

## **Beyond 2025 Talking Points**

Updated 04/03/25

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.

Got it. But 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.

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, a process that will take place throughout April and May.
- The Principals' Staff Committee will vote on the full, revised set of drafted outcomes on May 23, 2025.

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 an output.

Wait, I just finally understood what outcome means. What is an output?

- The current Watershed Agreement outcomes are actually a mix of outputs and outcomes. By understanding the differences between the two terms and ensuring our updated outcomes are consistent, it will help the partnership better understand the targets we are trying to meet.
- **Outcomes** represent what one wants to achieve over the long-term.
- **Outputs** describe short-term actions that are taken to achieve the outcome.
- Currently, the partnership uses indicators to measure progress for its outcomes. **Indicators** refer more to the tools that are used to measure progress toward outputs and outcomes.
- An example of these processes would be:

- Oyster Outcome: Continually increase the population of shellfish habitat from restored oyster populations.
- Oyster Output: Restore native oyster habitat and populations in 10 tributaries by 2025.
- Oyster Indicator: Acreage of oyster habitat restored per year.

But wait—there's more to the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* than the outcomes.

- The Principals' Staff Committee is also discussing revisions to the Vision, Preamble and Principles portion of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

How about streamlining the partnership structure and process?

- The Chesapeake Bay Program's Enhancing Partnership, Leadership and Management Goal Implementation Team is leading an informal process to aid the Management Board and Principals' Staff Committee in developing recommendations for streamlining the structure and governance process of the partnership.

Will the public be able to provide feedback on any of the recommendations?

- Yes, the public will have the option to provide feedback for 60 days beginning July 1, 2025.
- Public feedback can be accepted prior to July 1 by emailing [comments@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:comments@chesapeakebay.net).

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.

Where can I find information on the Beyond 2025 process?

- The most up-to-date information on the Beyond 2025 process can be found on the Chesapeake Bay Program's [Beyond 2025 webpage](#). The webpage includes the timeline, important documents, outcome review summaries and public feedback.