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Call for Input as Chesapeake Bay Trust Launches Initiative to Create Science-Based Tools for Policymakers and Regulators

New Project to Synthesize Studies from Pooled Monitoring Initiative to Strengthen Watershed Restoration Decisions

ANNAPOLIS, MD (October 1, 2025) – The Chesapeake Bay Trust today announced an innovative effort to synthesize more than 10 years of restoration research into practical, accessible tools that practitioners, regulators, legislators, and policymakers can use to support informed decisions about Bay restoration practices. The 11-month project will transform findings from about 40 scientific studies conducted through the Pooled Monitoring Initiative Restoration Research Program into user-friendly products tailored to decision-makers' needs.

The Bay Trust administers the Pooled Monitoring Program with many partners including representatives of federal agencies; the Maryland Departments of Environment, Natural Resources, and Transportation State Highway Administration; counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's; restoration practitioner groups; and others. This partnership demonstrates the impact of pooling resources to fund research that is thoughtful, innovative, and actionable. Thanks to this new effort, a decade of findings will be turned into available, easy-to-use resources, empowering stakeholders to use the results to restore nature.

The initiative comes at a critical time as the Chesapeake Bay restoration community navigates the 'Beyond 2025' phase of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement amid evolving restoration priorities. Local governments, regulatory agencies, and restoration practitioners have invested billions of dollars in restoration practices, yet the science about which approaches work best and under what conditions is still ongoing. Periodic efforts to synthesize the newest science will ensure the policymaker, regulatory, practitioner, and advocacy communities have the best and latest information.

"For over a decade, the Pooled Monitoring Initiative has been answering the tough questions that stymie restoration progress – from where to best site practices to how many projects need to be installed to see measurable benefits," said Dr. Jana Davis, President of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. "But producing excellent science is only half the challenge. This project ensures that our research findings empower the people who need them most in formats they can use to make sound decisions for the Bay and other local waterways."

The project team, led by Thriving Coasts Consulting, with partners akorn environmental consulting and Saltwater Consulting RVA, brings more than 70 years of collective experience at the science-policy interface in the Chesapeake region. The team will conduct extensive stakeholder engagement, including

interviews with key decision-makers and a broad survey to understand information needs and preferred communication formats.

"We're not just translating science – we're building bridges between researchers and the people making critical restoration decisions every day," said Dr. Seth Theuerkauf, Founder and Lead Consultant at Thriving Coasts and project lead. "Our approach combines rigorous synthesis with deep stakeholder engagement to ensure these products are trusted, usable, and aligned with real-world decision needs."

The initiative will produce a range of communication products to be determined by the very people who will use them. Product types to be considered are:

- Policy-ready synthesis briefs on key restoration topics like stream restoration effectiveness, stormwater best management practice (BMP) performance, and living shoreline design
- Interactive web tools and StoryMaps for visual learners
- Tailored products for specific audiences, from one-page legislative fact sheets to detailed technical guidance for practitioners
- An on-call information service to respond to specific requests from policymakers

"Local governments are on the front lines of working to recover the health of the Chesapeake and its tributaries, and are constantly engaged in the process of trying to assess the most cost-effective and impactful ways to achieve regulatory compliance and clean up local waters," said Erik Michelsen, Deputy Director of Anne Arundel County's Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration. "This program provides a scientifically rigorous means to support some of the most accomplished researchers in the region as they work to answer the most pressing questions from the regulated - and regulatory - communities."

Stakeholders interested in participating in the needs assessment or learning more about the project can contact the project team at seth@thrivingcoasts.com.

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About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (www.cbtrust.org) is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to improving natural resources through environmental education, community engagement, and local watershed restoration. The Bay Trust's grantees engage hundreds of thousands of individuals annually in projects that have a measurable impact on the waterways and other natural resources of the region. The Bay Trust's work is supported by the sale of a specialty license plate; donations from individuals and corporations; and partnerships with private foundations and federal, state, and local governments. The Bay Trust has received the highest rating from Charity Navigator for over two decades: On average, over 90 cents of every dollar go to programs.

About the Pooled Monitoring Initiative

The Pooled Monitoring Initiative's Restoration Research Program addresses critical questions that serve as barriers to watershed restoration project implementation. By pooling resources from federal, state, and local partners, the program funds rigorous research to answer questions posed by the regulatory and practitioner communities, then provides answers back for direct application. Learn more at cbtrust.org/grants/restoration-research.