



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.



~~Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement~~

~~Beyond 2025 Revision DRAFT~~

Released for PUBLIC FEEDBACK

July 1—September 1, 2025

FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

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ABOUT REVISIONS TO THE AGREEMENT

Since the Chesapeake Bay Program's foundation in 1983, its partners have used written agreements to guide the restoration of the nation's largest estuary and its watershed. Setting goals and tracking progress holds partners accountable for their work, while updating agreements over time ensures that goals are aligned with the best available science to attain restoration success. In December 2024, the Chesapeake Executive Council directed the Principals' Staff Committee to revise the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and propose a simplified and streamlined structure and process for the Chesapeake Bay Program. While structure and process revisions are ongoing, the partnership has evaluated the *Watershed Agreement's* current goals and outcomes based on the latest policy, community needs, best available science, emerging threats and new opportunities. Working with the Principals' Staff Committee, Management Board and subject matter experts, the 10 goals and 31 outcomes of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* were consolidated, reduced, updated, removed, replaced or revised to create the proposed four goals and 21 outcomes presented in this document, the draft *Revised 2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC FEEDBACK PERIOD

From July 1–September 1, 2025, the public is invited to provide written feedback on the proposed updates to the *Revised 2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. You are encouraged to read the Frequently Asked Questions on the [Planning for 2025 and Beyond](#) website before submitting your feedback to comments@chesapeakebay.net.

When submitting feedback, you are encouraged to do the following:

- Feedback should be as specific as possible, detailing how you would like to see these sections, goals or outcomes revised.
- Please include the sections and page numbers of the *Watershed Agreement* that you are commenting on. For example, your feedback could be categorized as pertaining to the Vision, Preamble, Principles or a specific Outcome.
- You are encouraged to indicate the state (or D.C.) that you reside in when you submit your feedback so we may share it with your state's representatives to the partnership. If your comments are in reference to a particular state or D.C. and not the entire watershed or agreement, we ask that you indicate that in your feedback as well.
- You are **highly encouraged** to submit your feedback as early as possible and not wait until September 1.
- All feedback received will be posted on the Planning for 2025 and Beyond website, with comments from individuals shared anonymously, unless you specify otherwise. Feedback from organizations, agencies or businesses will be shared as it is received, with identifying information and affiliations.

- ~~• All feedback will be read, categorized and reviewed by a 12-person team representing the federal and state agencies and advisory committees that make up the Chesapeake Bay Program. A revised draft of the updated *Watershed Agreement* will be presented to the Management Board in October 2025.~~

FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

VISION

The Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable and resilient Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved and healthy working lands, a vibrant cultural heritage and a wide range of engaged individuals whose communities enjoy access to the waters and natural landscapes of the region.

PREAMBLE

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.

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 180,000 miles of streams, creeks and rivers holds 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, 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 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.

The 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 effort 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.

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. The 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 longstanding commitment to restoring, conserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

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 ~~living resources~~ ~~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.

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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:

~~The partnership will:~~

~~• Collaborate to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.~~

- ~~• Achieve Goals and Outcomes in a measurable and timely way and at the least possible cost to the public.~~
- ~~• Represent the interests of all communities throughout the watershed fairly and effectively.~~

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 and 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 **embrace** ~~engage~~ local governments and other local entities in watershed restoration, conservation and protection activities.
- ~~Operate with transparency in program decisions, policies, actions and reporting on progress to strengthen public trust and confidence in our efforts.~~

~~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.~~

- ~~Maintain and enhance a coordinated watershed-wide monitoring and research program to support decision-making, track progress and assess the effectiveness of management actions.~~
- Anticipate and respond to **changing** ~~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.
- ~~Adaptively manage at all levels of the partnership to foster continuous improvement informed by the best available science and strong working relationships.~~
- ~~Seek consensus across the partnership when making decisions.~~
- 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 ~~the~~ 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 ~~Integrate~~ 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 ~~into~~ in the partnership in a manner that appropriately considers their unique status as independent sovereign nations. ~~and as original stewards of the land.~~

~~Integrate social science holistically throughout the partnership to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management and decision-making.~~

- ~~• Facilitate outreach to and welcome participation by all communities regarding the partnership's activities, decisions and implementation of this Watershed Agreement.~~

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GOALS ~~&AND~~ OUTCOMES

The ~~commitments~~ Goals and Outcomes contained in this section are ~~the Goals and Outcomes that collective commitments made by~~ the signatories ~~will work on collectively~~ to advance 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 ~~related to each Goal are specific, time-bound, measurable targets~~ lay out benefits and results that directly contribute to the achievement of each Goal. Targets contribute to achieving that the Outcome and are as specific, measurable and time bound as possible. Targets are reflected as a bulleted list under each Outcome ~~Goal~~.

