



## Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT)

Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
1:00 - 3:45 PM

[Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.](#)

**Purpose:** This is the monthly meeting of the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT). Meeting topics included a Phase 7 Model Development timeline update, a 2024 Tidal Water Quality Trends presentation, a discussion on 2025 Progress communications and a discussion on updating the Hydrologic Period for the Phase 7 model.

### Minutes

#### I. Welcome and Announcements

Lead: Suzanne Trevena, WQGIT Chair

#### II. Business & Workgroup Updates

Lead: Petra Baldwin, WQGIT Co-Staffer

Petra gave an overview of announcements and updates including a brief recap of the Dec 2nd Executive Council meeting and recent MB and PSC meetings. Petra highlighted the approval of the Urban Nutrient Management Panel Report and other major updates from recent workgroup meetings. More detailed updates from workgroups are outlined below and on the [posted slides](#). Other announcements and opportunities are linked in the [agenda](#).

**Materials:** [Presentation](#), [Oct 2025 – Feb 2026 Phase 7 Decision Planner](#) (version date: 12.03.25)

#### Discussion:

- Kevin Dubois, DoD asked for clarification on the Milestones commitments for federal partners. Suzanne Trevena responded that Milestone Partners can submit a wider range of commitments, but EPA will only be commenting and providing oversight on milestones related to water quality goals. Bo Williams added that an agenda item will be added to the next FOD meeting to review expectations for federal partners' 2026-2027 Milestones commitments, since they are slightly differently than those for jurisdictions.

#### III. 2026 WQGIT Meeting Planning

Lead: Suzanne Trevena, WQGIT Chair

Suzanne provided an overview of WQGIT meetings for 2026, highlighting a plan for a one or two day hybrid meeting in late April. Suzanne also shared WQGIT's plan to continue with current membership until CBP structure and governance changes are solidified by June 2026.

**Materials:** [Presentation \(slide 9\)](#)

**Actions:**

1. WQGIT is planning a hybrid meeting for the end of April 2026. If you have topic suggestions or are interested in volunteering to help plan the meeting, please reach out to WQGIT leadership.

**IV. Phase 7 Timeline Updates**

Lead: Bo Williams, EPA CBPO

Bo provided an update on the Phase 7 timeline, given recent furloughs and other changes that have slightly modified the schedule. In particular, Bo noted that the December 31st, 2026 deadline has not changed. February 28th is the deadline still set for the AMT decisions. March is the review period for the Phase 7 Land Use, about which an email will be sent soon to LUWG members. April 1st is when the CAST Team and Jess Rigelman need to finalize the CAST land use. There were questions about CAST updates, CalCAST, and other developments. CalCAST is expected to continue in full and the WQGIT will continue to be involved in discussions about these aspects of the model development through 2026.

**Materials:** [Presentation](#)

**Discussion:**

- Kevin McLean, VADEQ asked about current plans for future versions of CAST. Bo responded that there is no specific plan yet but there will be updates to CAST and it will be discussed at the WQGIT. Lee McDonnell added that this discussion will involve considering how to get new BMPs in the model, whether CAST updates should be designed around the release of new datasets, and other factors.
- KC Filippino, HRPDC asked for an update on CalCAST. Bo and Lew Linker shared that the work is happening despite personnel changes and we can expect a full CalCAST to be developed. Joseph Delesantro has taken the lead on this.
- Dave Montali, WVDEP asked for clarification on how review of the model will occur in the coming two years, and if there will be multiple opportunities to adjust inputs. Lee responded that they want to have as many opportunities for input as possible so as soon as there are results available about how inputs are interpreted through model, they will be shared. It is unsure when that will be.
- Mike LaSala, LandStudies asked what is anticipated to be included in future CAST updates. Lee responded that considerations to changes in BMP verification and the use of satellite imagery might be one major change, but that will all be discussed both as it pertains to Phase 7 as well as BMP reporting and verification in general.

**V. 2024 Tidal Water Quality Trends**

Lead: Rebecca Murphy, UMCES

Rebecca presented a summary of the tidal water quality trends from 2024, which includes trends at 150 monitoring stations across the Chesapeake Bay mainstem and tidal tributaries for multiple water quality parameters including nutrients, clarity, oxygen, and temperature. Rebecca showed maps and noted key short- and long-term trends in the estuary for each parameter. 2024 results suggest nutrient trends are mostly improving over the long-term with some leveling-out over the short-term. The number of stations with degrading conditions have decreased over the short-term.

for Secchi and chlorophyll a, while dissolved oxygen has different patterns in deeper vs. tributary waters. Rebecca also highlighted the role of the [Integrated Trends and Analysis Team](#) (ITAT) and other products developed like [Tributary Summaries](#), which show region-specific information.

**Materials:** [Presentation](#), [Summary Report](#), [Bay Trends Map](#), [Estuary Trends on CAST](#)

**Discussion:**

- Lew Linker, EPA CBPO asked if there was any diagnostics to explain why short-term trends in southern watersheds are increasing. Rebecca responded they are not sure, though it is sometimes point-source related. They usually first look at the non-tidal trends in that area to see if things match.
  - Jimmy Webber, USGS (in chat) shared they have seen increasing TN, TP, and SS flow-normalized loads in many of the downstream Virginia nontidal monitoring stations over the past 10-years and referenced the [Non-tidal Trends Report](#).
- Kevin DuBois asked about the methodology for secchi depth measurements.
  - Lew answered that secchi measurements are quite straightforward. He was unsure about the frequency of their measurements and Rebecca was not on the call at the time to answer. Lew added that light attenuation is complicated and there is literature exploring how scattered light acts compared to absorbed light, and the impacts to water quality are not straightforward.
  - Peter Tango, USGS (in chat) noted that Secchi info aligns with what Carl Friedrichs et al published in 2025 about recent improvements in light measures for the Bay.

**VI. Break**

**VII. 2025 Progress Communications Discussion**

Lead: Greg Sandi, MDE, WQGIT Vice-Chair

Greg led a discussion about jurisdictions' priorities, questions, and planning for communications around 2025 Progress, given this year will likely receive increased attention. Comments included the importance of considering audience (the general public, legislative audiences, and other stakeholders), balancing unified vs. state specific messages, increased coordination from EPA ahead of Progress release, an emphasis that 2025 is a milestone not an endpoint, and considering sector-by-sector analysis. There were also suggestions to coordinate with CBPO communications team and Advisory Committees for specific messaging and use WQGIT conversations now and in Spring 2025 to consider the big themes we want to recommend.

**Materials:** [Discussion Questions](#)

**Actions:**

1. WQGIT leadership will work in partnership with WQGIT members, CBPO communications team, CBP Advisory Committees, and other groups as needed to develop key themes and audiences we want to consider for messaging around 2025 Progress. If you have any further comments to share from your jurisdiction, please email WQGIT leadership.

**Discussion:**

- Lee McDonnell, EPA CBPO shared that from EPA's standpoint they will be doing more coordinating to ensure that all the jurisdictional partners are aware of what's going on with their progress analysis to prepare. Lee mentioned with the delay of NRCS data,

Progress Release may occur a bit later this year, and they will share a new schedule when that timeline is solidified.

