

Stewardship Outcome

Stewardship Outcome: Increase the public's participation in stewardship actions that contribute positively to lands, waters, wildlife, fisheries and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- Through 2040, build the capacity of leaders in the community and environmental professionals with the social science data, technical assistance and support needed to develop, improve and carry out individual- and community-level stewardship programs, including those that will help advance *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.

Baseline and Current Condition

Achieving the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's* water quality, restoration, and conservation goals depends on engaged residents who support community stewardship and take personal action. Historically, the Stewardship Outcome focused on increasing the number and types of volunteers with the knowledge and skills to engage in individual stewardship actions across the watershed. The revised Stewardship Outcome builds on the Chesapeake Bay Program's role as a regional convener, using a coordinated network of partners to influence on-the-ground programs.

In 2017, the first comprehensive survey of stewardship actions and attitudes, completed by 5,212 randomly selected watershed residents, produced a Stewardship Index score of 24 out of 100, with 100 representing the greatest opportunity and likelihood of adopting stewardship actions. The Index includes three components—Personal Action (38), Volunteering (23), and Advocating (19)—that collectively inform the overall score. Conducted again in 2023, the survey showed broad optimism and volunteerism, but persistent knowledge gaps about specific actions. It also found that more residents are willing to advocate for stewardship than are currently doing so. Most believe government involvement is important, though many express doubts about local government responses, suggesting a need to increase visibility of local efforts. Additional details are available through [Chesapeake Behavior Change](#).

A capacity assessment led by the Choose Clean Water Coalition, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and OpinionWorks identified systemic capacity gaps that limit nongovernmental organizations' (NGO) ability to engage communities at scale. Without sufficient capacity, organizations may struggle to apply for and manage creative funding streams, engage in professional development, invest in outreach and partnership models, and facilitate best-practices training. While many organizations report maintaining or increasing constituent engagement, a majority rate their engagement capacity as medium or low, and confidence in reaching new audiences remains limited. Addressing these

needs is central to supporting community leaders and environmental professionals in designing and delivering effective stewardship programs.

Monitoring Progress and Indicators

Monitoring: Stewardship Network Initiatives in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

To track increases in capacity, community-level action, and technical assistance, a selection of local stewardship initiatives led by the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership (e.g., Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund projects, volunteer cleanups, trainings, community science), collaborative networks, and practitioner toolkits will be documented and reported every two years on ChesapeakeProgress. Each project will appear on an interactive watershed map, accompanied by a summary. Where available, additional measures of program reach, participation, capacity, and impact will be reported.

Monitoring: Chesapeake Steward Map

The Chesapeake Steward Map strengthens connections and collaboration by identifying hubs, gaps, and opportunities to share knowledge and resources across the region. Individuals and organizations will be added regularly to help users find partners with shared interests and the expertise needed or offered to support stewardship programs. The number of stewards and organizations on the map, geographic coverage by jurisdiction/community type, and connections facilitated through map outreach will be documented and reported every two years to track and visualize progress towards growing network capacity through 2040.

Monitoring: Bay Stewardship Survey

The Bay Stewardship Survey focuses on the actions that more than 18 million people across the watershed take in their daily lives to improve ecosystem health, the public's perceptions and expectations about restoration, and the conditions that enable success. The survey describes stewardship across three facets—environmentally friendly behaviors, volunteerism, and civic engagement. Subject to future availability of funding, the survey will be conducted every five years and reported with trends by jurisdiction and demographic group to track changes in participation over time.

Stewardship Outcome Situation Analysis

The following table identifies challenges that will impact progress towards attaining this outcome and its targets. This analysis considers scientific, environmental, fiscal or policy-related developments that have already or may influence work during the upcoming six-year Management Strategy cycle. Consideration is given to which challenges are within and outside of CBP's ability to influence. Challenges associated with Changing Environmental Conditions are denoted with an asterisk (*). Challenges listed in bold font have been identified by the Goal Team and its Workgroups as being priorities for the Workgroup to seek to address or make progress against through the development and implementation of Management Approaches.

	Within CBP's ability to influence	Outside of CBP's ability to influence
Challenges		
Insufficient coordination among funders and local partners limits efforts to align resources, scale regional impacts, and reduce capacity constraints for grantees.	X	X
Creative, replicable models of effective stewardship, behavior-change, and social marketing campaigns are not broadly accessible.	X	X
Funding and capacity gaps limit environmental professionals' and community leaders' ability to implement stewardship programs.	X	X
The ability to measure and track stewardship program impacts is limited by a lack of shared, long-term data and common metrics.	X	
NGOs need greater technical assistance, support with funding applications, and capacity to secure resources for stewardship programs.	X	
Environmental professionals and community leaders have limited professional development and training opportunities.	X	X
A better understanding of watershed residents' knowledge of and willingness to participate in stewardship is needed to guide behavior-change campaigns.	X	
Existing markets often create disincentives for consumers to participate in stewardship actions.		X
Changing environmental conditions and extreme weather affect the success of environmental restoration and individuals' ability to participate in stewardship activities.*		X
Lack of strong political support, enabling policy, and sustained public engagement can deter individual and community participation in stewardship actions.	X	X

