

Chesapeake Executive Council reaffirms commitment to restoring Bay

Region's leaders address challenges in meeting pollutant reduction goals by 2025



Oxon Hill, Md. – Representatives from the six Chesapeake Bay watershed states, the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gathered today in Oxon Hill, Maryland for the annual meeting of the Chesapeake Executive Council.

Established over 35 years ago, the [Chesapeake Executive Council](#), is responsible for guiding the policy agenda and setting conservation and restoration goals for the regional, watershed partnership, the Chesapeake Bay Program. Members 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 EPA on behalf of the federal government.

The message echoed throughout today's meeting was a resounding call for all partners to recommit to the goals set under the [Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load](#) (Bay TMDL) and the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to ensure the entire watershed keeps moving toward a sustainable future.

"EPA will continue to support the Bay watershed states, the District of Columbia and our many partners involved in restoring the Bay and improving water quality," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. "Together, we have made significant progress, and we are committed to continuing that progress as we implement the next critical phase of work."

Each of the six watershed states and the District of Columbia recently submitted their final [Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans](#) (WIPs), which lay out the strategy each plan to take by 2025 in order to meet their targets for reducing pollution. During the meeting, each member spoke about some of the more innovative ways they plan to meet these goals.

"In just the last year, Virginia has made significant progress in meeting our conservation and restoration goals," said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam. "Working with scientists, policy experts and a wide range of stakeholders, we have designed a bold and comprehensive roadmap that not only enables Virginia to fulfill its commitment to restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay by 2025, but also fully addresses the increased pollution caused by development and climate change. I look forward to continuing close collaboration with our federal and state watershed partners to execute an effective Bay cleanup effort, ensuring that future generations can continue to benefit from our vast waterways."

Queen Richardson, a RiverSmart Homes program assistant with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, captivated the Council with her personal story of how she took advantage of many of the District's green job training programs and turned the skills she acquired into a career. The District of Columbia, just across the

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Potomac River from today's meeting, hopes to make long-lasting environmental contributions by investing in their residents through green job training programs.

"When we restore our streams, wetlands and shorelines, and reduce polluted runoff, we create economic opportunities for our residents and businesses and make our city more resilient to the impacts of climate change", said DC Mayor Muriel Bowser. "The District's clean up strategy is about investing in our infrastructure and in our people and making sure we're doing our part to clean up the Chesapeake Bay."

Today's meeting also addressed some of the challenges facing the 35-year old partnership. Skip Stiles, executive director of Wetlands Watch, spoke about the need accelerate progress in restoring wetlands and planting more trees, especially riparian buffers, to help meet water quality goals. He also noted that these actions would help better prepare the region to face a changing climate.

In June 2014, the Executive Council signed the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#), with the vision of fostering 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.

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan was elected as chair for a third term and the Council heard remarks from the Chesapeake Bay Program's three Advisory Committees, who represent citizens, local governments and the scientific and technical interests from across the watershed.

"I am incredibly honored to have been reelected to serve as chair of this Executive Council for the year ahead, and I believe very strongly that if we continue to embrace a spirit of bipartisan cooperation, we can, and we will, find real, commonsense solutions to protect the Chesapeake Bay," said Maryland Governor Larry Hogan. "This partnership stands at a critical juncture, with seven revised jurisdictional plans and the goal of clean water in sight. After three decades of collaboration with our federal and regional partners, we are witnessing significant improvements toward clean water and increased resiliency, but there is much more work to be done."