

Chesapeake Bay Program Update: Beyond 2025

May 21, 2025



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 up to 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.

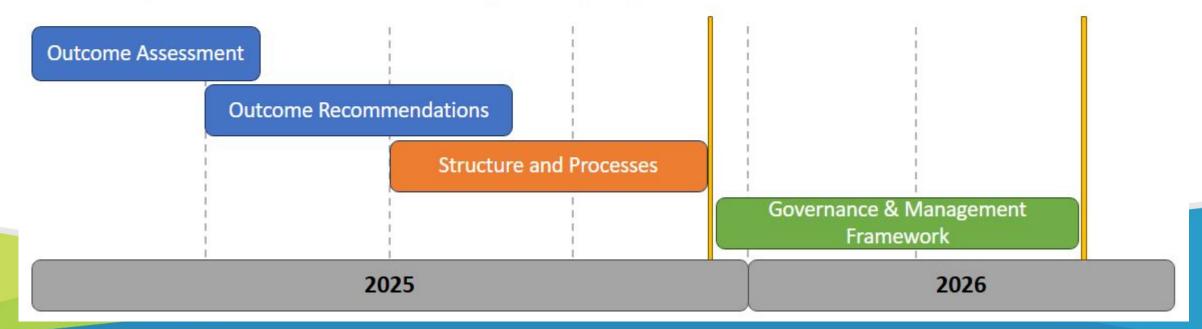
Partnership

- 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:

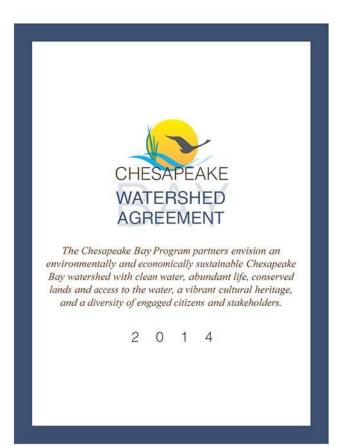
"...direct the Principals' Staff Committee to complete the following by December 1, 2025:

- 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..."
- 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

May 7 & 8

MB finalize recommended Outcome revisions; discuss any changes necessary for Goals and Management Strategies based on Outcomes status; discuss any changes necessary for structure and governance work.

June 12

MB review PSC direction and approve final recommendations for public feedback

July 1

60-day public feedback period begins

August 14

Initial recommendations for structure and governance work; initial feedback review from partner engagement period.

September 1

Conclusion of public feedback period

October 9

Propose changes to Watershed Agreement revisions based on public feedback; final structure and governance recommendations.

November 18

PSC approve final Watershed Agreement revisions and final structure and governance recommendations in preparation for EC meeting.

December

EC Approves
Watershed
Agreement
revisions; considers
structure and
governance
recommendation
and directs PSC on
implementation of
actions moving
forward.

May 23

PSC review MB's recommended Outcome revisions; discuss possible changes to Goals and Management Strategies; discuss any changes necessary for MB structure and governance work. Meeting follow-up; Chair's team will manage and circulate feedback.

July 10

MB structure and governance work.

Week of June 23

PSC short meeting for PSC to approve all Watershed Agreement changes for public release.

August 20

Review MB's structure and governance recommendations, provide feedback; initial review of feedback from partner engagement period.

September 11

MB begin to review, organize and address public feedback.

November 6

MB approve final Watershed Agreement revisions and final structure and governance recommendations in preparation for EC meeting.

December 11

Final preparation for EC meeting

2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

1 VISION, 10 GOALS, 31 OUTCOMES



Sustainable Fisheries



Toxic Contaminants



Land Conservation





Healthy Watersheds



Public Access



Environmental Literacy





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 Goals

Conserved Lands & Clean Water Watershed Health Habitat & Engaged Wildlife Communities

- 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

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

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.
- PSC will review updated Outcome language at its May 23 meeting approval will be requested on this language.

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.

Principals' Staff Committee / Management Board Meeting January 16, 2024

Actions and Decisions

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

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

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)

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?

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: <u>Puget Sound Partnership</u>, <u>San Francisco Estuary</u> <u>Partnership</u>, <u>Long Island Sound Study</u>, <u>International Joint Commission</u> (Great Lakes), <u>Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council</u>

 [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
- 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



Next Steps for the Watershed Agreement

Date of Action	Deliverable / Decision
May 23, 2025	PSC reviews and approves MB's recommended updates to the Watershed Agreement
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

May 23 PSC Decisions Requested

- Approve the PSC response to the January 2025 resolution from the Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC).
- Approve the proposed revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's Vision, Preamble, and Principles.
- Approve recommended language for the Agreement's outcomes, which were language proposed at the May 7-8 Management Board Retreat.
- Review and approve the revised goal structure under the Agreement, as well as any proposed changes to the Management Strategies section of the Agreement.
- Approve GIT 6's continued work on structure and governance as part of fulfilling the 2024 Executive Council charge.

Public Feedback Process

- Public feedback open July 1

 August 30.
- Anyone can submit comments by email to <u>comments@chesapeakebay.net.</u>
- 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 <u>chesapeakebay.net/beyond2025</u>.
- 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 <u>Beyond 2025 webpage</u>. The webpage includes the timeline, important documents, outcome review summaries and public feedback.



Thank you!

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