

# The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

RECOMMITTING TO THE FUTURE

By Chris Becraft

On June 16, the Chesapeake Executive Council signed the new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, recommitting program partners to restore and protect the Bay, its tributaries and the lands around them.

“Today we celebrate the most inclusive, collaborative, goal-oriented Agreement the Chesapeake Bay watershed has ever seen, highlighted by unprecedented participation from the headwater states and the public,” said Chesapeake Executive Council Chair, Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, who hosted the Council’s annual meeting.

## Collaboration

The governors of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New York and Delaware signed the Agreement along with the mayor of the District of Columbia, the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay.

June’s signing marks the first time that the Bay’s headwater states of New York, West Virginia and Delaware have pledged

to work toward restoration goals that reach beyond water quality, making them full partners in the Bay Program’s watershed-wide efforts.

## Commitment

The Chesapeake Bay Program partners have made much progress since 1984, when the first Bay Agreement was signed. However, there is much more to do — especially in the face of new challenges developing: renewable energy sources, population growth, and loss of farm and forest lands. The Agreement not only addresses our continuing water quality and land-use challenges, it also confronts critical emerging issues — environmental literacy and climate change.

The new Agreement includes 10 goals and 29 measurable, time-bound outcomes that will help create a healthy watershed by lowering nutrient and sediment pollution; ensuring our waters are free of toxic contaminants; and managing for sustainable blue crab, oyster and forage fish populations. They are also designed to restore wetlands, underwater grass beds and other habitats; conserve farmland and forests; boost public access and

environmental education; and increase the climate resiliency of the watershed’s resources, habitats and human communities.

## Action

Public input had a direct impact on the content of the Agreement — encouraging partners to include goals related to environmental stewardship, toxic contaminants and climate change — and will continue to contribute to how the goals are achieved. Indeed, partners plan to work with local governments, universities, watershed groups, citizens and businesses in creating essential management strategies.

“The Agreement builds upon the strength of our diverse citizenry, calling to action the nearly 18 million people that call our watershed home,” adds Governor O’Malley. “Together, we can and will achieve our united vision of a healthy Bay and a productive watershed, cared for by engaged citizens at every level. ■

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Program partners sign the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

Jay Baker