

## Beyond 2025 – Frequently Asked Questions

### Public Feedback Process

Here are some commonly asked questions to help guide you as you prepare to submit your feedback.

The *2025 Revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, along with related background materials, may be accessed on the Chesapeake Bay Program's [Planning for 2025 and Beyond](#) website. **Public feedback will be accepted beginning Tuesday, July 1, 2025 through 11:59 p.m. on Monday, September 1, 2025 by email to [comments@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:comments@chesapeakebay.net).**

1. What sections of the revised *Watershed Agreement* can be commented on?
  - a. Every section of the revised *Watershed Agreement* may be commented on.
2. When should I expect to receive a response to my feedback?
  - a. Due to the expected volume of feedback that will be received, we will be unable to provide a personal response to your submission. You will receive a notification that it has been received; however, if you do **not** receive a notification, please resubmit or use the [Contact Us form](#) on our website.
3. Do you have any suggestions for how my feedback should be structured?
  - a. It would be very helpful if your feedback included the sections and page numbers of the *Watershed Agreement* that you are commenting on. As an example, you could categorize your responses as pertaining to the Vision, Preamble, Principles, Management Strategies or specify a particular Goal or Outcome. Please be as specific as possible about how you would like to see these sections, goals or outcomes revised. Specific edits are much easier to review and incorporate than more generalized comments.
4. Why do some of the outcomes have blank spaces instead of numerical targets?
  - a. Some of the revised outcomes require additional research and calculations to ensure their proposed targets are specific, measurable and achievable. Given the tight timeframe in which we had to prepare an updated *Watershed Agreement* for public review, it was decided to keep some numerical targets blank at this time so subject matter experts could continue to determine the most appropriate figure to include. Your thoughts and feedback are also welcome on what these numerical targets should be! The subject matter experts will take this feedback into consideration as well.
5. How will feedback be reviewed?
  - a. 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.

6. Will I be able to see other feedback that has been submitted?
  - a. Yes, all received public feedback will be posted to the [Planning for 2025 and Beyond](#) website, along with a high-level summary of what has been received. Feedback from individuals will be posted with identifying information removed. Feedback from organizations, agencies or businesses will be shared as it is received, with identifying information and affiliations.
7. How can I ensure the representatives from my state see my comments?
  - a. You are encouraged to indicate the state 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. Feedback from individuals will be shared anonymously, unless you specify otherwise. Feedback from organizations, agencies or businesses will be shared as it is received, with identifying information and affiliations.
8. I'd prefer to pick up the phone and call someone directly to relay my feedback.
  - a. Unfortunately, feedback is only being accepted via email to [comments@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:comments@chesapeakebay.net) but the July and August Management Board meetings will have time set aside for public feedback. Please visit the [Meetings Calendar](#) on chesapeakebay.net prior to each the meeting to confirm the time of the public feedback session.
9. Will you wait to review all feedback until September?
  - a. Feedback will be reviewed on a rolling basis throughout the 60-day period. We **highly encourage you** to submit your comments early and not wait until September 1.
10. Can I provide feedback on the proposed revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Program's structure and governance process?
  - a. The focus of this 60-day feedback period is the draft revised *Watershed Agreement*, but comments on the Chesapeake Bay Program's structure and governance process will be accepted; these comments will be provided to the team of representatives from across the partnership, including federal and state agencies, non-profits and advisory committees that are tasked with developing recommendations for streamlining the structure and process of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Management Board and Principal's Staff Committee will discuss and determine whether to move these recommendation's forward to the Chesapeake Executive Council in December.

## Outcome Review Process

What does the process for revising the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* outcomes look like?

- The subject matter experts and workgroups behind each outcome prepared advice on whether their outcome should be updated, consolidated, removed, replaced or reclassified.
- On February 13, February 28 and March 13, Management Board meetings were held to review the advice, ask questions and discuss. Additionally, time was set aside at each meeting for public feedback.
- At the March 27 Management Board meeting, members heard proposals to add new outcomes to the *Watershed Agreement* and voted on the proposed outcome recommendations, sending them to the Principals' Staff Committee for review and approval.
- On March 28, the Principals' Staff Committee approved the draft outcome recommendations, paving the way for subject matter experts and workgroups to begin drafting revised outcome language, which took place throughout April and May 2025.
- The Principals' Staff Committee approved the proposed outcomes at their May 23, 2025 meeting.

What does it mean if an outcome is recommended to be consolidated, updated, removed, replaced or reclassified?

- The 2024 charge issued by the Chesapeake Executive Council directed the Principals' Staff Committee to review the 31 outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and determine if they should be consolidated, reduced, updated, removed or replaced.
- An **updated** outcome will maintain its original intent, but language may be added to make it more specific, measurable, actionable, relevant or timely.
- Outcomes may be **consolidated** together to form a single outcome, or activities underneath an existing outcome may be integrated into other outcomes.
- Outcomes may be **removed** from the Watershed Agreement.
- An outcome may be **replaced** by a new one that relates to the original's outcome intent or subject matter.
- An outcome may also be **reclassified**, in which it could adopt a new structure or be changed to a target.

