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Chesapeake Bay Program

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An oyster farm built for tough times

This multi-purpose wharf helps keep its community afloat



a helping hand to oyster aquaculture industry

Restaurant restrictions continue to plague a budding industry

Where to find the best summits in the Chesapeake Bay watershed

Maryland's oyster aquaculture industry

Maryland's budding aquaculture industry faces barriers to expansion and implications from COVID-19

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Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

In 2014, our partners signed the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, establishing goals, outcomes, and management strategies to guide the restoration of the Bay, its tributaries and the lands around them.

chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement



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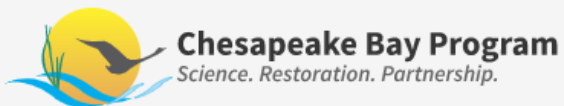
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WHAT WE DO > WHAT GUIDES US > CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Signed in 2014, this landmark accord establishes goals and outcomes for the restoration of the Bay, its tributaries and the lands that surround them.





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Who We Are

What We Do

Since the Chesapeake Bay Program’s foundation in 1983, its partners have used written agreements to guide the restoration of the nation’s largest estuary and its watershed. Setting goals and tracking progress holds partners accountable for their work, while developing new agreements over time ensures our goals are aligned with the best available science to attain restoration success.

In 2009, it became clear that we needed a new agreement that would accelerate the pace of restoration and align federal directives with state and local goals to create a healthy Bay. Bay Program partners gathered input from residents, stakeholders, academic institutions, local governments and more to draft an inclusive, goal-oriented document that would address current and emerging environmental concerns.

On June 16, 2014, the Chesapeake Executive Council signed the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (amended January 24, 2020). Signatories include representatives from the entire watershed, committing for the first time the Bay’s headwater states to full partnership in the Bay Program. This plan for collaboration across the Bay’s political boundaries establishes goals and outcomes for the restoration of the Bay, its tributaries and the lands that surround them.

The agreement named adaptive management as a core principle. Adaptive management is a process that supports making decisions in the face of uncertainty, reducing uncertainty over time and responding to changes. The Chesapeake Bay Program applies this process through the Strategy Review System, the documentation for which can be found on ChesapeakeDecisions.

Read the full Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (pdf).

Vision

Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders.

Themes

This agreement contains five themes consisting of 10 goals that will advance the restoration and protection of the Bay watershed.

These goals are interrelated: improvements in water quality can mean healthier fish and shellfish; the conservation of land can mean more habitat for wildlife; and a boost in environmental literacy can mean a rise in stewards of the Bay’s resources. Our environment is a system, and these goals will support the health of the public and of the watershed as a whole.



CHESAPEAKE WATERSHED AGREEMENT

2 0 1 4

As amended, January 24, 2020

GOALS & OUTCOMES

VITAL HABITATS (CONTINUED)



GOAL: Restore, enhance and protect a network of land and water habitats to support fish and wildlife, and to afford other public benefits, including water quality, recreational uses and scenic value across the watershed.

Fish Passage
Outcome



Continually increase access to habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in Chesapeake Bay freshwater rivers and streams. By 2025, restore historical historic fish migratory routes by opening an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage, with restoration success indicated by the consistent presence of alewife, blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad, American eel and brook trout, to be monitored in accordance with available agency resources and collaboratively developed methods.

**As amended, January 28, 2020 by the Principals' Staff Committee. See p. 17 for details and online at https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement*

Submerged Aquatic
Vegetation (SAV)
Outcome



Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of SAV (underwater grasses) in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay. Progress toward this ultimate outcome will be measured against a target of 90,000 acres by 2017 and 130,000 acres by 2025.

Forest Buffer
Outcome



Continually increase the capacity of forest buffers to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Restore 900 miles per year of riparian forest buffer and conserve existing buffers until at least 70 percent of riparian areas throughout the watershed are forested.

Tree Canopy
Outcome



Continually increase urban tree canopy capacity to provide air quality, water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Expand urban tree canopy by 2,400 acres by 2025.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

LAND CONSERVATION

The landscapes around the Bay and its tributaries are ecologically, culturally, historically and recreationally valuable to the people and communities of the region. Stimulating, renewing and expanding commitments to conserve priority lands for use and enjoyment is an integral part of furthering the watershed's identity and spirit.



GOAL: Conserve landscapes treasured by citizens in order to maintain water quality and habitat; sustain working forests, farms and maritime communities; and conserve lands of cultural, indigenous and community value.

Protected Lands
Outcome



By 2025, protect an additional two million acres of lands throughout the watershed—currently identified as high conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level—including 225,000 acres of wetlands and 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality. (2010 baseline year)

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Land Use Methods and
Metrics Development
Outcome



Continually improve our knowledge of land conversion and the associated impacts throughout the watershed. By December 2021, develop a watershed-wide methodology and local-level metrics for characterizing the rate of farmland, forest and wetland conversion, measuring the extent and rate of change in impervious surface coverage and quantifying the potential impacts of land conversion to water quality, healthy watersheds and communities. Launch a public awareness campaign to share this information with local governments, elected officials and stakeholders.

**As amended, January 28, 2020 by the Principals' Staff Committee. See p. 17 for details and online at https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement*

Land Use Options



By the end of 2021, work with local governments

AMENDMENTS TO GOALS AND OUTCOMES

As discussed on page 3 of this Watershed Agreement, the signatory partners recognized that:

"As the signatories identify new opportunities and concerns, Goals or Outcomes may be adopted or modified. Any changes or additions to Goals will be approved by the Executive Council. The Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) will approve changes or additions to Outcomes, although significant changes or additions will be raised to the Executive Council for approval. Proposed changes to Goals and Outcomes or the addition of new ones will be open for public input before being finalized."

On January 24, 2020, the PSC approved the following modifications to three 2014 Watershed Agreement outcomes. The PSC agreed that final approval of these edits to the original outcomes by the Executive Council was not necessary:

Diversity: "Identify ~~minority~~ stakeholder groups not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making or implementation of current conservation and restoration activities and create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage these groups in the Partnership's efforts."

Fish Passage: "Continually increase ~~available access to~~ habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed's freshwater rivers and streams. By 2025, restore historical fish migration routes by opening ~~1,000 additional stream miles~~ **an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage**. Restoration success will be indicated by the consistent presence of alewife, blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad, American eel and brook trout, to be monitored in accordance with available agency resources and collaboratively developed methods."

Land Use Methods and Metrics: "Continually improve our knowledge of land conversion and the associated impacts throughout the watershed. By ~~2016~~ **December 2021**, develop a watershed-wide methodology and local-level metrics for characterizing the rate of farmland, forest and wetland conversion, measuring the extent and rate of change in impervious surface coverage and quantifying the potential impacts of land conversion to water quality, healthy watersheds and communities. Launch a public awareness campaign to share this information with local governments, elected officials and stakeholders."



Abundant Life

Clean Water

Conserved Lands

Engaged Communities

Climate Change



The **Chesapeake Bay Program** is committed to tracking our progress toward the goals and outcomes of the **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement**. The accurate, up-to-date and accessible information found here helps oversight groups hold us accountable for our work. We envision **abundant life, clean water, conserved lands** and a diverse range of **citizens and stakeholders** who will steward an environmentally and economically sustainable watershed.



Home

Vision

We envision an environmentally and economically sustainable watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders.

Since the **Chesapeake Bay Program** was founded in 1983, we have used written agreements to guide the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Setting goals and tracking our progress holds us accountable for our work, while developing new agreements over time ensures our efforts are aligned with the best available science to reach restoration success.

The **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement** was signed on June 16, 2014 and amended on January 24, 2020. This inclusive, goal-oriented document addresses current and emerging environmental concerns and aligns federal directives with state and local goals