



## CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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The Chesapeake Bay Commission held its second quarterly meeting of 2025 on Thursday and Friday, May 1-2, 2025. The meeting was held in Washington, DC.

### Commission members in attendance:

Delegate Alex Askew  
Representative Kerry Benninghoff  
Delegate Robert Bloxom  
Delegate David Bulova  
Warren Elliott, PA Citizen Member  
Representative Carol Hill-Evans  
Delegate Julian Ivey  
Secretary Josh Kurtz  
RADM Carl Lahti  
Senator Sara Love  
Senator Scott Martin  
Senator Jeremy McPike  
Representative Nikki Rivera  
Delegate Sheila Ruth  
Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley  
Delegate Dana Stein  
Secretary Stefanie Taillon  
Senator Mary Washington  
Senator Gene Yaw

### Not in attendance:

Senator Richard Stuart

### Member Staff:

MD David Goshorn  
PA Jill Whitcomb  
DoD CDR Cara Hoy

### CBC Staff:

Jen Dieux  
Anna Killius  
Marel King  
Adrienne Kotula  
Maggie Woodward

**Thursday, May 1, 2025**

**WELCOME AND NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS**

Commission Chair Love called the formal meeting to order at 1:03 P.M. and welcomed members to the Reservoir Center for Water Solutions. Chair Love then recognized two changes to the membership of the Commission, first introducing Representative Nikki Rivera, who filled Representative Mike Sturla's seat in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Representative Sturla's place on the Commission. She then introduced a familiar face, Secretary Stefanie Taillon, who recently was appointed Virginia's Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources. Lastly, Chair Love introduced our new Maryland Director, Maggie Woodward.

**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 January meeting. 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, the agenda was approved unanimously.

**FOLLOW-UP FROM NOVEMBER MEETING**

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

**New EPA Region 3 Administrator – Amy Van Blarcom-Lackey**

EPA recently announced the appointment of a new Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator, Ms. Amy Van Blarcom-Lackey. The Mid-Atlantic Region includes all three Commission jurisdictions, as well as Delaware, West Virginia, DC, and oversight of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Ms. Van Blarcom-Lackey hails from the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, Senator Yaw's district, where her family has a dairy farm. In addition to being the first woman appointed as Region 3 Administrator, she served as Pennsylvania's first Agricultural Ombudsman and has experience with both Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and Farm Credit.

**Update of Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement**

The Commission requested periodic updates on the partnership's process to review and revise the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. A one-pager, sharing current progress on two of the Agreement's components (Goals and Outcomes), was provided to the Commission. As the Bay Program's work progresses, staff will update that one-pager based on the partnership's discussions.

Ms. Killius stated that the partnership's aim is to get proposed amendments out to the public for a 60-day feedback period throughout July and August. Staff committed to sending the members the revised draft as soon as available so that they know what constituents will be seeing and reacting to.

## **Webinars**

Ms. Killius announced that the Commission would be hosting at least two webinars this summer: one on PFAS pollution prevention, particularly with regard to biosolids, and one on nutrient management planning for agricultural operations. The hope is that these webinars are opportunities to bring in experts, build background knowledge, and encourage cross-jurisdiction sharing and strategy. To help with scheduling, she requested that members think about what weekdays work best and whether morning, lunchtime, or afternoon windows are preferred.

## **Graduate Fellow**

Ms. Killius announced that the staff is pressing forward with a year-long fellowship in partnership with Virginia Sea Grant. The opportunity was posted in March and applications collected through mid-April. Sea Grant has helped identify a handful of highly qualified candidates, who Ms. Killius will be interviewing next week. These candidates come from institutions throughout the watershed, studying science, law, and public policy.

The goal is to bring our fellow on board over the summer, at the start of the new fiscal year. One of their first projects will be refreshing and updating the jurisdiction comparison fact sheet based on the presentation and discussion from our January meeting.

As we embark on our pilot year and begin budgeting for Year 2, we are staying mindful of the uncertainty facing our Sea Grant programs. There have been indications that the President's budget will zero out these programs in the future, which would not only be a loss for us personally but for the many research institutions throughout the watershed that partner with NOAA Sea Grant to apply their coastal and marine research for the benefit of local communities.

Chair Love thanked Ms. Killius for the updates. She then introduced the day's first speaker, Ms. Michelle Price-Fay from EPA Region 3.

## **WHERE THE WATER MEETS THE ROAD**

Michelle Price-Fay, Director for the Water Division at EPA Region 3, introduced herself as well as the importance of managing stormwater within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. She then described the Clean Water Act's role in stormwater and the variety of programs that EPA manages for stormwater in the watershed. She discussed municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits and industrial stormwater permits, as well as the construction general permit. Administration of these permits is largely left to the states with EPA conducting oversight of their programs, which results in differences in the performance standards between the states. Ms. Price-Fay discussed examples. The permittees themselves manage the implementation of the permits with on-the-ground activities.

After Commission questions and discussion, Chair Love thanked Ms. Price-Fay for her time and introduced the next speaker, Erik Michelson.

## **STORMWATER, LIKE POLITICS, IS LOCAL**

Erik Michelson is the Senior Environmental Policy Officer & Deputy Director for the Department of Public Works in the Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration for Anne Arundel County. He discussed the county's approach to implementing its MS4 permit, as well as how the County is planning to meet the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. He discussed the details of a variety of infrastructure projects, community involvement, and

maintenance inspections conducted by the County, as well as the full delivery contract program they have successfully used for projects.

Chair Love thanked Mr. Michelson and the Commission, then took a fifteen-minute break.

### **COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

After returning from the break, Chair Love opened a dialogue with Commission members about issues of emerging concern. Chair Love began the discussion by asking members if they have had any experience dealing with salt as a contaminant in their jurisdiction. Delegate Bulova described the Accotink Creek TMDL for chloride and the Salt Management Toolkit that has been developed by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission as a result. Commission staff committed to share the information.

Senator Yaw then asked whether any other jurisdictions have dealt with state government not paying stormwater utility bills to local governments. Delegate Bulova described that Virginia law requires state government properties to pay local stormwater fees. Commission staff committed to share the information.

Senator Yaw then described the ongoing issue of combined sewer overflows in Pennsylvania and asked what has been done in other jurisdictions. Senator McPike and Delegate Bulova shared the significant legislation that has been passed regarding the Alexandria and Richmond combined sewer overflows in Virginia. Ms. Killius shared that we will be meeting in Alexandria in January 2026 and plan to cover the subject as a part of that meeting.

Chair Love thanked the members for their engagement and requested similar discussion time at future meetings.

### **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT TOUR**

Ariel Trahan, the Environmental Protection Specialist with the Watershed Protection Division of the DC Department of Energy & Environment, then led the Commission on a walking tour of urban stormwater management sites in the District of Columbia including an elementary school and public park.

The Commission adjourned the day at 4:30 P.M.

### **Friday, May 2, 2025**

### **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 9:30 A.M. and asked Executive Director Killius to call the roll. A quorum was present.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

The Commission unanimously approved the 2026 Meeting Dates. The Commission unanimously approved the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

## **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:

### **Chesapeake Bay Commission Publications for 2025**

The Commission's 2024 Annual Report was released at the end of February. All Commission members should have received physical copies of the report. The Commission also distributed a federal briefing memo for the new Congress and Administration explaining the key role federal support plays in the state-led effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Finally, the Commission prepared our FY2026 Federal Budget Priorities request and distributed it to the Chesapeake Bay watershed's Congressional delegation. Our federal budget request informs the sign-on letters that the Congressional Chesapeake Bay Watershed Task Force, co-chaired by Representatives Bobby Scott, Rob Wittman, Andy Harris, and Sarah Elfreth, circulates during the Appropriations season. Similar letters will be sent by Senator Van Hollen to his colleagues.

### **Liaison to Congress on the needs of the Bay Cleanup**

One of the Commission's core roles is to serve as a liaison to Congress on the needs of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup. During Appropriations season—roughly February through April—we work with our federal consultants, Crossroads Strategies, to meet with our congressional delegation and bring them up to speed on the work of the Commission and the needs of the Bay Program. This year, with so many new and important leaders in the watershed, staff have been busy introducing the Commission. Pennsylvania has been a particular focus, and Senator Yaw came to Washington on March 4th for meetings with Senator McCormick, Senator Fetterman, and House Agriculture Committee Chair GT Thompson. Staff may ask other Commission members for targeted outreach at strategic times in the next few weeks.

Our focus is on the importance of the Bay cleanup, the long-standing bipartisan partnership at its core, and its status as a model of cooperative federalism, where states lead and the federal government supports. We emphasize that Congress has always been a stalwart supporter for the work, even when previous Administrations have proposed wholesale cuts or ill-advised trims to the programs on which we rely. Further, when it comes to federal appropriations, the legislative branch has a critical role to play in the conversation – just as state legislators have during state budget negotiations.

### **Federal Budget Update**

The federal budget is very fluid this year and much is still unknown.

#### **What we know:**

- On March 15th, the President signed a full-year continuing resolution for FY2025, averting a shutdown. This CR largely extends federal government funding at FY2024 levels. The CR also called for agencies and departments to submit spend plans to Congress for the remainder of the fiscal year within 45 days.
- On April 10th, Congress passed a budget resolution with parameters for the FY2025 budget and budgetary levels for FY2026-2034. This set in motion the budget reconciliation process, tasking Congressional committees with identifying changes to federal revenues and mandatory spending within their jurisdiction. House committees should be coming up with \$1.5 trillion in mandatory savings and tax cuts of approximately \$4.5 trillion. The Senate has a savings floor of \$5 billion and tax cuts of \$1.5 trillion. A reconciliation bill combining all these changes bypasses Senate filibuster

rules and needs only a simple majority in the House and Senate to be sent to the President.

### **What we expect**

- The budget reconciliation process will focus on finding large cuts to mandatory spending – not necessarily the sorts of discretionary programs that we are most concerned about for our specific work. We will remain watchful as the reconciliation package comes together, but we expect more telling changes to be in the spend plans and the President's budget.
- We expected to see agency spend plans for the remainder of FY2025 submitted to Congress by Friday, April 25th. As of the Commission meeting, no spend plans have been released.
- We also expect to see a rescission package from the President, identifying \$9.3 billion in FY2025 federal funding that the White House would like Congress to cancel. Reporting indicates that these rescissions are mostly related to foreign aid and public broadcasting. Once Congress receives that package, it will have 45 days to act on it. If a simple majority agrees, those programs will be cut. If no action is taken, the funding is not cut.
- Finally, we expected to see a "skinny" version of the President's FY2026 budget released on Monday, April 28th, with the full version to be released later in May. We now expect the skinny budget the week of May 19th.

### **What we don't know**

- We don't know what agencies intend to spend for the remainder of this fiscal year. What we do have are leaked documents that suggest spending reductions could be significant – impacting the ability of agencies to deliver programs and setting off questions of impoundment.
- As part of the federal budget writing process, agencies send proposed budgets to the Office of Management and Budget. OMB returns a "passback" with changes based on the President's agenda. The agency can then appeal those changes and negotiate with OMB on the final budget request. Once settled, the final request is incorporated into the President's budget and submitted to Congress.
- According to leaked passback documents, OMB has indicated that it expects the agencies to align their FY2025 spend plans with the priorities that OMB set forth in their budget passbacks. In other words, if OMB is calling for program cuts in FY2026, it expects the agencies to already be making those cuts for the remainder of FY2025, to the extent possible.
- We have seen or heard about two passbacks with implications for the Bay partnership so far. A NOAA passback cuts funding for Habitat Conservation and Restoration as well as the Office of Education. This would potentially gut NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office and the B-WET program that supports environmental education efforts throughout the watershed. A USGS passback would zero out the Ecosystems Mission Area at USGS, including Chesapeake Bay studies, potentially ending USGS science efforts in the Chesapeake.
- The passback isn't the end of the process. The Agency spend plans may determine that cuts of this size and type are not possible for FY2025 without statutory approval. But the Administration may decide to trigger an impoundment fight with Congress and do it anyway. Also, the President's budget, when we finally see it, may have more moderate cuts after negotiations between OMB and the federal agencies, though we doubt that would be in keeping with what the Administration has communicated so far.

