**CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM**
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Chesapeake Bay Program
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

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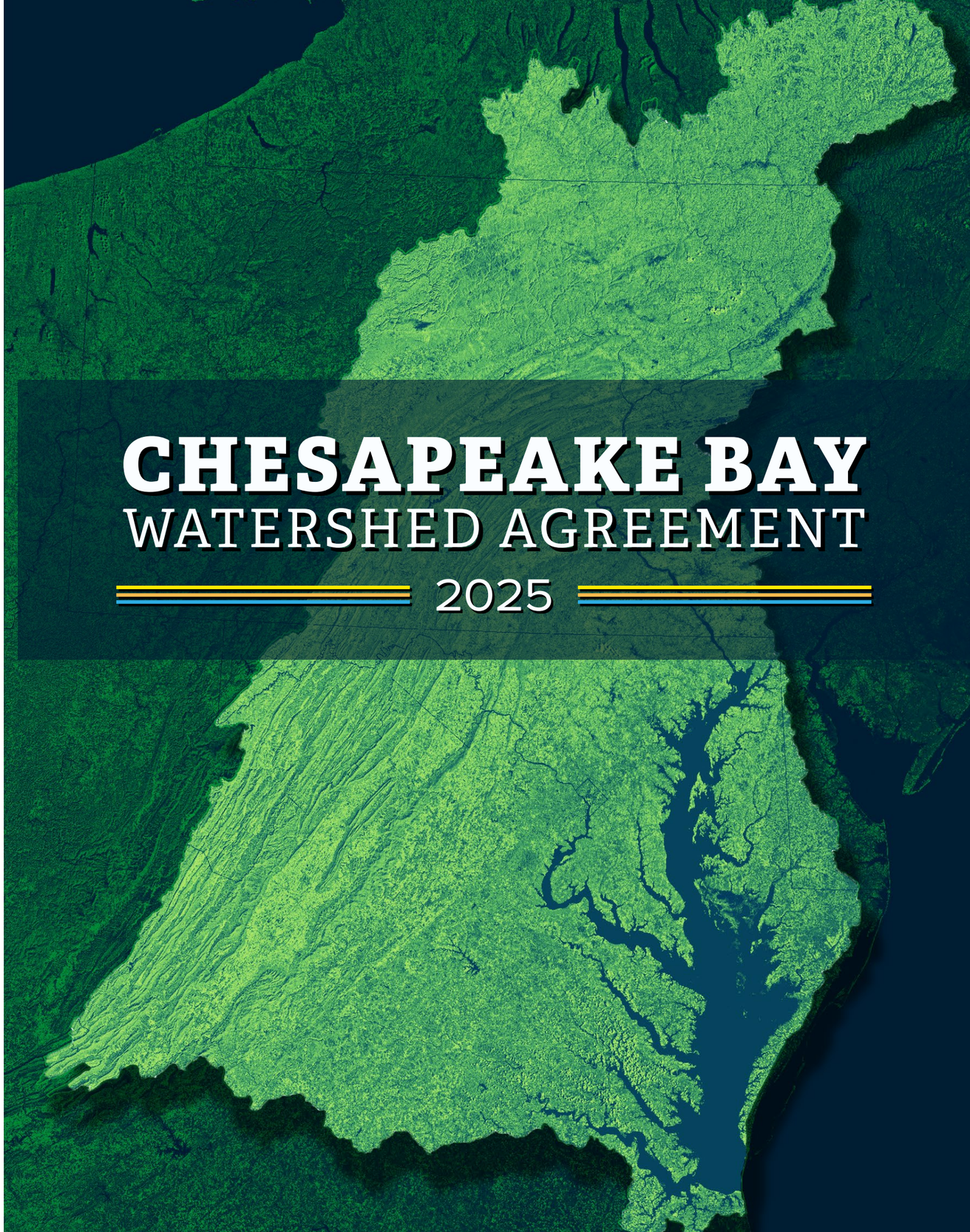


# CHESAPEAKE BAY
## WATERSHED AGREEMENT
## 2025

# Vision

*We envision a Chesapeake Bay region where clean water flows, wildlife thrives and farms, forests and fisheries are healthy and productive. It is a place where people from all walks of life feel connected to the land, to the Bay and local waterways, to their communities and to the rich cultural heritage that makes this watershed unique. Together, we are building a future that is environmentally and economically sustainable, resilient and full of possibility—where everyone can enjoy and help conserve the natural beauty of the Bay, and the lands and waters that surround it, today and for generations to come.*

# Table of Contents



# Preamble

*The Chesapeake Bay watershed is one of the most extraordinary places in the United States of America, spanning six states and the District of Columbia. As the nation's largest and one of the most productive estuaries in the world, the Chesapeake Bay and its vast network of more than 200,000 miles of streams, creeks and rivers hold tremendous ecological, cultural, economic, historic and recreational value for the more than 18 million people who live, work, learn and play in the region.*

To restore, conserve and protect this national treasure, the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership was formed in 1983 when the governors of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency signed the first *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*. That initial *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* recognized the "historical decline of living resources" in the Chesapeake Bay and committed to a cooperative approach to "fully address the extent, complexity and sources of pollutants entering the Bay." For more than 40 years, this regional partnership has been recognized as one of the nation's premier estuarine restoration, conservation and protection efforts, implementing policies, engaging in scientific investigation and coordinating actions among the states, the District of Columbia and the federal government.

*Elected officials from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania sign the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement in 1983. This pledge launched our cooperative effort to restore the Bay.*

Chesapeake Bay Program partners have made much progress in that time, and there is still more to do—especially in the face of continued challenges such as changes in population, loss of farm and forest lands, declining fish and wildlife resources, threats to biodiversity, emerging contaminants and changing environmental conditions. Through the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the partnership remains committed to restoring, protecting and conserving the Bay and its watershed through efforts based in and guided by science, and responsive to the lessons learned from our past and shared experiences.

One of the most important lessons the partners have learned from the past four decades is that although watershed-wide partnerships can help to coordinate and catalyze progress, implementation is locally inspired and driven. Local governments, tribes, communities, farmers, businesses, watershed groups and other nongovernmental organizations are key partners in our work. Working together to engage, empower and facilitate these partner networks will leverage resources and ensure better outcomes for all watershed communities.

*One of the most important lessons the partners have learned from the past four decades is that although watershed-wide partnerships can help to coordinate and catalyze progress, implementation is locally inspired and driven.*

The partnership's experience with watershed restoration, conservation and protection efforts has shown that measurable progress, coupled with clear accountability, yield the most effective results. The partnership continues to embrace new ideas, technologies and policies that will help meet our goals. We are committed to improving accountability, transparency and outreach to strengthen and increase public confidence in our work.

The 1983 *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* laid the foundation for a cooperative program that included four jurisdictions along with the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the federal government. This initial one-page document was followed by two more comprehensive voluntary agreements in 1987 and 2000. In 2010, at the request of the Bay jurisdictions, the Environmental Protection Agency established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL), which calculated the nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment reductions needed at that time to restore water quality in the Bay. This fulfilled consent decree commitments in Virginia and the District of Columbia from the late 1990s and was a keystone commitment of a federal strategy to meet Executive Order 13508 to restore and protect the Bay. Chesapeake Bay Program partners have been working towards meeting the Bay TMDL for the past 15 years and will continue to do so. Since 2014, the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* has included all seven jurisdictions in the watershed, with New York, West Virginia and Delaware joining the original signatories as full partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Executive Council. Numerous federal agencies also continue their long-standing commitment to restoring, conserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

*Volunteers plant trees at Delaware's Blackbird State Forest. Engaging local and state partners in efforts to restore tree cover drives progress toward thriving habitats and clean water.*

This *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* acknowledges that the partnership cannot address every issue at once and that progress must be made in a strategic manner, focusing on efforts that will achieve the most meaningful and cost-effective results. Watershed restoration, conservation and protection are integral drivers of the region's economy, health and culture. To that end, the partnership is committed to achieving success while maximizing the community and economic benefits across the watershed. The signatories to this voluntary agreement commit to achieving the restoration, conservation and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, its water, habitats, fisheries and wildlife for the benefit of all people living in and visiting this nationally treasured watershed.

In 2040, the partnership will come together to formally assess our progress and amend this agreement to ensure work reflects our shared Vision.

# Principles

*The Chesapeake Bay Program commits to operate under the following principles, which reflect the partners' collective, core values. The principles guide the work of the partnership in our governance and as we develop policy and take action to achieve the* Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's *Goals and Outcomes. The partnership will:*

## Science

- Use place-based approaches, where appropriate, to target specific geographic areas and produce recognizable benefits to local communities while contributing to larger ecosystem goals.
- Maintain and enhance a coordinated watershed-wide monitoring, modeling and research program to support decision-making, track progress and assess the effectiveness of management actions.
- Integrate social science holistically throughout the partnership to support adaptive management, more effectively engage with communities and incentivize individual and collective behaviors that support partnership goals.
- Adaptively manage at all levels of the partnership to foster continuous improvement informed by the best available science and strong working relationships.
- Use science-based decision-making, consider Indigenous and local knowledge, and seek out innovative technologies and approaches to support sound management decisions in a changing system.

## Restoration & Conservation

- Achieve Goals and Outcomes in a measurable and timely way and at the least possible cost to the public.
- Conserve working lands and support economically viable forests and farms to best position landowners to help protect the Chesapeake Bay.
- Acknowledge, support and engage local governments and other local entities in watershed restoration, conservation and protection activities.
- Anticipate and respond to changes in the landscape and environmental conditions, including long-term trends in sea level, temperature, precipitation, land use and other variables.

## Partnership

- Represent the interests of all communities throughout the watershed fairly and effectively.
- Meaningfully engage the public to foster collaboration and grow the partnership to support and carry out the restoration, conservation and protection activities necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of this *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
- Facilitate outreach to and welcome participation by all communities regarding the partnership's activities, decisions and implementation.
- Collaborate to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of this *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
- Operate with transparency and accountability in program decisions, policies, actions and reporting on progress to strengthen public trust and confidence in our efforts.
- Strive for consensus across the partnership when making decisions.
- Include tribal nations in the partnership in a manner that appropriately considers their unique status as independent sovereign nations and as original stewards of the land.

# Goals & Outcomes

*The Goals and Outcomes contained in this section are collective commitments made by the signatories to advance the restoration, conservation and protection of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its watershed. The Goals articulate the desired high-level aspects of the partners' Vision. The Outcomes lay out benefits and results that directly contribute to the achievement of each Goal. Targets contribute to achieving the Outcomes and are as specific, measurable and time bound as possible. Targets are reflected as a bulleted list under each Outcome.*

Details that articulate the actions necessary to achieve the Goals, Outcomes and Targets are laid out in Management Strategies, further described in the last section of this *Watershed Agreement*. This work will require efforts from many people, including all levels of government, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, watershed groups, farmers, foresters, businesses and individuals. Local governments will continue to play a unique and critical role in helping the partnership realize this shared Vision for the Chesapeake Bay.

*The signatories recognize that all aspects of the ecosystem are connected and that these Goals and Outcomes support the health and protection of the entire Bay watershed.*

While the Goals and Outcomes are described by separate topic areas, the signatories recognize that all aspects of the ecosystem are connected and that these Goals and Outcomes support the health and protection of the entire Bay watershed. Improvements in habitat and water quality lead to healthier wildlife and fisheries. Environmentally—including agriculturally—literate people are more engaged stewards of the Chesapeake Bay's healthy watersheds. Better water quality means swimmable, fishable waters for watershed residents and visitors. Conserved lands preserve the region's cultural heritage, agricultural viability, military readiness and nature-based capacity for pollution prevention and reduction. Increased public access to the Bay and its tributaries inspires people to care for critical landscapes and honor the region's heritage and culture. Healthy fish and shellfish populations support a vibrant economy for a spectrum of related industries.

