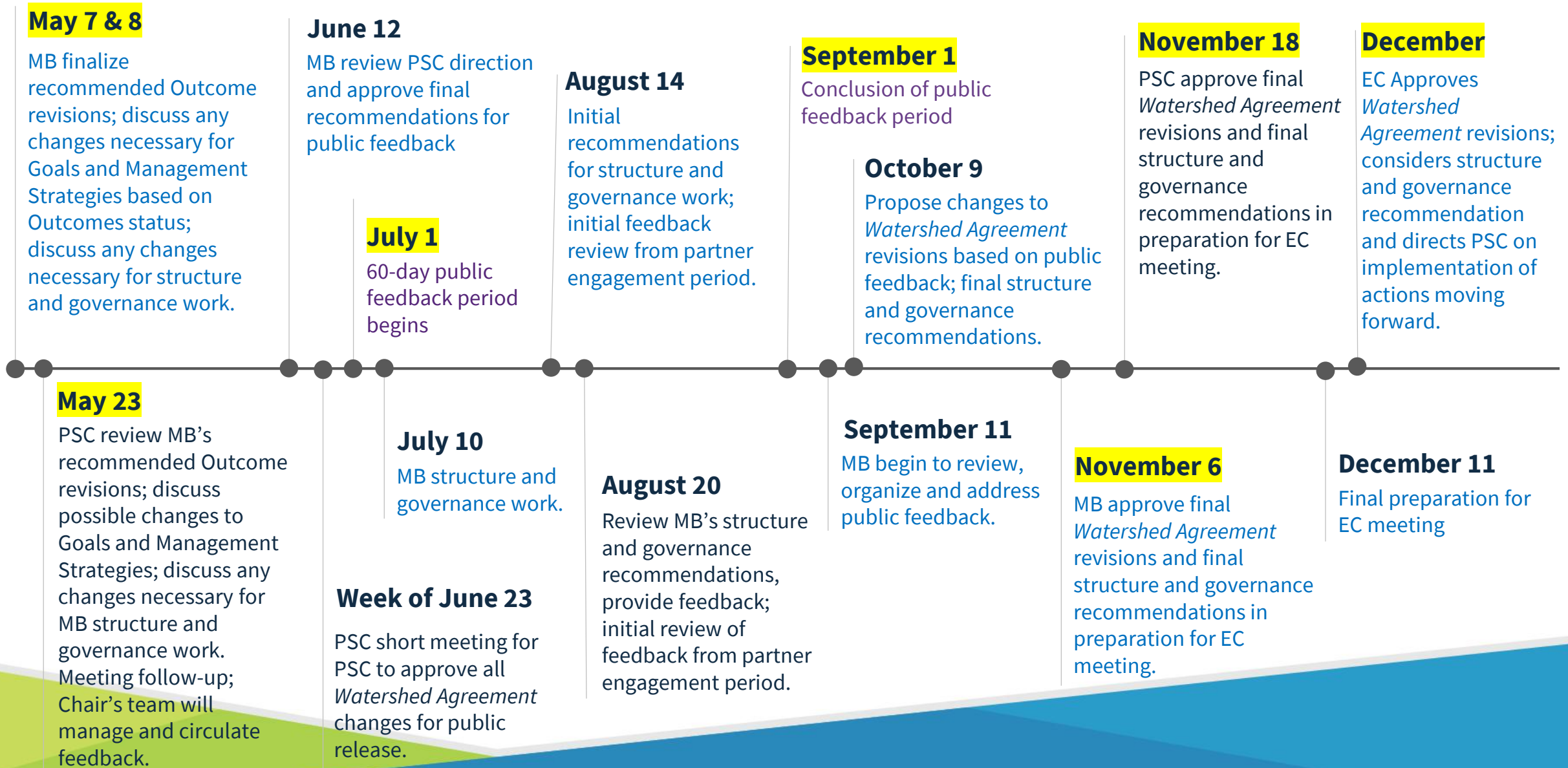


# Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

- Vision
- Preamble
- Principles
- **Goals & Outcomes**
- Management Strategies
- Affirmation by the Signatories



# Timeline for the rest of 2025



# 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

## 1 VISION, 10 GOALS, 31 OUTCOMES



Sustainable  
Fisheries



Toxic  
Contaminants



Land  
Conservation



Vital  
Habitats



Healthy  
Watersheds



Public  
Access



Environmental  
Literacy



Water  
Quality



Stewardship



Climate  
Resiliency

Each goal includes between one and five outcomes.

Goals focus on the big picture.

Outcomes are intended to be specific, measurable objectives toward achieving each goal.



