



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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The Chesapeake Bay Commission held its third quarterly meeting of 2025 on Thursday and Friday, November 13-14, 2025. The meeting was held in Stratford, Virginia.

Commission members in attendance:

Delegate Alex Askew
Delegate Robert Bloxom
Delegate David Bulova
Warren Elliott, PA Citizen Member
Representative Carol Hill-Evans
Secretary Josh Kurtz
Senator Sara Love
Senator Jeremy McPike
Representative Nikki Rivera
Delegate Sheila Ruth
Secretary Jessica Shirley
Senator Richard Stuart
Secretary Stefanie Taillon
Carmera Thomas-Wilhite, MD Citizen Member
Senator Gene Yaw

Not in attendance:

Delegate Nick Allen
Representative Kerry Benninghoff
Delegate Julian Ivey
Senator Scott Martin
Senator Mary Washington
RDML Stephen Barnett

Member Staff:

MD David Goshorn
PA Jill Whitcomb (day one)

CBC Staff:

Jen Dieux
Anna Killius
Marel King
Adrienne Kotula
Greg O'Connell
Maggie Woodward

Thursday, November 13, 2025

WELCOME AND NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Chair Love called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m. and welcomed members to the Stratford Hall Historic Preserve. She then welcomed the newest member, Maryland Citizen Representative Carmera Thomas-Wilhite. Chair Love also announced the Commission's New Department of Defense Liaison, Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett. Due to the temporary lapse in federal appropriations, Rear Admiral Barnett was unable to attend the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Chair Love then asked Executive Director Anna Killius to call the roll. A quorum was present.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Chair Love called for approval of the minutes from the September meeting. Representative Carol Hill-Evans moved for approval. Delegate Ruth seconded the motion. The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

ADOPTION/MODIFICATION OF AGENDA

Chair Love asked for comments or questions on the agenda from the members. Hearing none, Delegate Bulova moved to approve the agenda as presented. Delegate Bloxom seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

FOLLOW-UP FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING

Chair Love asked Executive Director Killius to present the group with follow-ups from the September meeting. Ms. Killius provided updates as follows:

Discrete requests for information on PFAS and biosolids

During the discussion of PFAS and biosolids, a number of questions were posed by members looking for information that would help in crafting policies preventing the land application of PFAS-contaminated biosolids. Much of that information focused on better understanding what authorities or policies were in place in each of our jurisdictions and how policy choices in one state may impact another. CBC staff provided answers to those information requests with members after the meeting.

Connecting with the Tribal Nations in Virginia

During the discussion about the Indigenous Conservation Council's calls for increased tribal partnership in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, it was suggested that Commission staff connect with the tribal advisory boards in Virginia to complement efforts we have already made in communicating with the ICC. Staff reviewed both the Commission on Updating Virginia Law to Reflect Federal Recognition of Virginia Tribes and the Virginia Indian Advisory Board on State Recognition. The membership of these bodies strongly overlaps with the membership of the Indigenous Conservation Council. Since the Commission has already been in communication with the Council and its representatives, it would seem that the desired connections have been achieved.

Making sure procurement experts in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia are connected

During the discussion of the shared challenges in implementing pay-for-performance programs in our states, the Commission identified the need to connect procurement teams at the state level so that they can share ideas and lessons learned. After the meeting, CBC staff confirmed that the procurement authorities in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia are in conversation with each other, and we'll be sure to check in with them and these programs periodically for any obstacles that the Commission can assist in resolving.

Blue Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment

In 2021, the Commission requested the initiation of a new Blue Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment based on declining juvenile population numbers seen in recent surveys. The Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee for the Bay agreed, and with funding provided by Maryland, Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay Program, a 2026 blue crab benchmark stock assessment is underway. The new model will be developed and undergo peer review by independent fisheries scientists before being accepted for use. The assessment is still moving at its expected pace. We should see results in early 2026 and a detailed presentation will be provided to the Commission at that time.

WHAT ARE THE FISH TRYING TO TELL US?

Dr. Mary Fabrizio, Professor, Virginia Institute of Marine Science at the College of William and Mary, discussed the impacts of climate change on population dynamics of the Bay's fisheries. She explained that impacts of warming water vary for different species, but can include metabolic stress, mismatches between the time of hatching and availability of food for larvae, shorter spawning seasons, and shifts in Bay habitat that are suitable for a given species. Dr. Fabrizio also explained that warmer water in the Bay has led to species inhabiting coastal ocean habitats and has brought southern species (such as southern flounder and penaeid shrimp) into the Bay. The management implications for Bay fisheries include adjusting expected fishery production levels, considering a change to temperature-dependent fishery management, revisiting time-of-year restrictions for species, and striving to reduce non-climate related stressors like construction and passive fishing gear.