As the signatories identify new opportunities and concerns, Goals, Outcomes or Targets may be adopted or modified. Any changes or additions to Goals will be approved by the Chesapeake Executive Council. The Principals' Staff Committee will approve changes or additions to Outcomes and Targets. Proposed changes to Goals, Outcomes and Targets, or the addition of new ones, will be open for public input before being finalized. Final changes or additions, and progress toward meeting Outcomes and their Targets, will be made publicly available.

## The Four Interconnected Goals of Watershed Restoration

*Mummichogs thrive in Maryland's Severn River Sanctuary. Underwater grasses are the foundation of the Chesapeake Bay food web, supporting a range of forage species and predators.*

# Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife

*The fisheries and wildlife of the Chesapeake Bay watershed are the backbone of the region's ecology, economy and heritage. However, impaired water quality, invasive species and habitat loss place pressure on fish and wildlife populations across the region. Our increasing use of natural resources can fragment and degrade the habitats on which they depend. Maintaining sustainable fisheries and restoring habitat for native and migratory species, while adapting to the challenges of changing environmental conditions, will support a strong economy, recreation and a resilient ecosystem.*

## Goal

*Protect, restore and sustain fisheries and wildlife, as well as the network of land and water habitats they depend on, to promote a balanced and resilient ecosystem and support local economies and recreational opportunities.*

## Outcomes

### Blue Crabs

Achieve a sustainable Bay-wide blue crab fishery through cross-jurisdictional coordination that supports healthy blue crab populations and thriving fish communities.

- Maintain blue crab abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the most recent benchmark status assessment.
- Achieve cross-jurisdictional coordination by annually evaluating and communicating blue crab population status to resource managers and the public through the Blue Crab Advisory Report.

### Brook Trout

Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay watershed by increasing occupancy, abundance and resilience to changing environmental conditions.

- By 2040, increase brook trout occupancy by 1.5% (233 miles) in watersheds supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds.
- By 2040, increase abundance at 10 long-term monitoring sites.
- By 2040, reduce identified threats by 15% to increase brook trout resilience in watersheds supporting healthy populations.

*Restoring headwater streams in places like Pendleton County, West Virginia, expands cold-water habitat for brook trout.*

## Fish Habitat

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and nontidal areas for key species through focused water quality conservation and restoration improvements informed by assessments of habitat and fisheries information.

- Improve the quantity and quality of tidal shallow water fish habitat above baseline conditions as determined by a Bay-wide assessment of fish habitat conditions completed in 2026.
- Increase the consideration of forage species in fishery management decision-making for key predators by developing annual reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.
- Improve the quality of nontidal fish habitat by continuing to assess the overall condition and suitability in the watershed to support healthy communities and inform effective restoration, conservation and management actions.
- By 2040, improve 270 stream miles of waters impaired by acid mine drainage to continually increase available habitat supporting fish populations.
- Develop comprehensive freshwater mussel conservation plans for 10 tributaries and implement key recommendations from at least five of these plans by 2040.

*Blue crabs support commercial and recreational fisheries and are managed across state lines.*

*The oyster aquaculture industry supports local economies and contributes to clean water.*

## Fish Passage

Improve habitat and water quality while creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms by removing barriers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams.

- Restore passage and connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years.

## Oysters

Increase ecosystem benefits from oysters through reef habitat restoration, sustainable harvest and aquaculture.

- By 2040, restore or conserve at least 2,000 additional acres of oyster reef habitat concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas to provide ecosystem service benefits.
- Maintain sustainable oyster abundance through oyster fisheries and aquaculture practices.
- Maintain reefs established under the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to achieve restoration success metrics.



## Stream Health

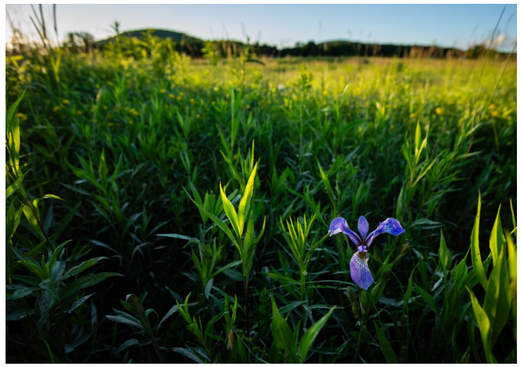
Improve and protect local stream health and function, including their living resources and ecosystem services throughout the watershed, using the best available science to inform land management, planning and conservation.

