

CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION 2025



State legislative districts represented by members of the Chesapeake Bay Commission

Watershed Boundary

PENNSYLVANIA

HARRISBURG

MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS

WASHINGTON, DC

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND

OUR MISSION: POLICY FOR THE BAY

CREATED IN THE 1980s BY THE LEGISLATURES of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission develops sound policies to support the health and well-being of the waters, land, habitats, and people that define the Chesapeake Bay region.

As a tri-state legislative body, the Commission provides leadership at the state, regional, and federal level on matters of watershed-wide concern. Each of the Commission's state delegations craft and secure passage of laws and budgets designed to improve the condition of the Bay. A signatory to every *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*, the Commission is an integral member of the state-led, federally supported Chesapeake Bay Program partnership and a driving force on many of the partnership's initiatives. Nationally, the Commission serves as a model for collaborative bipartisan policy work and a liaison to the U.S. Congress on law and budgetary matters related to the health of the Bay and its watershed.

Our twenty-one members contribute their time, talents, and expertise to the work of sustaining the environmental and economic resources of the Bay watershed. Fifteen state legislators — five from each state — partner with a cabinet secretary from each Governor and a citizen representative from each jurisdiction. Together, across state and party lines, the members of the Commission anticipate the needs and respond to the challenges facing the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, its communities, and its economies.

The diverse and bipartisan membership of the Commission is essential to its effective approach in addressing the complex issues that face the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. In the pages that follow, we are pleased to share highlights of the Commission's legislative and policy achievements in 2025.

Members of the 2025 Chesapeake Bay Commission



2025 MEMBERS



From left to right, Vice Chair David Bulova, Chair Sara Love, and Vice Chair Gene Yaw

- ◆ The Hon. Sara N. Love, Chair Maryland State Senate
- ◆ The Hon. David Bulova, Vice-Chair Virginia House of Delegates
- ◆ The Hon. Gene Yaw, Vice-Chair Senate of Pennsylvania

- The Hon. Nicholas J. Allen Maryland House of Delegates
- The Hon. Alex Q. Askew Virginia House of Delegates
- The Hon. Kerry A. Benninghoff Pennsylvania House of Representatives
- The Hon. Robert S. Bloxom, Jr. Virginia House of Delegates
- G. Warren Elliott Pennsylvania Citizen Representative
- ◆ The Hon. Carol Hill-Evans Pennsylvania House of Representatives
- The Hon. R. Julian Ivey Maryland House of Delegates
- The Hon. Josh Kurtz Secretary of Natural Resources, Maryland
- The Hon. Scott Martin Senate of Pennsylvania
- ◆ The Hon. Jeremy S. McPike Senate of Virginia
- The Hon. Nikki Rivera Pennsylvania House of Representatives
- The Hon. Sheila S. Ruth Maryland House of Delegates
- The Hon. Jessica Shirley Secretary of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania
- ◆ The Hon. Dana Stein Maryland House of Delegates
- The Hon. Richard H. Stuart Senate of Virginia
- The Hon. Stefanie Taillon Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Virginia
- Carmera Thomas-Wilhite Maryland Citizen Representative
- The Hon. Mary L. Washington Maryland State Senate

- Rear Admiral Carl A. Lahti Department of Defense Liaison

◆ *Member of the Executive Committee*

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

UNITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND INTERCONNECTION

FOR 45 YEARS, the Chesapeake Bay Commission has been a leader in the multi-state effort to restore the treasured Chesapeake Bay — as state legislators committed to its conservation, as a member of the Chesapeake Executive Council, and as a signatory to the original *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*.

Our members come from districts stretching all the way from Pennsylvania's Northern Tier to the mouth of the Bay in Hampton Roads, Virginia. We represent some of the watershed's biggest metropolitan areas as well as regions with deep farming roots. We are united by our shared vision for the Chesapeake. We see opportunity in the unique perspectives our members bring. And we recognize that we are all interconnected and must work in partnership to reach our goal of a healthy Bay.

Unity, opportunity, and interconnection are not only fundamental to our success as a Commission, they are foundational to the newly revised *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, approved by the Chesapeake Executive Council this December.

The revised *Watershed Agreement* envisions a healthy Bay ecosystem with engaged communities, clean water, healthy landscapes, and thriving habitats, fisheries, and wildlife. It includes updated outcomes that target the greatest opportunities for collaborative conservation based on the latest science and decades of learning. And under the agreement, every management strategy we craft will consider the interconnectedness of our work and the impacts of our changing environment and climate.

