**Chesapeake Bay Program Update**

**Principals’ Staff Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, February 16, 2012**

**CBPO Calendar**

March 1-2 Citizens’ Advisory Committee Meeting (Charlottesville, VA)

March 1-2 Local Government Advisory Committee Meeting (Washington, DC)

March 7-8 STAC Workshop on Crediting Conservation (Buckeystown, MD)

March 27-28 STAC Quarterly Meeting (Rose Haven, MD)

March 30 Final Phase II WIPs due

Apr 10-12 Environment Virginia Symposium (Lexington, VA)

Jun 4-6 Choose Clean Water Conference (Lancaster, PA)

**TOPIC UPDATES**

**Update on Draft Phase II WIPs and 2012-2013 Milestones**

As part of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, EPA received draft Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) that were due on December 15 from all seven Bay jurisdictions. The draft Phase II WIPs are the next step forward in the committed collaboration between the Bay jurisdictions and EPA to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. EPA also received from six of the seven Bay jurisdictions the final 2012-2013 milestones that were due on January 6. These milestones are intended to identify near-term actions to implement jurisdictions' WIPs and meet the Bay TMDL allocations.

On February 15, EPA provided feedback to each jurisdiction on their draft WIP and the final milestone submissions, noting both strengths and areas that merit further improvements. EPA will assist the jurisdictions as they refine and finalize their Phase II WIPs, due March 30, 2012. The jurisdiction plans and milestones can be accessed through EPA's website [www.epa.gov/chesapeakebaytmdl](http://www.epa.gov/chesapeakebaytmdl), which provides links to the plans where they are posted on jurisdiction websites. EPA will post information on its evaluation of the WIPs and milestones on the Bay TMDL website a few days after sending them to the jurisdictions.

**Executive Order 2012 Action Plan and 2011 Progress Report**

The Federal Leadership Committee agencies have submitted the FY2011 Progress Report and FY2012 Action to OMB for final review. OMB is expected to complete their review within a week. Following any final edits, both documents will be released for public comment and the Federal Officer Directors (FOD) will schedule a briefing for Management Board members. The FOD strongly encourages CBP Partnership members to provide comments on both documents.

**CBP Budget Update**

Funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program remains steady. In Fiscal Year 2012, Congress appropriated $57.4 million, representing a $3 million increase over FY 2011. EPA expects that funding for state implementation and accountability grant programs will remain the same in FY 2012 as in FY 2011. For FY 2013, the President's budget request is $72.6 million. If this level of funding is approved by Congress, most of the increase would likely be targeted to the jurisdictions through implementation and accountability grants, and monitoring grant programs. Congressional appropriations hearings on EPA's budget are scheduled for Feb. 28 and 29 in the House of Representatives and March 1 and 14 in the Senate.

**Trading Program Assessments Report**

EPA has developed state-specific assessments of water quality offset and trading programs based on interviews with the jurisdictions and other stakeholders. The final assessments, including EPA's response to the comments received from the jurisdictions, will be transmitted to the states on February 17 and to interested stakeholders shortly thereafter. The observations and recommendations in the assessments are expected to inform the ongoing development of offset and trading programs, a key component of the Watershed Implementation Plans. EPA expects the findings in the assessments to be addressed in the final Phase II WIPs and milestones due in March 2012, as appropriate. For additional information, contact Patricia Gleason in EPA Region 3 (215-814-5740, [gleason.patricia@epa.gov](mailto:gleason.patricia@epa.gov)).

**Green Streets-Green Jobs-Green Towns**

On February 8 the Chesapeake Bay Trust, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the state of Maryland unveiled an expanded Green Streets-Green Jobs-Green Towns grant initiative to help cities and towns in the Chesapeake Bay watershed accelerate greening efforts that improve watershed protection, community livability, and economic vitality. Building on the success of the initial round of grants, this public-private partnership will award more than $400,000 in 2012, double the funding from 2011.

The grant program is open to local governments and non-profit organizations in urban and suburban watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay region of Maryland, D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia who are interested in pursuing green streets, green infrastructure, and green jobs as part of their community or watershed planning.

Grant assistance up to $35,000 is available for infrastructure project planning and design, and up to $100,000 for implementation and construction. The strongest proposals will incorporate innovative green infrastructure and best management practices that maximize cost-effectiveness.

