



Overview: The new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*

The Chesapeake Bay Program has accomplished a great deal since the signing of the first *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* in 1983, but we still have much left to do.

A new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* is now under development within the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). Like other agreements before it, this voluntary *Agreement* will be the foundation for the Program's collective restoration, conservation, protection and stewardship efforts across the Chesapeake Bay region. From the day it is signed, it will become our guide into the future.

In 2011, the CBP partners recognized the need to create a new, up-to-date agreement – one that would reflect improvements in our scientific knowledge, changes in the regulatory landscape and evolutions that have taken place within the partnership and the restoration effort. In particular, with the need to revisit outdated commitments of *Chesapeake 2000* (CBP's last voluntary agreement) and the issuance of both the federal Chesapeake Executive Order (which now drives federal agency efforts) and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), the Program's partners realized a new agreement to better align the goals of federal, jurisdictional and non-governmental partners would be critical to our work together.

The CBP partners envision that the new Watershed Agreement we are now drafting will:

- Lay out clear goals and measureable outcomes for fisheries, habitats, water quality, healthy sub-watersheds, land conservation, public access and environmental literacy;
- Give focus to our collective effort by bringing together federal, jurisdictional and non-governmental goals;
- Present a shared, high-level vision for our work;
- Create a set of principles from which the Program will operate;
- Lay out timing, considerations and guidelines for creation of specific management plans under each goal that will enable us to meet the associated outcomes;
- Allow for flexibility to adapt and adjust our efforts with ever-evolving conditions and circumstances;
- Outline how the partnership will be accountable for its progress as we move ahead; and finally,
- Engage the headwater states of Delaware, New York and West Virginia as full members in the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership.

We expect to release the next draft of the new *Chesapeake Watershed Agreement* for public comment early in 2014.