- Improve the health and the ecological integrity of at least an additional 4,340 (approximately 3%) nontidal stream miles every six years.

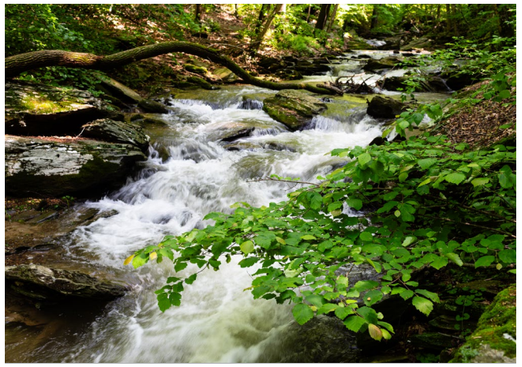
## Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,600 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay.

- Measure progress against the following targets for each salinity zone:
  - Tidal Fresh: 21,700 acres.
  - Low Salinity: 13,100 acres.
  - Medium Salinity: 126,000 acres.
  - High Salinity: 35,800 acres.
- Measure progress toward this Outcome against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030, 95,000 acres by 2035 and 100,000 acres by 2040.



*A wetland preserve in upstate New York connects visitors with wildlife and native plants.*



*Climbers Run flows through Pennsylvania to join the Susquehanna River.*

## Wetlands

Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, and provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and other valuable benefits to people.

- Restore or create at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of tidal wetlands by 2040, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds and represent healthy wetlands across the watershed.
- Restore or create at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of nontidal wetlands by 2040, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds and represent healthy wetlands across the watershed.

*The Susquehanna River flows through New York and Pennsylvania to deliver half of the Chesapeake Bay's fresh water near Havre de Grace, Maryland.*

# Clean Water

*Clean water is the foundation of healthy fisheries, habitats, farmlands 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. Changes in the landscape and environmental conditions may exacerbate these impacts. 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. These actions support sustainable economies that depend on a healthy Bay and watershed.*



## Goal

*Reduce pollutants entering the Bay and its rivers to achieve the water quality necessary to support aquatic life and wildlife, and support human health.*

## Outcomes

### Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorous & Sediment

Implement and maintain practices and controls to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. These reductions are necessary to achieve the applicable water quality standards, as described in the Bay TMDL. Those water quality standards support living resources and protect human health, as required by the Clean Water Act.

- Through 2030, signatories will continue to accelerate completion of all interim water quality planning targets through implementation of Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans, two-year milestone commitments and other innovative strategies to achieve and maintain reduced levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment.
- By December 31, 2030, revise the planning targets approved by the Principals' Staff Committee for nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment, incorporating the latest watershed modeling, monitoring data and research findings, and develop new or amended Watershed Implementation Plans to meet the updated targets by 2040.
- Demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment through multiple lines of evidence, including modeling and monitoring data.

### Toxic & Emerging Contaminants

Reduce the amount and effect of toxic contaminants, such as PCBs, plastics, mercury and PFAS, on the waters, lands, fisheries, wildlife and communities of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through an increased understanding of their impacts and mitigation options.

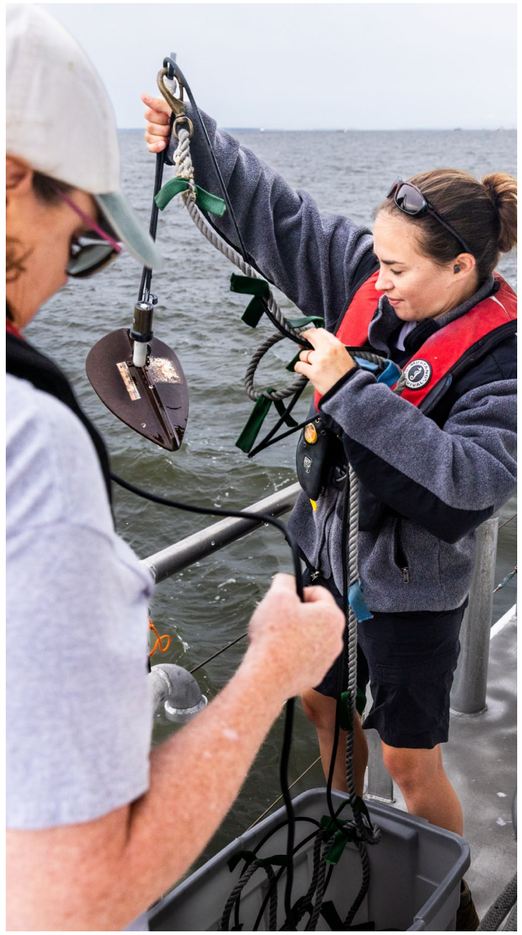
- Promote information sharing between researchers, program managers and policymakers on the lessons learned, best practices and most up-to-date science, policy and communications around the toxic contaminants impacting the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

*Students paddle on the Anacostia River, where partners are working to clean up contaminants.*

## Water Quality, Standards Attainment & Monitoring

Measure changing water quality conditions by maintaining monitoring networks and tracking our collective progress toward achieving clean water throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

- Maintain full core monitoring network operations (i.e., nontidal water quality, SAV, tidal water quality, benthic and community science) annually to support analysis and communication of water quality loads, trends and criteria attainment.
- Develop and expand partnership-approved approaches for assessing whether water quality criteria are being met for all designated uses. For dissolved oxygen criteria, establish an approved method by 2028 and apply the method for data analysis and reporting by the end of 2030.
- Maintain or exceed the rate of improvement in the water quality standards attainment indicator relative to the 1985-2022 baseline.
- Analyze and report status/loads, trends and factors affecting those trends for nontidal and tidal water quality.



*Monitoring water quality in the Bay and its tributaries allows us to observe environmental changes, track the progress of our restoration efforts and improve our understanding of the natural world. Our monitoring program is a cooperative effort by federal agencies, watershed jurisdictions, academic institutions and local partners. Left, Kerry Maguire of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources prepares to drop a monitoring instrument into the Bay. Right, Dr. Les Hasbargen, a professor at SUNY Oneonta, examines invertebrates at a monitoring site on Butternut Creek in Otsego County, New York.*



*Conserved lands like Pennsylvania's Pinchot State Forest protect waterways while providing recreational opportunities like hunting and fishing.*

# Healthy Landscapes

*The well-being of the Chesapeake Bay depends on the health of the lands that make up its watershed. As communities within the region continue to grow, the demand for land and resources can put our waters and habitats at risk. Encouraging sound land use management and conservation of areas with ecological, historic and cultural value can reduce or prevent pollution, maintain healthy ecosystems and ensure the health of forests, farms and open spaces, all while supporting growing economies and sustainable food production. These cost-effective strategies will help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions and ensure clean water for future generations.*

# Goal

*Conserve, protect, restore and enhance landscapes of ecological, economic, recreational and cultural value to improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and increase resilience.*

# Outcomes

## Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions

Increase the capacity for pursuing solutions, including those that are nature-based, to improve planning and responses to changing conditions while balancing long-term resiliency of watershed communities, economies and ecosystems.

- By 2040, support at least seven sub-watershed areas with knowledge-sharing and technical assistance to identify adaptation options with a preference for nature-based solutions. These solutions include restoration and protection projects that will help address risks to people, infrastructure and habitats from changes in temperature, precipitation and landscapes.
- By 2040, inform and lead to an increase in the implementation of the identified adaptation options that prioritize and integrate nature-based solutions in the above sub-watershed areas.