- Kevin DuBois, DoD shared that they are emphasizing that 2025 is a milestone and not an endpoint to set the mindset that work still needs to be done, especially accounting for changing environmental conditions.
- Norm Goulet, NVRC (in chat) asked to have time for a deep dive into the progress results including potentially a sector-by-sector analysis. Greg responded that a sector-by-sector analysis may not be appropriate at the WQGIT level, but potentially up to jurisdictions to think at that level of detail.
- Kevin McLean, VADEQ proposed having a unified plan for release but also ensuring jurisdictions receive their own progress ahead of time to be able to craft individual messages before the full public release.
- Greg emphasized the fact that with changing conditions in the Bay, including increases in temperature trends, the idea of what is a 'restored Bay' is changing. Lew agreed and added that rising temperatures are making it more difficult to achieve goals given the impact to dissolved oxygen carrying capacity and stratification.
- Greg shared that a challenge in MDE is the constant messaging of not having achieved goals and not doing enough, so there is value in preparing messaging to get ahead of that and outline both successes and challenges in a way that is pushing things forward instead of demoralizing.
- Suzanne suggested involving SET and the CBPO communications team to help. For WQGIT's role, she suggested considering what the big themes are that should be focused on and elevated.
- Rachel Felver, CBPO (in chat) offered help from the communications team. At minimum, they can help promote jurisdictional and sector successes throughout the year.
- Bo Williams, EPA CBPO noted the need to consider audience. Greg shared their main audiences to consider are the general public and legislative. Suzanne noted it could be helpful to connect with advisory committees to get their perspective and input.

## **VIII. Hydrologic Period Discussion**

Lead: Lew Linker, EPA CBPO

Lew gave an overview of what the hydrologic period is, its connection to the critical period, how it was determined in the past, and what it would take to develop a new hydrologic period for the Phase 7 model. Lew highlighted that developing and applying new long-term and critical periods involves both a manageable, straightforward technical aspect and a policy/application aspect that will likely require longer deliberation. He also noted that a new long-term and critical hydrologic period will redistribute flows and loads among partnership state-basins.

After discussion, there was general support for pursuing an update to the hydrologic period for the Phase 7 model, particularly in the interest of using the best available science and ensuring credibility and acceptability for the model. The technical aspects will likely be led by USGS, who will begin planning and moving ahead with this. WQGIT will continue to hear updates on the process and be involved in multiple touchpoints through 2026. All technical and policy decisions will need to be completed by the end of 2026.

**Materials:** [Presentation](#)

**Actions:**

1. Decision Requested: WQGIT voting members are asked to formally approve the decision to pursue an update to the hydrologic period for the Phase 7 model. Please send your consensus vote (1-5 scale) to Petra (Baldwin.Petra@epa.gov) by EOD Wednesday January 7, 2026.

**Discussion:**

- KC Filippino, HRPDC shared her support for pursuing this update since it seems straightforward and would make Phase 7 more authoritative at the local level. She noted that the statement from STAC mentioned in Lew's presentation was made before it was clear that Phase 7 would be in place for a long time and asked if there has been discussion with STAC to revisit that sentiment.
  - Lew responded that they have not revisited it. While the specific timeline was not settled, they knew Phase 7 would be around for a while. Lew added that it is a communication problem to be referencing a critical period from the 90s when discussing future climate conditions. Lew also thinks it would be a good update for a technical achievement standpoint, too.
- KC asked for clarification on the need for a long runway to develop, given it seems straightforward from a technical standpoint. Lew responded that the technical aspects would take at least two quarters, but the longer part is the WQGIT review and decision to apply it or not.
- Kevin McLean, VA DEQ also shared his support, with similar reasoning to KC's comments about public perception and given all of the other updates to and investment in the model, it makes sense to do this too. Kevin asked what the hesitation is apart from the uncertainty of how loads may be redistributed.
  - Lew responded that flows and loads have been applied for more than a decade, and WIPs have been implemented based on those, so there is natural inertia within the program.
  - Kevin noted that with the plan for Phase IV WIPs presumably being developed, we should keep ourselves up with the times.
- Norm Goulet, NVRC also shared his support and agreement with KC and Kevin. New WIPs and loads will be in place for a long time, so it should be based on the best model to ensure credibility and acceptability. Norm agreed with Lew that the largest discussions will be around distribution of the loads, and emphasized the need for multiple check-in points along the way with the WQGIT to ensure it is completed by the end of 2026.
- Greg Sandi, MDE shared support. If the model isn't populated with the best data, then we are making a poor decision.
- Marel King, CBC shared support. We always let the science lead the way. It won't be the easiest, but CBP is the strongest when we have these type of technical issues and work through them together.
- Scott Heidel, PADEP shared support. If we have an update that can be made, then we should do it.
- Other agreements and support were shared in the chat by Joe Wood (CBF), Mike LaSala (LandStudies) and George Onyullo (DC DOEE).
- KC suggested a small group could be formed, if needed, and volunteered. She also mentioned STAC has an adhoc group discussing this that could be engaged.
  - Scott Heidel, PADEP suggested keeping discussions in the WQGIT full group to ensure things are concise and everyone is in on the conversations.