Captain Chris Newsome of Bay Fly Fishing shared his perspective as a business owner who has relied on Bay fisheries for 25 years. He reported the decline in Bay fisheries that he has witnessed firsthand, which he attributed to a combination of anthropogenic factors (such as population growth, pollution, and technology to increase fishing efficiency) and environmental factors. Captain Newsome analogized the current approach for managing fisheries in the present era of rapid change to driving a car relying solely on a rear-view mirror and underscored the need for new forward-looking approaches. He especially emphasized the need for greater accountability for fishery managers when overfishing occurs or is predicted based on a policy decision and the need to not penalize conservation by reducing quotas for states that did not take their full share in a prior year.

Kate Wilke, Fisheries Scientist at The Nature Conservancy, addressed fishery management from a Mid-Atlantic perspective. She highlighted the value of recreation fisheries, with \$3.6 billion spent on recreational fishing trips in the region in 2021. Because of the shifts seen in species throughout the region, Ms. Wilke discussed the need for fishery managers to coordinate and remain nimble, including through making allocations based on projected stocks rather than historical patterns.

After Commission questions and discussion, Chair Love thanked the panelists and introduced the next panel.

A SUCCESS STORY: THE WORLD'S LARGEST OYSTER REEF RESTORATION

Adam Kenyon, Chief of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Shellfish Management Division, provided an overview of Virginia's efforts to restore oysters in the Bay. Mr. Kenyon shared that funds spent on oyster replenishment provide at least a 7:1 return for Virginia's economy. Having recently completed restoration projects in six tributaries -- one more than the state committed to under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement — Virginia is looking to the future of oyster restoration. Mr. Kenyon elaborated on the state's efforts to foster collaboration between communities, scientists, and industry leaders through the Blue Ribbon Oyster Panel, the goals for restoration in tributaries to the Potomac River, and initiatives to identify alternative substrates for oyster habitat.

Jackie Shannon, Virginia Oyster Restoration Specialist for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, shared the restoration keys to success identified by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. She emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement at all levels and praised the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for bringing stakeholders together to ensure restoration partners had open communication and a common vision for the goal. Ms. Shannon also shared some of the design and technological innovations that enabled CBF to more effectively build new oyster habitats.

Tommy Kellum, owner of W.E. Kellum Seafood, described how private industry has worked with partners to ensure successful restoration and a thriving oyster industry. Mr. Kellum celebrated the collaboration that occurred to respond to the devastation that oyster populations suffered in the 1990s. He encouraged the Bay Program to include private industry in restoration conversations and to capture the investments industry makes in restoration.

After questions and discussion, Chair Love thanked the panelists for their time and expertise, and the Commission took a fifteen-minute break.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

After returning from the break, Chair Love opened the floor for discussion or comments by the members. The Commission discussed upcoming legislative initiatives, topics for future Commission meetings and webinars, and the role the Commission plays in encouraging collaboration within the watershed.

The Commission adjourned the day at 3:20 P.M.

Friday, November 14, 2025

DELEGATION BREAKFAST BREAKOUTS

Each state delegation discussed news and issues relevant to their jurisdiction over breakfast.

ROLL CALL

Chair Love called the full Commission to order at 9:10 a.m. and asked Executive Director Killius to call the roll. A quorum was present.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LIGHTNING ROUND UPDATES

Chair Love asked Executive Director Killius to update the Commission on important and timely issues impacting the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Ms. Killius provided updates as follows:

CBC Annual Audit

Ms. Killius reported on the Commission's annual audit. The Commission's bylaws require CBC to hire a qualified accountant to conduct an annual audit of finances. Last month, Ms. Killius provided the Executive Committee with copies of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 audit reports completed by Alta CPA Group. No material misstatements or management issues were identified, and the Commission remains in good standing. All five members of the Executive Committee acknowledged their receipt of the audit, marking the end of the process until next year's audit. Ms. Killius also expressed her gratitude to Jennifer Dieux for taking excellent care of the budget and payroll, noting that the Commission's clean sheet is thanks to her diligent management of the accounts.

Federal Budget Status

Ms. Killius updated Commission Members on the status of the Federal budget. Earlier in the week, Congress passed a continuing resolution and mini-bus to end the more than 6-week lapse in appropriations. Most federal agencies will receive stopgap funding at fiscal year 2025 levels through January 30th, though three full-year appropriations bills were included: the Agriculture Department and FDA, the Legislative Branch; and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

Relevant to the Commission, authorizations for Farm Bill programs that had not yet been addressed were extended for another year. As a result, a "skinny Farm Bill" is not expected for this year. Additionally, funding available for conservation operations, which supports technical assistance programs, was cut by about \$65M from FY2025 levels. Finally, language was included to clarify the use of catfish processor grant funding and to express Congress's expectation that federal purchases of wild-caught catfish from the Chesapeake Bay area for food nutrition programs will continue. The Commission will remain watchful as the budget process continues to unfold.