*The city of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, uses rain gardens to calm traffic and manage stormwater. Nature-based stormwater solutions can reduce pollution and make cities more sustainable.*

## Healthy Forests & Trees

Conserve, manage and restore forests and tree cover to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat and people throughout the watershed, with a particular focus on riparian areas and communities.

- Conserve tree canopy within communities by reducing the rate of loss of existing canopy and planting and maintaining 45,000 acres of trees by 2040 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long-term.
- Conserve riparian forest by reducing the rate of loss of existing buffers and planting and maintaining 7,500 acres of buffers annually to achieve no less than 71.5% riparian forest cover by 2040 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long-term.
- Achieve a net gain in forests over the long-term by reducing the rate of forest conversion to other land uses by 33%, permanently protecting a total of 9 million acres of forested land, and planting, maintaining and managing 202,000 acres of new forests by 2040.

## Land Use Planning & Decision Support

Develop and disseminate relevant and actionable land use information in consultation with local governments, to organizations and communities involved in local and regional land use planning. This information should include past, present and future conditions, as well as the potential environmental and socioeconomic consequences of changing conditions.

- Develop at least five use cases annually, informed by and provided at the county, watershed or municipal scale to inform land use planning and decisions and maintain the ecological integrity of watersheds supporting good stream health. Use cases can include watershed protection, aquatic connectivity, stormwater, tree canopy, agricultural preservation or redevelopment.
- Highlight at least two widely applicable land use cases annually to showcase best practices and share this information with local governments and partners through diverse communications products.

## Protected Lands

Permanently protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, bolster local economies, honor cultural heritage and protect the mission and resilience of military installations.

- By 2040, permanently protect at least an additional 2 million acres of land above the 2025 baseline of 9.3 million acres. The 2 million acres will include specific targets for: riparian forests; wetlands (including migration corridors); natural areas supporting healthy streams; agricultural lands; tribal homelands; and urban and community greenspace.

*Visitors to Maryland's Patapsco Valley State Park enjoy the swimmable waters of the Patapsco River.*

# Engaged Communities

*The long-term success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration and conservation effort depends on individuals and communities throughout the watershed understanding their connection to the local environment and making choices that support its health in the face of changing environmental conditions. Stewardship begins with facilitating meaningful engagement, increasing access to outdoor recreation, providing learning opportunities to students, adults and job seekers, and empowering local decision-makers to support conservation actions.*



## Goal

*Engage and grow a community of local stewards and leaders through education, recreation and professional opportunities to ensure the long-term success of restoration and conservation efforts.*

## Outcomes

### Local Government Leadership

Increase knowledge and support the capacity of local government leaders in decision-making, such as land-use planning, to implement local actions that advance the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

- Engage directly (e.g., roundtable discussions) with at least 400 local government leaders annually.
- Engage indirectly (e.g., newsletters) with at least 4,000 local government leaders annually.

### Public Access

Create new and enhance existing public access sites in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through a combination of actions aimed at improving recreational opportunities and accessibility while addressing barriers to access by increasing the number, quality and geographic distribution of sites.

- By 2040, add at least 100 new sites providing access to natural lands and waters with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for recreation where feasible.
- By 2040, improve at least 100 of the 1,451 existing public water access sites by upgrading or maintaining site grounds and structures, and expanding the range of active and passive recreation opportunities such as paddling, boating, trails, courts, piers, wildlife viewing and picnic areas.
- By 2040, improve at least 40 of the existing public water access sites by adding Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) accessible features.
- Increase access to existing urban and community greenspaces identified in the protected lands dataset.

### School District Environmental Literacy Planning

Increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools.

- By 2040, reach all jurisdictional targets for the number of public school districts that are well prepared to deliver a comprehensive and system-wide approach to environmental literacy.

## Stewardship

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.

## Student Environmental Literacy Experiences

Increase the number of students who participate in inquiry-based environmental literacy instruction with the aim of each student receiving at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience, or MWEE, in elementary, middle and high school.

- By 2040, reach jurisdictional targets to result in at least 75% of public school students being enrolled in a school district that offers a MWEE for all students.

