**Spring 2013 Habitat Goal Implementation Team Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 25, 2013 1:00-4:00PM

Webinar ‘Virtual Meeting’

**Participants:** Jeff Horan (Chair, FWS), Jana Davis (Vice-Chair, CBTrust), Jennifer Greiner (Coordinator, FWS), Hannah Martin (Staffer, CRC), Deb Hopkins (FWS), Lee Karrh (MDNR), David Rider (EPA), Angie Sowers (USACE), Anne Wakeford (WVDNR), Howard Weinberg (UMCES), Jim Hedrick (WVDNR), Mark Secrist (FWS), Mary Andrews (NOAA), Nancy Butowski (MDNR), Rich Takacs (NOAA), Tai-Ming Chang (EPA), Lisa Fraley-McNeal (CWP), Nick DiPasquale (EPA), Denise Clearwater (MDE), Mike Slattery (FWS), Laura Bankey (National Aquarium), Sadie Drescher (CWP), Serena McClain (American Rivers), Adam Griggs (ICPRB), Alicia Berlin (USGS), Josh Burch (DDOE), Than Hitt (USGS), Walter Priest (VA NOAA), Beth Zinecker (USGS), Julie Winters (EPA), Claire Buchanan (ICPRB), R Jay Ugiansky (USDA), Bill Stack (CWP), Peyton Robertson (NOAA)

**Action Items:**

* Workgroups finalize recommendations on outcomes by July 25
	+ Wetland and SAV vetted through workgroups/GIT
	+ Jeff and Jennifer to coordinate with Water Quality GIT and Chesapeake Bay Program Modeling team to address SAV questions
* Add interested parties to Stream Workgroup distribution list
	+ Send any recommendations to Hannah Martin
* Explore options with Stream Workgroup membership to present at the Mid-Atlantic Stream Conference
* Hannah will send out NWI Map update with Ralph Tiner contact info for comments
	+ ralph\_tiner@fws.gov
	+ See NWI Map update attachment
* Julie will send website to Hannah. Hannah will send out USACE website with regulatory guidance (permitting flow chart and Nationwide guidance)
	+ <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/PermitTypesandProcess.aspx>
* Hannah will send out the most updated versions of stream and wetland BMP Verification protocols
* Follow up on wiring diagram that was raised at Fish GIT meeting

**Update on Restoration Permitting for Streams and Wetlands—Nick DiPasquale (CBP Director, EPA)**

The Fall 2012 Habitat GIT meeting focused on regulatory issues surrounding stream and wetland restoration projects. Since that meeting, the Chesapeake Bay Program has had several meetings with permitting agencies and restoration practitioners. The purpose of the meetings was to identify issues that could be addressed to improve the process without sacrificing the regulatory requirements. USACE has taken steps to provide guidance on the permitting process for applicants. This is an issue that hasn’t been resolved, however progress is being made.

Action: Hannah will send out USACE website link to a permitting flow chart and Nationwide27 guidance.

**The New Chesapeake Watershed Agreement—Nick DiPasquale (EPA)**

-The process to draft a new agreement started 2 years ago at an Executive Council meeting in which the council members directed the Bay Program to begin the process of revisiting goals and outcomes with the idea of suggesting changes. There is a need for a new bay-wide agreement that harmonizes the goals stated in the Executive Order and TMDL with the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership agreement and governance structures.

-Currently, the headwater states (WV, NY, DE) are technically only able to weigh-in and vote on water quality issues. The new agreement will make the headwater states full partners in all issues and they will have the opportunity to sign on just like MD, PA, VA, Bay Commission, and EPA. It will also build in opportunity for partnership to look forward at climate change and emerging issues like shale gas and other types of development.

-Each goal and outcome found in the agreement will have a management strategy document.

-On target to get the agreement signed at the Oct 2013 Executive Council Meeting. The agreement and signatures will be available online and will serve as a work plan. Online availability will track progress and also serve as an accountability document.

Discussion

* Goals and outcomes should be vetted through GIT and refined by July 25, 2013 in order to get to PSC by late August.
* Habitat GIT made the effort to tie outcomes to very clear habitat and species outcomes.
* Concern that the outcomes will not be 100% correct in a month and justified by latest science.