Snapshot of Signatory Programs

Managing a large and difficult restoration and conservation program with “no assurance about the level of funds that may be available beyond the short term” (GAO, 2028) is a challenging undertaking that requires individual and collaborative action from signatory partners, as well as the many communities and individuals who live, work, play and learn in our region. This “Snapshot of Signatory Resources” seeks to better recognize the significant contribution that individual signatory partners and federal agencies make towards outcome attainment. The existing programs and funding spotlighted below are not

intended to represent the full range of resources available or required to support progress towards outcome attainment; only the “biggest ticket” programs are included for each outcome and signatory partner. It is important to note that funding is reported from a single point in time (fiscal year 2025) and is not representative of future investments. Identifying the most critical programs and resources that exist at a particular moment in time can help the partnership focus its collaborative efforts on activities that have the greatest impact, and which don’t duplicate the work of existing programs.

State of Delaware

- The Stewardship Program offers multiple tax incentive programs to keep properties in active forest management, along with offering a small state cost share program when timber revenues allow.
- Delaware Community Conservation Assistance Program (DeCAP) (\$628K in FY2025) supports community and landowner-level implementation of backyard best management practices, including but not limited to tree plantings and riparian tree buffers, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

District of Columbia

- Kingman Rangers Workforce Development Program (\$262,000 in FY 2025) provides paid stewardship positions to full-time and part-time rangers that support operations, maintenance, and ecological restoration on the Islands and engage participants in environmental education and stewardship programs.
- Trash Free Communities: Trash Reduction Through Behavior Change (\$115,000 in FY2025) supports a litter reduction campaign that focuses on creating behavior change in local District communities.
- Community Stormwater Solutions Grants (\$284,000 in FY2025) provides funding for innovative, community-centered projects that improve the District's waterways.

State of Maryland

- Keep Maryland Beautiful (\$238,751 in FY2025) supports community-based organizations working to increase civic engagement, promote stewardship practices, and develop solutions to local environmental problems.
- Chesapeake Bay Trust Capacity Building Initiative (\$972,761 in FY2025) supports nonprofit organizations and local governments working at the intersection of natural resource protection and community well-being across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers Program (No specific funding; 2 FTEs supported the program in FY25) is a program that provides volunteer scientists with engaging and educational experiences with submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) while also generating useful data for Bay scientists and managers.

State of New York

- Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) is a statewide volunteer lake monitoring program directed by DEC staff in collaboration with the NYS Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA).
- Water Assessments by Volunteer Evaluators Program (WAVE) is a statewide DEC program where volunteers collect, or sample “stream bugs” to assess water quality in wadable streams in New York State.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

- Master Watershed Steward Program trains and supports volunteers to become local leaders in watershed stewardship through science-based education, restoration activities, and community outreach.
- Lancaster Watershed Leadership Academy develops community leaders who are inspired to act on local water quality challenges through a year-long program combining watershed education, leadership development, peer networking, and hands-on learning.
- Riparian Rangers trains and supports volunteers to monitor and maintain newly planted riparian forest buffers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Commonwealth of Virginia

- Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (\$48,663,103 in FY2025) provides matching grants to local governments for the planning, design, and implementation of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that address cost efficiency and commitments related to reducing water quality pollutant loads.
- Virginia Recreational Trails Program (\$1,798,344.72 in FY2025) supports the development and maintenance of both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trails and trail-related facilities.

State of West Virginia

- Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns (\$1.3 million in FY2026) supports design and implementation of green streets, community greening, and urban tree canopy projects that enhance livability in cities and communities.
- West Virginia Master Naturalist Program trains individuals in natural history, interpretation, and environmental stewardship to support local conservation projects and outdoor education.
- WV Save Our Streams trains watershed residents to monitor and protect local wadable streams and rivers using biological evaluations.

Federal Government

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Small Watersheds Grant Program (\$11M in FY2025) promotes voluntary, community-based efforts to protect and restore vital habitats in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams.

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants Program (\$11M in FY2025) accelerates regional watershed restoration projects to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution from entering the Chesapeake Bay.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Local Science Monitoring Grant (\$499,972 in FY2025) supports capacity expansion and integration of local science-based monitoring partners into the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership through the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative.

Management Approaches for Outcome 4: Stewardship Outcome

Management Approach 4.4.1: Increase strategic coordination and collaboration among local programs to improve stewardship program effectiveness. Partner with local governments, NGOs, and funders to align resources and support pollution-reduction and environmental restoration goals. Foster partnerships that reduce resource constraints, improve coordination among funded programs, and strengthen stewardship outreach and support for public policy.

