

CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM AND WATER RESOURCES UPDATES

January 2026

Chesapeake Bay Program

[Revised Bay Watershed Agreement Could Help Protect Local Tourism Industry](#)

Conduit Street (MACo Blog)

A major focus for Maryland agencies within the revised agreement is on improving shallow waterways, such as streams, coastlines, and rivers that come through counties across the state. The intent is that this localized attention can lead to big improvements in specific waterways that benefit nearby communities and their economic prospects.

[Chesapeake Bay officials poised to study inclusion of Native American tribes](#)

Maryland Matters

A document going before the governors on Tuesday will give Bay Program officials the go-ahead to study tribal inclusion, and “develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership.”

[New oyster restoration center will grow 50M oysters a year](#)

The Bay Journal

The Bay Foundation aims to grow 50 million oysters a year at the two-acre waterfront center on Tenthouse Creek, just off the West River in Anne Arundel County. The center will also be home to its 60-foot oyster restoration vessel.

[As the Chesapeake Bay cleanup enters a new era, it's fighting for relevance](#)

The Banner

As the Chesapeake restoration enters a new era — governors from across the watershed are expected in Baltimore this week to extend cleanup to 2040 — the movement appears uncertain about its future, according to interviews with over a dozen advocates, scientists and policymakers.

[Chesapeake Executive Council Approves Revised Watershed Agreement, Ushering in the Next Era of Bay Restoration](#)

Chesapeake Bay Program

The revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement contains four goals—Thriving Habitats, Fisheries and Wildlife; Clean Water; Healthy Landscapes; and Engaged Communities—and 21 outcomes. The partnership will now update or develop new Management Strategies for each outcome that outline how it will be achieved and include considerations such as monitoring, assessing and reporting progress, as well as where coordination with partners and stakeholders is needed.

[As governors gather in Baltimore, the Chesapeake Bay shows gains worth cheering](#)

The Banner

Even though the Chesapeake Bay Agreement didn't hit reduced nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution goals by the 2025 deadline, the coalition of state and federal governments did accomplish their goals on oyster restoration, fish passages, public access and sustainable fisheries.

[Chesapeake Bay leaders approve cleanup plan they call 'achievable'](#)

The Bay Journal

Leaders of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup approved major revisions Dec. 2 to the pact that has guided the effort for more than a decade, vowing speedier results despite uncertainty over federal funding.

[A familiar scene ushers in a new era of Chesapeake Bay restoration](#)

Chesapeake Bay Program

The scene was strikingly similar to one from 42 years ago. In front of a large crowd sat the governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; the mayor of Washington, D.C.; the deputy administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission (CBC), dressed in their professional best and excitedly describing plans to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

[Balancing the scales: Hope for reducing nutrients in the Chesapeake Bay](#)

The Bay Journal

They suggest that the region should put more effort into tactics that fundamentally rebalance the scales — so that the nutrients coming into a region in the form of animal feed or fertilizer more closely match what goes out in the form of meat, milk or other products.

[Bill could weaken EPA enforcement of Chesapeake Bay cleanup](#)

The Bay Journal

Legislation is moving through Congress that would tell the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to be “cooperative” with states that should be curbing pollution to the Chesapeake Bay – a directive that one Maryland lawmaker warns could undermine compliance with Bay cleanup goals.

[A grim year for the Severn River’s ospreys could be an omen for the Chesapeake’s future](#)

The Banner

“I’m still not that concerned about osprey as a species,” Watts said. “I’m concerned about the bay ecosystem.”

[Improving stream restoration outcomes across the Chesapeake Bay watershed](#)

Chesapeake Bay Program

“I’m still not that concerned about osprey as a species,” Watts said. “I’m concerned about the bay ecosystem.” This group of experts identified opportunities to better align and clarify current stream restoration goals and expectations. By improving how stream restoration is planned and measured, projects can deliver better results for both local streams and in turn, the Bay as a whole. The workshop led to several key findings and recommendations.

[New year, new environmental battles brew in Chesapeake Bay states](#)

The Bay Journal

Partisan clashes in Pennsylvania and budget headaches in Maryland cloud prospects for climate and environmental legislation in those states this year. But things are different in Virginia, where the election of a Democratic governor has raised expectations that measures stalled by her Republican predecessor will move forward.

