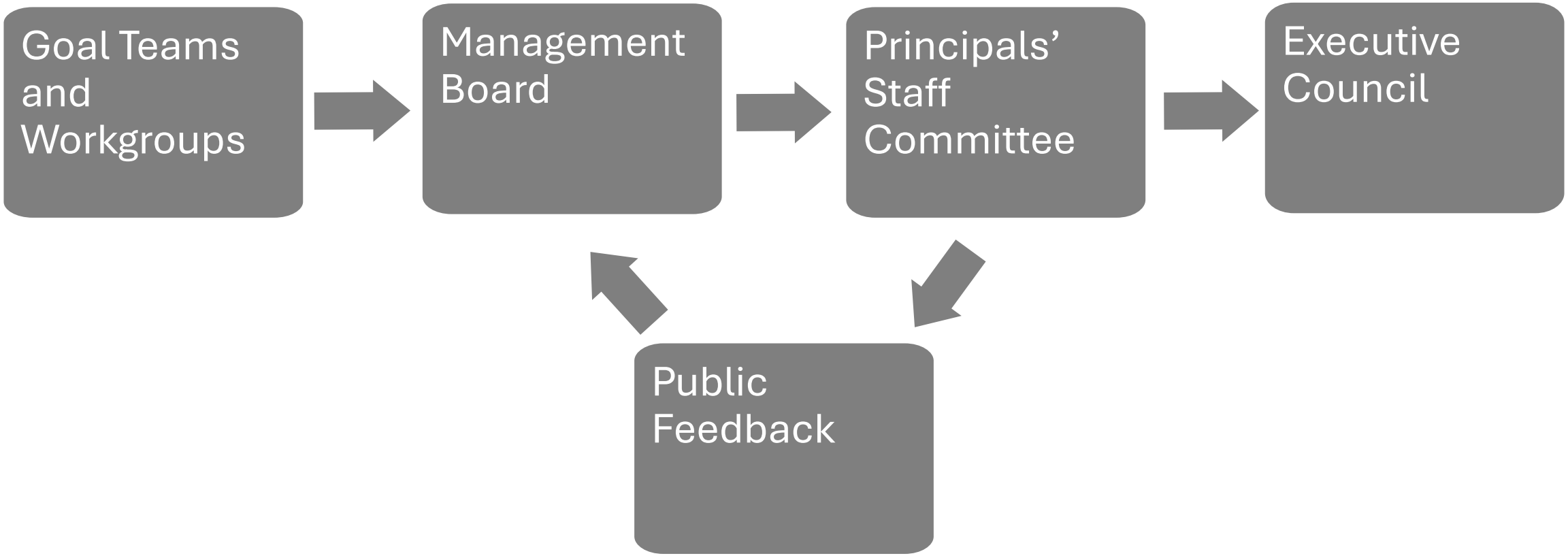
The Refreshed Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Commission Staff | 14 November 2025

Photo: Chesapeake Bay Program

THE PROCESS


Goal Teams and Workgroups
Management Board
Principals' Staff Committee
Executive Council
Public Feedback

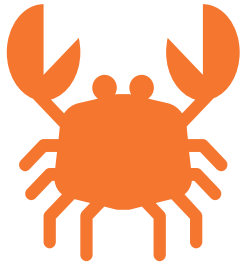
VISION

We envision a Chesapeake Bay region where clean water flows, wildlife thrives, and farms, forests and fisheries are healthy and productive. It is a place where people from all walks of life feel connected to the land, to the Bay and local waterways, to their communities and to the rich cultural heritage that makes this watershed unique. Together, we are building a future that is environmentally and economically sustainable, resilient and full of possibility — where everyone can enjoy and help conserve the natural beauty of the Bay and the lands and waters that surround it, today and for generations to come.

FOUR CORE WATERSHED GOALS

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife

Protect, restore and sustain fisheries and wildlife,
as well as the network of land and water habitats they depend on,
to promote a balanced and resilient ecosystem and
support local economies and recreational opportunities.



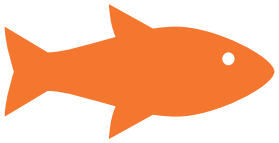
Blue Crabs

Achieve a sustainable Bay-wide blue crab fishery through cross-jurisdictional coordination that supports healthy blue crab populations and thriving fish communities.

+ manage according to benchmark assessment
+ coordinate management across jurisdictions

Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay watershed by increasing occupancy, abundance and resilience to changing environmental conditions.

+ increase occupancy by 1.5% in watersheds with healthy populations, with no net loss elsewhere by 2040
+ increase abundance at 10 sites by 2040
+ reduce identified threats by 15% by 2040



Brook Trout

Fish Habitat

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and nontidal areas for key species through focused water quality conservation and restoration improvements informed by assessments of habitat and fisheries information.

+ improve shallow water habitat above baseline
+ develop mussel plans for 10 tributaries and implement parts of 5
+ improve 270 AMD-impaired stream miles by 2040

Fish Passage

Improve habitat and water quality, while creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms by removing barriers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams.

+ reconnect 150 miles of habitat every 2 years

Oysters

Increase ecosystem benefits from oysters through reef habitat restoration, sustainable harvest and aquaculture.

+ maintain reefs established under 2014 Agreement
+ restore 2,000 more acres
+ maintain abundance through sustainable practices

Improve and protect local stream health and function, including their living resources and ecosystem services throughout the watershed using the best available science to inform land management, planning and conservation.

+ improve 3% of nontidal stream miles every 6 years

Stream Health

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,600 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay.

