

April 30, 2015

Via e-mail to agreement@chesapeakebay.net

Mr. Nicholas DiPasquale
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109
Annapolis, MD 21403



RE: Diversity Outcome Management Strategy Comments

Dear Mr. DiPasquale and Management Board Members:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition—a coalition of organizations from Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia with the common goal of restoring the thousands of streams and rivers flowing to the Chesapeake Bay—respectfully submit the following comments on the draft Diversity Outcome Management Strategy.

As a Coalition, we want to commend the Chesapeake Executive Council for including diversity in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. The Diversity Action Team has done an outstanding job of identifying obstacles, creating workgroups, drafting this strategy, and beginning the crucial discussion on diversity in the watershed. The Coalition has a few suggestions that seek to build on the great work already done in developing a baseline and implementing the approaches.

A. The Diversity Strategy Must Gather Information to Establish a Robust Baseline.

The Diversity outcome is to: “Identify minority stakeholder groups that are not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities and create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage them in the Partnership’s efforts.”

The strategy acknowledges that the number of diverse individuals engaged in protecting and restoring waters does not reflect the diversity of the watershed. The strategy also acknowledges the need to identify minority stakeholder groups that are not currently represented in order to engage those groups. However, the strategy lacks a robust baseline of minority stakeholder groups currently represented in the leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities. This information is necessary as a starting point to begin tracking improvements in diversity.

1. The Diversity Strategy Should Include a Baseline Number of Diverse Employees of Partnership Members.

The strategy acknowledges that there is no baseline for diversity in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The strategy addresses the lack of baseline by adding an appendix with various outreach policies and programs. While the appendix showcases the efforts the Partnership members are making to reach diverse audiences, the appendix falls short of quantifying the extent to which minority stakeholder groups are currently represented in the Partnership’s work.

In order to generate a robust baseline, participating partners should report data about the internal demographics of their employees. Specifically, Partnership members should report

race/ethnicity and other diversity information for employees that work in state agencies or federal government programs and are engaged in leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities.

Only by compiling information from the Partnership members on the diversity of employees will we be able to track whether the partners are increasing the diversity of those engaged in leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities over time.

2. The Diversity Strategy Should Make a Plan to Help Non-Profits Collect and Report Diversity Data.

Another piece of information currently missing from the diversity baseline is diversity of boards, staff, and volunteers of non-profits working in leadership, decision-making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities. Regional, and local non-profit environmental organizations are clearly in the best position to gather diversity data from their boards, staff, and volunteers, but most have not yet done so. While the vast majority of non-profit organizations would be willing to collect and report this data, capacity issues largely prevent this. The Bay Program and Partnership members should work closely with the non-profit community and funders to build capacity for groups to collect and report this diversity information.

A great example of a method to collect organizational demographics comes from Guidestar and D5 Coalition. Together, they created a questionnaire to support non-profits in collecting diversity data. The survey is voluntary and also has the option of being filled out anonymously. The purpose of the survey is to collect certain content information (i.e. gender, sexual orientation, and disability status) plus specific fields within those categories (e.g. male, female, or transgender).

For example, the race and ethnicity question asks how many board members/staff members/volunteers identify as Asian/Asian American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/Latina, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian, White, Multi-racial or Multi-Ethnic (2+ races/ethnicities). It also includes options for individuals who decline to state and those who identify as other with the option of filling in a blank. D5 Organizational Demographics.

The questionnaire also gives the organization a chance to share the strategies they use to address diversity. Options include tracking retention across demographic categories, tracking income levels, and tracking age. The questionnaire then gives the organization a chance to share more about their demographic profile including other methods used to support diversity.

We suggest the Diversity Action Team, Bay Program, and the Partnership members work with academic institutions (such as the University of Maryland, School of Public Health) to assist non-profits in collecting diversity data. In the Great Lakes region, Professor Dorceta Taylor from Michigan State University collected diversity data from local and regional environmental groups. See http://www.joycefdn.org/assets/1/7/TJF_DiversityBooklet_Final-9.25.pdf. The report, made possible by funding from the Joyce Foundation, is an important resource for the community and allowed for collection of the information without undue burden to the environmental community. We strongly recommend the partnership, environmental groups, academic institutions, and funders work together to replicate that diversity report in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

3. The Diversity Management Strategy Should Include More Examples of Successful Diversity Initiatives.

Several groups have created successful diversity initiatives that should be included in the strategy and then furthered by the Bay Program.

First is the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Technical Capacity Program. This program provides funding to groups that provide technical services on behalf of local governments and nonprofits for projects that enhance local capacity to more effectively restore the habitats and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. One evaluation criterion is "demonstration of need," which states that the "Projects should establish a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrate that activities would not move forward absent funding" National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Technical Grants Program Request for Proposal. The funding processes are necessarily competitive. However, programs like this provide a great opportunity for programs that would otherwise not receive funding to still have the opportunity to be competitive and participate. This is how the Bay Program is able to help smaller, less established organizations grow.