With so many unknowns, what are we seeing? We're starting to see federal agencies indicate that they will not have the capacity to spend their FY2025 dollars. We're starting to hear that grantees are not being

reimbursed on existing contracts that may be cut or canceled and that new agreements are being delayed. We've seen the loss of probationary employees within multiple agencies, and we're starting to see the departure of long-time experts taking early retirement offers. That is a loss of both institutional knowledge and future leadership at a very critical time for the Chesapeake Bay Program, but so many of the federal partners within the Bay Program are continuing to provide us with their best in terms of information, science, and resources where they are able.

What are we doing? We are doing our best to track the facts and share the impacts with Congress so that they can make informed decisions for their constituents and for the watershed. It is hard to ask much of them right now when they are responding to leaks and rumors. We'll be able to make more direct asks of them once we start to see the Administration's plans take formal shape.

## **DELEGATION CHAIR REPORTS**

Each delegation reported on the results of their ongoing or recently concluded legislative sessions.

### **Virginia**

Delegate Bulova began the discussion by describing that the Governor has yet to fully accept the budget and additional vetoes were expected by the end of the day. He detailed the Delegation's efforts to secure funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund, environmental literacy, and wastewater treatment plant upgrades, as well as the \$226 million secured for the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program. Delegate Askew described his legislation officially establishing shrimp and horseshoe crab fishing seasons in Virginia for the first time due to the northward migration of the species. Finally, Delegate Bulova described his PFAS legislation that focuses on the Occoquan watershed which was signed by the Governor and Senator McPike described his broader, monitoring-focused PFAS legislation that was vetoed by the Governor.

### **Pennsylvania**

Senator Yaw reported on efforts to provide additional funding to the Clean Streams Fund and rework legislation to prohibit PFAS in firefighting foam. The Delegation held a retreat in April and is planning future events to include additional colleagues and caucus leadership to keep them informed about our work and progress.

### **Maryland**

Chair Love invited Secretary Kurtz to provide an overview of the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act. Delegate Ruth described challenges faced in working to pass legislation prohibiting the use of PFAS pesticides, which Delegate Stein and Chair Love echoed with regard to their efforts to establish limits on PFAS in biosolids. Chair Love applauded Delegate Ruth's bill mandating water bottle filling stations in newly constructed buildings. Finally, Senator Washington provided an overview of Maryland's budget challenges and Bay-related priorities, which Secretary Kurtz expanded upon further.

Afterwards, Chair Love thanked the members and introduced the next speaker.

## **OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE**

Rob Beach, the Vice President for Communications at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, then provided a presentation on a recent public opinion poll done by the organization. CBF repeats the poll periodically; a similar poll was done 5 years ago. The polling was done to provide an assessment of current attitudes towards the state of

Chesapeake Bay and efforts to save it, as well as to understand how to best engage constituents and move them to action.

The polling found that the most worrying issue for residents was inflation, with climate change and threats against the environment ranking much lower in their concerns. This finding is in line with findings at the national level just ahead of the 2024 election. When asked specifically about environmental issues, climate change and water quality rank the highest among watershed residents. Interestingly, watershed residents believe that environmental policy regarding the Bay is moving in the right direction in a larger proportion than they do at the state or local level. Environmental nonprofits are the most trusted to speak candidly on both the environment overall and the Bay specifically; academic institutions are also among the most trusted sources on Bay issues.

Chair Love thanked Mr. Beach for his time.

### **REFRESHING THE WATERSHED AGREEMENT**

Anna Killius, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, provided an update on the refresh of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement that is currently underway. She provided background on the existing agreement and discussed the proposed simplification of the goal structure. She provided an update on the refreshed outcomes under consideration and how they are proposed to be updated.

The Commission had a discussion on the proposal of combining goals for simplicity as well as the outcomes under revision.

Chair Love thanked Ms. Killius for her presentation.

### **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.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Commission formally adjourned at 12:07 P.M.

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*The next meeting of the full Chesapeake Bay Commission  
will be held in State College, PA on September 4-5, 2025*