

DATE:

Ms. Kathy Boomer, Chair
CBP Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
c/o Meg Cole, STAC Coordinator
Chesapeake Research Consortium, Inc.
645 Contees Wharf Road, Edgewater, MD 21037

Dear Chair Boomer:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC), I would like to thank you and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) members for your continued commitment and service to the partnership as the liaison between the scientific community and the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). Thank you also for your thoughtful recommendations to the EC (dated September 23, 2022). We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your recommendations.

The partnership is at a critical time as we reflect on our progress toward our 2025 goals and outcomes and as we contemplate the challenges ahead. We agree with your assessment that the Chesapeake Bay system's response continues to lag significantly more than expected and appreciate your ongoing exploration of the underlying causes and information gaps that could limit our capacity to meet the commitments established in the 2014 Watershed Agreement. We eagerly await your the final "Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response" (CESR) report. It will be a valuable tool as we begin our work to implement the EC's Chesapeake Executive Council's directive to recommend a critical path forward for the partnership that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement leading up to and beyond 2025.

In response to the ~~Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee's~~ STAC recommendations, we offer the following responses:

- *STAC Recommendation: "Developing more effective outreach strategies is essential to increasing stakeholder willingness and capacity to implement priority BMPs across diverse communities, including the agricultural and urban sectors."*
 - **Partnership response:** The partnership MB agrees that more effective outreach strategies are critical to our success and commits to having a discussion at the Water Quality goal team. The CBP is encouraging and enabling the engagement of diverse communities through the creation of the Environmental Justice and Equity Dashboard. This web application integrates data from multiple sources to convey demographic, socioeconomic, environmental, and programmatic topics connected to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Chesapeake specific Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) initiatives and may be used to target specific communities for best management practice (BMP) implementation.

Commented [WJ1]: Does the Management Board as a whole agree with this statement?

Commented [BG2R1]: For MB response.

Commented [WJ3]: Is it the partnership or the Management Board?

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- *STAC Recommendation: “Target BMP implementation more strategically to those geographic areas that impose disproportionate impacts on Bay resources to achieve desired outcomes.”*

- **Partnership response:** Since 2010, the **Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)** allocation rules determined by the partnership have focused expected nutrient and sediment reductions in states and basins having the most impact. Using current understanding, EPA has directed funding toward the Most Effective Basins. ~~It is our hope that~~ The upcoming Phase 7 watershed model development may increase the partnership’s ability to target at an even finer scale with improved results. ~~more consequential scale.~~

Commented [WJ5]: What does “more consequential” mean in this context? Target what?

Commented [BG6R5]: Revised.

- *STAC Recommendation: “Develop a process-based trade-off analysis framework considering all outcomes to identify the most cost-effective opportunities for advancing the Bay Program’s multiple goals under changing climate conditions (e.g., addressing water quality and habitat concerns while building resiliency to extreme weather events).”*

- **Partnership response:** The partnership agrees that the efficient use of management funds requires that practices that benefit multiple outcomes be emphasized. While a fully integrated process-based model could be a goal to work toward, the **CBP** has taken the first steps in enumerating co-benefits of management practices and spatially identified areas of concern to multiple outcomes through its cross-**Goal Implementation Team GIT**-mapping effort (**Cross-GIT Mapping Project**. chesapeakebay.net).

Commented [WJ7]: “CBP” and “partnership” are being used interchangeably in this letter. I recommend picking one and using it throughout.

Commented [BG6R7]: We use both regularly.

- *STAC Recommendation: “Consider soil health as an integrative indicator of healthy watersheds to elevate key stakeholder concerns and highlight opportunities to provide on-site as well as downstream benefits associated with practice adoption.”*

- **Partnership response:** Soil health is a useful, integrative concept that can help the partnership make progress across several outcomes. Currently, soil health practices are being accounted for individually and independently of each other (for example, reporting on cover crops, residue management, pasture management, etc.). We look forward to working with STAC to develop appropriate definitions, metrics, and measurements of environmental effects.

Commented [WJ9]: I would recommend calling out that currently, soil health practices are being accounted for individually and independently of each other (cover crop, residue management, pasture management, etc.).

