Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

November 5, 2026

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Strategic Plan

Setting the Stage

Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO

Purpose of This Agenda Item

- PSC members will provide specific feedback on revisions that need to be made to the Strategic Plan prior to its release for public feedback.
  - Goal Team co-chairs will incorporate PSC feedback into a revised draft of the Strategic Plan.
  - **In December, PSC members will vote** via email to release the revised Strategic Plan draft for public feedback.

Five Things to Know

1. “[Management] strategies shall outline the means for accomplishing each Outcome and its Targets…” – Watershed Agreement
2. Management Strategies are implemented over a six-year period and will be supplemented by three-year Workplans
3. The Strategic Plan is written primarily for an internal audience. An Executive summary and web content will promote public awareness



Five Things to Know

4. Some sections were moved to the Appendix:
    - **Appendix 1. Snapshot of Programs**
      Spotlights a up to three key programs per entity that contribute to outcome attainment
    - **Appendix 2. Statutory Authorities**
      Highlights a few laws or regulations that may support, justify or motivate a partner's participation in outcome attainment



Five Things to Know

5. Participating Partner Lists are due Nov. 20
    - Participating Partner: an entity that participated the creation of an outcome's Management Strategies and/or expressed an intention to collaborate on implementation
    - Signatories and federal agencies are listed separately from other partners
    - Commitments are updated every three years
    - Participation is voluntary



Strategic Plan Chapters

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



Introduction and Accountability and Adaptive Management Chapters

Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Content in this chapter describes:
  - The Chesapeake Bay Program
  - The relationship between documents guiding CBP work
  - The structure of the Strategic Plan
  - Strategic Plan development and participation in implementation

Chapter 2: Accountability & Adaptive Mgmt

- Describe program-wide structures, processes and tools for accountability and adaptive management
  - Partnership oversight and responsibility roles
  - Assessment and revision cycles for the Watershed Agreement, Strategic Plan and Workplans
  - Monitoring, Assessing, and Reporting Progress
  - Transparency and Future Public Feedback

Management Strategies for the Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife Goal

Becky Gwynn, VA DWR
Kevin Schabow, NOAA

The Goal: 8 Outcomes, 19 Targets, 39 Management Approaches



The Process

- Workgroups drafted management strategy subchapters late spring-mid August
- ~3-week initial review by Goal Team in September
- ~2-week revision period late Sept/early Oct
- Goal Team consensus reached on 10/19

Goal-Level Challenges

- **Climate-driven impacts** (e.g., sea level rise, altered hydrology) degrading tidal and freshwater habitats and shifting species distributions.
- **Gaps in science and data integration** needed to support ecosystem-based fisheries management, multi-species forage assessments, and targeted habitat restoration.
- **Historical and ongoing habitat loss** driven by land-use changes, coastal development, altered stream channels, and legacy water quality impairments.

Goal-Level Challenges

- **Sustaining the funding**, long-term technical partnerships, staffing pipelines, and leadership commitments required for ongoing living resource conservation.
- **Coordinating policy, regulations, and resource allocation** across multiple state and federal jurisdictions with differing statutory frameworks.
- **Engaging local communities and waterfront stakeholders** – especially in areas where human activities and critical habitats overlap most heavily – to build stewardship and guide local actions.

Goal-Level Approaches

- 1.0.1: Leverage best available science, spatial modeling, and watershed-wide fish habitat assessments to fill gaps in ecosystem-based aquatic resource management, evaluations of forage availability, and habitat restoration and protection prioritization.

- 1.0.2: Facilitate alignment among state and federal resource agencies as well as non-governmental organizations and private entities to harmonize management policies, support joint monitoring, and coordinate regional restoration priorities.

- 1.0.3: Partner with Clean Water and Healthy Landscapes GTs to prioritize and align implementation of TMDL BMPs, habitat restoration, and land conservation in areas that maximize benefits to both living resource resilience and water quality.

Goal-Level Approaches

- 1.0.4: Collaborate with Engaged Communities GT to build awareness among local leaders, coastal communities in tidal and nontidal areas, and landowners to empower local stewardship to protect aquatic and adjacent upland habitats.

- 1.0.5: Support partner capacity by identifying, implementing, and institutionalizing long-term funding mechanisms, technical assistance networks, and workforce development strategies necessary to sustain living resource programs over the six-year cycle.

- 1.0.6: Work across THFW workgroups and those of other GTs to identify complimentary outcome priorities, areas of collaboration, and opportunities to address shared challenges.

Blue Crab Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Maintaining sustainable populations, using annual stock assessments
- Providing management recommendations to jurisdictions
- Promoting electronic reporting systems for commercial crabbing; addressing gaps in recreational harvest data
- Supporting research to improve understanding of population dynamics and inform management decisions
- Improving data management and availability

Brook Trout Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Protecting brook trout strongholds throughout the watershed
  - Identifying priority focal areas using TU Conservation Portfolio
  - Identifying and reducing stressors
  - Strengthening existing strongholds
- Expanding brook trout populations wherever feasible
- Expanding network through new Brook Trout Collaborative

Fish Habitat Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Integrating baseline assessment of tidal fish habitat into water quality prioritization efforts
- Integrating forage species into fisheries management
- Assessing non-tidal habitat quality for land management planning
- Implementing treatment strategies to remediate streams impacted by acid mine drainage
- Identifying and prioritizing conservation of freshwater mussels

Fish Passage Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Pursuing new project opportunities and funding to meet or exceed goal of restoring 250 miles every 2 years:
  - Leveraging Fish Passage Prioritization Tool
  - Maintaining database of willing landowners
  - Implementing actions to accelerate dam removals
  - Addressing additional non-dam barriers (e.g., road crossings, chemical barriers like AMD)

Oyster Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Expanding oyster reef habitat conservation and restoration
- Establishing revised success metrics to evaluate performance in new conservation or restoration areas
- Monitoring previously-restored tributaries for attainment of revised success metrics
- Defining sustain commercial oyster harvest and aquaculture practices, with recommendations to jurisdictions

Stream Health Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Focusing funding on restoration and direct project implementation
- Augmenting Chessie BIBI with a complementary suite of metrics to measure multiple facets of stream health
- Developing and promoting holistic Stream Restoration BMP design guidelines
- Addressing data gaps and measuring success
- Expanding engagement with communities and landowners

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Focusing resources on direct implementation of conservation, restoration and protection - current and future habitat areas
- Characterizing threats, developing protection measures, and making recommendations on laws, regulations and policies when necessary
- Measuring success through existing monitoring
- Expanding efforts to engage and educate the public on benefits of SAV

Wetlands Outcome

Strategies focus on:

- Implementing of strategic plan for tidal wetlands
- Building on The Nature Conservancy's efforts to develop a strategic plan for non-tidal wetlands
- Improving tracking of accomplishments
- Expanding landowner outreach and technical assistance
- Strengthening workforce capacity at all levels
- Identifying and pursuing new and increased sources of funding

Management Strategies for the Clean Water Goal

Lee McDonnell, EPA CBPO
Greg Sandi, MDE

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

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.

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
- **Management Approach 2.1.7**: Incorporate additional lines of evidence into assessments of progress

Summary of Management Approaches

Toxic & Emerging Contaminants

- **Management Approach 2.2.1:** Share information on the occurrence, sources, and effects of toxic contaminants
- **Management Approach 2.2.2**: 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.
- **Management Approach 2.2.5**: Research and disseminate microplastic pollution findings
- **Management Approach 2.2.6**: Implement solutions to reduce occurrence of plastic pollution in the Bay

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
- **Management Approach 2.3.5**: Improve modeling and monitoring integration and transparency
- **Management Approach 2.3.6:** Develop unified progress narratives and communications products

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

An update on the Goal Team activities

- Holding ~ quarterly meetings (May, Aug, Sept)
- Completed draft Management Strategies
- Building interconnections across Outcomes (previously not)
- Varying degrees of maturity of the 4 outcomes, workgroups, and their networks:
  - Forestry
  - Land use, protected lands, adapting to CEC

