



Chesapeake Bay Program  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

**Management Board and PSC  
Program Update  
March 2024**

**CBPO Calendar**

March 4	Conowingo WIP Steering Committee Quarterly Meeting
March 5 and 6	STAC Quarterly Meeting
March 6	Forestry Workgroup Meeting
March 7	Watershed Technical Workgroup Meeting
March 7	Criteria Assessment Protocol Workgroup Meeting
March 8	Agricultural Modeling Team Meeting
<b>March 12</b>	<b>Principal Staff Committee Meeting</b>
March 13	SAV Workgroup Winter Meeting
March 13	Toxic Contaminants Workgroup Meeting
March 13	Virginia Oyster Workgroup Meeting
<b>March 14</b>	<b>Management Board Meeting – People Cohort</b>
March 18	Maryland Oyster Restoration Workgroup Meeting
March 18	Data Integrity Workgroup Meeting
March 18	Trading and Offsets Workgroup Webinar
March 19	Urban Stormwater Workgroup Meeting
March 19	Wetlands Workgroup Meeting – Nontidal
March 20	Sustainable Fisheries GIT Meeting
March 20	GIT 6 Meeting
March 21	Sustainable Fisheries GIT meeting
March 21	Agricultural Workgroup Meeting
March 21	Climate Resiliency Workgroup Meeting
March 21- 22	LGAC Quarterly Meeting
March 22	Diversity Workgroup Meeting

**Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC)**

The Stakeholders' Advisory Committee held its first 2024 quarterly meeting in Richmond, VA on February 22-23. The meeting theme was: Through the lens of 2025 and beyond, learn and discuss the current thinking on the future of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed recovery effort and the Bay TMDL. The members heard lightning-round briefings from the Beyond 2025 small group leads on their draft recommendations. They also hosted a panel discussion on the Bay TMDL beyond 2025 with thought leaders from prominent watershed organizations. They discussed CBP updates during a briefing with the EPA CBPO Branch Chief for Partnership and Accountability.

The Stakeholders' Committee's 2024 Priorities that will drive the quarterly meetings include: (1) engagement in the Beyond 2025 work and a deeper dive into accountability for the Bay TMDL; (2) a broad understanding of the policies and incentives across the watershed for key outcomes with a focus on forest cover and land conservation with an intent to identify gaps; (3) continued engagement on equitable access to grants and capacity building; (4) intentionally learning and development of internal Committee guiding principles that advance inclusivity of all members.

The Stakeholders' Committee welcomed two new members at their February meeting: Sara Ramotnik, Senior Membership and Program Coordinator from Choose Clean Water Coalition (MD), and Bill Noftsinger, Senior Investment Manager, Alpha Omega Wealth Management (VA)

There are 2 PA gubernatorial vacancies.

**Upcoming meetings** The next Stakeholders' Committee meeting will be in Maryland on May 22-23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Contact Information** The Stakeholders' Committee officers are Chair- Chuck Herrick (DC) and Vice-Chair Donna Harris-Aikens (VA). To be added to the Stakeholders' Committee Interested Parties List, please contact: Alex LoCurto at [alocurto@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:alocurto@allianceforthebay.org) For program questions, contact Jess Blackburn

#### **Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)**

*"The purpose of the LGAC is to advise the Executive Council on how to effectively implement projects and engage the support of local governments to achieve the goals of the Bay Agreement."*

LGAC is pleased to welcome a new member: Adams County (Pennsylvania) Commissioner Martin Qually. LGAC still seeks a New York representative.

**Upcoming Meetings** LGAC's upcoming quarterly meeting will be on [March 21-22, 2024 in Luray, VA](#). Members will discuss LGAC's structure, function, and effectiveness and provide preliminary feedback on the Beyond 2025 effort. LGAC's Delaware representative, Don Phillips, is a member of the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee.

**Contact information** If there are MB requests to get LGAC feedback during future quarterly meetings, please contact the LGAC Coordinator, Laura Cattell Noll at [lnoll@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:lnoll@allianceforthebay.org). To be added to the Interested Parties list, please contact LGAC Staffer, Kayli Ottomanelli at [lgac@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:lgac@allianceforthebay.org).

#### **Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)**

##### **Membership Updates**

STAC welcomed a second Mayoral appointee, Amirreza (Amir) Sharifi (DC DOEE) to the committee in February. Sharifi is an environmental scientist with a strong background in TMDLs, water quality standards and water quality modeling, currently serving as a core member of DOEE's TMDL team. Mayoral appointments are selected by their chief executives based on the jurisdiction's needs and priorities; Sharifi will serve alongside Efeturi Oghenekaro (DC DOEE) until replaced. The [current membership list](#) can be viewed here.

##### **March 2024 Quarterly Meeting**

STAC convened virtually in early March for the first quarterly meeting of 2024. A 2-day agenda can be [viewed here](#), which includes invited presentations, STAC-led workshop report outs, discussion of received FY24 Workshop Proposals, and a themed second day, focusing on outputs from the February

[Beyond 2025 Symposium](#) and how best STAC can help advance the recommendations found. Presentations and recordings can be viewed on the [March 2024 quarterly meeting webpage](#).

Continuing with a series stretching over multiple meetings on the use of AI in water management, Joel Dunn (Chesapeake Conservancy) spoke with the committee on leveraging deep learning and data science for the conservation and restoration movement. The Chesapeake Conservancy has mapped wetland boundaries, future solar siting, species habitat ranges and their predicted changes with climate using hyper-resolution hydrography, land cover change detection and other innovative techniques. Dunn highlighted how these tools can be used to identify and track factors contributing to pollution and nutrient loading, prioritize conservation and restoration activities, and actively monitor and predict land use and hydrography dynamics.

Three workshop steering committees reported out on previous STAC-led workshops, sharing insights and recommendations found. Notably, steering committee members, Greg Noe (USGS) and Erik Michelson (Anne Arundel County), from the FY22 STAC workshop on stream restoration spoke at the February CRC Roundtable entitled, "Should we or shouldn't we? Assessing stream restoration practices." A recording from the webinar can be [viewed here](#).

Activities discussed were the following:

- FY22 Using Carbon to Achieve Chesapeake Bay (and Watershed) Water Quality Goals and Climate Resiliency: The Science, Gaps, Implementation Activities and Opportunities [Workshop webpage](#)
- FY22 State of the Science and Practice of Stream Restoration in the Chesapeake: Lessons Learned to Inform Better Implementation, Assessment and Outcomes [Workshop webpage](#)
- FY21 Advancing Monitoring Approaches to Enhance Tidal Chesapeake Bay Habitat Assessment [Workshop webpage](#)

Day 2 focused on outputs from the February [Beyond 2025 Symposium](#). Josh Kurtz (MD DNR) and Anna Killius (Chesapeake Bay Commission) were invited to open the day with an introduction and overview of the Beyond 2025 Committee and effort. Following, STAC members and partnership representatives involved in the Beyond 2025 topical Small Groups reported out on their perspective of the Symposium and the draft recommendations from each group. Julie Lawson from the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee and Jeff Lerner (EPA) joined STAC members KC Filippino (HRSD), Joe Wood (CBF), Kathy Boomer (FFAR), and Kenny Rose (UMCES) on the Small Group Panel. The committee and guests then met in breakouts to consider the draft recommendations presented and how best STAC can support and fill existing science needs.

### Recently Published Reports

All STAC review and workshop reports are available for download on the STAC [Publication webpage](#). So far in 2024, STAC has published three workshop reports:

- McPhillips, L., A. Buda, Z. Easton, W. L. Daniels, S. Fathel, J. Ignosh, C. Raj, D. Sample. (2024). *Best Management Practices to Minimize Impacts of Solar Farms on Landscape Hydrology and Water Quality*. [Download](#).
- Berger, K, K. Filippino, G. Shenk, N. Goulet, M. Lookenbill, D. Moyer, G. Noe, A. Porter, J. Shallenberger, B. Thomas, and G. Yactayo. (2024). *Using Local Monitoring Results to Inform the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Model*. [Download](#).

- Hanson, J., K. Brownson, E. Gilinsky, K. Gootman, B. Jenkins, R. Rossi, K. Saunders, L. Wainger, B. Williams, and S. Yee. (2024). *Using Ecosystem Services to Increase Progress Toward, and Quantify the Benefits of Multiple CBP Outcomes*. [Download](#).

#### FY24 Workshop Proposals

The first call for FY24 Workshop Proposals was released [earlier this year](#), with a second planned to be posted in June 2024. Workshops are organized to gather critically needed scientific and/or technical information related to protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

#### **Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team (STAR)**

The [February STAR meeting](#) continued STAR's focus over the previous few months on supporting the climate change component of the Beyond 2025 Small Group effort. The meeting began with a presentation of the Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group draft recommendations followed by clarifying questions from participants. Attendees then split up into breakout groups and discussed each recommendation, providing additional details that could be included or high-level topics they felt were not included in the draft recommendations. These comments were incorporated into the Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group materials where possible. The meeting concluded with a report-out session from the breakout groups. The next STAR meeting is on March 28th, 2024.

**Modeling Workgroup:** The Modeling Workgroup held its [quarterly review on January 9th and 10th](#), 2024. The January 2024 CBP Modeling Quarterly Review outlined the schedule and provided status updates on [the Phase 7 suite of models in development](#). The 11 presentations ranged from updates on the BMP optimization approaches, to discussions of crop yield calculations for estimating nutrient application and projecting future demand in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Decisions were made on applying the new wave-powered shoreline erosion recession rate Bay-wide and the temperature dependent algal growth rate curve for green algae. The next CBP Modeling Quarterly will be held in a hybrid format on April 2nd and 3rd, 2024.

