



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.

**APPENDIX A TO CLA’S 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN:
EXAMPLES OF HIGH PRIORITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
CLA INVOLVEMENT**

In all issue areas, CLA will support the adoption and enforcement of environmentally protective statutes, regulations, agency guidance, policies, consent decrees and settlement agreements, as well as pursue activities to achieve the Chesapeake Bay TMDL water quality goals, focusing on matters that will have the greatest impact on the environment.

Those issue areas include but are not limited to: air quality, water quality, environmental justice, governmental and private facilities compliance, hydrofracking and natural gas transport, infrastructure projects, land use and development, protection of biodiversity and endangered species, and climate change/adaptation.

Permit Compliance for Governmental and Private Facilities

- Assist clients and partners to secure compliance with NPDES and other discharge permit requirements.
- Analyze data to identify violations and take appropriate measures to achieve compliance, including but not limited to notifying owners or operators, notifying regulatory authorities, and bringing citizen suits.
- As new and expanded sources of discharges are proposed, support measures to ensure that offsets are required and implemented so as to avoid degradation of the receiving water quality.

Agricultural Activities

- Identify individuals & facilities, including agribusiness, that are violating the law. Seek compliance with existing laws, permits and other legal requirements, through policy and enforcement efforts.
- Identify and support the use of incentives for the farm community to install nutrient management plans and other “best management practices” (BMPs), to reduce releases of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment and other pollutants to land and water bodies; support funding for these activities.
- Support well-designed “agricultural certainty” programs that provide incentives to farmers to implement more BMPs and other beneficial practices.
- Pursue projects focused on more rigorous permit review, compliance and fee collection at Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and other permitted facilities.
- Assist with advocacy for legislative and regulatory change to improve the effectiveness and enforcement of rules designed to reduce agricultural pollution.

- Support efforts to persuade large “integrators” to provide assistance to individual farmers in their efforts to reduce releases of nutrients and sediment.
- Support efforts to expand, and make more competitive, sustainable agricultural practices in the region.

Urban/Suburban Stormwater

- Seek to strengthen laws and regulations designed to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff, including through policy and enforcement actions, where necessary.
- Support comprehensive, rigorous and effective Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits, and effective monitoring, inspections and enforcement.
- Support county and local efforts to reduce releases of stormwater, including the use of green infrastructure and environmental site design.

Natural Resource Protection, Conservation and Management

- Support efforts to strengthen and enforce laws and regulations, including but not limited to: forest and land conservation laws and regulations, land use laws, wildlife and fisheries protection laws, historical preservation laws, and other conservation tools throughout the Bay watershed.
- Support land and forest conservation and “smart growth” activities.
- Support local efforts directed at stream and river restoration, including wetlands and living shoreline construction and reforestation efforts.

Air Quality

- Support efforts to reduce atmospheric deposition from power plants, incinerators, and other sources of airborne pollution.

Sewer, Septic Systems, and Groundwater

- Support system upgrades and conversion to wastewater treatment systems.
- Support efforts to ensure and enforce permit compliance.
- Pursue measures designed to protect and improve receiving water quality.
- Support efforts to review the growing number of groundwater permits utilizing spray field irrigation rather than surface water discharges to ensure that these permits produce no new loads to impaired waters.

Hydrofracking and Natural Gas Transport

- Continue to support legislative efforts aimed at understanding environmental and potential health impacts before issuing drilling and extraction permits.
- Support efforts to protect natural resources and Bay watershed communities from activities associated with natural gas extraction and transport, including pipelines and compressor stations.

Climate Change

- Ensure that states address climate impacts in their 2-year milestones.
- Encourage states to implement climate resilient BMPs in accordance with their Phase III WIPs.
- Ensure states review and evaluate existing BMPs for climate impacts as part of their verification programs to determine if they continue to operate effectively.
- Support the addition of climate change to state permits, regulations and laws.
- Support efforts to educate the public on this topic, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including promotion of:
 - Agricultural changes, such as regenerative farming which would store carbon in the soil, while also avoiding runoff;
 - Planting of native trees and other vegetation;
 - Reduction of industrial emissions; and
 - Improved transportation policies.

Infrastructure Projects

- Work with NGOs to identify infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, powerlines, pipelines, etc., to determine whether they might have adverse impacts on water quality.
- Support NGOs in securing legal assistance for installation of green infrastructure projects.

Legacy Sediment Associated with Dams Discharging to the Bay

- Support research and advocacy regarding modified water deliveries and flows, buildup of sediments containing nutrients and other pollutants, and other environmental impacts.
- Work with NGOs in securing legal assistance to address downstream effects, including management and relicensing processes.