Challenges	Outcomes			
	3.1 AD	3.2 HF	3.3 LU	3.4 PL
3.0.1 Coordination: Effective and efficient coordination with other goals and their outcomes and management approaches	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
3.0.2 Funding: Inconsistent funding and availability of effective programs for planting and maintenance and long-term resilience monitoring; insufficient funding for land conservation capacity and technical assistance	X	X	X	X
***3.0.3 Land Use Change: Fragmentation and conversion of forests and tree canopy to other land uses; insufficient resources for land use planning assistance to reduce forest and farmland conversion; shoreline change due to sea level rise and marsh migration.**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
3.0.4 Scientific support for policies and regulations: Inadequate state and/or local policies that support effective reforestation, forest and tree canopy conservation, and forest management; overcoming regulatory and permitting hurdles that stall innovative nature-based engineering solutions.	X	X	X	X
3.0.5 Local engagement: Inadequate engagement with local governments to support planning decisions for forests and tree canopy and to draft complex, competitive federal grant proposals for adaptation projects.	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**

Goal-level Management Approaches

- 3.0.1 Coordinate activities across outcomes and goals
- 3.0.2 Identify and foster the development of funding opportunities
- 3.0.3 Synthesize landscape conditions and change
- 3.0.4 Provide scientific support for policies and regulations
- 3.0.5 Effectively communicate science, data, and policies to local governments and others engaged in implementation activities

Adapting to changing conditions

- 3.1.1 Develop a Criteria and Stakeholder-Based Selection Strategy for Focus Sub-watersheds

- 3.1.2 Build Strategic Coalitions through Stakeholder Engagement and Connector Framework

- 3.1.3 Support Place-Based, Needs-Driven Technical Assistance for Additive Benefits

- 3.1.4 Promote Adaptation Monitoring, Data Integration, and Implementation Tracking to Assess Long-Term Resilience

Healthy forests and trees

- 3.2.1 Increase workforce capacity and tree supply to accelerate implementation
- 3.2.2 Bolster funding, programs and partnerships
- 3.2.3 Leverage networks to enhance coordination and restoration impact
- 3.2.4 Address drivers of forest and canopy loss
- 3.2.5 Expand outreach and engagement with local governments around forests and tree canopy
- 3.2.6 Ensure adequate maintenance and management

Land use planning & decision support

- 3.3.1 Expand and Improve the Land Use Decision Support Use-Case Repository

- 3.3.2 Strengthen Local Land Use Decisions Through Trusted Networks

Protected lands

- 3.4.1 Data, Tracking & Targeting
- 3.4.2 Funding Conservation & Protection
- 3.4.3 Engagement, Communication & Outreach

Management Strategies for the Engaged Communities Goal

Julie Lawson, DC DOEE
Julia Wakeling, DC DOEE

Goal Level: Cross-Outcome Challenges

1. Uneven capacity, governance structures, and geographic coverage create inconsistent implementation across the watershed.

2. Sustaining resources, partnerships, staffing, leadership, and workforce pipelines

3. Inconsistent metrics, data sharing, and evaluation approaches limit understanding of collective impact and adaptive management.

Goal-Level Approaches

- 4.0.1: Strengthen coordination, capacity-building, and knowledge exchange mechanisms to support more consistent implementation of outcomes across jurisdictions, organizations, and communities.

- 4.0.2: Build and sustain organizational, leadership, and workforce capacity needed to support long-term community engagement efforts.

- 4.0.3: Establish shared approaches for measuring engagement and using data to guide adaptive management.

Local Government Leadership Outcome

- 4.1.1: Measure progress toward increasing the knowledge and supporting the capacity of local government leaders.
- 4.1.2: Serve as translators of complex scientific and technical resources and information.
- 4.1.3: Increase the knowledge and support the capacity of local government leaders via existing channels of trusted communications and engagement.
- 4.4.4: Strengthen the networks that support local government leadership capacity.
- 4.4.5: Support goal teams and workgroups who want to engage with local officials.

Public Access Outcome

- 4.2.1: Increase public awareness of existing access opportunities and available amenities.
- 4.2.2: Identify gaps in public access to better prioritize public access development.
- 4.2.3: Facilitate financial support opportunities with jurisdictions for public access projects.
- 4.2.4: Increase engagement of the Public Access Workgroup with local governments and organizations implementing public access projects.
- 4.2.5: Facilitate partnerships with parks and community organizations to support the stewardship and maintenance of public access sites.

School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome

- 4.3.1: Support jurisdictional governance and accountability. Build state leadership understanding, support, and accountability for environmental literacy using data-driven metrics and strategic communications.

- 4.3.2: Ensure availability of high-quality planning resources.

- 4.3.3: Ensure availability of high-quality planning resources.

