



## SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION VITAL HABITATS GIT/SAV WORKGROUP

### 2014 WATERSHED AGREEMENT: GOAL & OUTCOME LANGUAGE

**SAV OUTCOME:** Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of SAV (underwater grasses) in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay. Progress toward this ultimate outcome will be measured against a target of 90,000 acres by 2017 and 130,000 acres by 2025.

**VITAL HABITATS GOAL:** Restore, enhance and protect a network of land and water habitats to support fish and wildlife, and to afford other public benefits, including water quality, recreational uses and scenic value across the watershed.

### OUTCOME DISPOSITION ADVICE TO MANAGEMENT BOARD:

### UPDATE

**Recommendation:** The SAV Outcome should be **updated** to align with jurisdictional SAV and water clarity standards. Updating the SAV Outcome to align with water clarity standards will result in an SAV acreage target higher than in the current outcome but will result in a more accurate reflection of potential SAV extent in each Bay segment.

**SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound):** The current SAV Outcome is SMART because the SAV acreage language is *measurable* and interim goals are *time-bound*. An updated SAV Outcome should include an aspirational ultimate outcome as well as incremental, time-bound targets that are ecologically feasible within the timeframe of the Agreement. The SAV Workgroup will provide draft recommendations on interim timeframes and *measurable* acreage goals for your consideration. Interim goals allow for *time-bound* success criteria while maintaining an aspirational ultimate goal.

**Challenges and Opportunities:** There are numerous challenges influencing the success of SAV recovery and restoration throughout the Bay. Extensive efforts are being made to address those factors and to identify what additional opportunities and efforts are necessary to reach the ultimate SAV restoration goal. These include **Habitat Conditions and Availability, Protection of Existing and Recovering SAV, SAV Restoration Potential and Activity, SAV Research and Monitoring, and Public Perception, Knowledge, and Engagement**. These are further described as Factors in the [SAV Management Strategy](#).

**SAV Outcome Relation to Chesapeake Bay Agreement Mission, Vision, and Pillars:** SAV beds are a cornerstone of the Bay's ecosystem, providing essential habitat, improving water quality, and enhancing the Bay's resilience to climate change. The SAV Outcome aligns with the Bay Program's overarching goal of achieving an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed by addressing each of the five guiding pillars of restoration – **Abundant Life, Clean Water, Climate Change, Conserved Lands, and Engaged Communities**. SAV beds support the **Fish Habitat Outcome** by providing nursery areas, shelter, and foraging grounds for key fish species. They also enhance the **Blue Crab Abundance**

**Outcome** by offering refuge for juvenile and molting crabs. By stabilizing sediments, absorbing nutrients, and improving water clarity, SAV contributes to the **Water Quality Outcome**. As a key component of coastal resilience, SAV helps achieve the **Climate Resiliency Outcome** by sequestering carbon, buffering pH, and mitigating extreme weather impacts. Additionally, SAV restoration engages diverse stakeholders, fostering stewardship and advancing the **Environmental Literacy and Stewardship Outcome** through education, outreach, and hands-on involvement.

**Resources Needed:** Extensive resources are needed to achieve the SAV Outcome, including continued and significant funding to achieve the TMDL which impacts SAV recovery through improvements in Water Quality. Continued funding is also necessary for the annual, Bay-wide SAV survey (Tier 1 of our SAV monitoring approach). Additional funding would benefit the continued implementation of the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers program (Tier 2), as well as the implementation of the Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Site program that will include SAV (Tier 3; Beyond 2025 small group recommendation). GIT funding should be continued and prioritized in the future, as well as funding to support the expansion of direct SAV restoration capacity, and additional research efforts.

**Unintended Consequences of Removing the Outcome:** Removing the SAV Outcome from the Chesapeake Bay Agreement would pose significant ecological, economic, and social risks. SAV plays a foundational role in maintaining the health and resilience of the Bay ecosystem and the SAV Outcome is a critical component of the Bay Program's holistic approach to restoration. Without a focused effort on SAV restoration and protection, several unintended consequences could occur, including **Decreased Water Quality, Loss of Critical Habitat, Increased Vulnerability to Climate Change, Economic Impacts, and Reduced Community Engagement and Stewardship**.

**Value Added from Chesapeake Bay Program:** The Chesapeake Bay Program's leadership and coordination of the SAV Outcome through the SAV Workgroup adds significant value to the restoration and protection of SAV in the Bay. As a multi-jurisdictional partnership, the Chesapeake Bay Program's SAV Workgroup brings together federal, state, and local governments, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders to achieve the shared goal of SAV recovery. This collaborative framework is uniquely positioned to: **Provide Regional Coordination and Consistency, Leverage Expertise and Resources, Set Science-Based Goals and Track Progress, Facilitate Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing, and Enhance Public Engagement and Outreach**. The SAV Workgroup and the Bay Program as a whole play a critical role in increasing public awareness of SAV's importance and engaging communities in restoration activities. Its outreach efforts inspire stewardship and encourage local action to protect and restore SAV beds, particularly through the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers program.

**Public Benefit:** The SAV Outcome, as written, directly benefits the public by addressing critical ecological, economic, and social values tied to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. SAV restoration enhances water quality, supports commercial and recreational fisheries, and strengthens the Bay's resilience to climate change. These benefits directly impact residents, businesses, and visitors who rely on the Bay for their livelihoods, recreational opportunities, and quality of life.

By framing the SAV Outcome as a shared goal with measurable targets and visible impacts, the Chesapeake Bay Program can strengthen public commitment to restoration efforts. This connection between outcome-driven action and community involvement reinforces the notion that everyone has a role in ensuring a sustainable future for Chesapeake Bay.

Please see the full SAV Outcome Assessment for a detailed explanation of each component above at: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/group/submerged-aquatic-vegetation-workgroup>