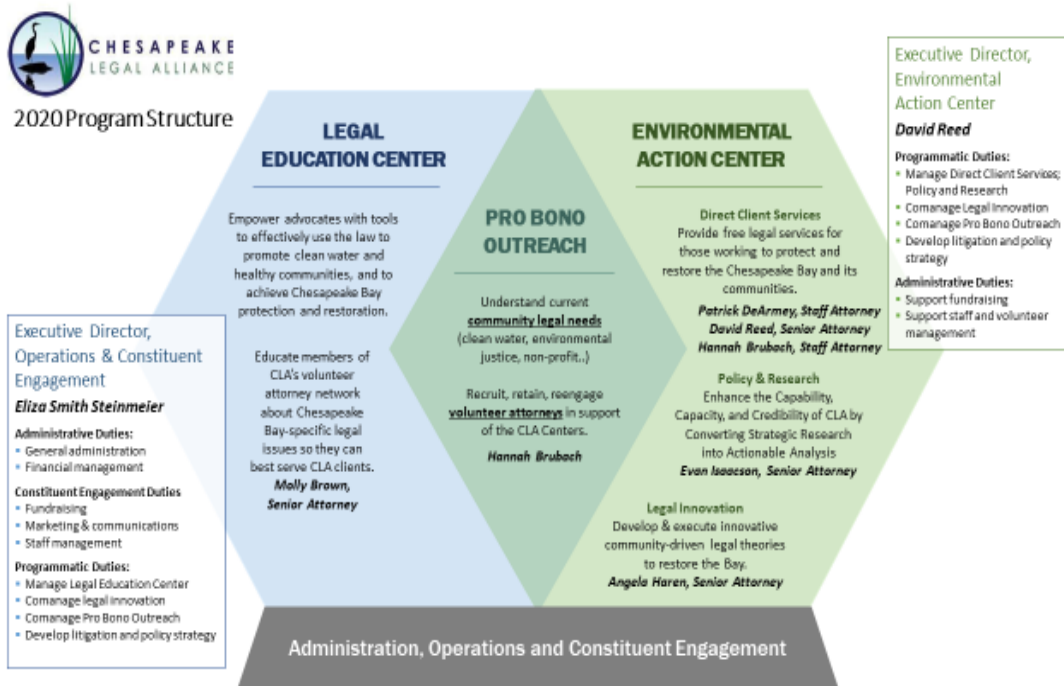
Outreach

Continue to look for opportunities to provide needed assistance and expand our support efforts. Pennsylvania faces special challenges because, of the 7 Bay jurisdictions, it is the furthest behind in meeting its 2025 water quality goals. EPA's *Expectations for the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans* (June 2018) includes a 5-page Appendix B setting forth specific "Expectations" for Pennsylvania.

APPENDIX B TO CLA'S 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN: ORGANIZATION

Program Organization

The organization of CLA's internal programs is reflected on the following diagram, which is followed by the Current Staff Organization Chart:



CLA Board and Committee-Level Organization

Board of Directors

- Approximately 20 to 25 board members (optimal size).
- Meet quarterly on topics of substance and governance.
- Board contributes wealth, wisdom, and work.
- Committee chairs and Co-Executive Directors confer regularly, and report to the full Board, on implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Board provides direction to CLA activities, growth and strategic planning.
- Board Chair and Committee Chairs interact directly with Co-Executive Directors. Co-Executive Directors communicate Board directives to CLA Staff (unless otherwise agreed upon).

Committees

- Meet as needed in person or via telephone conference.
- Explore and strategize in a given subject area, provide work where needed, provide quick input and decision-making resources for CLA Staff and information and make recommendations to the Board.

Board of Advisors

- This group provides valued strategic and other advice, including organizational development and fundraising support, based on the wide range of skills, experience and wisdom reflected in its membership.
- The Advisors are invited to all Board of Directors' meetings and conferences needed or desired with Board members and Staff.

Standing Committees

Executive Committee

- An Executive Committee, composed of CLA Officers, committee Chairs, and selected Board members, meets on a monthly basis on matters of corporate governance and to plan tasks to further progress with regard to the strategic plan. Meetings are open to all Board members.
- Meet in person or by telephone conference during months when the Board does not meet.

Nominating and Governance Committee

- Make recommendations for potential Board members and committee members upon the request of the Executive Committee.
- Make recommendations concerning matters relating to the governance of the organization, including internal policies and procedures, as requested by the Executive Committee.

Development and Marketing Committee

Development

- Identify and develop new sources of revenue. Encourage Board Members and committee members to identify and introduce CLA to corporate sponsors and other potential sources of funding.
- Find ways to support CLA Staff's grant application work, including identification of new grants, introductions to foundations and philanthropic arms of corporations.
- Develop Board-led fundraising and marketing events.
- Work with CLA Staff and Finance Committee to create and implement a Development Plan.

Marketing

- Bring CLA mission and activities to the attention of target audiences (partners, volunteers, funding sources) and media.
- Participate in events conducted by other Bay-related organizations to enhance awareness of CLA mission and activities.
- Enhance awareness of CLA among target audiences in the broader Bay watershed area.

Finance Committee

- Oversee all financial and budgetary activities, including preparation of the annual budget, in consultation with the Co-Executive Directors.
- Make recommendations to the Board with respect to any audit of the Alliance's finances, and provide appropriate oversight with respect to any audit function.
- Make recommendations to the Board with respect to any other financial and budgetary matters.
- Work with CLA Staff and Development & Marketing Committee to create and implement a Development Plan.

Strategic Planning Committee

- Develop recommendations for the Board of Directors regarding strategic priorities, including but not limited to the types of issues and cases CLA should pursue.
- Review periodically CLA's Strategic Plan in consultation with the Co-Executive Directors and make recommendations to the Board of Directors, at least annually, regarding any appropriate revisions or implementation strategies.
- Consider any other aspect of strategic planning for CLA, and make appropriate recommendations to the Board of Directors or any other CLA committee.
- Assist and confer with Staff in deciding if particular matters fit the mission of

CLA and whether to pursue them.

Litigation Committee

- Review and approve or disapprove any litigation matter, whether judicial or administrative, in which CLA Staff will appear as counsel of record, in accordance with its Committee Charter.

Diversity Committee

- Develop and monitor with Staff implementation of plan to increase and maintain Board, Staff and pro bono network diversity.
- Develop with Staff strategies for CLA to serve diverse and environmental justice communities.