**Chesapeake Bay Program Update**

**Management Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 13, 2012**

**CBPO Calendar**

Jun 19-20 CBP Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting (Annapolis, MD)

Jun 26 OMB and Federal offices “Day on the Bay”

Jul 9 Executive Council meeting (Lorton, Virginia)

Aug (tbd) CBP Management Board meeting

**Updates**

**Management Board Date Changes**

The Management Board meeting, originally scheduled for Wednesday July 11, 2012, is cancelled. This change was in consideration of the 2012 Chesapeake Executive Council, now scheduled for Monday, July 9. The August MB meeting, originally planned as a conference call will now be an in-person meeting based on member availability.

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**2011 Levels of Dissolved Oxygen in Chesapeake are Lowest in Last Four Years**

In 2011, monitoring data collected by the Bay jurisdictions and other partners showed that dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations in the Chesapeake fell to their lowest level in the last four years with 34 percent of the waters meeting the established standards for the summer months. These findings, issued by the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership on June 12, represent a decrease of 4 percent from the 2010 figures and is almost half of the higher DO values recorded a decade ago.

In spite of lower levels and in the face of many weather challenges, various Bay habitats and creatures that have been the target of restoration efforts showed resilience last year. In CBP news this March, scientists from Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) reported that despite a decrease in Bay grasses overall, the restored, healthy grass beds at Susquehanna Flats remained intact, widgeon grass beds grew (likely due to seed germination stimulated by lower salinities) and new grass beds were found in Virginia’s James River. In terms of fisheries, preliminary data by oyster scientists from Maryland Department of Natural Resources and NOAA showed good news, too. Experts estimate last year’s oyster survival rate was at its highest since 1985, oyster biomass increased 44 percent and oyster disease was at an all time low.

Experts were not terribly surprised by the final information on the Bay’s 2011 “dead zones” given the extreme weather. Between the very wet spring that sent excessive nutrients downstream, a hot, dry, early summer and more heavy rains accompanying Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Irene, conditions in the Chesapeake were bound to be affected. Last year’s heavy rains and even this year’s early algae blooms and fish kills reinforce the critical importance of controlling polluted runoff reaching the Bay’s waters.

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**EPA Releases Evaluations of Final Phase II WIP submissions**

On May 31, 2012, EPA released its evaluations of the final Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Completion of the plans marks a significant stage in the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort, and represents the local level planning needed to continue accelerating implementation of the necessary practices to restore the health and economic engine of the Bay watershed’s streams and rivers. The jurisdictions’ implementation plans identify how they are working with local partners to put measures in place by 2017 that will achieve at least 60 percent of the nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment reductions needed to restore the Bay. EPA Region III Administrator Shawn Garvin hosted a media teleconference and the plans and highlights from each jurisdiction were posted on the EPA TMDL webpage. Regional Administrator Garvin acknowledged that the jurisdictions are already doing much of this work, consistent with their Phase I WIP commitments. He added that the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, including state and federal officials, have committed to having all of the needed pollution control measures in place to fully restore the Bay by no later than 2025.

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**Chesapeake Executive Council 2012 Meeting Planning**

The 2012 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting is scheduled for July 9 at historic Gunston Hall Plantation near Lorton, Virginia. Gunston Hall was the home of Virginia statesman and founding father, George Mason. As in previous years, the meeting will consist of a public morning session, a private luncheon for EC members, and a news conference in the early afternoon that will include an announcement of the new EC chair. A brief session of “lighting talks” preceding the luncheon is intended to provide positive, constructive examples of restoration related to the lunch discussion topics. The theme for the meeting, discussed during the May PSC meeting, will be “Step By Step, Stream by Stream: Restoring our Waters.” Additional details about the planning effort will be presented during the Management Board meeting today.

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**Bernie Fowler Wade-In**

CBP Director Nick DiPasquale participated in the annual Bernie Fowler Wade-In at St. Leonard, Md. on Sunday, June 10. Former Maryland state senator Fowler started the wade-in in 1988 to assess whether he could still see his feet while wading into the river. This became known as the “Sneaker Index.” More than 100 participants, including Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, U.S Representative Steny Hoyer (Md.) and other Maryland elected officials and government leaders attended this year’s event.

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**Conferences and Meetings**

**CBP Citizens Advisory Committee quarterly meeting**

The CBP Citizens Advisory Committee met in Easton, Md., May 31 and June 1. Among items on the agenda, CBP Deputy Director Jim Edward briefed the committee on the Phase II WIP evaluations, the EPA evaluation of the state trading programs and the Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay’s 2011 Progress Report and 2012 Action Plan.

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**CBP Local Government Advisory Committee quarterly meeting**

The Chesapeake Bay Program Local Government Advisory Committee met in Lancaster, Pa. June 6-7. CBP Director Nick DiPasquale briefed participants on the evaluations of the states’ Phase II WIP submissions as part of the Bay TMDL. Other agenda items included a conference recap from the Choose Clean Water Coalition, the Chesapeake Bay Commission report on nutrient trading, a tour of Lancaster green infrastructure sites, and discussion on the future roles of advisory committees under a potential new CBP agreement.