Completing a comprehensive revision of the agreement was no simple feat. It required deep respect for and trust in our partners at a time when polarization can seem the expedient choice. It required unquestioning commitment to consensus building because only together can we reach our goal of a healthy Bay. Most importantly, it required contributions from countless individuals from every corner of the watershed:



At the 2025 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting, CBC Chair Sara Love celebrated the refreshed *Watershed Agreement*.

scientists and subject matter experts; farmers, watermen, and specialists of every field; private industry; non-profit organizations; and members of the public.

The revised *Watershed Agreement* reflects a partnership united around common goals, specific targets, and a clear timeline for achievement. It also presents an opportunity to think deeper about how and why we engage in watershed restoration. What environmental values do we want to conserve and pass down to the next generation? Who are we inviting and empowering to join us in this work? And how will we ensure that every community is connected to and enriched by its benefits?

It has been my privilege to represent the Commission during this pivotal year and join our fellow members of the Executive Council in approving a *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* built on unity, opportunity, and interconnectedness. We now begin a new chapter in our partnership to safeguard this national treasure.

THE COMMISSION AT WORK IN 2025



Tim Schaeffer, Exec. Dir. of the Pa. Fish & Boat Commission, lauds the partnerships that are improving fish habitat across the Commonwealth.



Va. Del. Askew shares how Hampton Roads communities are incorporating wetlands into community resilience efforts.



Pa. Sen. Yaw and Va. Sen. McPike discuss their efforts to limit public exposure to PFAS.



Rear Adm. Lahti describes how green infrastructure has transformed the Navy Yard neighborhood of Washington, DC.



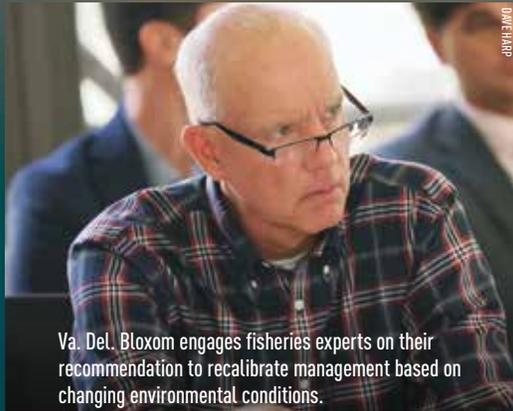
Va. Dels. Bulova and Bloxom view one of the more than 5,500 miles of stream impacted by acid mine drainage in Pennsylvania.



CBC members discuss efforts to expand green workforce development to underserved communities at the Bates Legacy Center in Annapolis.



In Pennsylvania, CBC members learned how Evergreen Farms manages nutrients from dairy operations to protect a world-class trout stream.



Va. Del. Bloxom engages fisheries experts on their recommendation to recalibrate management based on changing environmental conditions.



Va. Sen. Stuart notes the challenges facing wetlands in coastal Virginia as well as opportunities for landowners to aid in their protection.



Carmera Thomas-Wilhite joined a robust discussion on the future of oyster restoration at her first meeting as the Md. Delegation's Citizen Representative.



Md. Del. Sheila Ruth updates the members on proposed legislation to limit the use of PFAS in pesticides.



Pa. Sens. Yaw and Martin are steadfast champions of funding for the Pa. Ag Conservation Assistance Program.

Pennsylvania State Conservation

JESSE BUSSARD

THE COMMISSION'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025

MARYLAND

In 2025, the Maryland Delegation tackled policies to improve the health of the Bay and the watershed on many fronts. All members supported the Moore Administration's Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act, a multifaceted Bay restoration bill. The flagship initiative of the Act is the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming Program (LEEF), which will recognize and provide incentives to farmers who adopt conservation practices.

Senators Love and Washington successfully collaborated on a bill to mandate producer responsibility plans for packaging and paper products, building on the framework that Commission members created in 2023 and making Maryland the sixth state in the nation to enact such a law. To further reduce single-use plastics, Delegates Ruth and Stein championed legislation that requires water bottle filling stations to be included in new and renovated buildings with drinking fountains.

The Delegation also supported wildlife through a law sponsored by Delegates Ruth, Allen, and Stein, which created the Maryland Connectivity Coalition. By advancing wildlife crossing projects, the Coalition will protect species from habitat fragmentation and reduce collisions between vehicles and wildlife.

In September, the Delegation traveled to Frederick and Washington Counties to visit stream restoration projects, including the site of a future project funded through the Whole Watershed Act. Hearing from community members and the

coalition leading the project was a highlight for all and underscored the importance of partnerships to restoring the Bay!