**Integrated Trends Analysis Team (ITAT):** The [February ITAT meeting](#) featured presentations on potential topics and methods to support the workgroup's focus on increased integration of tidal and nontidal monitoring. A researcher from USGS shared work to characterize spatial and temporal patterns in specific conductance (SC) data, which can be used to quantify status and trends in freshwater salinization. The meeting also included a presentation on cluster analyses of water quality parameters at nontidal stations, specifically in the Susquehanna River basin. The next ITAT meeting will take place on March 27th, 2024.

The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) and its partners previously compiled tributary basin summaries for 12 major tributaries or tributary groups in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. In efforts to distribute the Tributary Summaries to interested parties, ITAT has presented information and examples on how to use the information to inform management decisions to multiple groups including the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), CBP Modeling Workgroup, Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee, and the Mid-Atlantic Planning Collaboration. If interested in having the Tributary Summaries presented at your jurisdictional or local meetings, please contact ITAT co-coordinators Breck Sullivan ([bsullivan@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:bsullivan@chesapeakebay.net)) and Kaylyn Gootman ([gootman.kaylyn@epa.gov](mailto:gootman.kaylyn@epa.gov)).

**Data Integrity Workgroup:** The Data Integrity Workgroup held a lab specific meeting in [October 2023](#). Participants shared sampling and laboratory updates and Alex Fries (UMCES) shared community science monitoring updates. Jerry Frank (CBL) shared that due to the funding for the blind audit program being

interrupted and redirected, there won't be a fall round this time around. Jerry will send the first batch out in January 2024 and the second in July 2024 with 2024's combined report going out at the end of the calendar year. Maryland Department of Health showed a video explaining their recent issue with Total Dissolved Phosphorous (TDP) data anomalies, and how they successfully resolved this issue. The group then had a thorough discussion on switching to new flow analyzers since the Lachat is being discontinued and most labs are switching to SEAL Analytical instruments. At the next meeting the group will follow up on this topic by discussing requirements for a sample comparison study when switching to a new instrument (how many samples should be required; specifically in the instance when most/all labs switch to the same instrument). Finally, Doug Moyer (USGS) and his team sought feedback on the order of preference for total nitrogen and phosphorous that are calculated based on individual components. The next Data Integrity Workgroup meeting will take place on March 18, 2024.

**Bay Oxygen Research Group (BORG) - 4-D Water Quality Interpolator:** The Bay Oxygen Research Group (BORG) met on February 12, 2024 to provide updates on two projects. Rebecca Murphy (UMCES) and Peter Tango (USGS) described progress on the 4-Dimensional Interpolator of dissolved oxygen, including recent developments and an overview of the project timeline. Jay Lazar (NOAA) then provided an update on the real-time hypoxia continuous monitoring program, which included 2024 stations, quality control procedures, and data access information. In between full workgroup meetings, the BORG Team continues to meet in a small working group monthly to discuss 4-D Interpolator developments and troubleshoot any challenges. Weston Slaughter, PhD student at the University of Maryland with [Dr. Sujay Kaushal's lab](#), has joined the group as an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Fellow, participating in efforts to better understand and predict dissolved oxygen dynamics in the Chesapeake Bay. The next BORG meeting has yet to be scheduled.

**Nontidal Network (NTN) Workgroup:** The **Nontidal Network (NTN) Team** of the Integrated Monitoring Network Workgroup met in [February 2024](#). The USGS team working to compare the historical Nontidal Network data to data in the data hub and water quality portal, to ensure data quality and reproducibility, have almost completed their effort. Once complete, the data will be available through a USGS data release. Meeting participants provided updates on other subjects such as River Input Monitoring sites and small agricultural watershed monitoring sites. Data providers shared updates on efforts to meet the March 2024 deadline. Also, at the February meeting, members discussed contingency plans for lab issues. The next NTN meeting will be on April 17, 2024.

**Hypoxia Collaborative Team:** The **Hypoxia Collaborative Team** met on [March 4, 2024](#). Partners shared updates on their ongoing work. Then, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Program Office (NCBO) team shared the proposal for the 2024 hypoxia station deployment locations with justification for the proposed placements. This proposal was followed by a robust discussion of the proposed two geographical areas. The collaborative was given an additional week to provide feedback or follow-up thoughts on the proposed locations. Peter Tango (USGS) then went over a proposed model-assisted optimization analysis for a high frequency sensor water quality sampling design strategy for long term and near term to support bay habitat and criteria assessment at the segment scale. This analysis would be proposed for GIT funding.

