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Rivemont is the portfolio manager responsible for the investment decisions of the Rivemont Crypto Fund.

Bitcoin continues to hover around $90,000, a level it has defended for several days in a cautious market awaiting the Federal Reserve’s final policy decision of the year. Investors appear to have already priced in the likelihood of a rate cut, making Jerome Powell’s remarks even more crucial than the announcement itself. In this wait-and-see atmosphere, volatility remains muted: BTC is trading within a narrow band, and total cryptocurrency market capitalization has slightly contracted.

Movements in FNBs show a mixed picture: while Bitcoin is seeing renewed outflows, several altcoins — notably ETH, SOL, and XRP — are attracting positive inflows. Analysts view this not as broad risk-off behavior but as a targeted rotation. On-chain indicators also paint a nuanced landscape: activity is improving modestly, yet overall confidence remains limited, suggesting the early stages of a fragile recovery.

The market as a whole appears frozen ahead of the Fed's decision. Expectations strongly point toward monetary easing, but the outlook is clouded by weakening U.S. consumer spending and record household debt. According to several experts, Powell's message will serve as the true catalyst: a cautious tone could push Bitcoin back toward $88,000, while openness to additional rate cuts could reignite bullish momentum, possibly driving BTC toward $93,000 to $95,000, or higher if enthusiasm builds.

Meanwhile, liquidity in derivatives markets has thinned sharply heading into the holiday season, triggering abrupt swings but few liquidations. Retail traders continue to pull back, while institutional investors keep accumulating. This quiet absorption of supply — combined with significant BTC withdrawals from exchanges — is creating the potential for a supply squeeze. However, without an immediate macro catalyst, Bitcoin remains stuck in a sideways trend until the Fed provides direction.

Standard Chartered has drastically revised its market outlook: the bank now expects Bitcoin to reach $100,000 in 2025, half its previous target. It still forecasts $500,000, but has pushed this projection back to 2030 instead of 2028. This adjustment comes as BTC trades around $90,000 with no clear driver to restart a sustained uptrend. In the short term, though, analysts agree that Bitcoin's direction hinges primarily on Wednesday's FOMC meeting. Despite several rebounds toward the $90,000 level, the cryptocurrency remains stuck in a narrow channel, lacking catalysts. Traditional halving-cycle models are being questioned, with some analysts suggesting that "crypto winters" may now be a thing of the past — a view echoed by prediction-market users who see a new crypto winter before 2026 as highly unlikely.

U.S. FNBs now hold the equivalent of 6.55% of Bitcoin's total supply — more than $117 billion — creating a structural layer of demand. This accumulation helps cushion sell-offs, as shown by the recent rebound from the December 2 low. But the key question is whether this support will be strong enough to prevent another breakdown and reignite upward momentum. Many analysts consider the risk-reward profile attractive at these levels, but confirmation will depend on renewed inflows into FNBs.

According to Alchemy co-founder Joe Lau, stablecoins are experiencing explosive adoption, far beyond their traditional use on crypto exchanges. Their appeal lies largely in their ability to enable instant, 24/7 settlement — something traditional banking systems struggle to match. More and more companies — from fintechs to payment giants like Stripe, to payroll and treasury platforms — are integrating these assets into their operations. At the same time, banks are developing their own tokenized deposit instruments, a “bank-native” version of stablecoins that enables fast transfers while remaining fully within existing regulatory frameworks. Initiatives such as JPM Coin and projects explored by HSBC illustrate this move toward a more modern alternative to traditional wire transfers. In this model, funds remain in the bank but move with the fluidity of digital assets.

This evolution is creating a dual financial system: stablecoins, which are open and usable between any two parties; and tokenized deposits, which are more closed and aimed primarily at institutional banking clients. Lau nevertheless expects these two universes to gradually converge. Banks are already exploring tokenizing additional assets, while stablecoin issuers are considering mechanisms closer to the banking model, particularly to improve capital efficiency. The market itself confirms this growth: total stablecoin capitalization has reached $300 billion, up 75% from a year earlier. Institutions like Morgan Stanley and Citi have raised their forecasts, with some expecting the stablecoin market to exceed $4 trillion by 2030 in optimistic scenarios. For Lau, the convergence of stablecoins and bank-issued tokens will profoundly reshape monetary infrastructure: money that is compliant, programmable, and instantly usable on a global scale.