# Proposed Modifications to Goal Structure



- Example: Clean Water
- Introduction: Clean water is the foundation of healthy fisheries, habitats and communities across the watershed. However, excess nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and toxic contaminants can degrade our waterways, harm wildlife and pose risks to human health. The Chesapeake Bay Program partners use a variety of tools to reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment, address toxic contaminants and monitor progress toward achieving water quality standards.
- Goal Statement: Reduce pollutants entering the Bay and its rivers to achieve the water quality necessary to support our aquatic wildlife and protect human health.
- Outcomes: Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring; Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment; Toxic Contaminants Mitigation

# Proposed Modifications to Outcomes: Disposition Process

- An **updated** outcome will maintain its original intent, but language may be added to make it more specific, measurable, actionable, relevant or timely.
- Outcomes may be **consolidated** to form a single outcome, or activities underneath an existing outcome may be integrated into other outcomes.
- Outcomes may be **removed** from the *Watershed Agreement*.
- An outcome may be **replaced** by a new outcome that relates to the original's intent or subject matter.
- An outcome may also be **reclassified**, in which it could adopt a new structure or be changed to an output or activity.



# Partnership Consensus Achieved!

- Sustainable Schools - **Reclassify**
- Environmental Literacy Planning - **Update**
- Student - **Update**
- Stewardship - **Update**
- Diversity - **Replace**
- Public Access – **Update**
- Protected Lands – **Update**
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation – **Update**
- Oysters – **Update**
- Blue Crab Abundance – **Update**
- Blue Crab Management – **Remove**
- Toxic Contaminants Research– **Consolidate**
- Toxics Policy and Prevention – **Consolidate**
- Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring – **Update**
- 2017 Watershed Implementation Plan – **Remove**
- 2025 Watershed Implementation Plan – **Update**
- Black Duck – **Reclassify**
- Wetlands – **Update**
- Local Leadership – **Update**
- Adaptation – **Update**
- Land Use Methods and Metrics Development – **Reclassify**

# Partnership Consensus Achieved!

- Tree Canopy- **Consolidate**
- Forest Buffers - **Consolidate**
- Monitoring and Assessment – **Replace**
- Land Use Options and Evaluations - **Replace**
- Healthy Watersheds - **Reclassify**
- Brook Trout – **Update**
- Stream Health – **Update**
- Forage Fish - **Reclassify**
- Fish Passage –**Update**
- Fish Habitat – **Update**

# Updated Outcome Language

- Outcome leads have drafted updated Outcome language for Management Board review.
  - Outcome: long-term, high-level change we desire, or the difference made by our actions
  - Target(s): more direct products of the actions we plan for and take as partners (SMART, where possible)
- No “stops” or “holds” received from the Management Board on the revised Outcome language on May 7&8.
- On May 23, PSC approved recommended language for the Agreement’s outcomes, which were language proposed at the May 7-8 Management Board Retreat, for release for public feedback

# How about streamlining the partnership structure and process?

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Enhancing Partnership, Leadership and Management Goal Implementation Team (GIT 6) is leading an informal process to aid the Management Board and Principals' Staff Committee in developing recommendations for streamlining the structure and governance process of the partnership.



## Actions and Decisions

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### Discussion of Structure, Governance, and Operational Management Framework


**Decision:** GIT 6 will coordinate an informal process and develop a draft scope of work to accomplish the **Executive Council Charge** to simplify and streamline the structure and governance process for the partnership. GIT 6 will also pursue options to standardize partnership meeting processes as well as action and decision documentation.

*“A simplified and streamlined structure and process for the partnership that supports all partners as they work toward achieving their commitments in an effective, efficient, and inclusive manner. It is the expectation of the Chesapeake Executive Council that the revised partnership structure and processes will be more inclusive of all communities and more manageable for partnership staff.”*


#### **Updated Guidance from the Management Board (03/06)**

- “develop a single one-pager that highlights the top 3-5 priorities that would inform the scope of work for the partnership to address the structure, process, and governance component of the 2024 Executive Council Charge.”
- “present the contents of the one-pager [at the 3/27 MB Meeting], highlighting the top level 3-5 priorities. The Management Board will then determine if this work under GIT 6 should continue or if an alternative approach should be pursued. “

# Proposed Priorities for Streamlining/Simplifying


- Clarifying membership roles, responsibilities, and definitions of Chesapeake Bay Program groups to strengthen accountability and adaptability
  - Revising the Strategy Review System to ensure regular assessment, adaptability in tactics and goals, and clear alignment of actions and responsibilities
  - Refining decision-making processes to ensure broad representation, agile science-based decision making, and integrative participatory practices
  - Strengthening communication, engagement and integration across the Program to build trust, align goals, and enhance coordination among program units
  - Establishing a logical framework and governance structure to produce results that align with the goals and outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement
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# PSC Direction to GIT 6 from March 28 Meeting


- Collect best practices for meeting operations
  - Review other regional partnership programs
  - Identify skillsets and resources needed to draft and execute the Scope(s) of Work for the top priorities
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# Meeting Best Practices – Examples

- Standardize agendas and meeting documentation
  - Update group membership on website every 6 months
  - Choose common meeting and file sharing platforms (e.g., MS Teams, Google Drive)
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# Geographic Program Reviews

- *Objective:* Review other geographic programs to gain insights for developing Scope(s) of Work.
  - *Suggested Approach:* Rapid assessment with 5-6 related regional partnerships. Delve further as needed.
    - How was the Program formally established? (e.g., statutes)
    - Organizational structure? What guides the Program?
    - Funding mechanisms; deployment and prioritization of resources?
    - How are you measuring success?
    - Lessons learned?
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# Geographic Program Reviews

1. Informational discussions and comparative exercise in June.
  - Individuals set up meetings with identified partnerships.
  - Review Program materials (e.g., strategic plan, org chart).
  - Discuss issues of interest; inform of CBP approach and seek feedback.