**Criteria Assessment Protocol (CAP) Workgroup:** The [September 2023](#) CAP meeting included a discussion on the dissolved oxygen (DO) criterion variances for deep channel and deep water designated uses. Qian Zhang (UMCES) shared his work showing that using the revised variances has no impact on any results of the assessment or the attainment deficit indicator in any of the locations the revision was approved. There is no impact from the revised variances on the overall attainment indicator in all assessment periods. The decision was made that Qian and Richard Tian (UMCES) would include the DO

variances in the indicator assessment starting with the 2020-2022 assessment. The group also discussed confidence intervals in the assessment. The next CAP meeting will be on March 7, 2024.

**Status and Trends Workgroup (STWG):** The [STWG met on January 29th](#) to foster cross-outcome learning and discuss STWG plans for 2024. The meeting began with a presentation on the [Forage Status and Trends Report](#), which synthesized all research findings and projects completed since 2014 in support of the Forage Outcome. This was followed by a presentation and discussion on the ongoing conversation to develop the Oyster outcome post 2025. The meeting wrapped up with an overview of the STWG plans and objectives for 2024. The full workgroup will next convene in the spring while individual teams continue to meet to work on new indicator development projects.

**Climate Resiliency Workgroup:** The Climate Resiliency Workgroup's [February Meeting](#) focused on updates on current climate-related GIT-funded projects through the workgroup (i.e., Collaborative Marsh Adaptation Project) and also across the other GITs and feedback from workgroup members on a number of requests from the Partnership. Julie led a discussion on key takeaways from the GIT-Funded Marsh Adaptation Project workshop, which brought together partners in two regional focus areas: the Middle Peninsula, VA and Wicomico River/Deal Island, MD. Workshop discussions included the strategic implementation of large-scale marsh adaptation projects, challenges and opportunities. Taylor Woods presented her work with USGS to understand climate change and land-use change impacts to stream flow and stream fish communities, soliciting feedback from the workgroup to inform modeling needs and project deliverables. Bo Williams and [Breck Sullivan](#) presented the draft recommendations for the Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group and asked for feedback on the recommendations ahead of the Beyond 2025 Symposium. Lastly, Brooke Landry and Katie Brownson presented updates on the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Workgroup and Forestry Workgroup's GIT-Funded Projects, respectively. These two projects are still in the early stages, but include components that are of interest toward making progress on the climate resiliency outcomes.

**Upcoming Meetings** The next CRWG meeting will be on [March 21st, 2024](#), and will focus on hearing about projects pertaining to community resilience and nature-based solutions.

### **Sustainable Fisheries (GIT 1)**

**Upcoming Meetings** The Fish GIT will be having our spring meeting March 20-21 at Hampton University. This meeting will look a little different than previous meetings. We will still have updates on bay-wide oyster restoration, the blue crab stock assessment, Beyond 2025, the forage report, and the invasive catfish workgroup, but we will also have the opportunity to learn from and interact with Hampton University. One of our primary goals for the upcoming year is to increase focus on DEIJ within the Fish GIT. We will have some discussions about how to go about this and hear from Hampton University about local restoration projects, marine science at Hampton University and the Living Marine Resources Cooperative Science Center (LMRCSC). NCBO will also be hosting a student focused session at this meeting. We are looking forward to this meeting and the opportunity to learn and grow as a GIT.

**Invasive Catfish Workgroup (ICW):** Blue catfish are an introduced species, have spread through the bay and are causing social and ecological impacts. The ICW is reaffirming our common goal to reduce the potential negative effects of catfish on native species, while considering the needs of all stakeholders. The ICW last met in January 2024 with representation from several different jurisdictions (Maryland,

Virginia, D.C, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, and North Carolina) and a wide range of stakeholders (academics, federal, commercial, recreational, marketing, etc.) At this meeting the ICW discussed the need to continue expanding the market for and commercial harvest of blue catfish, recognizing their value as a recreational fishery, and advancing our science to better guide management. The ICW will address these issues through four small groups; science/management, policy, recreational angling, and commercial fishing/processing/marketing. Each small group has been tasked with developing 1-3 specific and measurable action items to pursue over the next few years.

## **Habitat (GIT 2)**

**STRATEGY REVIEW SYSTEM (SRS) – LIVING RESOURCES COHORT:** The Brook Trout, Fish Passage, and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Workgroups are in the final stages of the most recent SRS cycle. During the December 14<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Progress Meeting ([link](#)), the Workgroup Chairs presented their Outcome’s findings and next steps to the Management Board. The SAV and Brook Trout workgroups made requests to the Management Board, and below are more details on these requests:

- **SAV Request:** *For the Management Board to endorse the necessity of establishing a Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Program and guide the CBP to take the necessary steps to do so. The purpose of this tier-3 monitoring effort would be not only monitor the impacts of climate change on the functional value of shallow water habitats throughout the Bay but also track the effectiveness of measures taken beyond 2025.*
  - **Management Board Response:** The MB supported the intention of the Habitat GIT to request a STAC Workshop on the Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Program in 2024. In the proposed workshop (if accepted by STAC), the MB recommended that the Habitat GIT further explore the scope and scale of the proposed Sentinel Program (avoiding redundancies), including determining if tidal or non-tidal monitoring will be conducted and identifying cross-GIT parameters to be monitored. This workshop will also suggest options/scenarios for funding. Additionally, the Habitat GIT will return to the MB to report out on findings of the STAC workshop. (Note: the report out would likely be at least nine months after the workshop.)
  - **SAV Next Steps:** A proposal for a STAC Workshop will be submitted in February.
- **Brook Trout Request:** *For the Management Board to direct the Bay Program to develop a cross-programmatic strategy that can be adopted by County, State, and Federal Agencies to develop agreements that promote brook trout habitat in priority counties that currently have stronghold or persistent Brook Trout patches.*
  - **Management Board Response:** The MB will identify at least one interested state who will convene the Brook Trout Workgroup co-chairs and partners in their jurisdiction (including brook trout, acid mine drainage, county and local interests) to collaborate on an approach for promoting restoration and conservation in Brook Trout strongholds or persistent Brook Trout patches. The lead jurisdiction and co-chairs will report back to the MB on the approach and any potential for replication throughout the watershed. Maryland, Pennsylvania agreed to take leadership positions for this effort.
- **NEXT STEPS:** Currently, the outcomes are working on finalizing their new 2024-2025 Workplans and updating their Management Strategies. These documents will be finalized and submitted to the SRS Team by 3/7/2024, after which the documents will be posted to the workgroup webpages.

**WETLANDS WORKGROUP:** The Wetlands Outcome Indicator was updated on [Chesapeake Progress](#). Between 2014 and 2022, 4,310 acres of wetlands were gained within in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and 60,666 acres of wetlands were enhanced. The press release can be found at [this link](#).

**TIDAL WETLANDS PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE (PSC):** The Habitat GIT will continue to support the efforts on Wetland Strategic Planning with the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). CBT created the tidal wetlands PSC, which consists of 42 members from jurisdictions with tidal wetland resources (MD, VA, DE, and DC) – as well as watershed-wide representation. *The purpose of this PSC is to work together to shape the Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the goal is to have focused discussions that are action-oriented to move the Strategic Plan forward and stay on schedule.* To date, five PSC monthly meetings have been held. CBT contracted ERG to support the Trust and the CBP by facilitating a consensus-based strategic planning process aimed at large-scale coastal wetland restoration. ERG is gathering input from a variety of stakeholders and synthesize it into overall themes in a situation assessment report, which will incorporate a decision framework to inform wetland protection and restoration efforts and build out the tidal strategic plan. CBT also sub-awarded The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to design a large-scale tidal restoration project – *the Pocomoke Sound Climate Adaption Initiative Project*. This site met the requirements of the project partners for ecological uplift, marsh migration, coastal resiliency, habitat restoration and CBP goals and outcomes requested by EPA CBP, NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The *Pocomoke Sound Project* includes thousands of acres of publicly owned marshes (critical for juvenile fish habitat) and marsh migration corridors and the project also encapsulates three vulnerable communities in need of climate resiliency: Crisfield, MD, Pocomoke City, MD, and Saxis, VA. TNC submitted an application in November 2023 to the 2023 NOAA *Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant* to request funding to ultimately construct the *Pocomoke Sound Project*.

**FY2021 & FY2022 GIT FUNDING:** The Chesapeake Bay Trust has facilitated the securement of contracts for the FY2022 and select FY2021 GIT Funding Proposals. Contractors were selected based on proposals received from the advertised scopes of work for the following projects. More information on the updated timelines of these Habitat GIT projects will be made available soon.

- **FY2021:** *“Understanding and Addressing the Impacts of Wetland Mowing to Facilitate Meeting the Chesapeake Bay Wetland Enhancement Goals”*; submitted on behalf of the Wetlands Outcome. (This project was funded in 2021 but did not receive bids on the SOW so it was readvertised with the 2022 projects.)
- **FY2022:** *“Mapping Non-tidal Wetlands in Areas with Outdated Wetland Maps”*; submitted on behalf of the Wetlands Outcome, with support from the LUWG.
- **FY2022:** *“Monitoring Vegetation Condition throughout the Delmarva Peninsula”*; submitted on behalf of the Black Duck Outcome, with support from the LUWG.
- **FY2022:** *“Protecting Chesapeake Bay SAV Given Changing Hydrologic Conditions: Priority SAV Area Identification and Solutions Development”*; submitted on behalf of the SAV Outcome.
- **FY2022:** *“Literature Review: Building climate resilience of stream restoration practices”*; submitted on behalf of the Stream Health Outcome. The project has now begun, and Stroud Water Research Center was selected as the contractor.

#### Upcoming Meetings

- The Wetlands Workgroup Nontidal Meeting will be on Tuesday, 3/19, from 2:00-4:00 ET. Additional information on this meeting can be found at [this link](#).
- The SAV Workgroup Winter Meeting will be on Wednesday, 3/13, from 1:00-5:00 ET. Additional information about this meeting can be found at [this link](#).

