

Charting a Course to 2025

In October 2022, the Chesapeake Executive Council charged the Principals' Staff Committee with recommending a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#) leading up to and beyond 2025. The [Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course to 2025 and Beyond](#) asked the Principals' Staff Committee to report back to the Executive Council at their 2023 annual meeting with recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025. *Charting a Course to 2025* was developed with input from federal agencies, jurisdictions, advisory committees, non-profit organizations, other subject matter experts and hundreds of public comments.

Outcome Attainability Assessment

The report includes a status update for each one of the 31 *Watershed Agreement* outcomes, including further detail on the challenges, current opportunities and recommendations on how to best progress to 2025. The assessment revealed that **18 outcomes are on course, 11 are off course and two are uncertain**, pending upcoming data updates. Notable successes include improvements in stream health, opening hundreds of miles of river to fish passage, globally significant oyster restoration, reaching 100% of sediment reduction targets and increasing the public's access to the water at hundreds of locations. For those lagging outcome areas, like forest buffers and wetlands, the assessment identified their challenges and opportunities to further progress.

High Level Report Recommendations

Overall, the report contains close to 200 recommendations to help the Chesapeake Bay Program accelerate progress. These many recommendations have been consolidated into a concise, critical path forward for the partnership for the next two years into and through 2025.

- **Accelerate Investments**: Unprecedented levels of funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act allow partners to use new funds to accelerate investments in lagging outcomes.
- **Integrate Emerging Science and Monitoring**: Science, monitoring and analysis are core functions of the Chesapeake Bay Program, providing insights on water quality, climate change, living resources, contaminants and best management practice implementation. Recent scientific reports and findings point toward a greater focus on key shallow water habitats, home to marshes, submerged aquatic vegetation and oyster reefs. More social science must be integrated to advance implementation programs, particularly where changes in behavior and land stewardship are needed, and when engaging more directly with local communities to meet their needs.
- **Fast-Track Existing Action Plans**: The Chesapeake Bay Program will lean in harder to the implementation of existing actions plans, including Phase III WIPs, the partnership's DEIJ strategy and climate change workplan. Keystone interventions are Forest Buffers and Wetlands, and each now have new action plans crafted by state jurisdictions and their partners. These actions plans have spatial components that can inform the design and selection of implementation projects for greater targeted impact.