

Discussion of Midpoint Assessment Roles & Responsibilities

Purpose

To clearly define the roles of the WQGIT, the Modeling Workgroup, and other associated Workgroups and Teams in the decision making process as it relates to policy and modeling issues under the Bay TMDL's midpoint assessment. Each group contributes to the necessary technical, policy, and management decisions the partnership will address through 2017 and beyond.

WQGIT Charge: Evaluate, focus, and accelerate the implementation of practices, policies, and programs that will restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to conditions that support living resources and protect human health.

Scientific, Technical Analysis and Reporting (STAR) Charge: Collaborate with partners to enhance the monitoring, modeling, and analysis needed to update, explain, and communicate ecosystem condition and change to support decision making to achieve CBP goals and outcomes. STAR is providing two primary items for the MPA: (1) a project to measure and explain water-quality changes, and (2) support from the Modeling Workgroup (which is under STAR and their charge is listed below). The STAR's explaining trends work will interact with the WQGIT and Modeling Workgroup efforts under the midpoint assessment.

Modeling Workgroup Charge: Develop technically defensible modeling tools as directed by the partnership; develop scenarios to assess management actions needed to fully achieve Bay water quality standards; track and quantify nutrient and sediment loads as WIP implementation progresses; and to estimate the aggregate effect of management practices from each source sector due to changes in land use, atmospheric deposition, fertilizer application, animal populations, manures, and management actions.

Agricultural Modeling Subcommittee Charge: Provide enhanced agricultural modeling assistance to support the Agriculture Workgroup and the Workgroup's Expert Review Panels on technical decisions regarding the development of the Phase 6 modeling tools for the midpoint assessment.

Decision Points for Upcoming Midpoint Assessment Priorities

- During the May 2014 WQGIT conference call, the Modeling Workgroup co-chairs confirmed that the Modeling Workgroup, closely coordinating with the WQGIT and its Workgroups, would take the lead in developing loading rates for the new land use classifications.
- Data inputs should be finalized and entered into the decision support tools by October 2015, before calibration begins. Currently, the WQGIT is responsible for approving the BMP loading rate reductions.
- The Phase 6 draft modeling tools are expected to be complete by January 2016. Over the next year, the Partnership will evaluate and fine-tune these decision support tools, with all models final by December 2016. The Modeling Workgroup will be making incremental decisions with regards to Phase 6 with the goal of providing the WQGIT with a technically defensible model that will address some of the policy decisions the WQGIT will need to make, such as improved land use and regional factors.

- How will this evaluation process be coordinated between the Modeling Workgroup and the WQGIT over this year?
 - Regular interactions between the Modeling Workgroup, the Source Sector Workgroups, and WQGIT through standing meetings and conference calls.
 - Additional face-to-face meetings and interactions on special topics (e.g. verification)
- In addition to improvements in modeling tools, the STAR project on explaining water-quality trends will provide improved understanding into factors affecting water-quality changes with a focus on relation to management practices. The STAR project results will be used by the Modeling Workgroup to help enhance the Phase 6 Watershed Model. The STAR project team will work with the WQGIT so the results can be used to (1) evaluate progress toward water-quality improvements, (2) help jurisdictions prepare and develop the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, and (3) implement the WIPs.
- There are specific issues under the midpoint assessment that will very likely influence the Phase III WIP planning targets. All of this work will lead to multiple Partnership decisions – both technical and policy-driven – on how to offset (e.g., Conowingo, climate change) or reallocate (e.g., James chlorophyll a) based on the resultant findings.
 - How is the decision making process defined?
 - Modeling Workgroup incorporates data and simulation capabilities into modeling tools.
 - WQGIT/MB/PSC decides how and when to use the information.

Requests for Feedback

- What's the relationship between the Modeling Workgroup and the Agriculture Workgroup's Agricultural Modeling Subcommittee in terms of decision making on simulation of agriculture and agricultural BMPs in the Phase 6 Watershed Model?
- What's the relationship between the Modeling Workgroup and the Watershed Technical Workgroup in terms of decision making on Scenario Builder and its interrelationship with the Phase 6 Watershed Model?
- What's the relationship between STAR and the Modeling Workgroup on key strategic issues under the midpoint assessment, such as Conowingo?
- Are there ways we can strengthen coordination, information exchange, and separate/shared decision-making responsibilities between our respective GITs and Workgroups in order to implement the priorities under the midpoint assessment and achieve our water quality goals and commitments?