

The Partnership's Tidal and Nontidal Monitoring Networks: Programming, Budgets and Priorities

Since 1985, the partnership's Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Monitoring Network has supported the assessment of status and trends tracking Bay habitat health. Historical changes in the sampling effort and components of the program have been punctuated by decisions supporting implementation of *Chesapeake 2000* during the period 2000-2004. The focus shifted to supporting the Bay TMDL through the Monitoring Realignment (MRAT) process in 2007-2009. Decisions by the Partnership's Management Board at the November 2009 meeting clearly focused the partnership's monitoring network objectives on: 1) supporting removing tidal segments of the Bay from the impaired waters list; and 2) determining the effectiveness of management actions.

Funding during the period 2010-2013 was directed at fulfilling the agreed to monitoring network priorities of the partnership by:

1) streamlining the tidal monitoring program while adjusting support to capture the key summer season water quality criteria assessment;

2) expanding the watershed monitoring network with a focus on filling gaps highlighted during MRAT that targeted:

- poorly represented land uses (i.e. agriculture dominated and urban dominated landscapes),
- under-represented watershed scales (i.e. small watersheds),
- spatial representativeness (i.e coastal plain vs. above fall line distributions); and
- areas of high BMP implementation (e.g. showcase watersheds); and

3) enhancing analysis support and capabilities to manage, analyze and interpret the data from the expanded watershed monitoring network.

At this time, a range of factors are increasingly impacting our ability to maintain full support of the present tidal and watershed monitoring network operations. Examples of these factors include:

- EPA funding challenges under the sequester
- Changes in available support under RFP competitions for monitoring program elements
- Fuel costs have increased >2.5x in the last 10 yrs
- Raising the QA standards of lab analysis to NELAC standards requires extra resources
- Scales of Economy: Widespread recessionary pressures effects on State budgets
- Decisions to adapt the monitoring programs to meet CBP priorities

The cumulative effect of these factors impacting the funding landscape will require us to more immediately revisit the programming, budgets and priorities of the partnership's monitoring efforts. In the near term, we are asking the Management Board to reaffirm the priorities derived from the Monitoring Realignment process and highlight information needed to make decisions on addressing the existing near term funding shortfalls.

Over the next 18 months, we will come back to the Management Board several times highlighting the response to actions requested from the Monitoring Realignment and requesting decisions on long-term strategies for sustaining support for the tidal and watershed monitoring networks.