



Chesapeake Bay Program  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

September 21, 2026

# **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Strategic Plan**

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# Strategic Plan Chapters

- Introduction
- Accountability and Adaptive Management
- Management Strategies for:
  - Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife
  - Clean Water
  - Healthy Landscapes
  - Engaged Communities
- Appendix



# **Introduction and Accountability and Adaptive Management Chapters**

Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO



# Introduction

- About the Chesapeake Bay Program
- Documents Guiding CBP Work

## Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (through 2040)

### Describes what we want to do

- Establishes and defines partners' commitment to shared goals, outcomes and targets
- States CBP's vision and principles

## CBWA Strategic Plan (6 years)

### Describes how we will do it

- Outlines the means for accomplishing each outcome and its targets
- Identifies challenges
- Defines management approaches and participating partners

## Workplans (3 years)

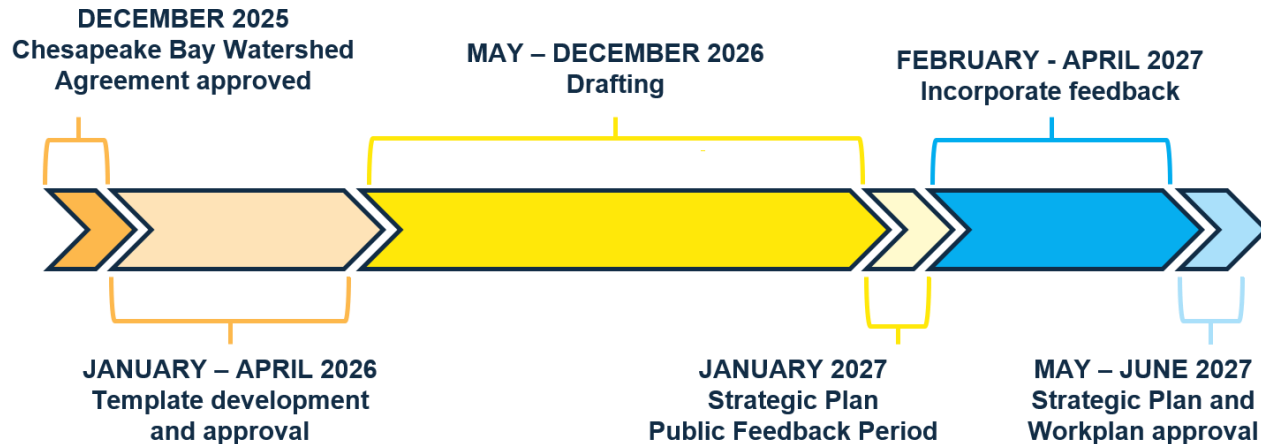
### Describes shorter term work to make progress

- States specific actions partners will undertake to implement management strategies
- Identifies implementation partners, resources and deliverables

**Attainment  
of goals,  
outcomes  
and targets**

# Introduction, Continued

- Structure of the Strategic Plan
- Strategic Plan Development and Participation in Implementation



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# Accountability & Adaptive Management

- Describe program-wide structures, processes and tools for accountability and adaptive management
- Subsections for the Watershed Agreement, Strategic Plan and Workplan:
  - Define oversight and responsibility roles related to the partnership structure
  - Link each document to a specific assessment and adaptive management mechanism

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# Accountability & Adaptive Management, Cont.

- Monitoring, Assessing, and Reporting Progress
  - Indicators Framework
  - Chesapeake Progress
  - Bay Barometer
- Transparency and Future Public Feedback
  - Public Feedback - Strategic Plan revision in 2033
  - Public Feedback - *Watershed Agreement* revision in 2040

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# **Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife Goal Team**

Becky Gwynn, Virginia Dept. of Wildlife Resources

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# Overview

- **Goal:** 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.

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# Current Status

- Draft Management Strategy with 8 sub-chapters (one per outcome) completed.
- Addressed challenges with new targets for freshwater mussels and acid mine drainage.
- Goal Team meeting Sept. 17 - initial discussion and feedback on draft document.
- Workgroups addressing GT feedback.

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## Next Steps

- Update draft sub-chapters based on Goal Team Feedback
- Continue to engage with signatories to update snapshots of relevant programs and statutory authorities.
- All comments to be addressed by Oct. 15, with GT final submission by Oct. 19.

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# Healthy Landscapes Goal Team

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

Ken Hyer, USGS  
Claire Jantz, PA DCNR

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## An update on the Goal Team activities

- Holding ~ quarterly meetings (May, Aug, Sept).
- Emphasis on the development of the Management Strategies. We have reviewed a copy of all 4 Outcome subchapters.
- Building a new GT (4 outcomes that were previously not connected). Now highly interconnected.
- Varying degrees of maturity of the 4 outcomes, as well as work to build networks and add value:
  - Forestry
  - Land use, protected lands, adapting to CEC

## Forestry Outcome

## Land Use Outcome

Added a forest conservation target, maintained forest buffers and tree canopy targets

Have a strong set of baseline indicators and for tracking progress

Management Approaches to address both challenges and targets

- Successfully produced 1-m LULC data for 3 points in time (4<sup>th</sup> in development)
- Shifting primary focus from development of the data to communications and applications
  - Developing use cases
  - Sharing applications
- Development of critical indicators
- Management Approaches to develop local connections through trusted networks and better communicate application of the data

## Protected Lands

## Adapting to CEC

Provides a critical connection to conservation as a pillar

Target is to protect an additional 2 million acres.

Developing and defining targets and indicators for: riparian forests, wetlands, natural areas, agricultural lands, tribal homelands, and urban and community greenspace

3 Management Approaches:

- In 2014 had no quantitative benchmarks (under STAR)
- Now has defined targets
- Supporting place-based adaptation across 7 sub-watersheds
- Shifting from a tidal emphasis to both tidal and nontidal
- The WG role is to deliver data, tools, address challenges, provide support
- Local coordination and capacity is critical
- Developing Management

Approaches

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## Future Considerations

- Once the Goal Teams and Workgroups develop their Management Strategies and Workplans, think about increased cross-goal team coordination. Examples:
  - Strategically deploying land use decision support to advance implementation of other outcomes
  - Establishing priority landscape targets that will guide strategic land conservation
  - Engaging communities in tree canopy conservation and restoration
- Discussing joint meetings with other Goal Teams.
- Perhaps we can use the Prioritization process to support cross goal-team collaboration to help with this.



# **Clean Water Goal Team**

Greg Sandi, Maryland Department of Environment



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## Clean Water Goal

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



### **Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Sediment (3 Targets)**

*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.*

- Target #1: 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
- Target #2: 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.
- Target #3: Demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment through multiple lines of evidence, including modeling and monitoring data

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# Clean Water Goal



## Toxic & Emerging Contaminants (1 target)

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

- Target #1: Promote 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



## Water Quality, Standards Attainment & Monitoring (4 targets)

*Measure changing water quality conditions by maintaining monitoring networks and tracking our collective progress toward achieving clean water throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.*

- *Target #1:* 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, trends and criteria attainment.
- *Target #2:* Develop and expand partnership-approved approaches for assessing whether water quality criteria are being met for all designated uses. For dissolved oxygen criteria, establish an approved method by 2028 and apply the method for data analysis and reporting by the end of 2030.
- *Target #3:* Maintain or exceed the rate of improvement in the water quality standards attainment indicator relative to the 1985-2022 baseline.
- *Target #4:* Analyze and report status/loads, trends and factors affecting those trends for nontidal and tidal water quality.

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# Summary of Management Approaches



## Clean Water Goal

- **Management Approach 2.0.1:** Incorporate additional lines of evidence into assessments of progress
- **Management Approach 2.0.2:** Improve effectiveness of the CWGT by enhancing coordination, communication, information share, adaptive management, and innovation.
- **Management Approach 2.0.3:** Expand local capacity through cross-partnership collaboration.
- **Management Approach 2.0.4:** Assess and integrate jurisdictional data sources to improve the accuracy of model predictions



## Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Sediment

- **Management Approaches 2.1.1-3:** Complete Phase 7 suite of modeling tools; revise planning targets; develop new or amended WIPs
- **Management Approach 2.1.4:** Continue to increase implementation of Phase III WIPs and share emerging innovative strategies
- **Management Approach 2.1.5:** Explore Tiered Implementation structure for achieving nutrient and sediment reductions
- **Management Approach 2.1.6:** Assess nutrient mass imbalances and advance new or emerging nonpoint source best management practices (BMPs) or innovations

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# Summary of Management Approaches



## Toxic & Emerging Contaminants

- **Management Approach 2.2.1-2.2.2:** Share information on the occurrence, sources, and effects; share research on the efficacy of mitigation practices and co-benefits of nutrient reduction practices
- **Management Approach 2.2.3:** Strengthen connections across the CBP and engage new partners
- **Management Approach 2.2.4:** Support development of a plastics monitoring program.



## Water Quality, Standards Attainment & Monitoring

- **Management Approach 2.3.1:** Sustain and strengthen core partnership monitoring networks
- **Management Approach 2.3.2:** Develop and implement decision rules for assessing water quality criteria
- **Management Approach 2.3.3:** Maintain and advance water quality data analysis to address information gaps and inform science-based management decisions
- **Management Approach 2.3.4:** Improve monitoring to model integration and transparency



# **Engaged Communities Goal Team**

Julie Lawson, DC DOEE  
Julia Wakeling, DC DOEE



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# Overview

**Goal:** 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.

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# Current Status

- Six Strategic Plan subchapters are complete
- Workgroup at-large rosters approved by Goal Team
- Two public webinars for Workforce Outcome
- Monthly 101 sessions for Stewardship Network Map
- ELit survey is live; deadline Nov 20
- K-12 CTE Action Team held inaugural meeting
- Cross-goal meeting with Healthy Landscapes to identify intersection of people and changing environmental conditions

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# Features of Strategic Plan Chapter

- **Local Government Leadership:** Increasing knowledge and capacity of local leaders via trusted messengers
- **Public Access:** tracking the quality, quantity, geographic distribution of access to land and water-based sites
- **School District Planning:** states will accelerate work to build regional hubs to advance environmental literacy
- **Stewardship:** creating and centralizing technical assistance resources, reflecting new network approach
- **Student Experience:** leveraging Bay Backpack to promote resources
- **Workforce:** four new metrics for tracking progress

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# Next Steps

- Complete Strategic Plan Chapter sent to Goal Team by Sept 25, with approval by Oct 9
- Hybrid Goal Team meeting Oct 22 in Annapolis
- Creating a shared "audiences" glossary to define terms in multiple outcomes (e.g., local leaders, practitioners, educators)



# **Timeline and Upcoming Deadlines**

Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO



# Timeline



| Deadlines                                                            | Actions and Deliverables                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Draft distribution to PSC:</b><br>October 22, 2026                | <b>EPA staff</b> will post a compiled draft of the Strategic Plan on the PSC’s meeting webpage two weeks in advance of its November 5 <sup>th</sup> meeting.                                                                                                                                     |
| November 5, 2026                                                     | <b>PSC members</b> provide specific feedback on revisions that need to be made to the Strategic Plan prior to its release for public feedback.                                                                                                                                                   |
| November 20, 2026                                                    | <p><b>Signatories and federal agencies</b> state which outcomes they will be listed as “Participating Partner” for in the draft Strategic Plan (to be released for public feedback).</p> <p><b>Goal Team co-chairs</b> finalize revisions to the draft Strategic Plan based on PSC feedback.</p> |
| <b>Draft distribution to PSC:</b><br>December 3, 2026                | <b>EPA staff</b> will email a revised draft Strategic Plan on December 3 <sup>rd</sup> to PSC members, seeking their approval to release the plan for public feedback.                                                                                                                           |
| December 3-18, 2026<br><i>(Early responses appreciated)</i>          | <b>PSC members</b> vote via email to release the revised draft Strategic Plan for the public feedback period. Votes should be submitted between December 3 <sup>rd</sup> and December 18 <sup>th</sup> .                                                                                         |
| <b>Draft distribution for Public Feedback:</b><br>January 5-31, 2027 | The <b>PUBLIC FEEDBACK PERIOD</b> will be launched on Tuesday, January 5, 2027 and will run through Sunday, January 31, 2027.                                                                                                                                                                    |