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**Choose Clean Water annual conference**

The Choose Clean Water Coalition held its third annual conference on June 4-6 in Lancaster, PA. The conference is intended to bring together local watershed organizations, clean water advocates, and government officials from across the Chesapeake region for panel discussions, workshops and networking. CBP Director Nick DiPasquale served as a panelist, representing the Chesapeake Bay Program Office perspective on a nutrient trading panel plenary session with representatives from VA DEQ and PA DEP. Other plenary sessions included Defense of the Clean Water Act, Best Ideas in local clean water WIPs, Lancaster green infrastructure, Challenges to addressing water impacts of extractive industries (fracking), and Local government perspectives on meeting challenges of WIP implementation.

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**CBP Goal Implementation Team Updates**

GIT 3 – Water Quality

*The Water Quality GIT works to evaluate, focus and accelerates the implementation of practices, policies and programs that will restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries to conditions that support living resources and protect human health.*

The Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) continues to make progress on several fronts to assess the actions necessary to meet the Partnership’s water quality goals. First, the WQGIT and its Milestones Workgroup are finalizing the assessment documents for the 2009-2011 and 2012-2013 Milestones. The final Milestones factsheets will be released at the Executive Council meeting. Second, the WQGIT is working through the Urban Stormwater Workgroup and Watershed Technical Workgroup to provide recommendations on removal rate definitions for new state stormwater performance standards and urban stormwater retrofit projects. These recommendations, developed by two Urban Stormwater Workgroup expert panels, are currently under review and the WQGIT is expected to approve them this summer. Additionally, the WQGIT has numerous efforts underway to evaluate how the Chesapeake Bay Program defines, simulates, and gives credit for other agricultural, stormwater, and wastewater best management practices (BMPs) to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment reaching the rivers and streams in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Finally, the WQGIT, its workgroups, and the newly formed BMP Verification Committee are moving forward with finalizing the BMP Verification Principles to guide and support the tracking, verifying, and reporting of pollution reduction practices.

GIT 5 – Foster Stewardship

*The Fostering Stewardship GIT promotes individual stewardship, supports environmental education for all ages, and assists citizens, communities and local governments in undertaking initiatives to achieve restoration and conservation in the Chesapeake region. It aims to build public support of restoration efforts and increase citizen engagement and active stewardship.*

GIT 5 is making progress in several areas:

* An early draft of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan*, developed with public input and the help of a GIT 5 Action Team, identifies and over 300 potential new access sites, ranks the readiness of the potential new sites for development, identifies gaps in existing public access, and outlines actions for implementation. The final draft Plan will be released for public comment in summer 2012 and approval will be sought from primary state and federal partner agencies. Once the Plan is finalized, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrail Network financial assistance program will fund public access projects in 2012 and both the National Park Service and the Action Team will track and report on the development of the new sites. The Plan will formally increase the EO baseline of existing public access sites to approximately 1,100 sites, making it the most comprehensive inventory of existing sites compiled in the Chesapeake Bay Region.
* The *Strategy for the Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed* developed under Executive Order 13508, called for USGS and NPS to develop a watershed-wide strategic, publicly accessible land conservation geographic information and priority system to support sound conservation planning and decision making. The prioritization system is intended to incorporate multiple land conservation values, including those of ecological, cultural, historic, scenic viewshed, recreational, and working importance to the Chesapeake landscape.

Working under a MOU, NatureServe, USGS and NPS have developed an initial plan of work specifying tasks and timelines for building out LandScope America—a free, publicly accessible conservation guide to the country’s natural places co-developed by NatureServe and National Geographic—to provide a fully functioning system for the Chesapeake in 2012. The partners are currently working to define the minimum level of data desired across the states; identify remaining data gaps for the region; develop a plan for acquiring the data; combine and publish the assembled resources; conduct outreach to potential users; and develop other enhancements to LandScope. They have also formalized “lead state contacts” in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia and have discussed content acquisition for LandScope Chesapeake. A draft data content outline is in the process of being developed and data collection will begin in spring 2012.

* The membership and structure of the Education Workgroup was revised in spring 2012 to ensure representation to meet the goals outlined in the Executive Order literacy strategy. State delegations (required by C2K) are now specifically defined by the Workgroup to include state departments of education, natural resource agencies, a college/university, NAAEE state affiliates, and at large members. Workgroup membership also includes school division representatives, national and regional non-profits, and broader representation from federal agencies, including new members from the U.S. Forest Service, NASA, etc. The U.S. Department of Education is also involved in the activities of the Workgroup.

The workgroup convened on June 6, 2012 to begin developing an Action Plan for FY 2012/2013. Priority actions include developing best practices documents and correlated metrics to track implementation. States are actively engaged in this process, which will become the CBP tracking mechanism for education. The expansion of Bay Backpack was also identified as a priority and meetings with Maryland and Virginia are intended to further explore the needs of the resource’s target audience. A new version of Bay Backpack to better meet state needs is planned for fall 2012. In addition, a STAC-funded Environmental Literacy Best Practices workshop will be held in August 2012.

**Recent Events**

May 14 CBP Principals’ Staff Committee meeting (Annapolis, Md.)

May 31-Jun 1 CAC Meeting (Easton, Md.)

Jun 4-6 Choose Clean Water Conference (Lancaster, Pa.)

June 6-7 LGAC Meeting (Lancaster, Pa.)

Jun 10 Bernie Fowler Wade-In (St. Leonard, Md.)