**Habitat GIT Goals and Outcomes—Jeff Horan (Habitat GIT Chair, FWS)**

1. Vital Habitat Goal, “Restore, enhance, and protect a network of land and water habitats to support priority species and to afford other public benefits, including water quality, recreational uses and scenic value across the watershed.”
	* Nancy Butowski suggests leading with “protect” similar to what was discussed at Fisheries GIT meeting.
	* We have a land conservation goal, Habitat GIT mostly focused on restoration.
2. Wetland Outcome, “Restore a total of 30,000-83,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, primarily on resource and agricultural lands and enhance function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands.”
	* Discrepancy between previous outcome of 30,000 acres based on past performance and the 94,000 acreage goals stated in Phase II WIPs. Denise Clearwater (Wetland Workgroup Co-Chair, MDE) talked to PA and agreed on 75,000 acre goal. PA has the highest acreage goal in the WIPs. Agreed to 75,000 acres with caveat to revisit after Phase III WIPs.
	* Wetland workgroup wants to divide resource and agriculture lands into two separate tracking processes. Group recognizes that urban has some habitat benefits, but CBP needs to find a way to distinguish between them when reporting.
	* Revised Wetland Outcome, “Restore a total of 75,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, primarily on resource and agricultural lands and enhance function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands.” Subject to Revision under Phase III WIPs.
		1. Needs to be vetted through workgroup and GIT.
		2. Also needs to be aligned with Black Duck energetics study results
3. Black Duck Sub-Outcome, “Restore wetland habitats to support a wintering black duck population in the watershed of 100,000 birds by 2025.”
	* Need realistic goals that are ambitious with legitimate scientific support to justify. Results have not been determined in the energetic study to determine acreage needed to support 100,000 wintering black ducks.
	* Need to get more science to justify this outcome.
4. Stream Health Outcome, “Restore stream health and function by 10% above the 2008 level throughout the watershed by 2025.”
	* Strong feeling among partners on the need for an overarching stream health goal that addressed biology in the stream with a 5 year or more assessment.
5. Brook Trout Sub-Outcome, “Restore naturally reproducing brook trout populations with an 8% increase in total cumulative brook trout patch area by 2025 in Chesapeake headwater streams.”
	* Scientifically derived based on Mark Hudy data set.
	* No comments.
6. Fish Passage Outcome, “During the period 2011-2025, restore historical fish migratory routes by opening 1,000 additional stream miles, with restoration success indicated by the presence of river herring, American shad, Hickory shad, Brook Trout and/or American eel.”
	* Nancy Butowski suggests adding specific river herring species and moving Brook Trout to the end (not migratory species).
	* Than Hitt, “We’ve seen that fish abundance was more important than occupancy for American eel responses to dam removal in the Bay.”
	* The management strategy will clearly define that Brook Trout is not a migratory species, however it does benefit from fish passage projects.
	* Revised Fish Passage Outcome, “ During the period 2011-2025, restore historical fish migratory routes by opening 1,000 additional stream miles, with restoration success indicated by the presence of Alewife, Blueback herring, American shad, Hickory shad, American eel and Brook Trout.
7. SAV Outcome, “Achieve and maintain 185,000 acres of SAV or sufficient water clarity to support 185,000 acres of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.”
	* Chesapeake 2000 agreement-goal of 185,000 acres was not met in 2010.
	* 185,000 acres by 2025 is not achievable due to lag time.
	* Revised SAV Outcome, “Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide. This will be demonstrated by having xx% of Bay segments achieving and sustaining their segment acreage targets for SAV by 2025.
		1. Xx% will come from Water Quality GIT.
		2. SAV Workgroup would rather have an acreage target but does not know how to create a realistic acreage goal in addition to segments passing.
		3. Action: Jeff Horan, Jennifer Greiner and Lee Karrh will work with Water Quality GIT and CBP modelers to define the xx%.

**Fish Passage Prioritization Tool and how it deals with road crossings affecting fish passage—Mary Andrews (Fish Passage Workgroup Chair, NOAA)**

-The Fish Prioritization tool was developed to target high priority dam removals and fish blockages based on collective priorities, to create a consistent voice when advocating for bay-wide priority dam removals/passage projects, and to justify additional funding. The tool also acts as a database for dam information, mileage opened and spatial tool to highlight progress.

-With this tool, the intention is to take the information and move to a management strategy to figure out the best options to meet the mileage goal and target species.

 -There are a total of 144,788 road crossings in the Chesapeake Bay drainage. In Chesapeake, most road crossing barriers will impact resident species and this is still a major issue for fish passage in general. Road and Railroad crossings are not prioritized in the current GIS tool.

-Field observations are still the most reliable way to determine fish barriers.

Discussion

* Any guidance for engineering designs? No, but that is something that MDE could bring in reviews. There is existing guidance in PA; nothing new has been generated.
* If money was available, we could look at LiDAR or slope data. Dam removal is top choice, GIS just isn’t the best option to identify barriers such as road crossings.
* Would not want to undo the removal by authorizing a new culvert. FEMA replaces culverts with what was there before a major storm event. NOAA wants to fund something more resilient.

**Wetland Workgroup Update—Denise Clearwater (Workgroup Co-Chair, MDE)**

-The wetland workgroup had a meeting in May 2013.

-NWI Map update: Trend analysis, will consideration nominations for 20 more quads in eastern MD and James River watershed in VA. NWI has requested feedback and suggestions for attributes associated with functions and accuracy of new maps**.**

* Action: If you are interested contact Ralph Tiner (FWS).

-BMP Verification Protocols: Use protocols already in place under agricultural or urban BMP verification, but must avoid duplicate reporting and report separately. Creating the wetland BMP Verification protocols has been complicated because protocols overlap with Ag, Urban and Streams BMP. Current protocol from Wetland WG is verified project built as designed, correct structural failures, remediate invasive species. NRCS wetlands reserve program includes repeated site visits. Generally, no Long-term Monitoring because of staff and funds. The workgroup requested CBP Assistance in developing a checklist and there is interest for a unique Identifier System.

-Wetland Rehabilitation Projects: Includes Plugging Ditches and Breaching of Levees but does not receive credit as Water Quality BMP in Model. WWG/Habitat GIT has requested consideration as BMP, plus reconsideration of efficiency credited to existing Wetlands (presently assigned same credit as forest) for next version of model – 2014. Formation of Expert Panel Anticipated.

Discussion

* Tidal vs. non-tidal is not split out and defined in the goal/outcome statement, however it is reported separately.
* Spraying phragmites is not credited as a BMP.

**Technical Synthesis III, SAV –Lee Karrh (SAV Workgroup Chair, MDNR)**

-History: TS1 published in 1992, TS2 published in 2000. Study results recommended habitat requirements for growth and survival of SAV in Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries.

-TS3 will: 1. Review current habitat requirements and water clarity standard and determine if they are stringent enough to allow for resurgence of SAV, 2. Improve modeling results for SAV growth in linked Watershed/Hydrodynamic Model, 3. Determine if global change will require different habitat requirements in the future.

-This will provide information for managers and public and improve direct SAV restoration (planintg/seeding).

Discussion

* Timeframe-TS3 should be completed within 18 months of receiving funds. EPA will send money to MDNR to distribute.

**Stream Health STAC Workshop—Bill Stack (CWP)**

-Title: “Designing Sustainable Stream Restoration Projects within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed”

-Objective: Create agreement among practitioners, regulators and scientists on a common language and methods for designing sustainable stream restoration projects that improve the functional elements of stream health to address water quality, climatological impacts, physical and biological components within the stream and adjacent riparian zone.

-There are about 700 miles of stream restoration projects that need to be accomplished by 2025. The purpose of this STAC funded workshop is to ensure the restoration projects are done correctly to meet sediment and nutrient reductions by creating common language and understanding among practitioners, regulators and scientists.

-STAC awarded $10,000 to this workshop. Steering Committee will form and meet in July 2013. Workshop to be held in December 2013.

Discussion

* Mark Secrist (Workgroup Chair, FWS)—Very useful workshop
* The stream health workgroup is working on getting more members into the group in order to be an active voice in CBP. CWP is helping out with this effort.
	+ Action: If you are interested in participating or can provide some suggestions on who should be participating, send to Hannah Martin.
* Anne, WVDNR-Would you give presentation at Mid-Atlantic Stream Conference? We are going to present on protocols developed for stream crediting sediment and nutrients. Next conference we can present results of STAC workshop.

Next Steps: Next meeting will be Fall 2013; most likely November.