In addition, the partnership is establishing two task force groups to help implement the EC’s charge on 2025. One task force will focus on recommendations leading up to 2025, due to the EC by this fall and the other will focus on post-2025 recommendations, due to the EC by the end of 2024. We expect that sSoil health ~~will~~ may be added to the discussion topics for the “2025 and Beyond” group as an emerging issue when developing recommendations for the EC.

Commented [WJ10]: Recommend using “may” as the MB will need to determine the charge and scope of the “2025 and Beyond” group.

Commented [WJ11]: Is this on the docket for the “2025 and Beyond” charge? I thought that the charge and scope still needed to be developed.

Commented [BG12R11]: The agenda is still under development, but soil health may be considered.

- *STAC Recommendation: “Advance a watershed planning framework focused on slowing down high impact water flows using riparian buffers, floodplains, and coastal and non-coastal wetlands to mitigate decades of overlooked human impacts and addressing multiple CBP goals.”*

- Partnership response: While these practices are credited for their nutrient and sediment effectiveness in the TMDL, the CBP has not quantified their importance to other goals and outcomes. In the near term, the partnership has emphasized the qualitative importance of riparian forest buffers and wetlands to other outcomes such as climate resiliency and habitat which factored into the partners' decision to prioritize activities to accelerate progress in achieving these outcomes. Better articulation of their benefits may help to increase their presence in planning and implementation.
- *STAC Recommendation: "Increase partnership focus on nearshore environments to better engage stakeholders and advance restoration (especially in areas where water conditions are more sensitive to land management)."*
 - Partnership response: While the partnership agrees with the recommendation, producing sufficient management-relevant science and modeling in the near-shore area has been a consistent challenge throughout the CBP's history. With the assistance of STAC, the partnership is working on better science and modeling in these areas which may enable decision-making applicable to nearshore environments this decade.
- *STAC Recommendation: "Encourage explicit efforts to improve connections among the jurisdictions, the Goal Implementation Teams, and the Partnership's science community to help advance a better understanding of how the Bay system will respond to CBP management under changing conditions."*
 - Partnership response: The CBP will continue, in cooperation with STAC, to refine CBP processes. Goal Implementation Teams will continue, through the adaptive management cycle initiated by STAC, to be forums for the jurisdictions to work together with scientists on these issues. The CBP will continue to coordinate ~~to~~ with STAC to optimize the communication of management objectives and relevant science.
- *STAC Recommendation: "Use the 2025 milestones to reevaluate and refine CBP governance to better coordinate BMP implementation strategies and address emerging challenges."*
 - Partnership response: The PSC decided at its March 3, 2022 meeting to separate the 2025 milestone process from the incorporation of Phase 7 modeling information and 2035 climate change. New partnership decisions are now expected in 2027 as the partnership works through its issues with CAST. As noted above, the partnership is establishing a high-level task force to envision the future of the partnership as we move past 2025. STAC's Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response document will be an important component of this conversation.—
- *STAC Recommendation: "Invest in strengthening and diversifying a technical and construction workforce that can help communities across the Bay watershed to advance our collective goals (recognizing that restoring the Bay and impaired wetlands and*

Commented [WJ13]: Same comment as above – does the "partnership" agree with this recommendation?

Commented [BG14]: CBC comment: We would recommend additional clarity regarding the sentence "New partnership decisions are now expected in 2027" to identify what partnership decisions are being referenced."

waterways, enhancing climate resiliency, and supporting regenerative agriculture have outpaced technical capacity to invest resources effectively.”

- **Partnership response:** The federal, state, local, and non-governmental partners of the CBP have a long and consistent history of funding projects. Rules that incentivize diversity of recipients are being strengthened. Recent additional funding will aid in incentivizing labor supply increases.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to helping guide the partnership in its efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. We look forward to continuing the dialogue around these important issues and to working with you in the coming months. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any suggestions that might help address these challenging issues.

Sincerely,

Kandis Boyd, Ph.D.
Management Board Chair
Chesapeake Bay Program

Cc: [Chesapeake Executive Council Members](#)
[Principals' Staff Committee Members](#)
[Management Board Members](#)

Commented [BG15]: CBC comment: “STAC’s recommendation raises a workforce-specific concern, separate from project funding, that would benefit from more information about the new Workforce Action Team, as detailed in the draft response to LGAC. We would recommend sharing more about the Team’s charge and planned next steps.”

Commented [BG16R15]: Additional information should be available later this summer.

Commented [WJ17]: Include who will be cc’d.

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