[Congress approves more Bay funding than White House sought](#)

The Bay Journal

Rebuffing deep spending cuts proposed by the Trump administration, Congress has approved more funding for Chesapeake Bay cleanup and conservation than the White House requested — including

boosts for restoring oysters, dealing with invasive blue catfish and addressing whether menhaden, an important forage fish in the Bay, are being overfished.

[Chesapeake Bay 'dead zone' varied in 2025 but near average overall](#)

The Bay Journal

Overall oxygen conditions in the Chesapeake Bay during 2025 were near the average observed in recent decades. But as is often the case, “average” obscures conditions that at times were both notably better and worse than normal.

[Water Quality, Wastewater and Stormwater](#)

[DNR Scientists Chart Future for Freshwater Mussel Restoration in Maryland](#)

Maryland DNR

“Several million people get their drinking water from the Potomac River down near Washington, D.C,” Ashton said. “A lot of that water starts in the headwaters—it’s currently not being filtered by several million mussels on its way downstream. So if you value clean drinking water and recreational activities on the water, you should probably value what freshwater mussels do to that water before it gets to you.”

[2025 Chesapeake Bay dead zone near long-term average](#)

VIMS

The Chesapeake Bay experienced hypoxia close to the long-term average in overall size and duration this year, according to the annual Chesapeake Bay Dead Zone Report Card produced by William & Mary’s Batten School & VIMS in collaboration with Anchor QEA.

[States must modernize stream crossing standards to protect communities from flooding](#)

Headwaters Economics

More than 6 million culverts in the United States channel water from streams and rivers under roads and away from homes, businesses, hospitals, and other critical facilities. However, nearly two-thirds of those culverts were built to standards insufficient for today’s storms.

[Understanding Chesapeake Bay water clarity isn’t clear cut](#)

The Bay Journal

One of the major goals of the state-federal Bay Program partnership is to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering the Bay to improve clarity so that underwater grass beds can get enough light to survive.

[Enjoy water from your tap: Streams show improvement in Chesapeake Bay watershed](#)

WTOP

Over the past six years, the streams in the Chesapeake Bay watershed — which covers 64,000 square miles — has become cleaner. According to the latest data from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, there’s been a 1.4% improvement in overall stream health throughout the watershed.

[DC Water takes big step forward in Potomac River Tunnel project](#)

WTOP

D.C. Water is making progress with an initiative that aims to clean up the District’s waterways — the

Potomac River tunnel project. On Tuesday, a multiton cutter head was lowered to the bottom of a 100-foot shaft at West Potomac Park to attach to a tunnel-boring machine.

[What comes after the rain and why it matters so much](#)

The Bay Journal

Stormwater runoff carries with it everything on the land — fertilizer, pet waste, sewage from failing septic systems and pollutants from roads, parking lots and sidewalks — sending it downstream into the places where we're swimming, fishing and boating.

[DC Water Advancing Work on Bypass to Contain Sewer Overflow](#)

DC Water

DC Water and its contractor continue to make progress to contain the sewer overflow from a collapsed section of the Potomac Interceptor (PI), a major sewer line along Clara Barton Parkway near 495 in Montgomery County, MD.

[Salting roads for snowstorms is a growing source of pollution. Virginia officials are looking for alternatives.](#)

WHRO

When icy weather descends, snow isn't the only white stuff that appears on local roads. Virginia officials coat roadways with rock salt, or sodium chloride, to prevent people from sliding off slick sheets of ice. Salting streets is a relatively cheap and easy way to melt ice by lowering its freezing point. The U.S. uses between 10 to 25 million tons of salt each year. But once the storm clears, salt often ends up where it shouldn't be, creeping into rivers, groundwater and drinking water systems.

[Drinking Water, Water Supply and Drought](#)

[Overview of COG's Drought Plan and History](#)

MWCOG

This document, updated in April 2025, provides an overview of COG's Water Supply and Drought Awareness Response Plan and the CAO's role during times of drought.

[New report shows vulnerability of DC area water supply: Shortages could lead to restrictions, taps running dry](#)

WTOP

The report by ICPRB shows the region will have enough water in most years, but there is an increasing chance — up to about 1% in 2030 and up to about 5% in 2050 — that there will be water shortages.

[VA DEQ NEWS RELEASE: Drought Advisory Update](#)

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in coordination with the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force, has issued a drought warning advisory for 22 counties and 13 cities, and expanded the drought watch advisory to now include 61 counties and 18 cities in Virginia. Only 12 counties and 7 cities are not currently under drought watch or warning advisories.

