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Efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay are at a crossroads. New water quality commitments bring greater urgency for progress toward a healthy Bay and the health of the rivers, creeks, and streams that are a part of its watershed. However, more than ever, the financial and human resources of the public sector to accomplish these goals are uncertain. These challenges come at a time when some businesses in the Bay watershed have also confronted economic headwinds. For all who share a stake in the Bay’s future, success will depend on working together in new collaborative ventures like this one.



Working together, the business community has an opportunity to help lead in causes that concern all of those living in the Chesapeake Bay region. Through this new business partnership, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and its business partners can create tangible change in the watershed and local communities while raising the profile of businesses who make important contributions to Bay and watershed restoration.

### **Turning the Tide**

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is moving to create a new and innovative business partnership to help address the needs for restoration and protection of the Bay watershed. We hope to involve a diverse mix of members from large corporations to small local businesses. This initiative will provide businesses around the Bay region with a forum in which they can make their voices heard and actively participate in environmental causes that are important to them, their customers, and their communities while helping to meet larger goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

### **Businesses: Large and small**

The Alliance can aid business partners by offering their knowledge and experience to design a program that is tailored to both large corporate and small to medium sized business needs while making sure that time and funding is leveraged to create the efficient solutions. Although there is no discrete criteria for division of business sizes used here, it is recognized that needs vary based on the both the size and nature of a business; such as whether a business is shareholder or independently owned, service or product-based, local, regional, or national, 50 or 500+ employees. These characteristics will ultimately guide interests in and benefits provided by this partnership. For example:

**Corporations** who are headquartered or have major footprints in the Bay watershed can have a voice in issues related to Chesapeake restoration and protection, can integrate Chesapeake goals in corporate sustainability and social responsibility efforts, can engage employees in volunteer efforts, and contribute to community-based environmental causes.

**Small Businesses** can set themselves apart from others in the marketing of their products and services and create a network of like-minded businesses. Some have made bold commitments to “give-back” to Bay-related causes as a way to demonstrate their commitment however they need support, resources, and partners to better achieve their company goals while providing them with recognition for their efforts.

**Some highlights of the proposed business initiative include:**

- **Establishing a Membership Pledge for Business Commitment to the Bay** – We will bring the business community together through commitment to a common cause. Becoming a member will unite interests through a set of key commitments and create a unique bond between companies, help market the program to consumers, and provide a means for recognition of participating businesses that support Bay restoration. B4B will be a membership association – by business, for business.
  - **Providing a Forum for the voice of Business in Bay Issues-** Businesses of all sizes will have the opportunity to come together in a Forum to discuss issues important to them and the Chesapeake Bay. Communication among businesses, policy makers and environmental groups will encourage cooperation and collaboration and strengthen work on common goals.
  - **Developing a programs to support business-** The Alliance will develop a framework that links Bay watershed goals to the needs of business. Sustainability and social responsibility programs that are integrated with Bay issues will be a target for large corporations. Small businesses will receive assistance in cause-marketing their products and setting themselves apart from others in the community. By tailoring support to the needs of different types of businesses it will be ensured that as many businesses as possible can contribute to helping the Chesapeake Bay.
  - **Celebrating Success** - Our *Businesses for the Bay* program demonstrated the value of promoting success in the past. As a recognized neutral voice in the community, the Alliance will recognize and market businesses for their contributions to the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.
  - **Increasing Employee awareness and engagement-** Information, educational resource, and volunteer projects will allow employees to become more familiar with causes that are important to a company and its sustainability or social responsibility platforms. Activities will be able to demonstrate how different issues and opportunities in the Bay and its watershed can link business objectives to environmental concerns.
  - **Creating opportunities for watershed philanthropy** - Some businesses have already taken the initiative to create giveback programs, and the Alliance will create a system in which businesses can donate to the environment and community as well. A diverse array of programs that adapt with the desires of the business partnership will evolve with the challenges facing the Bay watershed.
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