During the lapse in appropriations, the Administration directed agencies to push forward with plans for reductions in force (or RIFs) for all employees of programs that now lacked discretionary or other funding and were not consistent with the President's priorities. Subsequent reporting identified significant cuts expected at the Department of Interior, which includes the National Park Service, US Geological Survey, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. These agencies provide critical support to the Bay restoration effort through participation in the Chesapeake Bay Program, and several congressional delegation members from Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware reached out to the administration urging reversal of this decision. The Continuing Resolution package reversed any federal workforce reduction since October 1 and prevented future reductions before January 30. Nevertheless, the Commission will remain vigilant for any future RIFs that impact employees and offices critical to the Bay restoration effort.

Chesapeake Bay Program Updates

Ms. Killius updated Commission members on new leadership in the Bay Program. Last month, the Chesapeake Bay Program Office announced its newest Director, Dan Coogan. He comes to the office with two decades of experience at EPA headquarters and was most recently Deputy Assistant Administrator for Infrastructure and Extramural Resources, overseeing the office responsible for acquisitions, grants, and facility operations. In that role, he has been part of both

the roll out of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act grants under the previous administration as well as coordination with the Department of Government Efficiency under the current administration. He takes over for Lee McDonnell who has been serving double duty as Acting Director and Chief of the Science, Implementation and Analysis Branch since December.

With Dan's extensive experience in budgets and grant management, we expect that he will make the Bay Program office's budget a priority. EPA has already announced that they plan to make major changes to grant guidance and streamline pots of funding that flow to the Bay jurisdictions. We will need to look for efficiencies, because the additional funding that the Bay Program received under the Infrastructure bill will end after FY2026.

Ms. Killius emphasized the importance of communications and public engagement, including public-facing websites that share Bay Program progress, as the Program faces the need for reprioritizing Bay funding. Accountability and transparency are critical to the success and reputation of the Chesapeake Bay Program, and as legislators, the Commission has always recognized the importance of public support for prioritizing the health of our watershed.

OUR WETLANDS: MULTIPLE BENEFITS & MULTIPLE STRESSORS

Kirk Havens, Professor of Marine Science, Virginia Institute of Marine Science at the College of William and Mary, gave an overview of the emerging science on wetlands. He explained the dynamics that drive marsh migration and the model that VIMS has developed to predict marsh evolution. Dr. Havens emphasized the benefits of living shorelines and encouraged the Commission to consider how to incentivize their development. He also highlighted the need to adjust the design of stormwater infrastructure to cope with extreme precipitation.

Becky Gwynn, Executive Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, discussed the Department's efforts to restore and enhance wetlands. She identified capacity building as a vital component in reaching Virginia's restoration goals, with the need for additional practitioners to identify project sites, provide technical assistance to landowners, collaborate with partners, and implement projects. Virginia has emphasized providing public access for wildlife watching, recreational fishing, and hunting within its wetlands.

Ben McFarlane, Chief Resilience Officer, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, explained that Virginia's tidal wetlands are managed through a state-local cooperative system, with over 70% of Virginia's coastal local governments opting to adopt local ordinances to regulate wetlands rather than relying on state-level control by the Virginia Marine Resource's Commission. For local governments, a focus on resilience and the benefits wetlands provide in the form of flood protection has been key to gaining support for projects. Mr. McFarlane observed the need for greater coordination between stormwater programs and wetlands restoration programs on mutually beneficial projects, and he encouraged the Commission to incentivize large-scale wetland projects, provide funding for projects that create wetlands with resilience benefits, and adjust wetlands mitigation policies to better match compensatory efforts to the impact of a development project.

Chair Love thanked the panelists for their insights, and the Commission took a fifteen-minute break.

THE REFRESHED CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT

The Commission staff gave a presentation on the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, set to be considered by the Chesapeake Executive Council on December 2, 2025. The presentation provided an overview of

the revised Goals in the Agreement, the Outcomes under each Goal, and the Targets that will be used to measure the success of the Outcomes.

Chair Love thanked the staff for this update.

INTERIM ACTIONS

Chair Love asked Executive Director Killius to share interim actions identified by Commission members during the meeting. Ms. Killius identified the Commission's intent to continue making good use of webinars as opportunities to take deeper dives into subjects of interest, the topics of interest regarding wastewater that the Commission would like to address at the January meeting, and the Commission's desire to embrace opportunities for greater interjurisdictional collaboration presented by the revised Watershed Agreement.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Love asked if there was any new business to come before the Commission, and there was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Love asked if any members of the public had expressed interest in providing comments. There were three members of the public that signed up: Jay Ford, representing the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Brian Collins; and Doug Goodman.

Upon conclusion of their remarks, the Chair thanked them for joining and sharing their comments with the Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission formally adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

*The next meeting of the full Chesapeake Bay Commission
will be held in Alexandria, Virginia, on January 8-9, 2026.*