



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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The Chesapeake Bay Commission held its first quarterly meeting of 2026 on Thursday and Friday, January 8-9, 2026. The meeting was held in Alexandria, VA.

Commission members in attendance:

Delegate Nick Allen
Delegate Alex Askew
RADM Stephen Barnett
Representative Kerry Benninghoff
Delegate David Bulova
Warren Elliott, PA Citizen Member
Representative Carol Hill-Evans
Secretary Josh Kurtz – Represented by Dep. Sec. Goshorn
Senator Sara Love
Senator Scott Martin
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 Robert Bloxom
Delegate Julian Ivey
Senator Mary Washington

Member Staff:

PA Jill Whitcomb
DoD LT Remya Wiley

CBC Staff:

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

Thursday, January 8, 2026

WELCOME AND NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Chair Sara Love called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. and welcomed members to AlexRenew. Chair Love also welcomed the Commission's new Department of Defense Liaison, Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett, and thanked Secretary Taillon for her service to and on the Commission over the course of the Youngkin Administration.

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 November meeting. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

ADOPTION/MODIFICATION OF AGENDA

Chair Love asked for comments or questions on the agenda from the members. Hearing none, the agenda was approved unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Chair Love asked Executive Director Killius to give her Executive Director's Report. Ms. Killius provided updates as follows:

2025 Executive Council Meeting

On December 2, the Chesapeake Executive Council met at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, for its 2025 annual meeting. Senator Love represented the Chesapeake Bay Commission on the Council, alongside Governors Moore, Youngkin, Shapiro and Meyer; D.C. Mayor Bowser; EPA Deputy Administrator Fatouhi; and representatives from New York and West Virginia. The headline of the meeting was the approval of the refreshed *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. CBC has been highly involved in the revisions to the agreement, and it presents a more dynamic and engaging resource for the public, with updated goals to guide conservation and restoration in the Bay and its watershed through 2040.

In response to a resolution from the Indigenous Conservation Council, the Executive Council issued a charge to its Principals' Staff Committee instructing the PSC to work with watershed tribes on recommendations for including tribal nations in the Chesapeake Bay Program moving forward. At the Council's private meeting, there was a gift-giving ceremony with representatives from the ICC, including its Chair, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe, to mark this new chapter of collaboration.

In addition, the Council approved recommendations for streamlining and simplifying the governance and structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Those recommendations will be further developed and implemented by July 2026. CBC staff continue to be instrumental in developing the Program's structure and governance, aiming to ensure the result is efficient, transparent, and inclusive of all partners, which will be crucial to our success under the revised agreement.

2025 Annual Report

The Commission's annual report, which is required by our authorizing statutes, will include a letter from the Chair, state and federal highlights, and short pieces about topics the Commission has focused on over the past year: pay for performance programs, PFAS, stormwater, and capacity building. We expect the reports will be ready for distribution by late February and early March. Each Commission member will receive 10 copies, and every other member of the three General Assemblies will also receive a copy.

2026/2027 Fellowship

For our 2026-2027 fellowship, the Commission will be partnering with Maryland Sea Grant and Pennsylvania Sea Grant in addition to Virginia Sea Grant to support a graduate fellow based in our Annapolis office. We will again welcome applicants from all three of our jurisdictions to apply. When the application has been posted, we will share it with Commission members.

2026/2027 Calendar Dates

The approved dates for the remainder of our 2026 meetings are:

- May 7-8, 2026, in Annapolis, Md.
- September 10-11, 2026, on Tangier Island, Va.
- November 12-13, 2026, in Hershey, Pa.

Our September meeting on Tangier Island will require us to travel to the island by boat and to bring our supplies with us. Members may need to stay overnight on Maryland's Eastern Shore on Wednesday to ensure an on-time departure on Thursday, so everyone is asked to reserve Wednesday afternoon through Friday afternoon for the meeting. Members will receive suggested packing lists and critical pre-trip information as we get closer to the meeting.