BlackRock is continuing its push into crypto FNBs, filing with the SEC to launch ETHB, a new Ethereum staking FNB. Unlike its ETHA spot fund — a traditional FNB — this vehicle would incorporate staking rewards generated from a portion of the ETH it holds, giving investors exposure not only to price performance but also to staking yield. The filing specifies that the fund will remain a passive investment product: it will not attempt to outperform Ethereum, but to reflect its price while adding staking income, which may vary over time. The filing comes shortly after the creation of a Delaware statutory trust, a typical precursor to launching a commodity- or crypto-related FNB. BlackRock had previously attempted to integrate staking into ETHA directly, but the SEC repeatedly delayed its decision.

The market for Ethereum staking products has grown since generic listing standards for tokenized-asset trusts were introduced. Grayscale's ETHE came first, followed by other players. So far, none have managed to challenge BlackRock's dominance: ETHA manages more than $11 billion — about 3.6 million ETH — far outpacing competing funds. BlackRock's success is also evident in the Bitcoin market, where its IBIT FNB is the largest crypto FNB, managing around $70 billion. Once approved, the staked-Ethereum FNB ETHB is expected to trade on Nasdaq alongside the company's other funds, potentially strengthening BlackRock's leadership in the rapidly expanding institutional crypto-products sector.

Strategy, meanwhile, made headlines by completing its largest Bitcoin purchase in more than three months, spending nearly $1 billion to acquire more than 10,600 BTC. The purchase was funded mainly through the issuance of common stock. With this acquisition, the company now holds roughly 660,600 BTC, valued at around $60 billion. This single buy matches the company's total acquisition volume since mid-September. Despite the magnitude of the purchase, Strategy's share price remained steady near $180, though it has risen 7.5% over the past week as Bitcoin stabilized around $90,000. Some analysts had questioned whether the firm was slowing its accumulation, concerns now dispelled by this latest transaction. Still, firms like Cantor Fitzgerald have lowered their price targets, notably due to the risk of Strategy being removed from MSCI indices — a development that has weighed on sentiment.

Short-term uncertainty hasn't dampened long-term optimism. Speaking at Binance Blockchain Week, Ripple CEO Brad Garlinghouse offered a bold forecast: he believes Bitcoin could reach $180,000 by the end of 2026, nearly double its current price. Although he provided no detailed model, he argued that continued regulatory progress in the United States — particularly potential passage of the CLARITY Act — could create a far more favorable environment for the crypto sector. Garlinghouse thinks this legislation, stalled for now, could pass in the first half of 2026 and serve as a major growth catalyst. His view comes as several earlier predictions for late 2025 have begun to soften. Tom Lee, who had projected $150,000–$200,000 BTC this year, recently turned more cautious. Michael Saylor, however, maintains his aggressive targets — $150,000 in the short term and over $1 million within the next decade — despite the $19 billion liquidation shock in October. Meanwhile, Cathie Wood has revised her 2030 target from $1.5 million to $1.2 million, citing rapid stablecoin expansion.

Bitwise CIO Matt Hougan also envisions dramatic growth: he believes the crypto market could expand by a factor of 10 to 20 over the coming decade. He argues that tokenization, Bitcoin, stablecoins, and a growing range of emerging use cases — from prediction markets to privacy technologies and digital identity — will become foundational components of the digital economy. He draws on comments from former SEC Chair Paul Atkins, who predicts that U.S. equity markets could move entirely on-chain within a few years. With $68 trillion in U.S. equities versus just $670 million in tokenized stocks today, the potential for expansion is immense. Hougan stresses, however, that no one can reliably predict which blockchains will dominate long term due to countless variables — regulation, innovation, macro conditions, key actors, and luck.

It is precisely this uncertainty that guides his investment approach: rather than placing large bets on individual chains, Hougan prefers broad exposure through a market-cap-weighted crypto index, allowing him to benefit from overall sector growth while minimizing the risk of choosing the wrong winner. Even in a market that could theoretically rise 100,000×, he warns, an investor could still underperform drastically by backing the wrong projects. As the crypto ecosystem grows more intricate, Hougan expects crypto index funds to become “a big deal” by 2026 — an essential tool for capturing the industry’s upside while navigating its deep structural uncertainty.

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