['I've never seen anything like it': A winter drought grips the U.S.](#)

The Washington Post

More than two-thirds of the country is facing unusual dryness or drought, stretching from the Pacific

Northwest to the East Coast, touching every state except California. The stretch since July has been the driest period nationally since 2012.

PFAS

Virginia communities push back against sewage sludge on agricultural land as PFAS concerns grow

Virginia Mercury

The spokesperson went on to say that Synagro supports potential legislation to remove PFAS at the source or to implement discharge limitations for manufacturers to stop it from ending up in wastewater.

2026 Issue Preview: PFAS

Conduit Street (MACo Blog)

Ultimately, 2026 may prove pivotal in determining how Maryland manages PFAS. The path forward will require coordination across all levels of government to align environmental and public health initiatives with effective, practical solutions.

Climate and Energy

Water-Energy Nexus in the Potomac River Basin

ICPRB

In the Potomac River basin, this connection is increasingly relevant as regional energy demands grow, infrastructure expands, and water resource challenges intensify. Managing both resources efficiently is critical to long-term sustainability and resilience.

Report: Climate change imperils toxic sites across Chesapeake Bay region

The Bay Journal

Among the more notable sites in the Chesapeake Bay region that could face flooding by 2100: the Domino Sugar Refinery in Baltimore; the St. Michael's wastewater treatment plant on Maryland's Eastern Shore; the Fort Eustis Army base in Newport News, VA; DuPont's Spruance Plant in Chesterfield County, VA; and the Washington Navy Yard in the District of Columbia.

Eastern Shore counties challenge Maryland's \$340M deal to relicense Conowingo Dam

The Banner

But within weeks of a \$341 million settlement announced in October, the Eastern Shore group Clean Chesapeake Coalition challenged the new environmental certification issued by Maryland for the dam's owner Constellation Energy, arguing that their closed-door negotiations violated state law.

Eastern Shore opposition to Maryland's \$340M Conowingo Dam deal splinters

The Banner

Barely a month after several Eastern Shore counties challenged Maryland and Constellation Energy's \$340 million deal to relicense the Conowingo Dam, three out of four objecting jurisdictions have backed out of the appeal.

Maryland lawmakers override climate, environmental bill vetoes

The Bay Journal

Meeting this week in special session, Maryland lawmakers passed again a trio of climate and environmental bills that Gov. Wes Moore had vetoed after the 2025 General Assembly.

[Final county withdraws challenge to Maryland's \\$340M Conowingo Dam deal](#)

The Banner

Last month, three of four counties that had signed onto the Clean Chesapeake Coalition's administrative appeal of the dam deal backed out. Then, late this week, the last jurisdiction backing the appeal, Cecil County, also withdrew, marking an end to a short-lived challenge of the long-awaited settlement.

[Environment and energy groups set priorities for 2026 legislative session](#)

Virginia Mercury

As the state prepares to inaugurate its next governor and lawmakers return to Richmond for 2026 next General Assembly legislative session this week, energy and environment policies are expected to dominate debates. Advocacy groups are laying out policies they want to see garner lawmakers' support and the governor's signature, with many familiar bills that failed in recent years.

[Food, Forestry and Agriculture](#)

[Scientists Flooded a Forest to Catch a Ghost Forest in the Making. Here's What They Found](#)

Smithsonian Magazine

In a low-lying forest at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), a team of scientists are quietly predicting the future. For three summers, they've flooded the forest with brief deluges of freshwater and saltwater. They're mimicking the heavy downpours and storm surges expected as more extreme weather batters the East Coast.

[Meet the beetle brigade saving East Coast evergreens](#)

The Banner

Beneath the treetops of Rocky Gap State Park, Maryland is breeding an army of predator beetles born to hunt a vampiric pest that is killing the forest's eastern hemlocks.

[Upcoming Meetings and Events](#)

FARM: TBD

CBPC: Friday, March 20th 2026

[COG Staff Contacts](#)

Sushanth Gupta: sgupta@mwkog.org

Caitlin Bolton: cbolton@mwkog.org

Katie Dyer: kdyer@mwkog.org

Christine Howard, cdhoward@mwkog.org

Lindsay Smith (Food and Agriculture), lsmith@mwkog.org