Management Approach 4.4.2: Share best practices for stewardship programs and strengthen communications and behavior-change capacity across the watershed. Develop and disseminate replicable program, communications, and social marketing toolkits to support public engagement campaigns. Provide training and technical assistance to help partners adapt, implement, and evaluate successful models that reflect community needs.

Management Approach 4.4.3: Increase volunteer recruitment, engagement, and community-led stewardship programs. Expand volunteer opportunities, including those at public access sites, to build knowledge, experience, and long-term stewardship among adults and youth. Encourage increased federal and state investment to leverage local and private funding for volunteer and community-led projects that provide learning and capacity-building opportunities.

Management Approach 4.4.4: Expand watershed residents' participation in science and monitoring and strengthen shared approaches for measuring stewardship impacts. Coordinate with the Education Workgroup to encourage K-12 student participation in stewardship activities as part of the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) framework. Identify monitoring gaps where community science can support Best Management Practice (BMP) verification and habitat quality assessments. Develop common impact metrics and shared, long-term data systems across partners to track progress.

Management Approach 4.4.5: Increase access to training and technical assistance that support effective stewardship programs. Sustain and expand leadership and technical training platforms, and integrate watershed topics, including changing environmental

conditions and social science best practices, into training for environmental professionals, community leaders, and local government staff. Support NGOs and other organizations with grant applications, program design, and implementation.

Management Approach 4.4.6: Expand incentives and career pathways for emerging professionals, community leaders, and individuals engaged in stewardship. Coordinate with the Workforce Workgroup to support programs that combine education, certifications, and hands-on stewardship experience with workforce pathways that attract and retain new talent. Expand funding for programs that reduce barriers to students pursuing environmental careers, replicate community leadership models, and promote incentives for individual stewardship actions.

Participating Partners

The following partners participated in the creation of this Management Strategy and expressed their intention to collaborate on Management Strategy implementation over the next six years. Per the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, “participation in developing Management Strategies or in the achievement of Outcomes varies by signatory based on differing priorities across the watershed. This participation may include commitments such as sharing knowledge, data or information, educating the public, working on future legislation and developing or implementing programs or verified practices” (2025). Signatory partners may join implementation efforts at any time. Partners also recognize that Signatory participation is voluntary and may vary accordingly.

- **Signatory Partners**
 - State of Delaware
 - District of Columbia
 - State of Maryland
 - Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
 - Commonwealth of Virginia
 - State of West Virginia
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- **Other Partners**
 - Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
 - Cacapon Institute
 - Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin
 - Penn State Extension

Appendix 1. Signatory Statutory Authorities Driving Outcome Attainment

The law and regulation of signatory partners may support, justify or motivate their participation in the collaborative work of the Chesapeake Bay Program related to the attainment of specific Outcomes and Targets of the Watershed Agreement.

The following documentation identifies core statutory authorities that provide part of the impetus for the attainment of Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes and their related Targets. While Chesapeake Bay Program partners acknowledge that the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement is voluntary, subject to the availability of appropriated funds, and does not preempt, supersede or override any other law or regulation applicable to each signatory, they also acknowledge that the law or regulation of individual signatories can support each partner’s participation in outcome attainment. The table below is not an exhaustive list of all relevant laws and regulations. Rather, this appendix identifies the driving motivators that can bring about signatory partner engagement in efforts described in this Strategic Plan, associated Management Strategies, and Workplans.

Goal 4: Engaged Communities

Outcome: Stewardship	
Signatory	Statutory Authority
State of Delaware	<u>Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law (7 Del. C. Ch. 39)</u>
	<u>Delaware Land Protection Act (7 Del. C. Ch. 75)</u>
District of Columbia	<u>Water Pollution Control Act of 1984 (D.C. Law 5-188; D.C. Official Code § 8-103.01 et seq.)</u>
	<u>D.C. Law 18-55. Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act of 2009</u>
State of Maryland	<u>COMAR 01.01.2024.15 Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership</u>
	<u>COMAR 13A.04.17.01 Environmental Literacy Programs</u>
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	<u>Pennsylvania Constitution, Article I, Section 27 (Environmental Rights Amendment)</u>
	<u>Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law (Act 394 of 1937)</u>
	<u>Conservation District Law (Act 217 of 1945)</u>
State of West Virginia	<u>Voluntary Land Stewardship Program: West Virginia Code §31-21-7</u>
	<u>West Virginia Code §31-21-4</u>
Chesapeake Bay Commission	<u>1985, June 25, P.L. 64, No. 25</u>
	<u>MD Natural Resources Code §8-301</u>
	<u>Va. Code § 30-240</u>
Federal Government	<u>33 U.S. Code § 1267 – Chesapeake Bay</u>
	<u>S.1076 - National Environmental Education</u>