Stewardship Outcome

- 4.4.1: Increase strategic coordination and collaboration among local programs to improve stewardship program effectiveness.
- 4.4.2: Share best practices for stewardship programs and strengthen communications and behavior-change capacity across the watershed.
- 4.4.3: Increase volunteer recruitment, engagement, and community-led stewardship programs.
- 4.4.4: Expand watershed residents' participation in science and monitoring and strengthen shared approaches for measuring stewardship impacts.
- 4.4.5: Increase access to training and technical assistance that support effective stewardship programs.
- 4.4.6: Expand incentives and career pathways for emerging professionals, community leaders, and individuals engaged in stewardship.

Student Environmental Literacy Experiences Outcome

- 4.5.1: Maximize use of impactful environmental literacy resources. Develop and disseminate environmental literacy resources that equip educators to advance state education priorities using inquiry-based instruction and MWEEs.

- 4.5.2: Scale and sustain inquiry-based learning and MWEEs.

Workforce Outcome

- 4.6.1: Engage schools and workforce development partners to increase student, educator, and job seeker awareness and understanding of skills and pathways to participate in green careers.

- 4.6.2: Increase access to, and attainment of, Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) that support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* goals and outcomes.

- 4.6.3: Engage employers to support greater hiring and retention of workers trained in fields necessary to support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* goals and outcomes.

The Road Ahead

Sarah Brzezinski

The Road to Public Feedback



- PSC meeting to provide feedback on the draft Strategic Plan

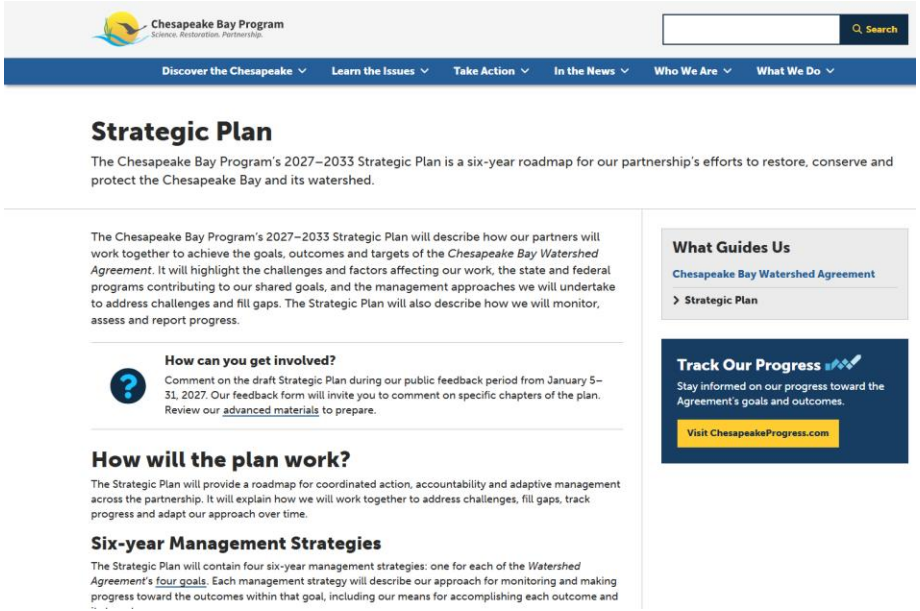
- Signatories and federal agencies – state which outcomes they will be listed as "Participating Partner" for
- Goal Team chairs – finalize Strategic Plan revisions

- Goal Team chairs send draft Strategic Plan to PSC

- PSC members vote via email to approve draft Strategic Plan for public feedback

- PUBLIC FEEDBACK PERIOD

Outreach for the Public Feedback Period



- A Strategic Plan landing page is live
- A 90-minute presentation will be delivered at the Chesapeake Watershed Forum
- Planning to host a CBP webinar in early January

Post-Feedback Pathway: 2027



- Goal Team chairs - consider and, as appropriate, incorporate public feedback
- Goal Team chairs - brief PSC on public feedback received

- Goal Team chairs – update PSC members on revisions
- PSC members – provide feedback Strategic Plan revisions

- Signatories and federal agencies – Finalize outcome “Participating Partner” list
- Goal Team chairs – finalize Strategic Plan revisions

- Goal Teams vote to approve the Strategic Plan and associated Workplans

- PSC VOTE TO APPROVE THE STRATEGIC PLAN