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EPA Administrator Takes Helm of Chesapeake Executive Council

Chesapeake Bay Program celebrates DEIJ successes and acknowledges challenges along the road to 2025

Richmond, Va.— As 2021 draws to a close, members of the Chesapeake Executive Council gathered today in Richmond, Virginia to review the many successes of the Chesapeake Bay Program over the past year, while providing transparency about the challenges that lie ahead.

Established 38 years ago, 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 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on behalf of the federal government.

At the meeting, Vernice Miller-Travis, executive vice-president of environment and sustainability with The Metropolitan Group, provided details on one of the partnership's major accomplishments of the past year—the release of the [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Implementation Plan Strategy](#). This Implementation Plan is the direct result of the historic [Statement in Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice](#) signed by the Executive Council at their August 2020 meeting. Immediately following the August 2020 meeting, an Action Team was formed to draft the Implementation Plan.

Ms. Miller-Travis helped pen [Restoration from the Inside Out: A Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy for the Chesapeake Bay Program](#), which guided the development of the Implementation Plan. Following a formal public comment period in September, the Implementation Plan was finalized and is ready to be broadly implemented across the partnership. It outlines the tasks, actions, roles and resources that are critical to advancing DEIJ and addressing environmental justice within all areas of the Chesapeake Bay Program. It aims to increase racial and ethnic diversity among partnership staff and leadership, while providing the tools to help all partners continually assess progress toward their DEIJ goals, and help them develop into leaders that understand, respect and embrace cultural diversity.

"Just as the Directive has committed us to address diversity, equity, inclusion and justice across the partnership, members of the Chesapeake Bay Commission will continue to look for opportunities to address DEIJ in our laws and budgets," said Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair David Bulova. "If we work to lift our most vulnerable communities, we can achieve clean water and air, abundant fish and wildlife, while providing the access needed to enjoy them."

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Providing leadership on not only the advancement of DEIJ, but also [climate change](#), will be Governor Ralph Northam's legacy for this partnership. He closed out his year of chairing the Executive Council by symbolically handing the reins to EPA Administrator Michael Regan.

"It has been an honor to serve as the Chair of the Executive Council, a partnership that plays a vital role in building the coalition necessary to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay," said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam. "We have built a strong foundation to protect all people and the economies vital to the Bay, especially those who have been historically underrepresented and under-resourced."

Members and designees of the Executive Council also heard from Michelle Price-Fay, acting director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office. In her remarks, she noted a recent assessment completed by the partnership in assessing the attainability of each outcome in the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. As 2025 looms near, Chesapeake Bay Program partners are taking an honest and critical look at whether the 31 outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* are on track to meet their targets. This assessment is driving conversations across the partnership as to what outcomes should be prioritized and how challenges will be met. These outcome attainability templates provide the foundation for the partnership's [*Bay Barometer: An Annual Report on the State of the Program and the Health of the Bay*](#).

In June 2014, the Executive Council signed the [*Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*](#), 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 citizens and stakeholders.

"EPA is honored to lead the partnership as we act together to close the gap in our restoration goals, build resilience to climate change and ensure that the benefits of our efforts are shared by all," said EPA Administrator Michael Regan. "With major infusions of federal funding coming soon, and with a greater resolve, we will work with our partners to help pick up the pace of progress and realize our collective commitments to a clean Bay and watershed."