



Chesapeake Executive Council

Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Tribes as a Formal and Enduring Partner in the Chesapeake Bay Program

Whereas Indigenous knowledge and guardianship are vital to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed;

Therefore, acknowledging the sovereignty of the federally recognized tribal nations within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this Chesapeake Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee to work with those federally recognized tribal nations to develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, recognizing that the partnership operates under a "Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program." This work shall be done in alignment with current efforts to fulfill the "Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course Beyond 2025," Item #2.

In developing recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee shall direct research into relevant governance matters, including but not limited to partner responsibilities and expectations, pathways for designating and identifying partner representatives, and formal channels for partnership, including signature on the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

As part of its recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee may prepare a draft memorandum of understanding with the federally recognized tribes within the watershed outlining Chesapeake Bay Program partner expectations and commitments, recognizing budgetary and resource needs and constraints.

Furthermore, the Principals' Staff Committee shall explore opportunities for advancing and respecting Indigenous guardianship and Indigenous knowledge within watershed restoration planning and implementation.