The Bay Program can also build on programs like this. There is a common realization that the grant process is extremely competitive. This provides an opportunity for the Bay Program (and interested partners) to launch training programs on grant application success for organizations that do not have the knowledge or technical capacity to become more competitive.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has also been successful in partnering with groups that promote diversity initiatives. For example, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation partners with:

- The National Wildlife Federation for the Deep Green Community program, which benefits wildlife and water in Baltimore.
- The Anacostia Watershed Society for the Anacostia Wetlands Awareness and Restoration Effort restoring tidal wetland habitat in the Anacostia Watershed in the District of Columbia.
- Blue Water Baltimore on the Blue Water Congregations program in Maryland, which works with religious leaders to reduce impacts from stormwater.
- Anacostia Riverkeeper on the Community Rain Barrels to install high-volume cisterns in the District of Columbia to harvest stormwater for community use.
- The City of Lexington, Virginia on the Green Infrastructure Showcase which integrates green infrastructure into new and highly-visible, mixed-income neighborhoods of affordable EarthCraft certified homes.

Successful partnerships like these are a unique opportunity to engage the press on local environmental justice stories, including grants. These stories also give the Bay Program the opportunity to promote the prioritization of diversity.

B. The Diversity Management Strategy Must Provide Clear and Effective Steps on How the Management Approaches Will be Implemented.

The Diversity Action Team generated four management approaches to address the factors affecting the ability to meet the outcome. We believe the management approaches are implementable. However, we have a few suggestions for each approach to help reach the goal.

1. The Diversity Management Strategy's Goal of Enhancing Communication and Outreach Can Be Achieved in the Following Ways:

- We agree that the partnership should begin to change how they talk about issues. Many of the strategies are communicated in a way that make them inaccessible and irrelevant for certain diverse individuals who are not experts in working with governmental agencies or familiar with environmental acronyms. The Diversity Action Team should work with the Bay Program communications team to help make Partnership materials more accessible to a wider audience.
- The partnership should support existing communication opportunities, such as the DMV EJ Listserv, the Symposium on Environmental Justice and Environmental Health Disparities in Maryland and Washington, D.C.; the National Environmental Justice Conference, the Choose Clean Water Annual Conference; the Watershed Forum; and Jews United for Justice Social Justice Events.
- The Diversity Action Team should work with states, local governments, and the public access team to ensure public access sites to waters with fish consumption advisories are clearly posted, with signage in multiple languages and including pictures.
- The Bay Program and Partnership should consider funding a mobile phone app that allows user to identify fish consumption advisories on waters in the watershed. The app could be modeled after Swim Guide, which helps users identify swimming advisories before swimming. Fish Guide could provide users with up-to-date information about fishing advisories in their local waters and would help anglers traveling to new places to fish know their risks.

2. The Diversity Management Strategy's Goal of Increasing Employment and Professional Engagement Can Be Achieved in the Following Ways:

- The partnership should create an ad hoc employment workgroup by inviting key stakeholders with expertise in diverse hiring and employment (such as career advisors from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, professors from diverse backgrounds, or affinity groups representing minority groups in environmental and engineering fields) in order to determine the best strategies for increasing employment and professional engagement.

- Additional focus should be added on how to “actively recruit” people of diverse backgrounds. Recruitment means to actively find qualified individuals and ask them to join an organization. This is important because the problem is that individuals are not applying for jobs. The reason for this is not necessarily because they are not seeing the job postings.
- Partnership members should take steps to make their workplace more welcoming and inclusive for diverse individuals.

3. The Diversity Management Strategy’s Goal of Promoting Environmental Justice Can Be Achieved in the Following Ways:

- The partnership should incorporate community leaders (i.e. neighborhood associations, faith based organizations, community development groups, and youth groups) into the fulfillment of the strategy for environmental justice purposes. We suggest that community leaders are invited to sit on a committee or take part in a work group to ensure they can bring their community issues/interests to the table. We want to see the partnership involve these leaders in the planning phase so each project contains an eco-social benefits to the community (i.e. jobs, health, and recreation). This also ensures community leaders are informed of potential projects before those projects are placed in their communities
- Other groups should be incorporated into this strategy’s implementation including Maryland Commission of Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities; Clean Water Action; Green Latinos; Green for All; Broccoli City; and various community colleges and universities.
- We strongly support the use of EJScreen to implement the strategy. We also encourage the tool be released for public use immediately.

We are happy to discuss our comments on the draft Diversity Management Strategy further. Please contact Jill Witkowski by phone at 443-842-7525 or by email at witkowskij@nwf.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Anacostia Watershed Society

Audubon Naturalist Society

Blue Water Baltimore

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Clean Water Action

Conservation Pennsylvania

Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania

Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

Friends of the Rappahannock

Lackawanna River Corridor Association
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Sierra Club
Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited
National Aquarium
National Parks Conservation Association
Nature Abounds
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch, Anacostia River
Penn Future
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
South River Federation
St. Mary's River Watershed Association
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership
Trash Free Maryland
Virginia Conservation Network
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
West Virginia Rivers Coalition