

Public Access Action Team Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2016 from 10:30AM-1:00PM
Suite 314, NPS Large Conference Room
410 Severn Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21403

Agenda items and the Public Access Workplan can be found on the Chesapeake Bay Program calendar: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/24459/>

Status of the Workplan, John Davy

The workplan is divided into 17 management approaches. The following points are updates from the different states in the watershed as it related to some of the management approaches.

Management Approach 1- Track progress towards the 300 new sites goal by 2025

- 108 new sites towards the total of 300 new sites by 2025 goal have been opened in the watershed as of December 2015

Management Approach 3- Establish a process that ensures public access is considered in the planning of all appropriate transportation projects

- All the states have processes now for coordinating with their Departments of Transportation to enhance public access as appropriate with bridge and road construction projects. WVA reported that a number of new projects have been part of bridge construction. PA is currently looking at Winfield where an access could be provided as part of a bridge construction project. VA DCR is also working with their DOT on some potential projects sites as is MD.

Management Approach 4- Enhance Public Access for a Diverse Population

- The EPA Environmental Justice tool, discussed later in these minutes, is one tool that can be used to help target areas which could meet the needs of diverse populations. Another major effort is underway in Baltimore City, MD, which is using a park equity analysis based on census data to evaluate underserved communities and then mapping these with GIS data, some other sites in MD are using the same process. MD DNR Fisheries is instituting a free fishing program for underprivileged in urban areas. Meeting participants also discussed the use of multilingual signage in areas which served diverse populations in the watershed. The ranges of activities varied among the states based on amount of urban and underserved areas in the watershed and resources available to address.

Management Approach 7- Urban Areas

- * MD has established fish for free locations in urban areas.

Management Approach 9-Engage in hydropower relicensing processes to expand public access

- As opportunities arise, each state becomes involved in relicensing projects. MD is currently involved in a project on the Susquehanna dealing with Conowingo Dam; PA uses this as opportunity to enhance fish passage and water quality with less focus on public access; VA has used it to obtain funding for additional public access but finds that some projects are too small or topography does not allow for any access opportunity; no current active projects in other states.

Management Strategy #15- Climate Change

- All states are dealing with this in various ways, tidal states such as MD and VA look at cost of increasing and providing access to sites with respect to how long site could remain viable or the cost of retrofitting as water levels rise. VA DGIF is now applying a standard that site should be useable at least 60% of the time based on coastal flooding. WV, while not concerned with sea level rise, is seeing more flooding from storm events as a result of climate change and is working to increase riparian buffers on public sites. MD is developing new designs to address climate change.

Review of EPA Environmental Justice Screen and Public Access Sites

- The EPA EJ Screen can be used to view demographic indicators such as percentage of minorities, income, age, etc. with respect to their proximity to public access sites.
- Current public access sites can also be viewed with estimated travel time by car or by walking to these sites as it relates to the selected EJ screen indicators.

Challenges to Providing Public Access

- Trash on sites has become a bigger issue in recent years. People are not using trash receptacles or taking their trash with them from the access sites. This is creating problems since it migrates back into waterway and/or adjacent community. This causes community complaints and makes it more difficult to develop new sites when these concerns are raised by neighboring public.
- Site management is becoming more of an issue. There is often not enough staff to provide needed enforcement of regulations or maintenance at existing sites. This leads to complaints from neighbors and again makes it difficult to develop new areas.
- Parking at sites, particularly on weekends and holiday periods, has become problematic. Handicapped sites are used by others because no other parking is available and people begin to park on streets in neighborhood creating more issues. Again site enforcement and management becomes an important need.
- Existing sites are being lost or severely impacted by two factors. First, with loss of CORP's program of small channel dredging, in tidal areas some sites are now too shallow for trailered craft leading to a change in site use and loss of a site for powerboats. Second, there are many instances, especially in VA where sites were leased under cooperative programs by DGIF from local governments for 20 years to provide public access. Many of these leases are coming up for renewal and some localities are opting not to renew due to site management/maintenance issues.

- There needs to be more education on proper stewardship of public access sites. People need to know importance of proper handling of their trash and respecting the rights of neighboring land owners. (This could be an effort for the environmental literacy group?)
- The fastest growing sector of public access need is for paddle craft. Currently no state has a program that requires registration of these craft so for the most part they do not pay for the access provided. The primary burden is on the power craft owners who must pay to register their vessels. This creates user conflicts and discontent among those who feel they are paying and not always having the funds support their needs. Paddlers often raise the most complaints about lack of access but have generally not been willing to help bear the cost.
- It was noted that the focus of the public access goal has been on new sites to meet the 300 site goal by 2025. It is becoming increasingly important to also look at the quality of new sites and to maintain the quality of existing sites. This may be something to be addressed through the adaptive management process for the work plan.
- Budget issues continue to impact all of our partners with respect to staffing, the funding of new sites as well as in providing TA to partners in the planning and development process. It is hoped that funding in these areas will improve over next few years.
- Fishing & Boating license/registration trends:
MD- fishing licenses are flat; Chesapeake Bay license now being sold; motor boat registrations rebounding
VA- fishing licenses are trending down; motorboat registrations up slightly
PA- fishing licenses and boating registrations are either stagnate or on a slight decline
NY- boating registrations are up
WVA- fishing licenses are trending downward; nonmotorized boating is up

Data Call for New Public Access Sites that opened in 2016

A new spreadsheet has been developed for recording all new sites and facilities that opened in 2016. This form is being sent out to all states with a request that it be completed and returned no later than January 6, 2017.

GIT 5 efforts and requirements for 2017

- The Public Access team developed the management strategy and work plan under the 2014 Watershed Agreement to meet the 300 site goal
- Adaptive management will continue to be the approach for modifying workplan priorities in the future
- Goal Teams and workgroups will report updates every 2 years to the Management Board and Principal Staff Committee. The Public Access team should take our next opportunity to present as an opportunity to educate and engage on current challenges to providing public access and affects on our workplan.

Attendees:

John Davy-NPS

Andy Fitch- EPA- CBP

Lisa Gutierrez- MD-DNR
John Wilson - MD DNR
Erik Zlokovitz-MD-DNR
Scott Bollinger PA - Fish and Boat Commission
Michael Krumrine DE - Division of Parks and Rec
Drew Pizzala-CRC
Amy Handen-NPS
Michael Krumrine-DE Division of Parks and Recreation
Mark Hohengasser-NY State Parks
Andy Hofmann-US FWS
Danette Pool- VA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Uwe Weindel - VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Brandon Keplinger-WV Division of Natural Resources
Jackie Kramer-NPS
Bob Campbell-NPS