PENNSYLVANIA

With the beginning of a new two-year legislative session, the Pennsylvania Delegation recommitted to unfinished business from the previous term. Delegation Chair Senator Yaw introduced two different methods of generating revenue from the regulation of skill game machines. Both would dedicate ten percent of revenue to the Clean Streams Fund, providing an estimated \$30 million in additional support annually. In April, Senator Yaw and Senate Appropriations Chair Martin were both presented with the Karl Brown Award for Agricultural Conservation Leadership from Penn State Extension in recognition of their role as champions of the Clean Streams Fund.

While the Clean Streams Fund held steady in the 2025-2026 Commonwealth Budget at \$50 million, \$51 million was newly appropriated for "small" (less than \$500,000) wastewater projects across the state, and Operations Funding for the Department of Environmental Protection was increased by 5.5 percent.

Senator Yaw re-introduced legislation from the previous session to ban, with certain exceptions, the use of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in firefighting foam and require the labeling of firefighting personal protective equipment that includes PFAS. A House version passed that chamber. Other emerging

The Maryland members toured stream restoration projects and set priorities for the upcoming session during their Delegation meeting.



contaminants gained interest, with Delegation Vice Chair Representative Hill-Evans co-sponsoring legislation to establish a road salt best practices guide and Representative Rivera joining Hill-Evans in co-sponsoring a bill that would ban driveway sealants with high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

VIRGINIA

Despite an uncertain federal funding landscape and a shorter legislative session, the Virginia Delegation secured notable achievements for Bay restoration in an otherwise reserved year.

For the third year in a row, Virginia's Agricultural Cost Share program received full funding of \$223 million — a historic level of investment for the program. With this level of support, the Commonwealth's Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been able to assist more agricultural producers than ever in getting more conservation practices on the ground to help restore waterways and protect their investments.

The Virginia Delegation also focused on wetlands restoration in 2025. Members successfully shepherded legislation to establish a policy committee to tackle this ongoing challenge for stakeholders. This group will work together to evaluate existing policies regarding wetlands and recommend policy changes necessary to accelerate tidal and nontidal wetland identification, restoration, creation, and protection. Wetlands will be critical to Virginia's success in Bay restoration in the coming years, and this was an important step forward for all.

Senator Stuart and Delegate Askew also carried legislation for Virginia to officially establish a commercial shrimp fishery, thus continuing Virginia's tradition of supporting sustainable water-based industries. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission adopted regulations implementing the fishery in December 2025.

FEDERAL

With significant resource and staffing changes proposed by the incoming Administration, the Commission ensured that the Chesapeake Bay



watershed's bipartisan Congressional delegation was aware of how these decisions could impact the success of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its science-based, state-led, and federally supported partnership to restore the Bay.

Additionally, Senator Yaw visited Senators Fetterman and McCormick as well as Representative G.T. Thompson to share how conservation programs authorized under the federal Farm Bill support local streams and local economies throughout Pennsylvania and the watershed.

The Commission also supported introduction of the Chesapeake Bay Conservation Acceleration Act, a bill led by Senator Van Hollen and Representative Wittman, to help improve delivery of key agricultural conservation practice programs within the Bay watershed and improve access to technical assistance by prioritizing workforce development; the MAWS Act, led by Representative Elfret, which promotes science- and market-based solutions to protect native fisheries by controlling invasive catfish in the Chesapeake Bay; and the Chesapeake Bay WATERS Act, introduced by Senator Warner and Representative Bobby Scott, to reauthorize key programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Chesapeake Bay Office.

LEADING THE WAY IN PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS

THE CHESAPEAKE REGION leads the nation in the number of “pay-for-performance” (P4P) programs to improve water quality. Unlike traditional “cost-share” programs that pay for the implementation of a practice, such as acres of cover crop planted, P4P is based on the expected outcome of a project, such as pounds of nitrogen reduced. Another key difference is that instead of a reimbursement payment, P4P programs may cover some up-front costs but condition subsequent payments on continued operation and performance. Project applicants bear the risk that the project costs more or is less effective than expected, but can also reap the benefits of improved efficiencies and overperformance.

Four P4P programs have been established in the Chesapeake watershed, with a fifth in development. Maryland was the first, with amendments to the Clean Water Commerce Program in 2021 that dedicated \$20 million from the Bay Restoration Fund to P4P annually through 2030. Pennsylvania then established the Clean Water Procurement Program in 2022 with \$22 million in federal COVID-19 relief money and permanently funded it in 2024 with \$6 million from the Clean Streams Fund, which receives a dedicated share of personal income tax revenue. Virginia established a one-year pilot by appropriating \$20 million in 2025. A multi-state program is available through the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) as it spends down a one-time \$25 million appropriation from Maryland dedicated to projects upstream of the Conowingo Dam.

