



Choose Clean Water  
COALITION

# Strategic Plan 2022-2026

A network of advocates for clean water  
throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed



# Thank You

We are deeply grateful to the 170+ people who contributed to our Strategic Plan including:

- Strategic Planning Committee
- Steering Committee
- Staff
- 11 Key informants
- 7 Young Professionals of Color Members
- 6 State Leads
- NY DE & WV Coalition members
- 5 Funders
- 120+ people provided feedback through surveys and small group discussions



Kristin Reilly, Director

## Friends of Clean Water,

For more than 10 years, the Choose Clean Water Coalition has brought together nonprofits, funders, elected officials, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholders around our common goal—clean water. And while we have found success in our joint efforts much work remains and some of our toughest challenges still lie ahead.

Climate change is impacting not only our water quality, but the lives of the millions of people who live in the Chesapeake watershed. We recognize that our community has failed to adequately address the impact that pollution has on under-resourced communities and/or People of Color. And we are faced with the reality that we are unlikely to meet our 2025 Chesapeake clean up goals.

While this may seem daunting, we already have what we need to address these challenges—our collective power. When harnessed, the more than 270 member organizations of the Choose Clean Water Coalition and our many partners can create a more inclusive and powerful network of advocates championing sound and equitable clean water policies.

The work starts with us. To be both authentic and effective, we need to better reflect the communities that we serve, continue to amplify the voices of clean water champions, and advocate for strong clean water policies and programs. This is our plan for how we will do that, working together, to ensure clean water for everyone.

# Who We Are

## MISSION

Together, we create a more inclusive and powerful network of advocates championing effective and equitable clean water policies.

## VISION

A diverse movement that ensures clean water for people, communities and wildlife throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

“ Until nature is accessible and safe to all without fear of harm or discrimination we have failed in our mission. ”

Mariah Davis, Choose Clean Water Coalition

## VALUES

WE BELIEVE in a more just, equitable and inclusive society where access to clean water is a fundamental right. We are committed to:

- Authentic partnerships
- Collaborative action
- Power-building
- Collective impact
- Equitable outcomes



# Our Focus

## Grow and mobilize a more inclusive movement of clean water champions

The Coalition convenes and connects clean water advocates in NY, PA, DE, MD, VA, WV, and DC. Our more than 270 member organizations strive to authentically reflect and amplify the voices of the diverse communities they represent through our leadership, programs, and shared commitment to build a more inclusive network of champions.

## Expand the capacity of Coalition members to be strong advocates for clean water and resilient communities

The heart of our Coalition is our membership. Each member organization is unique and plays a critical role in supporting local communities to protect their rights to clean water. The Coalition provides relevant communications, tools, training, and peer learning to build the capacity of each organization and the network as a whole.

## Advance equitable policies and ensure accountability through 2025 and beyond

As we collectively aim to accelerate progress toward our 2025 water quality (TMDL) goals, our Coalition is growing the political and public will to ensure clean water is a consistent priority with broad, bipartisan support well beyond 2025. We advocate for policy that restores and protects our water and supports our most vulnerable communities.

## What we mean by:

- **Diversity:** Includes all the ways in which people differ. We embrace a broader definition that includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.
- **Equity:** Promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.
- **Inclusion:** Refers to the degree to which diverse individuals are enabled to participate fully in the decision-making processes within an organization or group.
- **Environmental Justice:** The quality of being just, impartial, or fair.
- **Local:** Community-level and community-specific issues, policies, or elected officials.
- **Power-building:** Providing the tools, training, and resources our members need to successfully advocate for and accomplish their goals.



## PRIORITIES

**Grow and mobilize a more inclusive movement of clean water champions**

**Expand the capacity of Coalition members to be strong advocates for clean water and resilient communities**

**Advance equitable policies and ensure accountability through 2025 and beyond**

## STRATEGIES

- Build a bigger tent; customize strategies to recruit and diversify membership
- Align the Coalition's structure and governance with our values and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice
- Demonstrate and communicate value of Coalition membership
- Foster relationship-building and collaboration among stakeholders (NGOs, elected officials, state and federal agencies, funders, service providers)
- Build a strong foundation of leadership, infrastructure and support in the District of Columbia and each state across the watershed

- Provide capacity-building resources (communications, toolkits, training) to be effective advocates for clean water
- Work with funders to increase long term investment in DEI and environmental justice
- Identify and secure funding to strengthen the Coalition and expand our internal capacity to better serve the needs of Coalition members
- Expand the role of and investment in state leads
- Communicate a simple, compelling narrative and shared messaging that deepens understanding of intersectional issues (climate, energy, public health, drinking water)
- Connect and convene members for peer learning and knowledge sharing around critical policy priorities and emerging issues

- Engage members in joint advocacy efforts to increase public funding for clean water
- Better understand the needs of frontline communities; advocate for resources to advance shared goals
- Amplify local voices and stories to advance state and federal policy
- Increase the visibility of the Coalition among policymakers, decision makers, and influencers in every congressional district
- Hold decision makers accountable for achieving progress on Chesapeake water quality, habitat, and resiliency goals by 2025 and beyond
- Promote safe and equitable access to local waterways and open spaces (i.e. green spaces or nearby nature) in communities with limited resources



## RESULTS

**An inclusive movement that advocates for clean water and healthy communities**

**Clean water is a consistent policy priority with broad, bipartisan support**

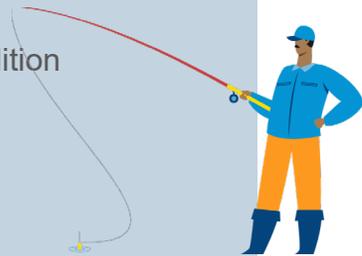
**All communities benefit from clean rivers and streams across the Chesapeake watershed**

## HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Coalition Steering Committee reflects demographics of our population within the Watershed
- 15% increase in Coalition membership overall with an emphasis on representation from diverse communities
- Secure new funding to work with and support Indigenous People and Native American Tribes
- 70% of Young Professionals of Color participants stay in the environmental sector
- 40% of Coalition members have fully developed DEIJ implementation plans
- Grow Coalition's full-time staff from four to five by 2025

- Achieve federal policy and funding objectives
- Achieve state policy and funding objectives set by state leads
- Widespread bipartisan support among watershed delegation members for Chesapeake-specific programs and funding
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program funded at full authorization level or higher
- Chesapeake WILD grant program funded at full authorization of \$15 million

- Next Bay Agreement is co-created through an inclusive process
- Coalition members receive a high and growing level of satisfaction and value from being part of the Coalition
- 80% of members engaged (participate in Lobby Day, participate in work group, attend conference, etc.)
- 65% of members sign on to appropriations requests
- 50% increase in funding for state leads by 2025





# It's All Connected

## WATER

Stormwater. Drinking water. Water that flows through our rivers and streams. They are all connected. Water flows through multiple issues, including public health, land conservation, energy, and the regional economy.

## EQUITY

Tree Equity. Redlining. Public Health. Disproportionate Impacts. Systemic racism and other historic inequities are embedded in our water policies and infrastructure. What harms one of us, hurts all of us.



## CLIMATE

Warming temperatures. Rising seas. Flooding. Hurricanes. The list of climate impacts is long. “Frontline” communities with the fewest resources to confront these devastating impacts are often the first affected and hardest hit, and would benefit from climate preparedness and green infrastructure.

## JUSTICE

Access. Policy change. A just society cannot exist without environmental justice. Our work is rooted in a set of decisions, policies, systems, and structures that benefit some and harm marginalized communities.



## VISION

A diverse movement that ensures clean water for people, communities and wildlife throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed

## MISSION

Together, we create a more inclusive and powerful network of advocates championing effective and equitable clean water policies

## WE BELIEVE

in a more just, equitable and inclusive society where access to clean water is a fundamental right. We are committed to:

- Authentic partnerships
- Collaborative action
- Power-building
- Collective impact
- Equitable outcomes

## STRATEGIES

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## PRIORITIES

### Expand the capacity of Coalition members to be strong advocates for clean water and resilient communities

- Provide capacity-building resources (communications, toolkits, training) to be effective advocates for clean water
- Work with funders to increase long term investment in DEI and environmental justice
- Identify and secure funding to strengthen the Coalition and expand our internal capacity to better serve the needs of Coalition members
- Expand the role of and investment in state leads
- Communicate a simple, compelling narrative and shared messaging that deepens understanding of intersectional issues (climate, energy, public health, drinking water)
- Connect and convene members for peer learning and knowledge sharing around critical policy priorities and emerging issues

### Advance equitable policies and ensure accountability through 2025 and beyond

- Engage members in joint advocacy efforts to increase public funding for clean water
- Better understand the needs of frontline communities; advocate for resources to advance shared goals
- Amplify local voices and stories to advance state and federal policy
- Increase the visibility of the Coalition among policymakers, decision makers, and influencers in every congressional district
- Convene partners to create a shared agenda and hold decision makers accountable for achieving progress on Chesapeake water quality, habitat, and resiliency goals by 2025 and beyond
- Promote safe and equitable access to local waterways and open spaces (i.e. green spaces or nearby nature) in communities with limited resources

## RESULTS

- ★ An inclusive movement that advocates for clean water and resilient communities
- ★ All communities benefit from clean rivers and streams across the Chesapeake watershed
- ★ Clean water is a consistent policy priority with broad, bipartisan support

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 15% increase in Coalition membership overall with an emphasis on representation from diverse communities
- 65% of members sign on to appropriations requests
- 80% of members engaged (participate in Lobby Day, join work group, attend conference, etc.)
- 70% of YPC participants stay in the environmental sector
- Widespread bipartisan support among watershed delegation members for Chesapeake-specific programs and funding
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program funded at full authorization level or higher
- Chesapeake WILD grant program funded at full authorization of \$15 million



# Up Next: Implementation

## Grow and mobilize a more inclusive movement of clean water champions

- Governance Review
- Convening Steering Committee advisory committees - new DEIJ Committee, Governance Committee, Fundraising Committee
- New DC lead and increased funds for State Leads (\$)

## Expand the capacity of Coalition members to be strong advocates for clean water and resilient communities

- Use workgroups to meet with decisionmakers. We've had past meetings with Sarbanes, McEachin, Regional Admin Adam Ortiz.
- Update the DEIJ in Action Guide and create measures of success (\$)
- Policy/Issue papers (\$)
- Increased funding support for current Coalition staff and identified growth opportunities (communications) (\$)
- Pairing potential new funders/funding sources with implementation actions

## Advance equitable policies and ensure accountability through 2025 and beyond

- Continuing to develop communications and advocacy resources – like ACAP/Stormwater videos (\$)
- Continue to expand our Indigenous Waters group and participation in the VA EJ Collaborative (\$)
- Increased advocacy trainings (\$)
- Defining Equitable Access: Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area, Chesapeake WILD, America the Beautiful For All Coalition