**Suggested Programs:** Puget Sound Partnership, San Francisco Estuary Partnership, Long Island Sound Study, International Joint Commission (Great Lakes), Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

2. [As desired] Informational small group discussion(s) with Partnerships' **external stakeholders.**

# Expertise and Resources Needed for Top Priorities?

1. Clarifying membership roles, responsibilities, and definitions of Chesapeake Bay Program groups
2. Revising the Strategy Review System (SRS)
3. Refining decision-making processes
4. Strengthening communication, engagement, and trust
5. Establishing a logical framework and governance structure that supports the vision and goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement



# May 23 PSC Decisions

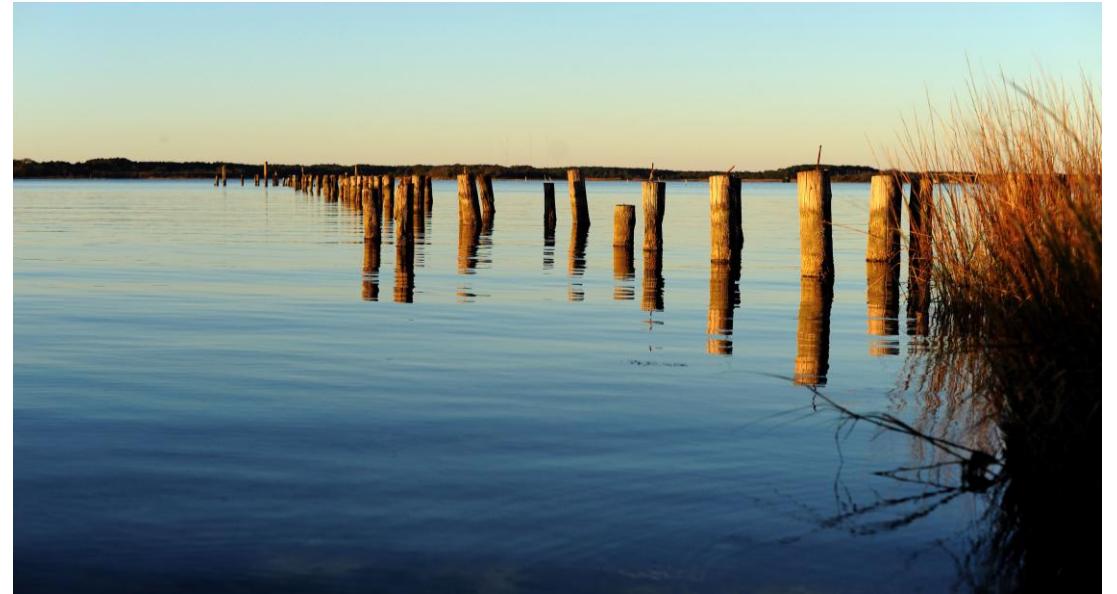
- Approved revisions to Watershed Agreement for public feedback:
  - Proposed revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's Vision, Preamble, and Principles.
  - Recommended language for the Agreement's outcomes, which were language proposed at the May 7-8 Management Board Retreat.
  - Revised goal structure under the Agreement, as well as proposed changes to the Management Strategies section of the Agreement.
- Approved GIT 6's continued work on structure and governance as part of fulfilling the 2024 Executive Council charge.
- Agreement on the intent of the draft PSC response to the January 2025 resolution from the Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC). More work needed to finalize. Will be on the June meeting agenda.

# Next Steps for the Watershed Agreement

| Date of Action     | Deliverable / Decision  |
|--------------------|---|
| July – August 2025 | 60-day public review and engagement period for updated Watershed Agreement                          |
| Sept – Oct 2025    | PSC reviews public feedback and revises Watershed Agreement as needed                               |
| November 2025      | PSC approves final updated Watershed Agreement for Executive Council consideration                  |
| December 2025      | Chesapeake Executive Council holds annual meeting; reviews and approves updated Watershed Agreement |

# Public Feedback Process

- Public feedback open July 1– August 30.
- Anyone can submit comments by email to [comments@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:comments@chesapeakebay.net).
- Comments will be collected, reviewed and integrated as appropriate into the updated Agreement.
- All comments received, as well as a redlined version of the updated Agreement will be posted online at [chesapeakebay.net/beyond2025](http://chesapeakebay.net/beyond2025).
- The final updated Agreement will be reviewed by the Management Board and will inform the Principals' Staff Committee recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council.





# Where can I find information on the Beyond 2025 process?

The most up-to-date information on the Beyond 2025 process can be found on the Chesapeake Bay Program's [Beyond 2025 webpage](#). The webpage includes the timeline, important documents, outcome review summaries and public feedback.





# Thank you!

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