~~The~~ Details that articulate the actions necessary to achieve the Goals, Outcomes and Targets are laid out in Management Strategies, further described in the ~~next~~ last section of this *Watershed Agreement*; ~~articulate the actions necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes.~~ This work will require ~~effort~~ efforts from many people, including all levels of government, academic institutions, ~~nongovernmental~~ non-governmental 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. ~~Signatories will participate in achieving the Outcomes of this Watershed Agreement in the manner described in the "Management Strategies Development and Implementation" section.~~

While the Goals and Outcomes are described by separate topic areas, the signatories recognize that ~~they all aspects of the ecosystem are interrelated-connected and that these Goals and Outcomes support the health and the protection of the entire Bay watershed.~~ Improvements in habitat and water quality lead to healthier ~~living resources-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 Bay 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 fishing-related industries. ~~The signatories recognize that all aspects of the ecosystem are connected and that these Goals and Outcomes support the health and the protection of the entire Bay watershed-related industries.~~

As the signatories identify new opportunities and concerns, Goals ~~or~~, 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, ~~although significant changes or additions will be raised to the Executive Council for approval and Targets.~~ Proposed changes to Goals ~~and~~, Outcomes and Targets, or the addition of new ones, will be open for public input before being finalized. Final changes or additions ~~will be, and progress~~

~~DRAFT Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Revisions~~ ~~Public Feedback Release~~
~~toward meeting Outcomes and their Targets, will be made publicly available on the Chesapeake Bay~~
~~Program's website.~~

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THRIVING HABITAT, FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE GOAL

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. ~~Meanwhile, our~~ Our increasing use of ~~land and natural~~ resources can fragment and degrade the habitats ~~on which~~ they depend ~~on~~. 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 ~~balanced~~ resilient ecosystem.

GoalGOAL:

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.

Blue Crab SustainabilityCrabs Outcome

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

- ~~Continually maintain~~ Maintain blue crab abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the ~~2026~~most recent benchmark ~~stock~~status assessment.
- ~~Achieve~~ cross-jurisdictional coordination by ~~jointly~~annually evaluating and communicating ~~stock~~blue crab population status ~~annually to resource managers and the public~~ through the Blue Crab Advisory Report.

Brook Trout Outcome

~~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~~ and refining targets, as needed, ~~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.~~

Fish Habitat Outcome

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and nontidal areas for key species through the next stock-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 non-tidal 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.

Fish Passage Outcome

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 Outcome

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

- RestoreBy 2040, restore or conserve at least 1,8002,000 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 Outcome

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) Outcome

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. **Fish Habitat**

~~Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and non-tidal areas for key species through focused water quality, conservation and restoration improvements informed by a synthesis of fisheries science and habitat assessments.~~

- ~~• Continually improve the quantity and quality of shallow water fish habitat in tidal areas 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 annually developing reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.~~
- ~~• Establish a baseline and assess the overall condition and suitability of fish habitat in the watershed to support healthy communities and inform effective restoration, conservation and management actions.~~
- ~~• Develop an acid mine drainage target, in collaboration with the Brook Trout Outcome, that strives to better understand the impacts and mitigation opportunities for acid mine drainage throughout the watershed.~~
- ~~• Develop freshwater mussel conservation plans for five tributaries and begin implementation by 2035.~~

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.

Wetlands Outcome

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

Tidal Wetlands Target:

- Restore or create ~~4~~ at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of tidal wetlands by 2035 ~~2040~~, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds and represent healthy wetlands across the watershed.

Non-Tidal Wetlands Target:

- ~~Restore or create 2~~ at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of nontidal wetlands by 2035.
- ~~Buffer Protection Target: Same as the Protected Lands Outcome and will be tracked under that Outcome.~~
- ~~Waterbirds represent wetlands functioning at its highest level; priorities for specific species will be developed over the next 12 to 18 months.~~

Stream Health

~~Continually improve~~ 2040, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds 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 health and ecological integrity of at least 3% of non-tidal stream miles every six years.~~

Brook Trout

- ~~Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay represent healthy wetlands across the watershed by increasing occupancy, abundance and resilience to changing environmental conditions.~~
 - ~~By 2035, increase brook trout occupancy by 1% in watersheds supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds.~~
 - ~~By 2035, increase abundance at 10 long-term monitoring sites.~~
 - ~~By 2035, reduce identified threats by XX % to increase brook trout resilience in watersheds supporting healthy populations.~~
- 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.~~

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

~~Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide, which is necessary for a restored Bay.~~

- ~~Progress toward this Outcome will be measured against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030 and 95,000 acres by 2035.~~
- ~~Progress will also be measured against the following targets for each salinity zone:~~
 - ~~Tidal Fresh: 21,330 acres~~
 - ~~Low Salinity: 13,094 acres~~
 - ~~Medium Salinity: 126,032 acres~~
 - ~~High Salinity: 35,790 acres~~

FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

CLEAN WATER **GOAL**

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. The 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 GOAL:

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

Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome

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.

Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome

Measure changing water quality conditions by maintaining ~~core~~ monitoring networks, ~~evaluating attainment of established water quality standards (i.e., dissolved oxygen, clarity and chlorophyll-a) in the Bay and strengthening scientific understanding and communication of patterns in nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other parameters and tracking our collective progress toward achieving clean water,~~ throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

- Maintain **Monitoring Networks:** ~~Annually, 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, ~~water quality~~ trends and ~~water quality standards~~~~criteria~~ attainment.

~~Develop Methods for Water Quality Standards Attainment:~~

- Develop and expand partnership-approved approaches ~~to support assessment of all dissolved oxygen, clarity and chlorophyll a criteria in for assessing whether water quality criteria are being met for~~ all designated uses ~~using all available data.~~ For dissolved oxygen criteria ~~assessment, have methods established and,~~ establish an approved method by 2028 and ~~applied in~~ apply the method for data analysis and reporting by the end of 2030.

~~Evaluate Water Quality Standards Attainment:~~ Through management actions in support of the

- ~~Maintain or exceed the rate of~~ **Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome**, ~~maintain a long-term trend of improvement in the water quality standards attainment indicator at a rate of at least 0.2% per year, aligned with the historical~~ relative to the 1985—2022 ~~baseline trend of the multi-metric water quality standards indicator between 1985 and 2022. Update the water quality standards attainment indicator annually.~~

~~Calculate Water Quality Loads~~

- ~~Analyze and Trends:~~
 - ~~Watershed: In coordination with the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome, compute and communicate report status/loads and, trends in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment for the watershed. On an annual basis produce the load and trend analyses and communication results for the nine major river system river input monitoring sites. Conduct the same analysis for the complete non-tidal network on a biennial basis.~~
 - ~~Tidal Bay and tidal tributaries: On an annual basis for the tidal Bay and tributary stations, compute and communicate and factors affecting those trends for physical, chemical~~ nontidal ~~and biological measures.~~

Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment

- ~~Implement and maintain practices and controls that will reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to support living resources and protect human health by achieving tidal water quality standards.~~
- ~~Through 2030,~~ continue to implement and maintain practices and controls to reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to achieve the interim water quality targets as determined by the Principals' Staff Committee. Partners may meet this target by implementing their Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, two-year milestone commitments or other innovative strategies.
- ~~By December 2030, update this outcome with revised targets that include a timeline to meet the updated water quality targets for nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment.~~
- ~~Demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment toward meeting the interim water quality targets as determined by the Principals' Staff Committee, through multiple lines of evidence, including annual progress reporting and monitoring data (in coordination with the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome).~~

Toxic and Emerging Contaminants Mitigation Outcome

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

- Promote ~~continuous~~ 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.

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES GOAL

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. ~~Sound~~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

GOAL:

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

Protected Lands

~~Protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, ensure military readiness and national defense, and honor cultural heritage.~~

- ~~● **Protected Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect an additional 1.5-2 million acres of land throughout the watershed at the federal, state or local level.~~
- ~~● **Forests:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of XX acres of forest, of which XX% are in riparian areas.~~
- ~~● **Wetlands:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of XX acres of wetlands, focusing on the protection of buffer zones.~~
- ~~● **Watershed Health:** By 2040, protect a total of XX acres of natural lands in watersheds that support good stream health.~~
- ~~● **Tribal Lands:** Support the sovereignty and duty of care of tribal nations and communities by securing protection status and/or co-management agreements for a total of XX acres of tribal homelands.~~
- ~~● **Agricultural Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of XX acres of agricultural lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.~~
- ~~● **Community Greenspace:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of XX acres of community greenspace.~~

Land Use Decision Support

~~Develop and disseminate relevant and actionable land use information to organizations and communities involved in local and regional land use planning on past, present and future conditions, and the potential environmental and socioeconomic consequences of changing conditions.~~

~~Continually increase the number, variety and/or geographic scope of use cases (e.g., watershed protection, aquatic connectivity, stormwater, tree canopy, stream health or redevelopment) for landscape information.~~

- ~~Highlight two use cases annually to showcase best practices and share this information with local planning officials and partners through Story Maps and/or other communication products.~~
- ~~Promote land use data and tool applications that maintain the ecological integrity of watersheds supporting good stream health and address the needs of local communities.~~

Healthy Forests and Trees

Conserve 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.

