

Chesapeake Bay Program Updates

1.23.2026





10 GOALS
31 OUTCOMES



4 GOALS
21 OUTCOMES

**FOUR CORE
WATERSHED
GOALS**



21 OUTCOMES WITH SPECIFIC TARGETS

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife

- Blue Crabs
- Brook Trout
- Fish Habitat
- Fish Passage
- Oysters
- Stream Health
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)
- Wetlands

Clean Water

- Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment
- Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring
- Toxic and Emerging Contaminants

Healthy Landscapes

- Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions
- Healthy Forests and Trees
- Land Use Planning and Decision Support
- Protected Lands

Engaged Communities

- Local Leadership
- Public Access
- Stewardship
- Student Environmental Literacy Experiences
- School District Environmental Literacy Planning
- Workforce

Water Quality goal

Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorous & Sediment - 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment through multiple lines of evidence, including modeling and monitoring data.

Toxic & Emerging Contaminants - 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.

- 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 - 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Maintain or exceed the rate of improvement in the water quality standards attainment indicator relative to the 1985-2022 baseline.
- Analyze and report status/loads, trends and factors affecting those trends for nontidal and tidal water quality.



CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT

2025

Changes to the structure and governance

- The implementation process requires consultation with the existing PSC, Goal Team, Advisory Committees, and Program Support.
- Revise Leadership Components, Implementation Components, and Process for Decision Making iii. Develop an Annual Operations and Multi-Year Procedure section
- The PSC will receive a complete draft of the proposed revisions on March 24th for discussion at the April 7th PSC meeting. The PSC will finalize revisions on June 30th.
- The deadline for finalizing structure and governance recommendations to July 1, 2026.

Changes to the structure and governance

- The Implementation Team will brief the PSC on draft revisions to the Governance and Management Framework at the April 7th PSC Meeting.
- The MB will seek consensus on the revised Governance and Management Framework at their June 12th meeting. Supermajority voting will take place if consensus is not achieved.
- The Implementation Team will deliver a revised Governance and Management Framework by June 16 for acceptance at the June 30th PSC Meeting. Supermajority voting will take place if consensus is not achieved.

Changes to the structure and governance

- Revise Leadership Components (Section V(A-B))
- Revise Implementation Components (Section V(C-H))
- Revise “Process for Decision-Making” (Section VI)
- Develop an “Annual Operations and Multi-Year Procedures” Section collated from Sections VII, VIII, IX, X)

2025 Executive Council Charge

- *Principals' Staff Committee is charged with working with federally recognized tribal nations to develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership.*



Chesapeake Executive Council
*Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee:
Tribes as a Formal and Enduring Partner in the
Chesapeake Bay Program*

Whereas Indigenous knowledge and guardianship are vital to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed;

Therefore, acknowledging the sovereignty of the federally recognized tribal nations within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this Chesapeake Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee to work with those federally recognized tribal nations to develop recommendations by July 1, 2026, on how best to include tribes across the watershed in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, recognizing that the partnership operates under a "Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program." This work shall be done in alignment with current efforts to fulfill the "Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course Beyond 2025," Item #2.

In developing recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee shall direct research into relevant governance matters, including but not limited to partner responsibilities and expectations, pathways for designating and identifying partner representatives, and formal channels for partnership, including signature on the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

As part of its recommendations, the Principals' Staff Committee may prepare a draft memorandum of understanding with the federally recognized tribes within the watershed outlining Chesapeake Bay Program partner expectations and commitments, recognizing budgetary and resource needs and constraints.

Furthermore, the Principals' Staff Committee shall explore opportunities for advancing and respecting Indigenous guardianship and Indigenous knowledge within watershed restoration planning and implementation.

Impetus for the 2025 Executive Council Charge

- The Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC) signed and submitted a resolution to the Chesapeake Bay Program in January 2025 (modified in July 2025), requesting the following:
 - **Include the Indigenous Conservation Council as a signatory to the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement** to support Tribal Nations in their right to exercise their treaty rights and serve as full partners in its protection and restoration;
 - **Establish and fund an Indigenous Guardianship Program** as a priority within the Agreement's revised goals and strategies that would direct funding to the ICC as a new jurisdictional Signatory partner to be sub-granted to Tribal Nation members to build their tribal capacity; and,
 - **Expand the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) with an additional standing seat committed to sharing and honoring Indigenous science** within the partnership and building the engagement of Indigenous scientists to enhance the effectiveness of the partnership and respect for Indigenous science.

Activities Underway

- Signatory Team established to implement EC charge and develop recommendations, in collaboration with the federally-recognized tribes, for PSC review and approval – first meeting was January 21.

Name	Affiliation
Brian Hamilton, Lucinda Power, Keith Bolt	EPA (Coordinator)
Kevin McLean	VA DEQ
Leila Duman	MD DNR
Claire Jantz	PA DEP
Marel King	CBC
Holly Walker	DNREC
Julia Wakeling	DOEE

Name	Affiliation
Dana Adkins	Chickahominy Indian Tribe
Jessica Phillips	Chickahominy Indian Tribe – Eastern Division
John Pierce	Monacan Indian Nation
Barbara Orf	Nansemond Indian Nation
Joe Capella	Pamunkey Indian Tribe
Alana Hutka	Rappahannock Tribe
Chief Frank Adams	Upper Mattaponi Tribe

Recommended Scope of Work*

- Establish signatory partner definition, roles and responsibilities, and expectations
- Identify pathways and processes for designating partner representatives, including signatories to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement
- Engage and solicit feedback from the tribes on their:
 - Expectations of a signatory partner and level of participation in the partnership
 - Vision for how an Indigenous Guardianship can support the Agreement's goals and outcomes, and vice versa
 - Role within the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
- Signatory team develops recommendations, in collaboration with the federally recognized tribes, to the PSC on how to meet EC charge
- ❖ Ultimately, the recommendations should address and respond to the three ICC requests.

**Needs further discussion/refinement by signatory team*

Timeline

- **January – March 2026:** Convene team, collaborate with tribes, draft recommendations
 - First Tribal Representative and Signatory Representative meeting set for February 3
- **April 7, 2026:** Present draft recommendations to the PSC at their quarterly meeting
- **June 30, 2026:** PSC finalizes and approves recommendations (to meet July 1 deadline)

Questions?

