



Strategic Plan: 2021 - 2023
(Final, October 25, 2020)

Our Vision

Enduring protection for the Chesapeake Bay watershed with healthy ecosystems, sustainable land use, and clean water for all.

Our Mission

Applying the power of the law to protect and restore clean water and promote healthy, resilient ecosystems for communities across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

CLA is the only regional organization solely dedicated to providing free legal services to protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We are a trusted source for innovative legal strategies to solve the Bay's most complex problems. Our clients include individuals, community groups and environmental advocates working to protect the Bay's lands, waters and communities. CLA also works with local, state, and federal regulators seeking unique solutions to Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration.

CLA staff attorneys, together with a network of volunteer attorneys, provide the following services:

1. **Direct client counseling, case development, and representation** in local, state and federal matters.
2. **Legal education and training** on how to use the law to achieve Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration.
3. **Strategic policy counseling and innovative legal analyses** of issues that arise in the course of the protection and restoration of the watershed.

Our Core Values

1. **Passion:** Our passion for a clean and healthy environment for all is at the heart of our organization and inspires our work on a daily basis.
2. **Integrity, Accountability, and Excellence:** We remain true to our mission and are accountable to ourselves, and to the people and partners we serve. We challenge ourselves to the highest level of learning and performance, and base our decisions on experience and the best available science, evidence and information.
3. **Innovation and Impact:** We instill creativity and innovation into our work to carry out our mission. We aim to achieve tangible and enduring results.
4. **Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** We believe in the equal value of every human being. We know that to solve the Bay's most complex problems we must embrace differences and actively include a variety of voices. We respect and include all people, communities, cultures, religions, and perspectives in our work.
5. **Kindness, Empathy and Respect.** We emphasize kindness, empathy and respect within CLA, to the people and partners we serve and to the donors who support our efforts. This includes supporting each other during difficult times, providing fair compensation and benefits for our staff, respecting work-life balance, and maintaining cordiality - even in contentious matters.

Strategic Approaches

The Board of Directors and Staff have identified the following Strategic Approaches, which are designed to increase CLA's ability to achieve its mission to apply the power of the law to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, resulting in clean water, resilient ecosystems, and healthy communities.

- I. **Provide High-Quality *Pro Bono* Legal Services.** CLA will strive to meet all requests for assistance taking into consideration consistency with CLA's mission and the client's ability to pay. These services include:

- A. **Representing Clients in Judicial & Administrative Matters:** CLA, through Staff and network attorneys, and on behalf of clients and partners, seeks to ensure (i) legal compliance by the regulated community and (ii) accountability from federal, state, and local governments for effective implementation and enforcement of laws, regulations and policies designed to protect the Bay and its tributaries.

In evaluating prospective matters, CLA gives priority to the following areas:

- 1) Matters that have the greatest potential for achieving environmental improvement, regulatory efficiencies, effectiveness and compliance;
- 2) Matters that have the potential to develop and establish useful legal precedent;
- 3) Matters that address issues in traditionally overburdened communities; or impact broad programmatic environmental issues;
- 4) Matters that address pollution from agriculture, urban/suburban stormwater, and municipal and industrial discharges;
- 5) Matters that protect natural resources and promote biodiversity.

- B. **Developing Innovative Legal Solutions:** Provide innovative and creative legal tools, legal analyses, strategies and solutions for Bay and watershed improvement.

- C. **Converting Strategic Legal and Data-Driven Research into Action** to advocate for the establishment, implementation, and enforcement of improved and effective laws, regulations, and policies.

