

Federal Commitment to Implement the *Chesapeake Executive Council Directive No. 21-1 Collective Action for Climate Change*

April 22, 2022



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

In alignment with mission, applicable law and budget constraints, the U.S. federal government will work together to implement the *Chesapeake Executive Council Directive No. 21-1 Collective Action for Climate Change*, recognizing that urgent attention is needed to confront the challenges that a changing climate poses to the Chesapeake Bay region. The Directive emphasizes the importance of the "...resiliency of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, including its living resources, habitats, public infrastructure and communities, to withstand adverse impacts from changing environmental and climate conditions." This landmark directive is consistent with Executive Order 14008 issued by President Biden in January 2021 committing the federal government to tackle the climate crisis, and with Executive Order 13508, under which federal agencies have reaffirmed their longstanding and shared commitment to protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

This collective Commitment to Implement by federal agencies reflects our resolve to minimize the adverse effects of climate change on the Chesapeake Bay watershed and its habitats, and to do our part, as appropriate to our missions, to implement the Directive. Leaders of our agencies balance near and long-term priorities to reflect the ever-increasing need to implement the Directive while partnering with state and local governments, supporting urban, and underserved communities, protecting farms, forests, wildlife and habitats, and restoring and protecting water quality and living resources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The federal agencies in the Chesapeake Bay Program will collectively identify opportunities to carry out the four major goals of the Directive: to address the threats of climate change in all aspects of the partnership's work; prioritize communities, working lands, and most vulnerable habitats; apply the best scientific, modeling, monitoring and planning capabilities; and connect restoration outcomes with emerging opportunities.

Examples of the types of projects for Directive goals include enhanced technical assistance for comprehensive planning to mitigate effects of tidal wetlands, oyster reefs and submerged aquatic vegetation, soil health conservation, climate change on multiple Chesapeake Bay Program priorities including fisheries, habitat, water quality, healthy watersheds, and stewardship. Agencies will advance efforts aimed at accelerating projects to reduce flooding in communities, enhancing carbon sequestration and soil health on working lands, increasing the resiliency of habitats such as projects for living shorelines and riparian buffers, and enhancing science to forecast the effects of climate and land change to help target climate adaptation efforts. The federal agencies will look to support projects to address water-quality and habitat restoration that can take advantage of new opportunities in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and other federal appropriations.

In all these efforts, the federal departments and agencies will seek to advance environmental justice principles and commit to an ongoing partnership with tribes and underserved communities to build their adaptive capacity and address their adaptation-related priorities. As appropriate to agency missions, we will work to prioritize projects and allocate funding that promote wildlife habitat, species diversity, and climate resiliency in areas that benefit underserved communities.

Environmental Protection Agency

- Leverage the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's historic funding to enhance ecosystem and community resilience in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, especially in communities which are underserved and disproportionately at risk from climate change.
- Enhance understanding of Best Management Practice (BMP) responses to climate change conditions and support implementation of climate adapted BMPs, including new and emerging BMPs.
- Identify actions in Climate Adaptation Implementation Plans that align with Directive goals; encourage collaboration to enhance outcomes.

Department of Defense

- Report on Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI), REPI Challenge, and Sentinel Landscape Projects that include climate resilience co-benefits.
- Provide a tally of dollars spent and a list of water quality best management practice project types implemented that provide climate resilience co-benefits.
- Report on the number and percentage of installations who have updated their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans to address climate change.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Work with partners to conduct climate focused summer teacher workshops, develop online course that models use of Climate data tools, and support the development and implementation of a climate education needs assessment for the region
- Coordinate the Chesapeake Bay Program Climate Resiliency Workgroup with an emphasis on connecting partners to pursue nature-based climate resilience projects (e.g., coastal wetland restoration).
- Continue place-based initiatives in the Choptank complex and Middle Peninsula to identify and support oyster and nearshore habitat restoration to enhance ecological and community resilience.
- Continue operating the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy system to include temperature, salinity, hypoxia and fish telemetry observations.
- Provide research and synthesis quantifying the impact of climate change drivers on fish and habitat status and trends to support ecosystem-based fishery management.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

- With our partners, continue to implement projects consistent with the Final Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Plan (January 2021).
- Through Engineering with Nature, explore opportunities to implement natural and nature-based features to enhance climate resiliency.
- Maximize use of technical assistance programs such as Planning Assistance to States, Floodplain Management Services, National Hurricane Program and Silver Jackets.
- Collaborate with and support communities, installations, other federal and state agencies, and non-governmental organizations to leverage resources and expertise to proactively address the impacts of climate change.