- The Habitat GIT Workgroup Chairs will be meeting in March (exact date/time TBD) to update the HGIT Management Strategy and discuss the upcoming Spring 2024 HGIT Meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. The current [Management Strategy can be found here](#) and the calendar webpage for the [HGIT Spring Meeting can be found here](#).

### **Water Quality (GIT 3)**

The WQGIT held a meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and discussed the following topics:

**Workgroup Updates:** WQGIT Workgroup Coordinators shared updates, including:

- Caitlin Grady, GWU was approved as the new AgWG Vice Chair and Arianna Johns, VA DEQ was approved as the new LUWG Co-Chair.
- The WTWG held its first [meeting](#). The co-chairs are working to consolidate information from that meeting into a mission and priorities that will be shared with the WG for review and comment.

**Accountability Framework in the Context of the TMDL:** Suzanne Trevena, EPA and Kelly Gable, EPA reviewed the accountability framework and its components for the GIT. This was followed by discussion by attendees.

**Beyond 2025 Steering Committee Updates:** The co-leads of the Clean Water Small Group shared their recommendations for the upcoming Beyond 2025 Symposium and followed up from their February 1<sup>st</sup> listening [session](#).

**Phase 7 Model development updates:** The Phase 7 Track Leads provided detailed updates on the progress of their respective areas of the Phase 7 effort. This was followed by discussion by attendees. The presentations from each Track Lead can be found on the WQGIT February Meeting [Page](#).

**Upcoming Meetings** The WQGIT will hold their next meeting on Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – topics to be discussed include Phase 7 modeling and Beyond 2025.

### **Maintain Healthy Watersheds (GIT 4)**

The HWGIT staffer, Sophie Waterman, presented on the Bay Program's Healthy Watersheds outcome and Goal Team at the [EPA Healthy Watersheds Learning Exchange](#).

**Upcoming Meetings** The next HWGIT meeting is on April 8th from 11-1. The GIT will discuss SRS and gather members' input about work done over the past two years.

### **Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship (GIT 5)**

Chesapeake Research Consortium welcomes its newest staffer, Meredith Lemke, supporting the Stewardship GIT (GIT 5) and the Stewardship, Education and Diversity Workgroups. Meredith will be located with the National Park Service Chesapeake office in Annapolis, and will work closely with the NOAA education team.

**Stewardship Workgroup:** Work is on course for the Stewardship Network Study & Asset Mapping “Scope 9” GIT Funded Project with contractors from Local Concepts LLC. The project is working to

develop a visualization (a “map”) of the network of networks supporting stewardship work in the watershed, in order to assess and use networks more effectively to strengthen collaboration and increase progress toward our shared goals and outcomes. This will serve many outcomes, both under the Stewardship GIT as well as those outcomes that can benefit from increased stewardship efforts (such as tree canopy, riparian buffers, etc. The network visualization tool, now called “Chesapeake Steward Map,” will provide a platform for stewardship providers to share their information (such as who they are, what they do and where, which other providers they interact with), which will be used to help show existing and facilitate new connections among the various entities working in the field. This tool will highlight strengths and gaps in partner relationships and geographic areas to inform future efforts. It will soon be tested for functionality and refined to suit needs.

The Workgroup is preparing for its biennial progress review with the Management Board in March, and will be developing the new two year action plan (2024-25) during April and May.

In February, Workgroup co-chair Michael Weyand left his position at the City of Gaithersburg for a different role with Montgomery County in the agriculture sector, and will not be able to continue leading the Stewardship Workgroup. The Workgroup will be recruiting for a new co-chair early this spring, to work with the current co-chair, Ashley Traut from the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition. Education Workgroup

The GIT funded project entitled, “How Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) are Advancing K-12 Student Outcomes,” referred to as “Scope 7” just wrapped up the first phase of the project. This included gathering data from school and school district personnel through surveys and focus groups to identify key areas where nonformal education organizations should be focusing to increase school district engagement. A summary document is now under review. The next step of this project includes developing a rubric/tool based on the results of the summary document and field testing it with partners across the region.

Work continues with contractor WE Strategies on the Workforce Landscape Assessment “Scope 8” GIT funded project. The contractor team and advisory committee have been meeting regularly and are currently identifying entities to help provide information on workforce needs and opportunities that can benefit Bay Program related fields. Discussions about existing workforce development programs and other topics of interest will take place throughout February.

The Workgroup is preparing to provide a brief update to the Management Board in March on the 2022 Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool which measures and tracks progress on the Student Outcome of the Environmental Literacy Goal.

The NOAA B-WET program offered two funding opportunities this winter which recently closed on February 16th. NOAA expects to award about \$500,000 for 4-6 state capacity building projects and \$900,000 for 9-14 projects that will work towards implementing systemic MWEEs and/or building capacity in school districts. An additional \$1.2 million will support 15 continuing projects that are in their second and third years of implementation.

**Public Access Workgroup:** The Public Access Workgroup is preparing for its biennial progress review with the Management Board in March, and will be developing their new two year action plan (2024-25) during April and May. They are on track to meet the Outcome target by 2025.

**Protected Lands Workgroup (Support from Chesapeake Conservation Partnership):** The Protected Lands Workgroup has been developing their new two-year action plan for 2024-25. This process is a bit off-cycle, but the new cycle of cohorts for the SRS process would have delayed the plan, and an updated, new approach was needed. The plan is being developed by new workgroup members who joined the reformed group last year, and should be in place this spring. The most recent indicator shows sufficient progress to expect meeting the target for the Outcome by 2025, if the pace of land conservation stays on course; therefore the action plan will focus on actions needed to help accelerate or maintain the rate of conservation.

PLWG hosted its first meeting with their new GIS Community of Practice in early February. The group is enthusiastic about working together to coordinate the process of gathering annual land conservation data in the future.

**Diversity Workgroup:**

The Diversity Workgroup has been exploring the process and timing for restructuring and growing the capacity of the Steering Committee and Workgroup membership, along with redefining the roles within these groups. This restructuring effort aims to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of the workgroup as a whole. There is also an effort to broaden the group's membership to include entities currently missing that would help to round out the group's capacity to implement actions and achieve progress toward the Outcome. Recent Workgroup and Steering Committee meetings have included many new members who are eager to contribute to the work, and these groups are pleasingly the most diverse we've seen in any CBP meetings!

The Diversity Workgroup has been involved in contributing to the internal assessment and the development of recommendations as part of the CBP's "Beyond 2025" process. Forward-looking discussions have been held with Workgroup and Steering Committee members and other partners over the past year to explore ways to center people in Chesapeake Bay efforts beyond 2025, and to consider a vision and hopes for the future of the watershed. These insights have been carried by staff to the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee meetings and the "People" topic small group.

The Workgroup has been preparing for its biennial progress review with the Management Board in March, and will be developing the new two year action plan (2024-25) during April and May. The next Workgroup meeting (end of March) will focus on summarizing feedback and insights from the progress review process and using it to help start developing the new action plan

**Enhance Partnering, Leadership and Management (GIT 6)**

Vision Statement: *"To provide an innovative strategic framework necessary for the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership to be the watershed restoration leader by achieving the goals and outcomes of the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement."*

Mission Statement: *"The Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management Goal Implementation Team assists in continuously improving the operations of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership by providing guidance on governance and accountability; ensuring that adaptive management practices are in place and implemented; engaging, developing, and supporting local leaders; and advancing the efficient and transparent use of financial resources."*

GIT6 operates as the oversight body for the SRS process, assisting with any workflow questions and providing guidance on process efficiency and efficacy. The SRS process is in stage 4. The next SRS meeting will host the People's cohort at the March 14<sup>th</sup> Management Board Meeting. The meeting link can be found by accessing this [webpage](#). GIT6 is also enmeshed in the SRS process through the Local Leadership Workgroup, which develops a management strategy for achieving the local leadership outcome, within the stewardship goal. The local leadership outcome compliments the SRS People Cohort. The Local Leadership Workgroup chose to abstain from participating in this year's SRS process, due to the recent onboarding of a new staffer and the upcoming coordinator transition.

**Upcoming Meetings** GIT6 is hosting its next quarterly meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The meeting webpage can be found by clicking this [link](#). Highlights of the meeting will include:

- Introductions to Martha Shimkin, Director of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office
- Introducing Shared Learning Initiatives: covering topics on leadership, partnering, and management. The topic of Psychological Safety has been discussed within the GIT leadership as a potential first shared learning topic.
- Updates from GIT Workgroups
- GIT6 coordination in future Beyond 2025 efforts

**Contact Information** Lucinda Power(Chair) [power.lucinda@epa.gov](mailto:power.lucinda@epa.gov), James E. Martin(Chair) [james.e.martin@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:james.e.martin@dcr.virginia.gov), Greg Allen (Coordinator) [allen.greg@epa.gov](mailto:allen.greg@epa.gov), Erin Sonnenburg (Staffer) [Sonnenburg.erin@epa.gov](mailto:Sonnenburg.erin@epa.gov).

**Budget and Finance Workgroup:** The Budget and Finance Workgroup continues to refine its work plan as it makes substantial progress on several fronts. Projects that are underway include the joint project between EPA's National Center for Environmental Economics and EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office. This project will assess whether the benefits of Bay restoration accrue evenly including to underrepresented communities. The project will launch a focus group initiative very soon to advance our understanding of what members of underserved communities value most. The results of the focus group initiative will inform analysis of accrual benefit in the next phase of the project. The workgroup also recently submitted a proposal for a STAC workshop. The proposed workshop would explore the natural and social sciences gaps that impede the use of market-based approaches for Chesapeake restoration. The proposal was recently ranked highest among proposals submitted for the spring 2024 call for STAC workshop ideas. Should the workshop be approved for funding, the Budget and Finance Workgroup will provide leadership to assemble topical experts and the planned output from the workshop will be recommendations for how to advance market-based approaches.

