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Chesapeake Executive Council Celebrates 40 Years of Bay Partnership

Council elects Maryland Governor to guide Chesapeake Bay Program into the next phase of watershed restoration

Washington, D.C.—Maryland Governor Wes Moore was elected chair by members of the Chesapeake Executive Council today when they gathered at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. for their annual meeting. Governor Moore takes over leadership of the federal-state Chesapeake Bay Program partnership from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan, who has led the Council for the past two years.

“I’m honored and deeply humbled to serve as the Chair of the Chesapeake Executive Council,” said Maryland Governor Wes Moore. “The Chesapeake Bay is part of who we are as Marylanders—and plays a vital role in our state’s environment and economy. Maryland is ready to take the lead on this important work, and we know we won’t be working alone. I am optimistic that if we take shared responsibility, hold each other accountable and follow the science—we can achieve our vision of a cleaner, healthier Bay for all.”

Today’s meeting presented the unique opportunity to celebrate the Bay Program’s [40th anniversary](#), while solidifying the foundation in which to reach 2025—the target date by which many of the outcomes under the current [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#) strive to be achieved.

Established 40 years ago following the signing of the first *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, the [Chesapeake Executive Council](#) is responsible for guiding the policy agenda and conservation and restoration goals for the [Chesapeake Bay Program](#), a regional watershed partnership. Members include the governors of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the chair of the tri-state legislative Chesapeake Bay Commission and the administrator of the EPA on behalf of the federal government.

In June 2014, the Executive Council signed the *Watershed Agreement*, consisting of 10 goals and 31 outcomes, with the vision of fostering an environmentally and economically sustainable watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged residents and stakeholders.

At their 2022 annual meeting, the Council directed the Bay Program’s Principals’ Staff Committee with [recommending a critical path forward](#) that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*. A steering committee representing each watershed jurisdiction, as well as advisory committee members and non-profit partners was formed in early 2023 to work with subject matter experts in assessing the attainment of each of the 31 outcomes. Additionally, the steering committee and subject matter experts identified new science and restoration strategies, as well as emerging issues and changing conditions in the watershed (e.g., climate change) that will impact the work of the partnership moving forward.

The result of this work was the Executive Council’s acceptance of [three overarching recommendations](#) that will be used to guide the partnership’s work until 2025. The Chesapeake Bay Program will now focus on the second part of the 2022 charge—continuing to address new advances in science and restoration while focusing on the future of Bay restoration. Recommendations for what the partnership will look like post-2025 will be presented to the Council at their 2024 meeting.

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“The Chesapeake Bay Commission has been a proud partner of the Bay Program from the beginning, helping to achieve consensus and lead action,” said Pennsylvania State Senator and Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair Scott Martin. “As a legislator, I know this work is not easy. The key is to stay focused on a common goal. In a watershed as diverse as the Chesapeake, we can all engage around local water quality. The partnership’s science, data, tools and funding empower local communities to improve their own rivers and streams, which in turn benefits the Bay downstream. I am excited about the next chapter as we work collaboratively to further enhance these resources.”

Prior to the meeting, the Executive Council participated in a tour, led by staff from the District of Columbia’s Department of Energy and the Environment, to view restoration activities that have taken place at the National Arboretum. The Arboretum is located within the Anacostia River watershed, which drains into the Chesapeake Bay. The Anacostia River is considered one of the nation’s great restoration success stories. Having suffered from years of industrial pollution and trash, the river has made incredible strides toward one day becoming swimmable and fishable thanks to partnerships, dedicated funding and community support. Executive Council members were able to witness firsthand how stream restoration projects, with support and buy-in from local communities, contributed to this remarkable recovery.

Each member of the Council provided remarks at the meeting and had the opportunity to hear reports from the Bay Program’s three advisory committees, who represent stakeholders, local governments and scientists from across the watershed.

“The Chesapeake Bay is more than just an ecological national treasure; it is an economic engine for the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond,” said outgoing Executive Council Chair Michael Regan, administrator of the EPA. “Under the Biden-Harris administration protecting and restoring the Bay has been a top priority, with historic investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and significant new partnerships to implement these unprecedented resources quickly and efficiently. With Governor Moore at the helm, EPA and all the partners of the Program are well-positioned for the next generation of conservation in the Chesapeake Bay.”