

Preliminary Healthy Watersheds Assessment for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Background and Purpose

At the April 2017 Healthy Watershed Goal Implementation Team (HWGIT) meeting, EPA's Healthy Watersheds Program presented the final results of their [Preliminary Healthy Watersheds Assessments](#) (PHWA) project, a set of 48 statewide and 85 ecoregional-scale assessments of watershed health and vulnerability across the United States. The PHWA was designed to help states implement the Clean Water Act's goal of maintaining high quality waters and to provide a foundation of nationally consistent data that can be built on and enhanced. The health assessment provides an index of watershed health that combines six sub-indices: hydrology, geomorphology, landscape condition, habitat, biological condition, and water quality; and the vulnerability index incorporates potential stressors in three sub-indices: land use change, water use, and wildfire risk.

At the April meeting, members agreed that utilizing the results of the PHWA along with additional jurisdictional data could address two major gaps identified in the Healthy Watershed's Management Strategy: "routine collection of information about the status of healthy waters and watersheds is often lacking" and "widespread assessments of healthy watershed vulnerability are not available." A baseline of [State Identified Healthy Waters and Watersheds](#) has been determined, but the status of these waters and watersheds and vulnerabilities facing them is unknown. So this summer the HWGIT staff put out an RFP for the *Preliminary State-Identified Healthy Watersheds Vulnerability Assessments for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, calling upon a contractor to develop a plan to assess whether watershed health is being maintained through the use of the PHWA and more comprehensive state and local data.

Contractor and Scope of Work

Tetra Tech was awarded as the contractor. Their team will work with EPA, HWGIT staff, and jurisdiction leads to:

- identify, obtain, and integrate appropriate state data to augment the EPA assessment to summarize conditions of state-identified healthy watersheds,
- identify state-identified healthy watershed vulnerabilities,
- develop an approach that can be utilized in the future to determine if state-identified healthy watersheds are being maintained, and
- create a Quality Assurance Project Plan.

Tetra Tech will work with each jurisdiction to create a geodatabase with data that is frequently and easily updated so as not to create a reporting burden and to ensure reproducibility in the future. This will include information on the date of data collection used to indicate current watershed health and vulnerability, as well as the dates of future monitoring and when conditions can be assessed again. While working with jurisdictions, the Tetra Tech team will determine what will be most helpful for jurisdictions for tracking healthy watershed status and vulnerabilities moving forward. Finally, Tetra Tech will give a presentation to the HWGIT on their report and geodatabase before the final deliverables are due in order to allow time for feedback.

Project Timeline

- October 2017: Kick Off Meeting
- December 2017: Project Team meeting
- December 2017 – March 2018: Work with EPA and jurisdictions to compile data
- Monthly check in meetings with HWGIT staff
- March 2018: Presentation to HWGIT
- May 2018: Final Report and Geodatabase

Project Deliverables

- A final report detailing watershed conditions and vulnerabilities, an approach to determine if healthy watersheds are being sustained, and information useful to jurisdictions in addressing management needs
- A geodatabase with dates of current and future monitoring and data collection
- A presentation to the HWGIT in advance of the final deliverables

How You Can Help?

Tetra Tech will be reaching out to HWGIT jurisdiction leads, data contacts and healthy watersheds experts to begin identifying and obtaining data that can be used for this project. Please work with your appropriate counterparts to assure that the Contractors get the information and datasets in a timely manner.

Feel free to reach out to the HWGIT staff with any questions and concerns.

Project Contacts

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