



Chesapeake Bay Program
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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October 11, 2024

Dear Principals' Staff Committee members,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), I am pleased to share the attached letter, which presents additional recommendations for your consideration as you prepare your report to the Executive Council. This letter follows our earlier communication and reflects further discussions within STAC aimed at supporting the Chesapeake Bay Program during this pivotal time.

In this letter, we emphasize the importance of local implementation strategies, adaptive management, and a holistic approach to living resource conservation. These themes, along with the introduction of our new STAC-led Social Science Standing Workgroup, highlight the need to broaden our focus and incorporate the human dimensions that are crucial for effective and equitable Bay restoration.

We hope our recommendations prove valuable as you continue to shape the future of the Chesapeake Bay Program. As always, STAC remains committed to providing independent scientific and technical guidance, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration in the years ahead. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or for further discussion.

Sincerely,

Meg Cole

Coordinator, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
Chesapeake Research Consortium



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Dear Principals' Staff Committee members,

In its role as an advisory body to the leadership of the Chesapeake Bay Partnership (CBP), the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) respectfully offers the following thoughts as you consider your report to the CBP Executive Council (EC) based on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee Report, and in anticipation of an official charge from the EC for further actions during 2025.

STAC is satisfied that our recommendations and opinions were considered carefully and incorporated appropriately in the final Beyond 2025 Steering Committee Report. We appreciate the attention given to the 2023 STAC Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) Report during Beyond 2025 deliberations and are happy that we could be of service to the partnership. We would like to highlight several additional STAC recommendations beyond those discussed in our August 30, 2024, letter to the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC).

Our previous letter recommended that the CBP recognize and respond to the challenges of generating enough pollutant reductions from non-point sources to meet Bay water quality goals. Here we emphasize local autonomy and implementation approaches for serious consideration, including:

- allowing greater local autonomy in BMP implementation,
- exploring “pay for performance” incentives and including local priorities as part of performance evaluation,
- promoting local watershed health as a foundation for pollutant reduction,
- explicitly considering local climate change influences, and
- increasing local access to expertise and monetary resources.

Our previous letter also recommended the CBP increase management attention on living resources, emphasizing shallow water habitats throughout the watershed that are crucial for many species and are also most accessible for people to enjoy. Shallow water habitat quality depends on more than nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loading. Living resources, in turn, depend on more than habitat quality. A holistic, locally focused prioritization of living resource conservation and restoration is called for, including clear articulation of desired outcomes and metrics.

Another recommendation in our previous letter was adopting a greater capacity for flexible responses to changing conditions and improving understanding, embracing adaptive management approaches at multiple program levels to improve the CBP's capacity to learn while doing.

STAC believes that the CBP Strategy Review System process should be revised, expanded, and revisited on a regular basis, assessing not only the capacity to address current outcomes but also whether the outcomes themselves need reassessing or revising. This process must be balanced against the need for stability, without insisting on rigidity.

Finally, STAC would like to emphasize the centrality of people in Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. Protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay is more than a goal of scientists and policy makers — it is a mandate from the public. People are more than the ultimate source of environmental stressors. Everyone who lives, works, goes to school, and/or recreates in the Bay or watershed has a stake in its environmental protection and restoration. In a changing world, people need equitable access to healthy natural environments, clean water, and abundant living resources, alongside equitable access to affordable food, housing, social interactions, and security. People need a degree of autonomy as well as regulation, they need to be listened to as well as informed, and they need to feel that they are part of the solution instead of merely the source of the problem. To this end, understanding individual and community values, preferences, opinions, and motivations, as well as integrating adaptive human, natural science, and engineering dimensions into Bay governance, is critical to restoring a Chesapeake Bay that is responsive to all. STAC has organized a new STAC-led Social Science Standing Workgroup to help in this effort, actively moving beyond our traditional emphasis on natural science and engineering.

We look forward to our continuing involvement during this time of transition, offering broad scientific and technical expertise to advise the partnership during Phase 2 efforts throughout and beyond 2025.

Respectfully representing STAC,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Larry Sanford".

Larry Sanford
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee