

## ***Nontidal Network (NTN) Workgroup Meeting***

Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025

1:00 – 2:00 PM

### ***Theme: Planning and Feedback Related to Monitoring Program Activities and Directions.***

Meeting Materials [Link](#)

*This meeting was recorded for internal use only to assure the accuracy of the meeting notes.*

## **MINUTES**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- **Action item:** continue to consider incorporating more field elements in our discussion. We plan to conduct field round-robins more frequently in our regularly scheduled NTN WG meetings.
- **Action item:** to field folks, please consider and think about questions, topics, etc. for NTN meetings and invest quality agenda time.

### **1:00 – 1:10 PM Welcome**

*Peter Tango (US Geological Survey, USGS)*

#### Announcements:

- Funding Stressors – What does this mean for the Workgroup?
  - *Peter Tango:* A dedicated team with representatives from various states and institutions continues to meet behind the scenes to ensure we're proactively managing planning horizons and potential future constraints. While we don't yet have explicit budget meetings scheduled, things are proceeding well for now, and we're maintaining momentum until we receive further guidance.
- NTN Load and Trend Data Release is final and [published here](#) – Douglas Moyer.
  - Additional links: [NTN Geonarrative](#) and [USGS NTN Webpage](#).
- ITAT Webinar: Tributary Summaries – Gabriel Duran, Kaylyn Gootman & Breck Sullivan.  
**Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup> 12 – 1 PM.**

#### Conferences:

- [Choose Clean Water Conference](#), May 19th-21st, 2025. Harrisonburg, VA. **Registration is now open!**
- [Coastal & Estuarine Research Federation \(CERF\) 28th Biennial Conference](#), November 9-13th, 2025. Richmond, VA. **Call for Abstracts – due April 28th.**

### **1:10 – 1:20 PM Request for Feedback on NTN Fact Sheet**

*James Webber (USGS)*

*Description: A PDF of the updated NTN Fact Sheet has been completed with community input on its format and information detail. Jimmie will go over the new, improved edition of the Fact Sheet. Your review and feedback are requested.*

James Webber: I'd like to share a draft two-page fact sheet we've been working on, highlighting the value of the non-tidal network (NTN). This document is designed to showcase the partnerships behind the NTN, clarify its funding structure, and promote transparency in how the network is supported annually. It's still in USGS review, but we're sharing it here for early feedback on how we've framed the message and storylines.

This project has been a collaborative effort among myself, Peter, Doug, Kaylynn, Mark Nardi, and Alex Soroka, among others. The fact sheet is designed with multiple audiences in mind. First, you—the agencies and partners on this call. We hope this is something you can share with your leadership or peers who may not be familiar with the NTN. We're also thinking ahead to new Department of Interior and EPA leadership, especially as we prepare for transition briefings. And of course, it's intended for an informed general public interested in how science supports local water management decisions.

On the first page, we've aimed to clearly convey our main messages—especially the role of monitoring and partnerships. The introductory paragraph explains why the NTN exists: to provide actionable information to improve water quality and support Clean Water Act goals. The left column describes what we monitor—streamflow and water quality, with graphics to visualize sampling before, during, and after storm events. The center graphic maps NTN stations across the watershed, designed to be simple but meaningful.

On the right side, we highlight the power of partnerships. A short paragraph and infographic illustrate the 25 different partners supporting the NTN, including those providing funding and those out in the field collecting samples. The message is that this network relies on all of us; we couldn't do it without each partner.

On the back, it's heavy on visuals and light on text. The narrative we're building here focuses on two key elements: where the funding comes from and where we're headed with the NTN in the future. At the top, we highlight the funding structure. One important point we emphasize is that nearly all monitoring stations are supported by more than one partner—this truly is a collaborative effort. The total cost for annual monitoring is \$7.6 million, and the infographic illustrates the flow of funding. While EPA contributes a large share, state, federal, and local partners contribute roughly the same amount collectively. It reinforces that no single entity owns this network—it's a shared responsibility.

We also included a process flow graphic to illustrate the steps involved: sample collection, lab analysis, data processing to generate loads and trends, and finally, sharing and interpreting the results. Doug mentioned earlier that recent data are now available. This visual aims to quickly convey how information flows through the system. Moving on to the future, we highlight that the NTN will continue evolving to meet partner needs. Over the

years, we've added stations and embraced emerging technologies like continuous water quality monitoring. The message is clear—the NTN remains committed to delivering data-driven insights that support Clean Water Act goals. We close the page with links to additional resources, making this a concise, 5-minute read designed for accessibility and utility.

**Comment from chat:** *Rachel Pence:* We get SO much traffic and public interest while we're out sampling near the Blue Ridge Parkway - excited to share this with the public and partners.

- **Comment:** *Breck Sullivan:* In addition to a field handout, I wanted to mention that the Maryland, Delaware, and DC Water Science Center has been discussing adding QR codes to their stream gauges. Maybe we could work with them to link the fact sheet to that site so anyone scanning the code has access to this information.

### **1:20-1:40 PM [Outcome Review Updates – Beyond 2025 Process.](#)**

*Peter Tango (USGS)*

*Description:* *The Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring (WQSAM) Outcome of the 2014 Watershed Agreement is up for revision in 2025. The existing language focuses on monitoring capacity and status/trend analysis and deliverables. It is not worded as natural resource endpoint, e.g., meeting N and P load reduction targets; meeting DO, clarity and CHLA water quality standards. STAR Leadership has been working on refining and drafting the Outcome language for submission to the MB meeting for its consideration on April 25<sup>th</sup>, alongside the development of a logic model to facilitate our thinking of the new Outcome language. The NTN WG and other STAR WGs have received emails requesting feedback on the drafted language. We will discuss updates to and look for feedback on the new Outcome language.*

*Peter Tango:* The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's 2025 milestone has prompted a reevaluation of whether current outcomes and outputs effectively support long-term goals. Our primary focus is the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring outcome (WQSAM) which has guided water quality work for the past decade. While the original language emphasized monitoring, it did not directly address attainment or accountability. The revised outcome aims to be more explicit in its goals by including a focus on tracking water quality standards attainment and expanding the scope to both tidal and non-tidal monitoring. While traditional parameters such as dissolved oxygen, water clarity, and chlorophyll-a remain central, feedback has highlighted the importance of including additional stressors such as pH and temperature. This broader approach is essential to reflect the full spectrum of water quality issues affecting aquatic life in the Bay and its tributaries.

To guide the outcome revision, partners developed a logic model and action plans outlining the necessary monitoring, QA, analysis, and communication steps. A proposed draft follows the structure of other successful outcomes (e.g., oysters), pairing a big-picture ecological

goal with measurable, time-bound targets. The draft was circulated via survey for input, and the feedback revealed support for the clearer framing, while also offering suggestions for refinement.

Survey respondents appreciated the updated outcome's alignment with regulatory goals and the inclusion of nutrient and sediment reductions. Many also valued the incorporation of nontraditional data, like community science, to address monitoring gaps. However, some expressed concern about overly technical language, potentially high expectations for full standards attainment, and overlapping content with related outcomes. These concerns have led to considerations of tiered goals (short-, mid-, and long-term) and clarifications of vague terms like "enhanced understanding."

The revised outcome continues to evolve based on input from partners, survey respondents, and oversight bodies. Discussions are ongoing about how to frame the outcome in the context of potential restructuring of the agreement's goals. Further revisions will be made as needed based on additional guidance from the MB and the Principal Staff Committee (PSC). For now, the team is working with the best version available, shaped by collaborative input and strategic alignment.

**Comment:** *Breck Sullivan:* I just want to add that not only might there be changes coming from the MB and PSC in the future, but STAR leadership will also need to revise our draft outcome language. We didn't have guidance from the MB before we sent out the survey, so we now need to ensure the language follows the intended structure: a general high-level sentence followed by SMART-targeted bullets. With that structural revision and the feedback from the survey, we'll be sending out a new version. We'll only be asking for major red flags—anything that's a clear hold or stop. The draft language is due to the MB on April 25th, so STAR leadership will need time to revise the language, coordinate with the WIP outcome team to avoid duplication, and send the update to everyone for quick review. Please look out for an email from Gabriel requesting your input. Thanks.

### **1:40 – 2:00 PM *Shifting NTN Leadership Meetings to a Rotating Schedule with Field/Lab Staff***

*Peter Tango (USGS)*

Description: *Currently, the NTN WG has a monthly alternating meeting schedule between the public meetings and the leadership team. The NTN leadership team would like to propose a new meeting schedule with the current leadership team meeting schedule to include more frequent meetings with jurisdictions' Lab and Field representatives to continue to facilitate connections and collaborations across the Partnership. We will discuss our goals and plans and follow up with representatives who have already received requests from Douglas Moyer and Kaylyn Gootman.*

*Peter Tango:* We'd like to gather your input on shifting our leadership meetings to a rotating schedule that includes field and lab staff. Over the last couple of years, we've found value in alternating between leadership team meetings and sessions that plan months ahead to

align topics and deliverables with the time available. We tried last year to facilitate more interaction with field and lab representatives by exploring options for full in-person meetings, regional meetings (e.g., North and South), or more virtual engagement. Travel restrictions, especially for federal partners, remain a challenge, so we're looking at whether we should invite lab and field staff on a quarterly or semiannual basis—or designate a meeting specifically for field-led topics. We welcome your feedback on frequency, format, and ideas for fostering stronger collaboration across the entire team.

*Doug Moyer:* Our NTN meetings have shifted toward overarching program updates rather than the field and technical issues we used to focus on. I'd like to reconnect field staff and create a forum where rotating technicians from each sampling office can join periodically. Cindy Johnson previously led a field crew discussion group where teams could share challenges—like dealing with storm sampling or equipment issues. These meetings generated practical insights and even led to methodological improvements. Whether we use this group or schedule separate technical sessions, the goal is to stay connected to what's happening on the ground and ensure field voices are heard.

**Q: Breck Sullivan:** I think this is a great idea to use some form of forum to bring the different field teams together. Thinking more around the governance of the Bay Program, how would this be different from the Data Integrity WG?

- **A: Doug Moyer:** Data Integrity WG (DIWG) has a heavy focus on labs and the QA we see is usually on tidal waters. Much of the technical work in the nontidal came from the NTN WG and DIWG took care of the lab piece.
- **Comment from chat: Durga Ghosh:** the advantage of having it looped in with DI is exchange of ideas with Tidal network folks
- **Action item:** continue to consider incorporating more field elements in our discussion. We plan to conduct field round-robins more frequently in our regularly scheduled NTN WG meetings.
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## 2:00 PM Adjourn

**Next Meeting: Wednesday June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 1 – 2:30 PM**

### *Attendees:*

*James Webber (USGS), Breck Sullivan (USGS), Peter Tango (USGS), Gabriel Duran (CRC), Allison Welch (CRC), Matthew Kearns (USGS-WV), Scott Heidel (PADEP), Joel Blumquist (USGS), Rachel Pence (VADEQ), Mark Brickner (PA), Alexander Soroka (USGS), Tyler Trostle (PADEP), Philip Hurst (VADEQ), Tyler Shenk (SRBC), Lori Brown (DNREC), Jamie Shallenberger (SRBC), Nick Murray (WVDEP), Durga Ghosh (USGS), Andrew Keppel (MDDNR), Douglas Moyer (USGS), Ashley Hullinger (PADEP), Kristen Heyer (MDDNR), Bhanu Paudel (DNREC), Cynthia Johnson (VADEQ), Renee Karrh (MDDNR), Nicholas Santoro (USGS).*