As each jurisdiction developed its program, several policy questions arose:

- **What is meant by “performance”?** The primary goal of each program is to reduce nutrients entering the Bay, but other goals

were also included, such as investment in underserved communities (Maryland), participation of small farms (Pennsylvania), or innovation (Virginia). Programs factored these additional goals into their proposal evaluation criteria.

- **How will performance be measured?** Several modeling tools exist to estimate the expected nutrient load reductions. Maryland, Virginia, and SRBC use the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST), while Pennsylvania uses a Nutrient Trading Tool. Virginia also allowed for direct monitoring of projects.
- **How long will the program last?** Virginia’s program was a one-year pilot with one application round. The SRBC program is funded with a one-time appropriation spread over multiple application rounds. Maryland and Pennsylvania have authorized programs through 2030 and 2032, respectively.

Differences among programs assess the impact of policy choices, but they also limit development of a regional market that could standardize prices and expectations across the watershed.

Price-per-pound of nitrogen reduction has decreased across the programs that have gone through multiple rounds of bidding, as applicants draw on previous experience to refine proposals. On average, prices range from \$15.57 to \$32.73 per pound across programs, but prices across projects vary widely, from just over \$6.00 to more than \$200 per pound.

A recent workshop of the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee identified additional needs for an expanded market, such as a common currency between industry-led climate-focused programs and jurisdiction-led water quality-focused programs, and new tools to evaluate benefits

beyond mere nutrient reduction.

Despite these limitations, the Chesapeake Bay region remains in a strong position to build on current programs and lead the nation as an incubator of innovative and cost-effective pollution reduction.

Large-scale stream restoration that includes habitat, wetlands, and flood control is a winner in P4P bid competitions that incentivize ecosystem benefits.



NAVIGATING PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN RESTORATION

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY watershed continues to face persistent challenges due to human influence on this dynamic, natural system.

Developing safe, effective, and efficient solutions to these challenges takes time and research, as well as the institutional capacity to carry out those solutions. The Commission is working on a variety of these issues and will continue to adapt our work as necessary to address them.

PFAS

Over the last several years, the Commission has increasingly focused on PFAS (per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances), contaminants of emerging concern. PFAS have strong chemical bonds that make them heat- and water-resistant, rendering PFAS useful in a wide range of products — from food packaging to firefighting foam to pesticides. But those same chemical properties mean that once PFAS enter the environment, they do not break down, presenting bioaccumulation concerns as well as risks to human health and ecosystems. Because PFAS can enter the environment in a variety of ways, legislators have considered multifaceted approaches to prevention, detection, and removal, including limiting the use of PFAS in certain products, testing drinking water and biosolids for PFAS concentrations, and requiring industrial dischargers of PFAS to reduce concentrations in their wastewater. As with many issues surrounding the Bay, action on PFAS taken in one state is likely to impact neighboring states. Crucially, the Commission is working to help members understand PFAS policies in context and create informed approaches that meet the needs of each individual state.

STORMWATER RUNOFF AND FLOODING

Stormwater is the fastest growing source of polluted runoff to the Bay. As urbanization continues to increase the amount of impervious surface in the watershed and climate change

increases the frequency of intense rainfall events, managing stormwater and preventing flooding have been a focus of the Commission's work. States will need to continue to adapt their regulations and permitting systems to manage flows for the protection of communities and waterways, while also supporting local governments who are on the front lines of stormwater management. Our members remain committed to working across all levels of government to address the evolving challenges stormwater presents.

CAPACITY BUILDING

As we enter a new chapter in Bay restoration, it is crucial to ensure that all residents in the watershed have a voice in our path forward and share in the benefits of a renewed Chesapeake. Engaging meaningfully with under-resourced

communities and developing their capacity to apply for and manage restoration and conservation programs can empower them to take on stewardship of the resources around them. The Commission is working to help legislators understand how programs can better reach under-resourced communities in each of our states, providing not only funding but also technical assistance and institutional support.

In addition, the watershed needs environmentally literate

and technologically capable individuals ready to lead the next generation of Bay restoration. Workforce development is a major priority for the Commission when it comes to agricultural conservation programs at the state and federal level. During the revisions to the *Watershed Agreement*, the Commission was an enthusiastic supporter of the new Workforce Outcome, which aims to increase the success of job seekers in careers that support the watershed. We look forward to continuing to help the Bay Program focus on building capacity throughout the Bay region to carry out effective and equitable programs to protect the Bay.

Under the new Workforce Outcome, the Chesapeake Bay Program will “increase the ability of all job seekers in the watershed to understand, participate and succeed in career pathways that positively support the Chesapeake Bay watershed”
—*Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement 2025*

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