What does it mean to be a target underneath an outcome?

- A target is a desired short-or-medium term result that will drive progress toward the outcome. The action taken to achieve the target is more specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound, ensuring work is publicly accountable, tracked appropriately and lessons are learned from the results.

## **General Beyond 2025 Process and Background**

What is Beyond 2025?

- Beyond 2025 refers to the effort being undertaken by the Chesapeake Bay Program to determine the next steps in restoring and conserving the Chesapeake Bay post-2025.

Why 2025?

- When the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* was signed in 2014, many of the 31 outcomes, or measurable restoration targets, listed 2025 as the intended date in which to meet these objectives.

What is the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*?

- The *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* is a voluntary agreement between the six watershed states, the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the federal government, containing 10 goals and 31 outcomes to advance the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay.

How did the Beyond 2025 effort come about?

- In 2022, the Chesapeake Executive Council [directed](#) the Principals' Staff Committee with recommending a critical path forward that prioritized and outlined the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* leading up to and beyond 2025. Two steering committees were created to aid the formation of these recommendations.
- The first steering committee, made up of Chesapeake Bay Program representatives from the Chesapeake Bay Commission, federal agencies, the seven watershed jurisdictions, advisory committees, non-profit organizations and other subject matter experts, reviewed the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to determine how each of the 31 outcomes were progressing toward meeting their objectives. They also assessed how emerging science, monitoring and analysis could help address existing and growing threats, and evaluated the progress made and challenges associated with meeting the pollutant reductions called for in the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL).
- The result was [Charting a Course to 2025](#), a report which also included recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025.

Have any of the 31 outcomes been met?

- Yes, as of 2023, [18 outcomes were on-course to be met by 2025 and 13 were off-course.](#)

What happens after 2025?

- In spring 2023, the second steering committee, again with Chesapeake Bay Program representatives from the Chesapeake Bay Commission, federal agencies, the seven watershed jurisdictions, advisory committees and non-profit organizations, convened to provide recommendations on moving the partnership into the next phase of Bay restoration for the Principals' Staff Committee and Chesapeake Executive Council to consider.

What did the steering committee recommend?

- [A Critical Path Forward for the Chesapeake Bay Program Beyond 2025](#) provided two recommendations.
- The first asked the Chesapeake Executive Council to do the following:
  - Affirm its continued commitment to working together in meeting the goals of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
  - Direct the Principals' Staff Committee to recommend revisions to the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* that take into account new science, emerging challenges and more effectively engage the people living in the watershed.
  - Each outcome should be reviewed to ensure it contributes to achieving the goals of the partnership, provides clear direction, and enables accountability and progress evaluation.
- The second recommendation calls for the partnership to propose ways to simplify its organizational structure and governance processes.
  - Any recommendations for streamlining the organizational structure and governance processes should enhance transparency and efficacy while ensuring effective coordination, collaboration and inclusivity.
  - Consider modifying the partnership structure and improving adaptive and science-based decision-making to achieve a more holistic vision of a healthy and resilient Bay and watershed.

What action did the Chesapeake Executive Council take in response?

- At the 2024 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting, members issued a [charge](#) to the Principals' Staff Committee, asking them to take the following actions:
  - Revise the existing *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, in accordance with the Chesapeake Bay Program's [Governance and Management Framework](#), by the end of 2025, including a review of the 31 outcomes.
    - Reviews may call for an outcome to be updated, consolidated, removed, replaced or reclassified or new outcomes to be added.

- The Chesapeake Executive Council asked that changes to the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* reflect:
  - A renewed and greater emphasis on engaging all communities throughout the watershed.
  - A mandate to address water quality and living resources.
  - An elevation of conservation as a key pillar for the partnership, along with science, restoration and partnership.
  - A grounding in the most current scientific understandings and issues.
  - Goals and outcomes that are measurable, time-bound and sufficient to complete the outcome as quickly as possible.
  - An acknowledgement that our scientific understanding is continuously evolving and our efforts should constantly adapt accordingly.
  - The fact that while all partners share a common goal, it is being approached from different perspectives, challenges and opportunities.
- Recommend a streamlined and simplified process and structure for the partnership, that is more inclusive of all communities and manageable for staff, supporting all partners as they work on achieving the outcomes.

Who ultimately approves the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*?

- The Chesapeake Executive Council will approve the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and recommendations for the partnership's structure and governance processes at their annual meeting in December 2025.

Will the revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* be signed by the Chesapeake Executive Council?

- No, since these are only revisions and not a new agreement.