The proposed 2027 meeting dates are:

- January 7-8, 2027
- May 6-7, 2027
- September 9-10, 2027
- November 4-5, 2027

The Commission will be asked to approve the 2027 dates at the May meeting, and Members are asked to compare the dates to their calendars and let CBC staff know of any major concerns. In January, the Commission will meet in Annapolis, but locations for the other meetings have not yet been determined. CBC staff welcome suggestions from the Members for enriching meeting locales.

FEDERAL POLICY UPDATES – CROSSROADS STRATEGIES

Jason Gleason and Wally Burnett, Principals at Crossroads Strategies, provided an update to the Members on the federal budget and policy. Support for conservation technical assistance is a perennial concern of the Commission, and Mr. Gleason and Mr. Burnett discussed the potential for a "skinny" farm bill. They also called attention to the interest in Congress of continuing to pursue permitting reform which could have impacts on bedrock environmental statutes, and to the Interior Appropriations bill redirecting \$500 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Abandoned Mine Land Funding.

Mr. Gleason and Mr. Burnett took questions from the Members, and Chair Love thanked them for their time.

WASTEWATER CHALLENGES: AGING SYSTEMS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Michelle Price-Fay, Director of EPA Region 3's Water Division, provided an overview of combined sewer systems in the watershed. She explained that 64 CSOs were identified in the Bay TMDL, with overflow volumes and pollutant contents of the overflows varying based on the size of the catchment area for the system as well as the system's design and capacity. Ms. Price-Fay outlined how CSOs are regulated in partnership with the states, and she identified challenges to CSO operations, such as funding and capital shortfalls, changing environmental conditions, aging infrastructure and workforce shortages, as well as opportunities for improvements, such as digital and "smart" technologies, predictive analytics, green infrastructure, gray infrastructure and advanced treatment, along with funding.

Lee Currey, Director of the Maryland Department of the Environment's Water and Science Administration, provided a state-level perspective on wastewater infrastructure. Mr. Currey detailed how Maryland's creation of a dedicated funding source for wastewater upgrades, the Bay Restoration Fund, has been key to achieving significant reductions in nitrogen loading to the Bay. Intense storm events, workforce shortages, and the need to address emerging contaminants add to the challenges that plants already face from aging infrastructure, capacity limits, and the need to oversee and maintain highly complex systems. He emphasized that plants are now reaching the end of their lifespans and will need further upgrades and maintenance to sustain high levels of nutrient reduction.

Justin Carl, PE, General Manager and CEO of AlexRenew, gave the Commission an overview of AlexRenew's history, service area, and operating structure. AlexRenew is nearing completion of the RiverRenew project, which created a tunnel beneath Old Town Alexandria to intercept CSO outfalls along the Potomac River and bring the flow back to the AlexRenew for treatment. The \$615 million project will decrease overflow events to fewer than 4 per year and reduce bacteria in discharges by 80-99%. As Alexandria grows and AlexRenew faces growing demand, Mr. Carl emphasized the importance of Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans from EPA and funds from the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund to fund plant upgrades to meet new regulatory requirements and enhance system resiliency. Because dollars in the state's revolving fund are limited, AlexRenew will rely heavily on municipal green bonds for future projects, though the plant is able to secure low interest rates because of its excellent bond rating.

Chris Pomeroy, President of AquaLaw, shared perspectives from his wastewater sector clients from across the watershed. Mr. Pomeroy echoed the theme of plants that were previously upgraded now needing renewed investment in nutrient removal technology, on top of the stresses they face from repairing and replacing other infrastructure (such as pipes and pumps) and coping with growth. He explained that historically, highly efficient wastewater treatment systems outperformed their TMDL allocations, which helped achieve reduced nutrient loading to the Bay despite slow progress in reducing nonpoint pollution. Mr. Pomeroy recommended avoiding this overreliance on the wastewater sector when the next round of Watershed Implementation Plans are written and providing robust funding for loans and grants to allow infrastructure investments while keeping ratepayer costs low.