U.S. Department of Agriculture - National Resources Conservation Service

- Invest in climate smart commodities, expanding markets, and strengthening rural America by providing funding to partners through the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation for pilot projects to provide incentives to producers and landowners to: implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands; Measure/quantify, monitor and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices; and develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.
- Invest millions of dollars in the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and forestry conservation practices and conservation activities in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Continue to invest millions of dollars in locally driven, public-private partnerships to mitigate climate change and address other natural resources challenges in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

U.S. Geological Survey

- Enhance monitoring of relative sea-level rise, through improved measurements of land subsidence and rising waters in coastal areas.
- Conduct monitoring during extreme storm events of coastal inundation and inland flooding.
- Develop and provide tools forecasting vulnerability and likelihood of change to coastal areas from sea-level rise.
- Forecast how coastal marshes may migrate in response to on sea-level rise, sediment supply, and nearshore characteristics.
- Aggregate partnership water-temperature data across nontidal portions of the watershed and analyze data to describe status and trends in water temperature.
- Assess the potential effects of climate and land change on freshwater streams and fish populations.
- Develop web-based hub of existing decision tools so climate change can be better considered for actions to improve water quality, restore habitats, and conserving lands.
- Engage stakeholders to understand and apply findings to increase resiliency of restoration and conservation actions to climate change.

National Park Service

- Conduct Climate Vulnerability Assessments of all the coastal park sites of the Chesapeake Bay region which will provide recommendations for climate resiliency including adaptation, managed retreat, and protect-in-place decisions. The NPS has also started a dialogue with the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom members about partner sites and impacts from climate change.
- Provide technical and financial support to convene and facilitate the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP), a large landscape collaborative of government, Tribal and nonprofit partners, collectively working to conserve 30 percent of the watershed by 2030 through prioritized and targeted land conservation. The Chesapeake Conservation Partnership is focused on the nexus of conservation, equity, community resilience, and

ecosystem restoration. A new effort of the CCP called *Chesapeake Conservation Ready* will strive to collectively advance land conservation priorities within the watershed (federal and non-federal lands) and coordinate across multiple funding sources (Federal, state, local, private).

- Develop a Chesapeake Gateway Communities program to collaborate and partner with underserved Bay communities and local organizations to support and promote local resilience and community sustainability, equitable access, welcoming experiences, inclusive storytelling, community stewardship, and tourism and economic benefits tied with sectors closely linked with Chesapeake heritage, such as indigenous, handcrafted, agriculture and maritime activities.
- Continue to provide technical and financial assistance to develop and utilize Indigenous Cultural Landscape Studies in partnership and consultation with Tribal partners across the Chesapeake region so that the natural and cultural resources that supported American Indian lifeways and settlements and uniquely Indigenous perspectives can be understood and applied in land-management and climate resiliency decisions.
- Ensure consistent and meaningful Tribal consultation by establishing two permanent positions working across the Chesapeake watershed to serve as Tribal liaison.
- Utilize the Public Land Corps authority that provides youth under 30 years old and veterans under 35 years old with pathways to careers in conservation by offering direct hiring authority for two years following internships.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Identify opportunities for restoration and protection projects that enhance ecosystem and community resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change on the Chesapeake Bay, giving particular attention to projects that augment wetlands and forest buffers.
- Build the resiliency of vulnerable ecosystems and help fish, plants, and wildlife adjust to the impacts of climate change, by investing in cutting-edge science that will guide conservation, including land and species management, and habitat restoration.
- Review best management practices and maintenance of stormwater and nonpoint source management on Refuge lands throughout the Chesapeake Bay to account for the impacts of climate change while protecting fish and wildlife habitats.
- Provide support to the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, a landscape collaborative of Federal, State and local government, Tribal, and nonprofit partners, collectively working to conserve 30 percent of the watershed by 2030 through prioritized and targeted land conservation.
- Lead a pilot study called Targeted Outreach for Green Infrastructure to prioritize natural resources, wildlife habitats, and public infrastructure needs in underserved communities at risk due to climate change. Two cities Cambridge, MD and Williamsport, PA were chosen as pilot cities. In addition, two Tribal communities were chosen for this pilot.
- Continue to work with the Baltimore Rivers to Harbor Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, and the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition to build resiliency of vulnerable ecosystems and populations, help communities and wildlife adjust to the impacts of climate change. The Service will look for opportunities to expand and repeat the success of these initiatives in other cities throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

- Work with underserved communities to identify vacant lots to be restored as pollinator and tree canopy habitat, for community gardens in food deserts, and to offset urban heat island effects in these communities.
- Continue to work with Upper Mattaponi, the Mattaponi, and the Pamunkey tribes on developing climate resistant and sustainable communities on Tribal lands.
- Focus environmental literacy on understanding the impacts of climate change, promoting climate change topics into formal and nonformal K-12 education and encouraging environmental stewardship throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.