The request for proposals is available at [www.cbtrust.org](http://www.cbtrust.org/) with a deadline of March 9, 2012 for all applications. The Chesapeake Bay Green Streets- Green Jobs-Green Towns Academy will also host a webinar: “Tools for Greening Chesapeake Bay Communities” at 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15. To register visit: <http://mp118885.cdn.mediaplatform.com/118885/ml/mp/4000/5345/5417/12575/Lobby/default.htm>

**State Video Conferencing for Water Quality**

EPA has provided video teleconferencing equipment to our jurisdiction partners to enhance communications and collaboration between partners. The equipment loan program is part of EPA’s Green Conferencing Initiative intended to minimize unnecessary travel and still allow for necessary face-to-face conversations. Please contact Greg Barranco ([barranco.greg@epa.gov](mailto:barranco.greg@epa.gov)) in the Chesapeake Bay Program to identify the point of contact in individual jurisdictions.

**New Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership Website**

A new and improved CBP website debuted the week of January 30. This redesign elevates our the CBP web presence to among the very best environmental websites in the nation. The new website features: reworked content, new “issue” pages that provide a holistic approach to interpreting the issues that are in the forefront of Bay policy and science; updated Bay Field Guide including image galleries, videos and even sounds for some of the bay critters; better history information for students; and better integration of news, photos, videos and other information.

Please visit the new site at [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net)

**CBP Goal Implementation Team Updates**

GIT 1 – Sustainable Fisheries

The Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (GIT 1) recently agreed to the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee’s (CBSAC) recommendation for new female-specific blue crab reference points to help maintain sustainable crab populations in the Bay.  The GIT is now working with CBSAC on developing male specific reference points that will greatly increase the ability to manage the species.

GIT 1 formally adopted a new report—developed by the Oyster Metrics Team—defining oyster restoration success at the tributary and reef scale through a set of scientifically derived metrics.  These metrics will be used to evaluate restoration projects.  GIT 1 also formally adopted an Invasive Catfish Policy Statement that defines blue and flathead catfish as invasive species within the Chesapeake Bay that have the potential to cause harm to native fish species.  The policy agrees to examine potential measures to reduce densities, limit range expansion, and evaluate possible negative ecological impacts.

During the GIT’s biannual meeting in January, the team devoted a full day engaging land-based organizations, stakeholders, and fishery management to help them better understand the connections between land activities and the long-term effects on habitat and the Chesapeake Bay fishery resources. GIT is further examining the connections and impact between land, habitat and fisheries.

*The Sustainable Fisheries GIT focuses on advancing ecosystem-based fisheries management by using science to make informed fishery management decisions that cross state boundaries.*

GIT 2 – Habitat

The Habitat Goal Implementation Team is charting a path toward more direct engagement of partners from State natural resource agencies, NGO’s, and local communities by establishing a team steering committee with representation from each of the State natural resource agency. Each Habitat GIT workgroup is making progress on implementing collaborative and strategic habitat conservation on a watershed scale.

The Fish Passage Workgroup continues progress on a collaborative federal and state prioritization for blockages in MD, VA, and PA that will accelerate projects which enhance passage of target species and open large stretches of high quality habitat. The Habitat GIT’s newest workgroup, the Stream Health Workgroup, is developing and implementing a Stream Functional Framework that identifies critical stream functions to be addressed during stream restoration. The team is also working with the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture to revise the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order Brook Trout Outcome and milestones to reflect the latest catchment level data. To hasten progress on restoration and enhancement goals, the Wetland Action Team is initiating action teams in interested watershed states to focus on implementation in support of State WIPs and State Wildlife Action Plans. A team in Maryland was established in 2011. The SAV Workgroup is updating the SAV Strategy and their research agenda to address lessons learned from large scale restoration efforts.

*The Habitat GIT seeks to facilitate the implementation of projects that restore and enhance a network of land and water habitats to support priority species and to afford other public benefits including water quality, recreational uses, and scenic value across the watershed by coordinating the efforts of Chesapeake Bay Program partners.  These habitats include tidal and non-tidal wetlands, living shorelines, submerged aquatic vegetation, islands, uplands and forests, and freshwater streams.*

GIT 3 – Water Quality

The Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) is making progress on several fronts to assess the actions necessary to meet the Partnership’s water quality goals. First, the WQGIT and its Milestone Workgroup are developing options for assessing the 2009-2011 milestones. The evaluation of this first set of milestones is unique because they were developed prior to the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL when the Partnership was using Phase 4.3 of the Watershed Model. Nonetheless, the WQGIT recognizes that they set an important precedent for setting short-term goals. A key component of this assessment will be the 2011 progress run, and the WQGIT is working through the Watershed Technical Workgroup to ensure that data are properly submitted to the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) and credited. Finally, the WQGIT and its workgroups are applying lessons learned from the Partnership’s experience with the 2009-2011 milestones to develop a consistent approach for developing and presenting the 2012-2013 milestones.   
  
The WQGIT also has numerous efforts underway to evaluate how the Chesapeake Bay Program defines, simulates and gives credit for best management practices (BMPs) to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment reaching the rivers and streams in the Chesapeake watershed. The BMP Effectiveness and Verification Process proposal included on today’s agenda was shaped by feedback from the WQGIT, and the Management Board has agreed that the Process should be led by the WQGIT based on the expertise of the GIT and its sector workgroups. In addition, the WQGIT workgroups have convened 9 expert panels to review the effectiveness associated with agricultural, stormwater and wastewater BMPs. Before these practices can be credited in annual progress runs, the WQGIT will review recommendations of the expert panels and the workgroups and decide how to simulate these practices in the Chesapeake Bay Program modeling tools.

*The Water Quality GIT works to evaluate, focus and accelerates the implementation of practices, policies and programs that will restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries to conditions that support living resources and protect human health. Provide technical expertise and leadership to support the development, implementation, and tracking of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, Watershed Implementation Plans, and two-year milestones that support long-term Bay restoration goals.*

GIT 4 – Healthy Watersheds

GIT 4 is hosting a STAC Workshop on Crediting Conservation; scheduled for March 7-8, 2012. The goal of this workshop is to explore whether we can “count” nutrient load reductions based on actions that avoid conversion of forests and other resource lands. Potential applications include: Crediting in-stream processing by healthy streams.

The GIT 4 Communications Workgroup is identifying key audiences it wants to reach and creating a set of targeted messages and actions to support GIT 4 objectives. The Workgroup is also working to incorporate a “Maintain Healthy Watersheds” track into the 2012 Chesapeake Watershed Forum. The Defining Healthy Watersheds Workgroup is working to define “healthy watersheds” and create a system for tracking watershed health and protection status.

*The goal of the Maintain Healthy Watersheds GIT is to maintain local watersheds at optimal health across a range of landscape contexts. With this goal, GIT4 intends to bring attention to the challenge of protecting streams and watersheds that are healthy today, as a programmatic complement to the “dirty waters” approach which focuses on restoring waters after they are allowed to be degraded.*

GIT 5 – Foster Stewardship

The Stewardship GIT is working to protect high-priority lands and strategically add public access sites to the Bay and its tributaries to enable boating, swimming and fishing. Its Public Access Planning Team recently mapped approximately 1,100 existing public access sites throughout the watershed—the first time the entire watershed was inventoried. In addition, a web-based mapping tool was developed to identify public access gaps and opportunities using input from the public. The website received more than 14,000 hits in just 30 days, including suggestions for more than 300 additional public access sites. These suggestions will be included a strategy for expanding public access that will be released in the first quarter of 2012.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Park Service (NPS), and an action team of other federal agencies, state governments and nonprofits developed a working prototype of the Chesapeake Land Conservation Priorities System, a web- and GIS-based tool for facilitating collaboration among state, federal, local and nongovernmental organization partners and supporting sound conservation planning and decision making at all levels. The team is now working with NatureServe to explore potential collaboration with their LandScope America system to expand and integrate the capabilities of the prototype. The goal is development of a fully functional system in 2012. Once in use, the system will greatly facilitate collaborative conservation efforts through broadly shared information.

GIT 5 partners are also working to foster a dramatic increase in the number of citizen stewards of every age who support and carryout local conservation and restoration. The Chesapeake Conservation Corps Action Team comprised of state, federal and nonprofit organizations was recently formed to outline the issues, needs, strategies and measurable outcomes for growing youth conservation corps opportunities. Corps program funding information has been used to inform the development of a strategy that will articulate program resource needs and outline a series of approaches to connect these needs to available and potential funding sources.

In addition, a NOAA-led team, including the U.S. Department of Education, EPA, National Science Foundation (NSF), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), DOI, and state and nongovernmental partners, developed a draft Mid-Atlantic Elementary and Secondary Environmental Literacy Strategy, designed to help state partners advance their environmental literacy efforts. The objective of the strategy is to ensure that federal programs and resources are coordinated, informed by state priorities, and fully available to and used by state partners to advance state efforts to develop and implement comprehensive environmental literacy strategies for pre-K–12 students.

*The Fostering Stewardship GIT promotes individual stewardship, supports environmental education for all ages, and assists citizens, communities and local governments in undertaking initiatives to achieve restoration and conservation in the Chesapeake region. It aims to build public support of restoration efforts and increase citizen engagement and active stewardship.*

GIT 6 – Partnering and Leadership

The GIT 6 Decision Framework Implementation Workgroup and the Chesapeake*Stat* Workgroup are supporting the other GITs as needed in implementing adaptive management through the newly-adopted decision framework. Individual development leads from GIT 6 have been working directly with each of the other GITs as requested.