After questions and discussion, Chair Love thanked the panelists for sharing their expertise with the Commission. The Commission Members then had a safety briefing followed by a tour of AlexRenew's state-of-the-art [Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant](#) and underground pumping station — a major component of the [RiverRenew Tunnel Project](#). The [pumping station](#) is a first of its kind in Virginia — a 12-story underground engineering marvel designed to meet silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards.

The Commission adjourned the day at 3:15 p.m., in advance of the safety briefing.

Friday, January 9, 2026

DELEGATION BREAKFAST BREAKOUTS

Delegations discussed news and issues relevant to their jurisdictions over breakfast.

WELCOME & ROLL CALL

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

THE 2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSIONS

Members from each Delegation then shared policy initiatives they were considering for their upcoming legislative sessions. Each Delegation discussed both legislation and budget priorities.

Afterwards, Chair Love thanked the members for their reports. The Members then took the opportunity to break into small groups to facilitate additional discussion among sponsors of bills on priority topics, including PFAS.

A DISCUSSION WITH EPA'S REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR AND THE BAY PROGRAM'S DIRECTOR

Amy Van Blarcom-Lackey, EPA Region 3 Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator, and Dan Coogan, Director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office, joined the Commission to share their vision for EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office and their goals under the revised *Watershed Agreement*. Ms. Van Blarcom-Lackey and Dr. Coogan outlined three areas of focus: (1) maximizing spending on nutrient and sediment reductions, including efforts to trim administrative costs and redirect funds to water quality improvements; (2) active engagement with all stakeholders, especially in the headwaters states; and (3) enhancing coordination of the federal agencies in the partnership through greater communication at the leadership level. Members emphasized the importance of public and stakeholder engagement, acknowledged the challenge that collaboration across agencies presents, and thanked EPA for maintaining a focus on its coordinating role. Members also expressed interest in having representatives from federal agencies invited to future Commission meetings when topics relevant to their work are on the agenda.

After a dialogue with the Members, Chair Love thanked Ms. Van Blarcom-Lackey and Dr. Coogan for speaking with the Commission.

INTERIM ACTIONS

Chair Love asked Executive Director Killius to share any interim actions identified by Commission members during the meeting. She identified five topics: (1) information on the trickle-down effects to states of federal spending cuts, particularly for conservation technical assistance; (2) information on and possible action related to reallocation of money for abandoned mine land cleanup from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; (3) extending an invitation to federal partners to participate in Commission meetings relevant to their work; (4) continuing communication and collaboration on a regional approach to PFAS source control and mitigation; and (5) updates on Congressional efforts to change federal environmental permitting requirements.

Chair Love thanked Ms. Killius for keeping track of the action items.

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. No one had done so.

ELECTION OF 2026 OFFICERS

Each Delegation presented its nominations for leadership during 2026:

Maryland:

Delegate Sheila Ruth, Chair

Senator Mary Washington, Vice-Chair

Virginia:

Senator Jeremy McPike, Chair

Delegate Alex Askew, Vice-Chair

Pennsylvania:

Senator Gene Yaw, Chair

Representative Carol Hill-Evans, Vice-Chair

The members unanimously endorsed the slate of candidates from each Delegation.

Chair Love then shared that the Chair for the full Commission would rotate to Pennsylvania for 2026 and offered her congratulations to Senator Yaw. Senator Love shared closing remarks related to her tenure as Commission Chair during 2025 and thanked all the members and staff for their support.

Senator Yaw thanked Senator Love for her service, presented a small token of appreciation, and shared his thoughts on the Commission's work ahead in 2026.

Senator Yaw then wished the Delegations success for their legislative sessions and reminded everyone that the next meeting of the full Commission will be held in May in Annapolis, Maryland.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission formally adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

*The next meeting of the full Chesapeake Bay Commission
will be held in Annapolis, MD, on May 7-8, 2026*