- Suzanne summarized that hearing general willingness, WQGIT will make an official decision via email, but USGS will begin work on the technical aspect now.
  - Dave Montali, WVDEP suggested work begin soon so it is completed in time. He shared concern if it was given to Modeling Workgroup, but if USGS can cover it, then that is good.
  - Peter Tango, USGS shared they have had initial discussions to assess their capacity. Ken Hyer and Jimmy Webber will continue exploring it and get things started.

## **IX. Wrap-Up**

Lead: Petra Baldwin, WQGIT Co-Staffer

## **X. Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:** [Monday, January 26th, 2026](#)

### **Attendance**

Suzanne Trevena, EPA (WQGIT Chair)  
 Greg Sandi, MDE (WQGIT Vice-Chair)  
 Petra Baldwin, CRC (WQGIT Co-Staffer)  
 Caroline Kleis, CRC (WQGIT Co-Staffer)  
 Scott Heidel, PADEP  
 Dave Montali, WV DEP  
 Holly Walker, DNREC  
 Joseph Wood, CBF  
 KC Filippino, HRPDC  
 Kevin McLean, VA DEQ  
 Emily Dekar, Tioga Co., NY  
 Kevin DuBois, DoD  
 Cassie Davis, NYS DEC  
 George Onyullo, DC DOEE  
 Marel King, CBC  
 Mike LaSala, LandStudies  
 Rebecca Murphy, USGS  
 Bo Williams, EPA  
 Lew Linker, EPA  
 Lee McDonnell, EPA  
 Tyler Trostle, PADEP  
 Ashley Hullinger, PADEP  
 Natahnee Miller, PADEP  
 Christina Lyerly, MDE  
 Scott Settle, WVDEP  
 Terra Famuliner, RVARC  
 Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA  
 Adrienne Kotula, CBC  
 Chris Brosch, DDA  
 Patrick Thompson, Energy Works  
 Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal

John Lancaster, PADEP  
 Jess Blackburn, ACB  
 Norm Goulet, NVRC  
 Sabine Miller, MDE  
 Kristin Saunders, MD DNR  
 Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR  
 Arianna Johns, VADEQ  
 Tony Timpano, VA DEQ  
 Jamie Mitchell, HRSD  
 Caitlin Bolton, MWCOG  
 Sushanth Gupta, MCWOG  
 Dylan Burgevin, MDE  
 Kelly Gable, EPA  
 James Shallenberger, SRBC  
 Tyler Shenk, SRBC  
 Tracy Clarke, EPA  
 Rachel Felver, ACB  
 Auston Smith, EPA  
 Eric Hughes, EPA  
 Joseph Delesantro, EPA  
 Jimmy Webber, USGS  
 Ken Hyer, USGS  
 Jackie Pickford, USGS  
 Breck Sullivan, USGS  
 Katie Brownson, USDA  
 Doug Bell, EPA  
 Gabriel Duran, CRC  
 Allison Welch, CRC  
 Patrick Woolford, EPA  
 Marjorie Zeff, AECOM  
 Ellen Egen, Aqua Law

Callie Sams  
Elgin Perry

Melissa Brennan, EcoStasis

### **Acronyms**

AMT: [Agricultural Modeling Team](#)

BMP: Best Management Practice

CAST: [Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool](#)

CBP: Chesapeake Bay Program

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

FOD: Federal Office Directors

LUWG: [Land Use Workgroup](#)

MB: [Management Board](#)

NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service

PSC: [Principals' Staff Committee](#)

SET: [Strategic Engagement Team](#)

USGS: US Geologic Survey

WIP: Watershed Implementation Plan

WQGIT: [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)