- ~~**Tree Canopy:** Reduce the loss of existing canopy, and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long term.~~
- ~~**Forest Buffers:** Reduce the loss of existing buffers, and plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually to achieve no less than 71% riparian forest cover by 2035 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long term.~~
- ~~**Forest Conservation:** Reduce the loss of existing forests to development through planning and conservation, and plant and maintain XX acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long term.~~

Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions **Outcome**

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

- By 2040, support at least seven ~~subwatersheds~~sub-watershed areas ~~have benefited from 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, ~~workgroup activities will~~ inform and lead to an increase in the implementation of the identified adaptation ~~strategies~~options that prioritize and integrate nature-based solutions in the above ~~subwatersheds~~sub-watershed areas.

Healthy Forests and Trees **Outcome**

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 8.6 million acres of forested land (nine million acres by 2040), and planting, maintaining and managing 202,000 acres of new forests by 2040.

Land Use Planning and Decision Support Outcome

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 to 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 Outcome

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.

ENGAGED COMMUNITIES GOAL

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.

GoalGOAL:

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.

Stewardship

Local Government Leadership Outcome

Increase the 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 Outcome

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.

Stewardship Outcome

Increase the public's participation in stewardship actions that contribute positively to ~~the~~ lands, waters, ~~living resources~~wildlife, fisheries and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- Through 2040, ~~better equip practitioners~~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.

Local Leadership

Continually increase the knowledge and capacity of local government leaders to empower them to make decisions and implement local actions that support the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

Student Environmental Literacy Experiences Outcome

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 state targets to result in at least 75% of public school students being enrolled in a school district that offers a MWEE for all students.

School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome

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

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

- ~~Increase the percentage of local government leaders reporting water resource management actions biennially.~~

Workforce Outcome

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

- **Understanding:** By ~~2035~~2040, inform and grow implementation of strategies that help students, educators and job seekers to become aware of and understand environmental careers and the in-demand skills and pathways to ~~them.~~ access these opportunities.

Participating:

- By ~~2035~~2040, increase the number of post-secondary institutions and training providers offering industry-recognized credentials that support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.

Succeeding: By 2035, inform and

- 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.

Public Access

~~Enhance new and existing public access sites to the Bay and its tributaries 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.~~

- ~~**New Access Sites:** By 2040, add 100 new public access sites with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for recreation where feasible.~~
- ~~**Improving ADA/ABA Accessibility:** By 2040, improve 3% of existing public water access sites by adding ADA/ABA accessible features, where feasible, to meet the needs of communities.~~
- ~~**Access Upgrades, Maintenance and Expansion:** By 2040, improve at least 100 existing public water access sites by upgrading or maintaining site grounds and structures—including signage, parking, seating and public facilities—and expanding the range of active and passive recreation opportunities, such as kayaking, boating, trails, courts, piers, wildlife viewing and picnic areas.~~
- ~~**Expanding Access to Urban Lands:** By 2040, expand access to XX % of urban lands and community green spaces identified in the Protected Lands data set. An initial baseline study is to be conducted by 2025-2026 to determine appropriate numeric targets for this metric.~~

Student Experiences

Continually increase the number of students who participate in inquiry-based environmental literacy instruction working towards at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) in each elementary, middle and high school.

- By 2040, state targets are reached that result in 75% of public-school students being enrolled in a school district that offers a MWEE for all students.

School District Planning

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

- By 2040, all jurisdictions reach their target for the number of school districts that are well prepared to deliver a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Within ~~X timeframe (previously “one year”) of the revision of~~ 18 months of revising the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay ~~Program’s Program~~ **Goal Implementation Teams** 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 their Targets~~ as well as monitoring, assessing and reporting progress and coordinating actions among partners and stakeholders as necessary. ~~Management Strategies describe how~~ 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 ~~or, financial support and~~ technical ~~support assistance~~ are needed to empower local governments and others to do their part; and what steps are necessary to facilitate greater ~~local~~ participation in achieving the Outcome.

Participation in ~~developing~~ Management Strategies or ~~participating~~ 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 ~~X6-year (previously “2-year”) periods~~.

The signatories and other partners shall thereafter update and/or modify such commitments every ~~X (previously “2”) years-six years~~. The 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~~ **Goal Implementation Teams** will ~~adopt a six-year cycle to re-evaluate with X frequency (previously “biennially”)~~ 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 ~~public~~

~~meetings of the appropriate publicly accessible partnership meetings~~ ~~Goal Implementation Team and Management Board.~~

~~The Goal Implementation Teams will submit the~~ Management Strategies will be submitted to the partnership's ~~Management Board leadership~~ for review. If the ~~Management Board 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. ~~This includes, but is not limited to, the strategies and plans for implementing the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load.~~