- II. **Provide High Quality Legal Information and Education.** Our legal education program is designed to increase Chesapeake Bay communities'

understanding and use of the law to protect local water quality and the Bay. CLA provides our clients and partners with objective, balanced, comprehensive, up-to-date information, education, training, facilitation and collaboration services, and other resources useful to individuals and groups in furtherance of the protection and restoration of their local waters, the Bay, and its watershed. These services include:

- A. Developing and presenting informational, educational, and practical training programs, workshops, and materials.
- B. Facilitating and promoting dialogue and collaborative strategic actions among stakeholders, including coalition building.
- C. Serving as a neutral facilitator.
- D. Providing information to local, state, and federal governments as they develop strategies to protect the Bay and monitor and review government programs and initiatives.
- E. Providing legal and other internships and fellowship opportunities to develop the environmental leaders of tomorrow.
- F. Providing outreach and communications that are accessible to all our constituents, from our network attorneys to community members across the Bay watershed.

III. **Environmental Justice: Prioritize Matters of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) in our work.** Our pursuit of JEDI recognizes that environmental and public health burdens and benefits are not distributed equitably in our society. As we work to protect the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, we will seek to address these historic and current disparities so that all people in the Chesapeake Bay watershed can realize and enjoy a healthy and sustainable environment. To achieve this, CLA will:

- A. Support community-led initiatives that improve environmental outcomes in communities disproportionately burdened by pollution;
- B. Identify and seek to work with community leaders and partners in disproportionately impacted communities;
- C. Identify and research specific environmental concerns and needs of identified communities;
- D. Assist clients and partners with matters within the CLA mission that seek to:
 - 1. Address specific environmental justice concerns,
 - 2. Challenge policies or actions that result in, or may result in, disproportionate environmental burdens; and
- E. Seek opportunities to perform outreach and training, participate in conferences, and develop workshops and panels.

- IV. **Advocate for Effective Consideration of Climate Impacts and Solutions.** Since the climate crisis affects the environment of the Chesapeake Bay broadly, we will use the full range of our tools to address it. We will seek out opportunities to promote climate resiliency, mitigation and adaptation measures through legislative, regulatory, and permitting reforms, as well as enforcement of relevant laws and regulations.

Organizational Priorities for Achieving Our Strategic Approaches

The Board of Directors and Staff have identified the following Organizational Priorities for carrying out our Strategic Approaches.

- I. **Effective Outreach.** In order to successfully provide our core services, CLA Staff must:
- A. Understand current community legal needs;
 - B. Continue to recruit, retain, and re-engage CLA’s robust network of volunteer attorneys throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- II. **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI).** To more fully accomplish our mission and live our values, we strive to make our commitment to JEDI evident in all areas of our organization. We are committed to institutionalizing JEDI in our organizational culture, including our internal organizational structure/policies/goals/vision, and among our Staff. We also strive to maintain a talented and diverse Board of Directors and Board of Advisors to include representation from stakeholder populations, and different types of expertise, backgrounds and experience.
- III. **Expand CLA’s Reach to More Communities Within the Watershed.** CLA seeks to address a wide range of threats to Bay health by expanding our reach to more Bay watershed communities and organizations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, New York, and central and southern regions of Virginia. We seek to give priority to sectors and jurisdictions which are experiencing the greatest challenges in achieving water quality goals.
- IV. **Ensure Long-term Financial Sustainability and Resilience of CLA.** In order to achieve our mission, we are committed to ensuring that CLA is viable today and into the future.
- A. CLA will create, implement, and periodically review and revise a Development Plan for long-term financial sustainability, including increasing and diversifying the sources of contributions in order to

meet increases in operational expenses, and create a reserve fund to cover the costs of least 6 months of operating expenses.

- B. CLA may communicate regarding this Strategic Plan to certain stakeholders, as appropriate for fundraising purposes.
- C. CLA will endeavor to maintain a talented, engaged, and committed Staff and Board of Directors to carry out this Strategic Plan.

- V. **Ensure Sound Operations.** CLA will develop an Operating Plan for the implementation of this Strategic Plan, which sets forth goals against which CLA's performance is evaluated. This will initially be developed by the Staff and reviewed with the Board of Directors. This Plan will be reviewed and revised as appropriate.