The GIT contributed to the adaptive management section of the program’s NAS report response and are assigned to lead the follow-up on various aspects of the NAS recommendations. The GIT is also tracking the program’s progress in implementing the multi-step process related to program alignment approved by the PSC. The Chesapeake*Stat* Workgroup continues to develop and improve the Chesapeake*Stat* website to support decision-making and to reflect progress with implementation of the decision framework.

The GIT is helping to enhance meeting management through training for the GIT Coordinators and Staffers. The current topic is on Managing Effective Meetings and a web-based learning tool *Skillsoft* is being used. In addition, much progress is being made with updating the CBP information technology architecture to better support the needs of the partnership. In addition and at the direction of the PSC following the February 16th 2012 meeting, GIT 6 will be following up on recommendations from the NAS report on developing options for an ongoing independent evaluation function of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

*The goal of the Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management GIT is to continually improve the leadership and management of the CBP Partnership and assist Bay stakeholders in building their capacity to become environmental leaders in their communities.*

**Partner Updates**

**Pennsylvania DEP Awards Grants to Protect, Improve Watersheds in 36 Counties**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection announced on February 3 that it will invest in 73 watershed protection projects intended to improve watersheds, reduce stormwater runoff and acid mine drainage and improve educational programs, among other environmental efforts. This year, the Growing Greener program, which is funded by the Environmental Stewardship Fund, will award $9.72 million for 57 projects around the state. An additional project, funded by the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Grant, will cost $72,912. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program, which was created through the federal Clean Water Act to help reduce water pollution from nonpoint sources, is funding 15 additional projects, which would total $3.12 million. These projects are intended to reduce nonpoint source pollution by implementing agricultural and stormwater best-management practices; developing, repairing or installing passive systems to treat abandoned mine drainage; and supporting the establishment of riparian buffers, among other goals. One of the Growing Greener program’s goals is to invest in projects that protect watersheds from impairment due to nonpoint source pollution or those that will restore damaged waterways. For more information on Growing Greener or to see the complete list of grant recipients, email [GrowingGreener@pa.gov](mailto:GrowingGreener@pa.gov), call 717-705-4500 or visit DEP’s website at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us/), keyword: Growing Greener.

**Maryland proposes $8 million capital investment for oyster restoration; Oyster disease levels lowest on record**

On February 13, Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley announced the results of Maryland’s 2011 Fall Oyster Survey. The report shows a 92 percent survival rate (in the Maryland tidal sections of the Chesapeake Bay), the highest for oysters since 1985. The survival rate — the percentage of oysters found alive in a sample — builds upon last year’s strong spatset (number of baby oysters), which was the highest since 1997.

During the 2-month sampling assessment, which concluded on November 21, 2011, 263 oyster bars and 343 samples throughout the Bay and its tributaries were evaluated. Although high freshwater flows from heavy rains in the spring and late summer storms – Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee — impacted oysters above the Bay Bridge, this represented a relatively small proportion of the total oyster population. The lower salinities proved to be beneficial to the majority of oysters in Maryland by knocking back disease.

In his proposed FY2013 budget, Governor O’Malley has proposed a $7.5 million capital investment in oyster bar restoration in Harris Creek in Talbot County and the Little Choptank River in Dorchester County, two of the State’s new sanctuaries, where conditions are favorable for reproduction. The Governor has also proposed an additional $500,000 for aquaculture infrastructure improvements, which will include low-cost loans through the Maryland Agricultural and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBDICO) for entrepreneurial watermen and other citizens who want to grow oysters. More at: <http://www.governor.maryland.gov/press.asp>

**NOAA Buoy System Science Users Forum**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Chesapeake Bay Office will hold a Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CBIBS) Science Users' Forum on February 28 at the CBP offices in Annapolis, MD. Participants will discuss how CBIBS data is currently used and brainstorm about possible future uses and how the data delivery system can be improved to meet those needs. CBIBS is a system of observation buoys that report real-time weather and environmental information about the Chesapeake Bay. These tools provide users with products and information they need to explore, traverse, restore, and manage the Chesapeake Bay.

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is also exploring outreach opportunities to share information about its oyster restoration efforts with the CBP Communications Office.

**Recent Events**

Jan 5 Chesapeake Bay Commission meeting

Jan 6 2 Year Milestones Due

Jan 21 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Stewards Academy Conference

Feb 4 CBP Management Board Meeting, Annapolis