

Addressing the 2013 Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Networks Funding Shortfalls and Sustaining the Networks Through 2025

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Key Messages

- All the partnerships' shared monitoring networks have reached a level of maturity, stability, and longevity where they are paying back on the long term financial investments made by the partners for years and decades.
- For the two and half decades of the partnership, the states, EPA, and other partners have been systematically increasing their investments in these monitoring networks, driven by the expressed needs supporting shared management decision making.
- However, over the past 3-5 years, the underlying funding base has been slowly eroding as state partners experienced the effect of the economic downturn and were forced to make significant across the board funding cuts, including to their contributions to the shared monitoring networks.
- Recently, the federal partners have had their budgets cut back in response to the economic downturn, the rising federal deficit, and the resultant sequestration which is expected to last for years.
- The Partnership is facing making decisions on competing Bay restoration priorities within a shrinking collective budget.

Challenge to the Partnership

- Address the 2013 shortfalls in full funding of the existing monitoring networks and take on the longer term challenge for how to sustain these networks through the next major decision point—2025

Estimated 2013 Shortfalls

- Combined tidal and watershed water quality monitoring networks: \$944,789
- Baywide SAV aerial survey: \$163,000

Addressing the 2013 Shortfalls

Recommended Approach:

- Develop a set of guiding principles to drive decision making on the options
- Work through STAR's tidal and non-tidal monitoring workgroups to flesh out a series of options

- Present options/recommendations to the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team for feedback and the Management Board for final decisions

Timeframe

- Need decisions on funding levels for the tidal and watershed water quality monitoring networks by end of July/mid-August at the latest

Near-term options to reduce/close the existing water quality monitoring networks funding shortfall:

- Increase EPA's funding contribution in FY2013
- Plan not to fund the shallow-water monitoring network for 2014, leading to partial savings in FY2013
- Ask each of the jurisdictions to tap into their CBIG/CBRAP grant funds to cover the cost of some of their non-tidal network stations
- Re-evaluate the continuation of a select set of the non-tidal monitoring network stations recently established
- Seek short term funding commitments from other federal agencies (e.g., USGS)

Near-term options to close the existing baywide SAV aerial survey funding shortfall:

- Seeking short term funding commitments from other federal resource management and regulatory agencies—Corps of Engineers, NOAA, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Maryland and Virginia consider increasing their funding commitments by tapping into their CBIG/CBRAP grant funds

Plan for Sustaining the Networks Through 2025

Recommended Approach:

- Work with STAC to re-constitute the Monitoring Re-Alignment Team process, with a focus on supporting decision making on the type of tidal and watershed monitoring networks which can be sustained at least through the 2025 time frame
- Reconfirm Partnership's management objectives for its shared monitoring networks
- Work through STAR's tidal, non-tidal monitoring workgroups and the Habitat Goal Implementation Team's SAV Workgroup to develop funding projections out through 2025 time frame and flesh out a series of sustainable network options to address the confirmed management objectives
- Work the options up through STAR and STAC for development of recommendations
- Present options/recommendations to Water Quality Goal Implementation Team and Habitat Goal Implementation Team for feedback and the Management Board for final decisions

Timeframe:

- January 2014: options/recommendations addressing the tidal and watershed water quality and biological resource monitoring networks presented to Management Board

- Late 2014: options/recommendations addressing other monitoring networks presented to the Management Board

Options for Developing Sustainable Monitoring Network at Least Through 2025:

Tidal Water Quality Monitoring Network

- Carefully examine all aspects of the network and its operation for any and all opportunities for cost savings without impacting the states' ability to assess water quality standards attainment for all 92 segments (e.g., reevaluate management applications of shallow-water monitoring data)
- Reconsider the management-decision making relevance of winter cruises
- Reduce nutrient monitoring while sustaining measurements of the physical water column profiles.
- Factor in outcomes from umbrella criteria assessment work underway within the Partnership
- Consider alternative monitoring strategies that provide more accurate assessments than the existing network approach—e.g., semi-continuous buoys deployed in deeper water habitats of the mainstem Bay and larger tidal tributaries
- Consider alternative funding mechanisms (e.g., NOAA NMFS as DO and temperature define critical habitat for decision making in regulatory situations, i.e., dredging, permitting, endangered species)

Baywide SAV Aerial Survey

- Carefully examine all aspects of the survey and its operation for any and all opportunities for cost savings without impacting the states' ability to assess water quality standards attainment for all 92 segments
- Reach agreement on long term allocation of funding responsibilities among the state and federal agency funding partners
- Make plans for contingency funding in cases where individual partners can't reach their allocated funding responsibility for a particular year

Non-tidal Water Quality Monitoring Network

- Carefully examine all aspects of the network and its operation for any and all opportunities for cost savings without impacting the Partnership's ability to assess management effectiveness of implementation pollution reduction practices and technologies
- Increase EPA's funding contribution
- Ask each of the jurisdictions to permanently tap into their CBIG/CBRAP grant funds to cover the cost of some of their non-tidal network stations
- Re-evaluate continuation of a select set of the non-tidal monitoring network stations upon closer evaluation of the relative contribution of each individual station to meeting the collective network's management effectiveness assessment objective
- Seek sustained funding commitments from other federal agencies (e.g., USGS)
- Build in contingencies for ensuring continued funding for stream gaging stations in cases where local, state or federal agency partners pull the funding