+ achieve 90,000 acres of SAV by 2030, 95,000 by 2035, and 100,000 by 2040, with an ultimate target of 196,600 acres

Wetlands

Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and other valuable benefits to people.

+ restore or create 3,000 tidal and 3,000 nontidal acres by 2040
+ enhance 15,000 tidal and 15,000 nontidal acres by 2040

Clean Water

Reduce pollutants entering the Bay and its rivers to achieve the water quality necessary to support aquatic life, wildlife and protect human health.

Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment

Implement and maintain practices and controls to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. These reductions are necessary to achieve the applicable water quality standards, as described in the Bay TMDL. Those water quality standards support living resources and protect human health, as required by the Clean Water Act.

+ *Through 2030, continue to accelerate completion of interim WQ planning targets*
+ *By 12/31/30, revise planning targets and develop new/amended WIPs to meet them by 2040*
+ *Demonstrate net reductions through modeling and monitoring data.*

Water Quality Standards Attainment & Monitoring

Measure changing water quality conditions by maintaining monitoring networks and tracking our collective progress toward achieving clean water, throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

+ *Maintain full core monitoring networks annually*
+ *Develop and expand approved approaches for water quality criteria assessment. For DO, approve method by 2028 and apply it by 2030.*
+ *Maintain/exceed rate of WQ standards attainment.*

Toxic & Emerging Contaminants

Reduce amount and effect of toxic contaminants, such as PCBs, plastics, mercury and PFAS, on the waters, lands, fisheries, wildlife and communities of the watershed through an increased understanding of their impacts and mitigation options.

+ *Promote information sharing between researchers, program managers and policymakers on lessons learned, best practices and most up-to-date science, policy and communications.*

Healthy Landscapes

Conserve, protect, restore and enhance landscapes of ecological, economic, recreational and cultural value to improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and increase resilience.

Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions

Increase the capacity for pursuing solutions, including those that are nature-based, to improve planning and responses to changing conditions while balancing long-term resiliency of watershed communities, economies and ecosystems.

+ support at least 7 subwatersheds by 2040.

Healthy Forests and Trees

Conserve, manage and restore forests and tree cover to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat and people throughout the watershed, with a particular focus on riparian areas and communities.

+ reduce loss and plant 45,000 acres of trees by 2040.
+ reduce loss and plant 7,500 acres of buffers annually.
+ reduce forest conversion by 33%, permanently protect 9 million acres, and plant 202,000 acres by 2040.

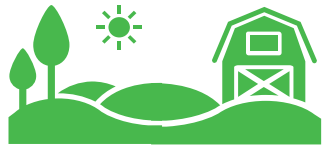
Land Use Planning and Decision Support Outcome

Develop and disseminate relevant and actionable land use information, in consultation with local governments, to organizations and communities involved in local and regional land use planning. This information should include past, present and future conditions, as well as the potential environmental and socioeconomic consequences of changing conditions.

+ develop 5 use cases and highlight 2 annually.

Permanently protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, bolster local economies, honor cultural heritage and protect the mission and resilience of military Installations.

+ permanently protect 2M more acres by 2040.



Protected Lands

Engaged Communities

Engage and grow a community of local stewards and leaders through education, recreation and professional opportunities to ensure the long-term success of restoration and conservation efforts.

Local Government Leadership

Increase the knowledge and support the capacity of local government leaders in decision-making, such as land use planning to implement local actions that advance the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

+ *Directly engage 400 leaders annually*
+ *Indirectly engage 4,000 leaders annually*

Workforce Development

Increase the ability of all job seekers in the watershed to understand, participate in, and succeed in career pathways that positively support the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

+ *Increase student, educator and job seeker awareness*
+ *Increase offerings of industry recognized credentials*
+ *Increase employer hiring and retention*

Stewardship

Increase the public's participation in stewardship actions that contribute positively to lands, waters, wildlife, fisheries and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

+ Build capacity for individual and community-level stewardship

Public Access

Create new and enhance existing public access sites in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through a combination of actions aimed at improving recreational opportunities and accessibility while addressing barriers to access by increasing the number, quality and geographic distribution of sites.

+ Add 100 new public access sites
+ Upgrade or maintain 100 existing public access sites
+ Improve ADA or ABA accessibility at 40 sites
+ Increase access to existing community greenspaces

Student Environmental Literacy Experiences

Increase the number of students who participate in inquiry-based environmental literacy instruction, with the aim of each student receiving at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience, or MWEE, in elementary, middle and high school.

+ At least 75% of public school students enrolled where MWEEs are offered

Increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools.

+ Increase public school system-wide comprehensive approaches to environmental literacy

School District Environmental Literacy Planning

KEY DATES AND TIMELINES

2026

Develop Management Strategies for Goals and Outcomes

2030

Updated Watershed Implementation Plans to meet new Bay TMDL-related planning targets by 2040

2033

50th Anniversary, Program Evaluation and Strategy Updates

2040

Revise or Rewrite Agreement

Questions?


THRIVING HABITAT, FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
Blue Crabs - Brook Trout - Fish Habitat - Fish Passage - Oysters - Stream Health - Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) - Wetlands
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES
Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions - Healthy Forests and Trees - Land Use Planning and Decision Support - Protected Lands
CLEAN WATER
Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment - Toxic and Emerging Contaminants - Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring
ENGAGED COMMUNITIES
Local Government Leadership - Public Access - Stewardship - Student Environmental Literacy Experiences - School District Environmental Literacy Planning - Workforce