**Local leadership Workgroup:** The Local Leadership Workgroup held its first quarterly meeting for 2024 on February 20<sup>th</sup>. During this meeting, the workgroup's new staffer was formally introduced to the workgroup membership and interested parties. The meeting's primary agenda topics included: the workgroup's work plan, including logic and action plan progress; the success of the [Protect Local Waterways](#) website winning an Anthem Award; and facilitating a discussion concerning the People's Small Group vision statement for the upcoming Beyond 2025 Symposium.

Martha Narvaez, co-chair for LLWG, led the Beyond 2025 vision statement discussion for the workgroup. The following questions were presented:

1. Are we or are we not achieving our vision?
2. Does the vision need to be changed to better serve the needs of people and highlight their role?
3. From a local government perspective, why are or are we not achieving our vision? What are the barriers?
4. How do you see your work connected to the Bay Program if at all?

The Local Leadership workgroup appreciated the increased feedback from its membership with the multiple-choice questions and was pleased with the discussions following. The consensus from the membership and interested parties was that the vision statement requires minor revisions; membership

requests greater emphasis on people within the statement and greater support for local governments, through funding and staffing, within the partnership.

**Upcoming Meetings** The next local leadership quarterly meeting will be May 14<sup>th</sup>, from 9 to 3 pm. The location has yet to be determined, but this will be an in-person meeting, with a virtual component. More meeting information can be found via this [link](#).

**Contact Information** Erin Sonnenburg (Staffer), [Sonnenburg.erin@epa.gov](mailto:Sonnenburg.erin@epa.gov) or [sonnenburge@chesapeake.org](mailto:sonnenburge@chesapeake.org); Laura Cattell Noll (Coordinator), [lnoll@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:lnoll@allianceforthebay.org); Martha Narvaez (Chair) [mcorrozi@udel.edu](mailto:mcorrozi@udel.edu); Les Knapp (Vice Chair) [les.knapp@maryland.gov](mailto:les.knapp@maryland.gov)

### **Communication Workgroup**

**Strategic Engagement Team:** On February 27, the Strategic Engagement Team met with the Beyond 2025 Healthy Watersheds and Shallow Waters small groups. Each of the small group leads presented their recommendations, followed by a discussion with the team to review any previous outreach conducted and share ideas for other ways in which to engage internal Chesapeake Bay Program partners and the interested public moving forward. Both teams plan to follow up with the Strategic Engagement Team in the future as the Beyond 2025 process moves forward.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- The next bi-weekly meeting will be with the Climate Resiliency Workgroup on March 12 to discuss communications needs.
- The Strategic Engagement Team will hold their next quarterly meeting with the Stewardship Cohort on April 11.

### **Communications Office:**

### **Staffing Updates**

- On February 20, the Communications Office welcomed Bianca Martinez Penn as our new Communications Staffer. Bianca previously was a C-StREAM intern during the summer of 2022, where she worked with the Diversity Workgroup. She graduated from the University of Miami in 2023 with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and minors in Marine Policy and Sustainable Business.
- Marisa Baldine recently joined the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay as the Chesapeake Bay Program Outreach Specialist. She was the previous Communications Staffer with the Chesapeake Research Consortium.

**Bay TMDL Indicator Webinar** The Communications Office helped to facilitate a webinar on February 6 to walk through and answer questions regarding the new Bay TMDL Indicator. This indicator will help bridge the gap between monitored and modeled data to estimate the progress of nitrogen and phosphorus reductions in response to implemented best management practices. The webinar can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLA2491w92Y>.

## Published blogs

The following blogs were published in February:

- New report investigates how the Bay's forage base is changing over time  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/new-report-investigates-how-the-bays-forage-base-is-changing-over-time>
- Seven successes show there's more than one way to restore a wetland  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/seven-successes-show-there-s-more-than-one-way-to-restore-a-wetland>
- The Bay Program revamps the Chesapeake Healthy Watershed Assessment  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/the-bay-program-revamps-the-chesapeake-healthy-watershed-assessment>
- Could the blue catfish "cattie" be the Bay's next best recipe?  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/could-the-blue-catfish-cattie-be-the-bays-next-best-recipe>
- Near the birthplace of Frederick Douglass, a lush wetland park awaits  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/near-the-birthplace-of-frederick-douglass-a-lush-wetland-park-awaits>
- Do you know how safe your Maryland-caught seafood is to eat?  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/do-you-know-how-safe-your-maryland-caught-seafood-is-to-eat>