*Children participate in an educational program in Washington, D.C. Bringing students outdoors fosters connections to the natural world and plants the seeds of environmental stewardship.*

## Workforce

Increase the ability of all job seekers in the watershed to understand, participate and succeed in career pathways that positively support the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- By 2040, inform and grow implementation of strategies that help students, educators and job seekers become aware of and understand environmental careers, and the in-demand skills and pathways to access these opportunities.
- By 2040, increase the number of postsecondary institutions and training providers offering industry-recognized credentials that support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.
- By 2040, engage employers to support greater hiring and retention of workers trained in fields necessary to support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.



# Management Strategies

Within 18 months of revising the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the Chesapeake Bay Program will update or develop Management Strategies for the Outcomes and their Targets that support the Goals of this *Watershed Agreement*. These strategies shall outline the means for accomplishing each Outcome and its Targets as well as monitoring, assessing and reporting progress and coordinating actions among partners and stakeholders as necessary. Addressing and accounting for changing environmental conditions is critical to successfully managing to achieve Outcomes and shall be an explicit consideration in preparing these strategies. Management Strategies shall also describe how signatories, other state and federal agencies, local governments, Indigenous representatives, nonprofit and private partners are engaged; where actions, tools, financial support and technical assistance are needed to empower local governments and others to do their part; and what steps are necessary to facilitate greater participation in achieving the Outcome.

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. Management Strategies, which are aimed at implementing actions to achieve Outcomes, shall identify participating signatories and other stakeholders, including local governments and nonprofit organizations, and will be implemented in six-year periods.

The signatories and other partners shall thereafter update and/or modify such commitments every six years. The Chesapeake Bay Program will report progress to the public and update work plans on a shorter-term basis for each Outcome in accordance with adaptive management. Specific Management Strategies will be updated in consultation with stakeholders, organizations and other agencies, and will include a period for public input and review prior to final adoption.

Management Strategies may address multiple Outcomes if deemed appropriate. The Chesapeake Bay Program will adopt a six-year cycle to re-evaluate and update strategies as necessary, with attention to changing environmental and economic conditions. Partners may identify policy changes to address these conditions and minimize obstacles to achieve the Outcomes.

Stakeholder input will be incorporated into the development and reevaluation of each of the strategies. The Chesapeake Bay Program will continue to make these strategies and reports on progress available to the public in a transparent manner on its websites and through publicly accessible partnership meetings.

Management Strategies will be submitted to the partnership's leadership for review. If the leadership determines that any strategy or plan developed prior to the revision of this *Watershed Agreement* meets the requirements of a Management Strategy as defined above, no new strategy needs to be developed.

# Affirmation & Signatories

As Chesapeake Bay Program partners, we recognize the need to accelerate implementation of actions necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes outlined in this document and to realize our shared Vision of a healthy and vibrant Chesapeake Bay watershed.

As Chesapeake Bay Program partners, we acknowledge that this *Watershed Agreement* is voluntary and subject to the availability of appropriated funds. This *Watershed Agreement* is not a contract or an assistance agreement. We also understand that this *Watershed Agreement* does not preempt, supersede or override any other law or regulation applicable to each signatory.

We, the undersigned members of the Chesapeake Executive Council, reaffirm our commitment to support the Goals of this *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and to work cooperatively in its implementation. We agree to work both independently and collaboratively toward the Goals and Outcomes of this *Watershed Agreement* and to implement specific Management Strategies to achieve them. Everyone in this great watershed is invited to join with the partnership, uniting as a region and embracing the actions that will lead to success.

On December 2, 2025, the Chesapeake Executive Council approved significant modifications to this *Watershed Agreement*. As these modifications revise the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* rather than create a new one, the signatures from June 16, 2014, still stand as approvals for this document.



For the Chesapeake Bay Commission

For the State of Delaware

For the District of Columbia

For the State of Maryland

For the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

For the State of New York

For the Commonwealth of Virginia

For the State of West Virginia

For the United States of America

On behalf of the Federal Government and the Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Commerce
- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Department of Transportation

**Chesapeake Bay Program**

*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*