



Chesapeake Bay Program

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News Release

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Six Governors, D.C. Mayor, EPA Administrator and Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair Sign Landmark Agreement to Restore and Protect Bay Watershed

Annapolis, MD – This afternoon, the Chesapeake Executive Council—which represents the seven watershed jurisdictions, a tri-state policy group and federal agencies—signed the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#), committing Chesapeake Bay Program partners to a set of interrelated goals to advance the restoration, conservation and protection of the Bay, its tributaries and the lands that surround them.

Agreement signatories include the governors of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the mayor of the District of Columbia; the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on behalf of the Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay. This marks the first time that the Bay's headwater states of Delaware, New York and West Virginia have pledged to work toward restoration goals that reach beyond water quality, making them full partners in the Bay Program and its watershed-wide work. The signing of this collaborative accord took place on the Annapolis, Maryland, waterfront, at the Executive Council's annual [meeting](#).

“Today we celebrate the most inclusive, collaborative, goal-oriented Agreement the Chesapeake Bay watershed has ever seen, highlighted by unprecedented participation from the headwater states and the public,” said Chesapeake Executive Council Chair and Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley. “This Agreement not only addresses our continuing water quality and land use challenges, it also confronts critical emerging issues—environmental literacy, toxic contaminants and climate change. Finally, it builds upon the strength of our diverse citizenry, calling to action the nearly 18 million people that call our watershed home. Together, we can and will achieve our united vision of a healthy Bay and a productive watershed, cared for by engaged citizens at every level.”

The Agreement contains ten goals and twenty-nine measurable, time-bound outcomes that will help create a healthy watershed: they will lower nutrient and sediment pollution; ensure our waters are free of toxic contaminants; sustain blue crabs, oysters and forage fish; restore wetlands, underwater grass beds and other habitats; conserve farmland and forests; boost public access to and education about the Bay and its tributaries; and increase the climate resiliency of the watershed's resources, habitats and communities.

Years in the making, this landmark set of goals and outcomes has been mutually agreed upon by Bay Program partners. By accomplishing these goals, partners will restore clean water, abundant wildlife and a vibrant cultural heritage to the Bay, where citizens and stakeholders will have access to waterways and open space and be engaged in conservation and stewardship.

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“I am pleased to see that this Agreement aligns closely with strategies developed by federal agencies in response to President Obama’s Executive Order on Bay protection and restoration,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, who also chairs the Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay. “When there is consensus and commitment toward a common goal, our effectiveness is that much stronger. Together, we demonstrate our commitment toward a common goal—a restored, healthy and economically vibrant watershed.”

The Agreement was developed with input from citizens and stakeholders, who submitted thousands of comments during two public review periods. Public input had a direct impact on the content of the Agreement—influencing partners to add goals related to environmental stewardship, toxic contaminants and climate change—and will continue to contribute to how the Agreement is achieved. Moving forward, Bay Program partners will collaborate with academic institutions, local governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and citizens in developing and implementing the management strategies that will define how we will accomplish the Agreement’s goals and outcomes.

“The signatories cannot implement this Agreement alone. We’ll need the help of local governments, businesses and citizen groups,” said Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair and state Rep. Ronald Miller. “The management strategies are a new tool introduced in this Agreement to recognize and coordinate the good work of these important partners.”

The public will also be able to hold partners accountable for their actions, thanks to a level of transparency not seen in previous Bay Program agreements. Watershed restoration efforts have shown that firm accountability can lead to results, and Bay Program partners stand ready to embrace new ideas and improve the verification of their actions to strengthen public confidence in their work.

“In my long career in public service, I have not witnessed a more genuine effort to solicit public input than that made by Chesapeake Bay Program partners in writing the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*,” said Bay Program Director Nick DiPasquale. “This Agreement is a clearer, stronger and more comprehensive document because of this transparency, and its implementation will continue to be influenced by the interests and expertise of every individual, organization, community, local government, business and partner that wants to be involved in this endeavor.”

In addition to signing the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, Executive Council members heard from the Bay Program’s three Advisory Committees today. These committees represent citizens, local governments and scientific and technical interests from across the watershed and the nation, and have provided invaluable advice to the Executive Council over the years. Under the new accord, they will continue to advocate for the use of sound science, targeted and informed restoration, and public engagement at the local, regional and national levels.

Executive Council members also heard from four high school students representing Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. While each of these students was introduced to conservation in a different way, they have all had valuable experiences on the Bay and spoke about the importance of engaging future generations in environmental restoration, advocacy and leadership.

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The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership that has coordinated and conducted the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since its creation in 1983. Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council include the governors of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the mayor of the District of Columbia; the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the federal government. This group is responsible for setting the Chesapeake Bay Program’s policy agenda. To learn more, visit www.chesapeakebay.net.

Additional Quotes

“Clean water and healthy watersheds are essential to Delaware’s quality of life and agricultural and tourism industries. With this new Agreement, we will build upon the hard work of farmers and small communities in Delaware’s portion of the Chesapeake watershed and the millions of dollars of investments that have been made to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediment entering our waterways. We look forward to the progress that can be made under this new Agreement.”

--- Delaware Gov. Jack Markell

“I am thrilled that the new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* dovetails so nicely with the groundbreaking work that the District is already doing to improve the health of our waterways. The Agreement complements our Sustainable DC Plan, under which all of the District’s agencies are already working toward many of the same goals as outlined in the Agreement. This compact will definitely enhance the water quality of our two main rivers—the Anacostia and the Potomac—and promote environmental literacy and stewardship citywide.”

--- District of Columbia Mayor Vincent C. Gray

“New York State has aggressively implemented effective water quality programs while assisting critical industries in the region such as agriculture and looks forward to continuing to collaborate with other states to help restore water quality in Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Protecting our water resources is an important goal that requires a strong commitment and the Chesapeake Bay Program brings together various stakeholders to achieve a cleaner, healthier Bay.”

--- New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

“This Agreement is a sensible way to approach improving both the water quality and the environment of this region that means so much to all of us. I applaud the cooperative efforts of all Bay watershed entities that have made this historic Agreement possible.”

--- Pennsylvania Gov. Thomas Corbett

“Virginia has been and will continue to be a leader in the Bay restoration effort and I have made water quality protection a key element of my natural resources agenda. But there is more to do, not only for water quality but for land conservation, habitat restoration, fisheries management and the rest of the issues embodied in the goals of this new Agreement. Virginia will be a full and active partner with our sister states, the District of Columbia, the federal government and the many citizens and stakeholders dedicated to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.”

--- Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe

“By continuing our efforts to ensure a cleaner, healthier Chesapeake Bay, we are also supporting our state’s robust tourism industry and the miles of rivers and streams that provide our families and visitors with recreational opportunities to enjoy all that’s wild and wonderful about the Mountain State.”

--- West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin