

## **4/15/2024 – Wetlands Workgroup Meeting**

**MEETING:** Wetlands Workgroup Meeting

**DATE/TIME:** 4/15/2024, 10:00 - 1:00 ET

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

*Presenter: Pam Mason (Workgroup Chair)*

- Last April WWG was restructured to include a nontidal team and a tidal team.
- Nancy Schumm and Tess Danielson became Vice Chairs for the WWG.
- Each team met once every other month to discuss priorities.
  - There were 2 meetings where both teams came together.
- From those meetings there were 5 wetlands challenges that stood out
  - Tracking: There needs to be a system in place to track wetlands lost and long-term monitoring of restoration projects.
  - Funding: There is a lack of financial drivers to increase wetland restoration at the scale necessary to meet goals.
  - Lack of Consistency: There is a need for a list of practices that count towards restoration and enhancement with guidance on how to calculate acres restored.
  - Capacity: There is a need for long term capacity/more expertise in wetland design, permitting, and implementation.
  - Outreach: Outreach and education geared towards landowners.
- Wetlands Workgroup Accomplishments
  - [Wetlands indicator update on Chesapeake Progress](#)
  - [WWG Statement on Sackett v EPA](#)
  - [Progress on Wetlands Workshop Action Plan](#)
  - GIT Funded Projects: relative tidal marsh health; improving mapping in nontidal wetlands; assess potential impact of tidal marshes.
  - Chesapeake Bay Trust Capacity Building Project
- WWG Next Steps
  - Begin merge with Black Duck Action Team.
  - Continue to discuss the wetlands outcome.
  - Keep science needs up to date.
  - SRS in December.

### **Comments/Questions:**

- **Kevin Du Bois** (*in chat*): Our work on the GIT-funded wetland mowing project indicates that there is almost no public education happening that would dissuade wetland mowing activities.
  - **Sarah Koser** (*in chat*): Thanks for the update; this will be important to consider/write into the Tidal Strategic Plan.

### **UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SEAS STUDENT INTRODUCTION**

*Presenters: Matthew Gerber, Sarah Ramsey, Jennie Rhodes, & Annie Wisner (SEAS)*

- The students introduced themselves to workgroup members.

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- The WWG put together a proposal to develop a strategy to improve communications and tackle ways to address the gaps in achieving the wetlands outcome.
- It may focus on local decision makers and local communities.
- The students have created a preliminary proposal for the project and have been meeting with WWG Chair and Vice Chairs once a month since February.
  - If there are members interested in joining those meetings let Dede Lawal know and she'll extend an invite.
- The students will have the opportunity to come to Annapolis in the summer and we'd like to have them meet some workgroup members to form connections and help with the project.

### **Comments/Questions:**

- **Kevin Du Bois:** There may be communication issues with recommendations from the Mowing Wetlands GIT Funded project. If we could put together a presentation of the results and if the students are interested, they can present it to a variety of stakeholders.
- **Sarah Koser:** What type of deliverables will you have from the project?
  - **Jennie Rhodes:** We envision a report that goes over ecosystem science, policy, and communications and narrowing down the information to a one or two pager to make it easily conveyable to the public. We can also create presentations and possibly present findings to the community. So, there are a few different forms of deliverables.
- **Pam Mason:** Are there any meetings or conferences you know about that the students may want to attend?
  - **Sarah Koser (in chat):** Could they apply to RAE as students to attend for October 2024 - would be nice to all reconnect in the fall.
  - **Kevin Du Bois:** Pam, if you're going to speak at the Chesapeake Bay Commission (CBC) meeting on the results of the wetland mowing report, would that be a good way to expose them to the CBC and the mowing subject? CBC meeting is September 5 – 6 in Virginia Beach, VA.
  - **Denise Clearwater (in chat):** If finances allow, attendance for the students at the National Association of Wetlands Managers meeting would be very helpful. I think they have travel scholarships for students to attend the conference.

### **BLACK DUCK ACTION TEAM (BDAT) MERGE DISCUSSION**

*Presenters: Alicia Berlin & Ben Lewis (BDAT Co-Chairs)*

- Alicia and Ben gave introductory presentations about the Black Duck Action Team at WWG meetings in February and March in preparation for this discussion.
- The best option to move forward would be to work together with the Black Duck team to allow for more synergy and collaboration.
- Jamboard Questions

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- Do you have any concerns about merging the Black Duck Action Team with the Wetlands Workgroup? Do you have any suggestions on actions to take, so this is a smooth transition, and no priorities are lost along the way?
- How can the Black Duck Decision Support Tool (QR Code) support the Wetlands Workgroup?
- Both Wetlands and Black Duck Outcomes are off course. What do you think has been the most critical influencing factor or gap that needs to be addressed to accelerate progress?

### Comments/Questions:

- **Ben Lewis:** [The Decision Support Tool](#) was developed by the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and Ducks Unlimited played a big role. It's been in the works for several years, but it basically highlights primary areas for wetland protection/restoration based on food availability estimates and duck usage.
  - **Alicia Berlin:** It has also expanded to other dabbling ducks.
- **Mitch Hartley:** I think you can choose the species in the tool, but the energetic needs for the wetlands will be the same because they integrate the use of all duck species.
- **Kevin Du Bois** (*in chat*): What do the numbers in the polygons mean?
  - **Ben Lewis** (*in chat*): The numbers are restoration acre goals.
- **Kristen Saacke Blunk** (*in chat*): Isn't kcal requirements for American Black Duck?
- **Alicia Berlin** (*in chat*): There is a link to the report at the bottom: [abdu\\_cbt\\_finalreport\\_15dec2016\\_v5.pdf \(acjv.org\)](#).
- **Kevin Du Bois** (*in chat*): Are there tribal lands where protection, restoration are needed? If so, how are we communicating with those sovereign nations? Good topic for the interns?
- **Mitch Hartley:** In my opinion I don't think people are looking at this prioritization tool and saying where they should direct resources. It's used to justify or rationalize work that is already being done on the ground.
  - **Chris Guy:** For the Bay Program, this tool is at the scale that we and it's comprehensive for a function of wetlands. It's not being used because not a lot of people are working on voluntary restoration. In terms of prioritization as a watershed the Bay Program is using it.
- **Kristen Saacke Blunk** (*in chat*): NFWF's business plan has utilized the tool to identify its target outcomes.
- **Ben Sagara** (*in chat*): The tool gets used to strengthen proposals, but I think your right, restoration is too opportunistic (so much has to come together to find a viable restoration site) that I generally do not "target sites" off the desktop tool. Rather, if the tool shows my site is in a priority area, that is good info to know and is useful for proposals.
- **Dave Goerman** (*in chat*): Agree, there is no coordinated large-scale effort to restoration, wetland work has been a locally driven opportunity process. to meet the goal that needs to change. Funding limit (restrictions/caps) also contribute to the small, localized nature of project development as well.

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- **Kristin Saunders** (*in chat*): Our GIS team is in the process of standing up Chesapeake Data (part of Chesapeake STAT) and in that we will have a portal (created with user input) that allows for use of all these data layers for targeting work and amplifying multiple benefits. We can make sure that the black duck decision support tool data is embedded.
- **Kristin Saunders**: Back when the Black Duck Action Team presented about this tool to the Management Board there was a concern that there are too many specialized tools and there needs to be a way to simplify them. Maybe if this information was embedded into another tool that already gets used like the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership land conservation tool.
- **Amy Jacobs**: If a tool is developed without the people that are going to use it at the table, it's rarely used. If you want a targeting tool to be implemented, it has to go hand in hand with a targeted outreach plan from the beginning.
  - **Mitch Hartley** (*in chat*): I couldn't agree more Amy! I think it's fair to say that NOT many "implementers" were at the table when the Black Duck DST was developed. To your second point, the DST has probably lacked traction most when it comes to outreach. It hasn't been an easy tool to communicate clearly (or visualize, or understand), even with professional audiences (e.g., waterfowl biologists).

### **WETLANDS OUTCOME UPDATE**

*Presenter: Pam Mason (Workgroup Chair)*

- Below is a compiled list of the wetlands outcome shortcomings that were voiced in previous workgroup meetings and discussions.
    - The Wetlands Outcome is not realistic as is.
    - It should include conservation/protection, be split between tidal and nontidal wetlands, account for tidal wetland loss & marsh migration, and crosswalk with other habitat/fisheries outcomes.
    - To come up with a value, a baseline of existing wetlands should be established, projected loss/gain from climate change should be accounted for, and the percentage of the current goal reached should be known.
    - The outcome needs to be consistent with wetland goals/outcomes across jurisdictions and not only focus on agricultural land.
  - Below are some possible criteria with which to build temporal and spatially scaled wetlands outcomes beyond 2025.
    - Outcomes split into tidal and nontidal.
    - Near term and long-term goals.
    - Restoration, creation and preservation. (Do we even want enhancement? If there were to be an invasive species outcome it could be tied to that)
1. Referential to historic area: areas of wetlands pre-colonial. Maybe a percentage.
    - a. by jurisdiction
    - b. by physiographic province

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2. Historic reference + projected losses
3. Achievement of ecosystem services- rolled up
  - a. Lbs pollutant removal using approved BMPs (set to percentage of remaining reductions needed)
  - b. Minimal area for black duck current populations
  - c. Increased area for black duck
  - d. Area based on blue crab, anadromous fish habitat
  - e. Areal extent for flood benefits (consider open space NFIP CRS credits)
4. Distribution by jurisdiction, physiography, stream order (floodplain, isolated)
5. Referential to existing + projected losses
6. Referential to community need
  - a. High risk for flooding
  - b. subsistence fishing/hunting
  - c. Cultural importance
  - d. Increase/ maximize wetland complexes
7. Referential/ consider WIPs (we know these numbers have decreased... and there is a category wet ponds/ wetlands that nobody seems to understand)

### Comments/Questions:

- **Tess Danielson:** Post 2025 will the wetlands outcome and black duck outcome be separate or together?
  - **Chris Guy:** That depends on if you want to have functionality in the outcome or have it be strictly acres.
- **Kristin Saunders (in chat):** Does the main outcome become wetlands that support species and the species like black duck etc become indicators, not outcomes in the agreement in the future?
- **Denise Clearwater:** Other goals and players need to be involved if we are thinking about making changes - like the forestry workgroup.
  - **Pam Mason:** The forest has a larger landcover than wetlands, so I would think a “natural” change of wetlands into forests is okay, but we wouldn’t want to cut down forest to expand wetlands. The specification of land type in the outcome can be a problem.
  - **Chris Guy:** Were you thinking about forested wetlands in urban areas or riparian buffers where they wouldn’t be necessarily categorized as wetlands?
    - **Denise Clearwater:** Existing riparian forests that are being converted in the name of water quality improvement and I’m concerned that adding ducks onto that would be more incentive to make something so wet you don’t have a forest.
- **Dave Goerman:** The outcome is high level, but the site-specific strategies or objectives should be geared towards the evidence and natural potential of a site. The overall outcome goal is not necessarily the goal at a specific site. Separating the outcome from the site conditions at the local scale is what’s needed.
- **Amy Jacobs:** How do we focus on more systems level restoration projects than small patches of individual practices. Has there been discussion as we move past 2025 of

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mixing up the actual workgroups and goals? Is there a way we can think broader and more inclusive to integrate the teams and thinking to restoring whole systems?

- **Chris Guy:** The answer is yes, but the Beyond 2025 team is going through high level exercises to see if the agreement itself should be amended, rewritten, or kept the same. Looking at what you mentioned would be the next phase after December.
- **Gina Hunt (in chat):** Nothing is decided. Phase 2 - talking outcomes happens after the EC meeting in December.
- **Kristin Saunders (in chat):** Amy, I love that approach and nothing is decided. It might be good to think about wetlands goals in terms of what the living resources and water quality NEED and then state the goals and outcomes in terms of ecosystem function to support living resources and people and integrate them in some way so they reflect a system not silos.
- **Dave Goerman (in chat):** Thanks Amy, yes, we have been supporting and advocating systems-based approach and equivalencies of resource types as well. But we use local geo-technical and historical evidence to drive that decision making, including trying to get agencies to accept use of community-based targeting.
- **Jonathan Phinney (in chat):** Has the wetland workgroup considered conducting functional assessments on CB wetlands? There are several protocols that could identify ones for duck habitat, water quality etc. function.

### SCIENCE NEEDS DISCUSSION

*Presenter: Tess Danielson (Workgroup Vice Chair)*

- This time was taken to complete this [Google Form](#) to prioritize the wetlands science needs.

#### Comments/Questions:

- **Sadie Drescher:** Thinking about the regulatory questions in the form and framing those as research questions. What are the regulatory policy obstacles and then what is the science question need that would address those?

### WETLAND DATA COLLECTION

*Presenter: Helen Golimowski (Devereux Consulting)*

- Below are questions to discuss about the Habitat Tracker data collection and next steps.
  - What should the timeline be for annual data collection? Should it align with the water quality reporting?
  - What are the next steps for opening the Habitat Tracker to more users? (Helen is the only active user)
  - What do we need to finalize the process?
  - What additional analyses do we want to be able to do with the Habitat Tracker?
    - Wetlands adjacent to development.
    - Wetlands without continuity.

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- Wetlands adjacent to SAV patches.

### Comments/Questions:

- **Ben Sagara:** When is the water quality data getting collected? In my opinion, at least for Virginia, it would be best to align with that since someone is already reaching out to the different agencies/organizations.
  - **Helen Golimowski:** The water quality reporting begins around December and ends in February.
- **Denise Clearwater:** December should work for Maryland as well.
- **Kevin Du Bois (in chat):** What data is collected and from whom?
  - **Katheryn Barnhart (in chat):** Acres enhanced and created/restored.
  - **Tess Danielson:** Tracking the gains in voluntary acreage for restoration and enhancement.
- **Cassie Davis (in chat):** This would be in addition to NEIEN reporting?
  - **Katheryn Barnhart (in chat):** Yes.
- **Tess Danielson:** December works for DC. Is the data submitted with an Excel spreadsheet? If so, can we have access to it all year to update it as projects are completed so it's not a giant push at the end?
  - **Helen Golimowski:** Yeah, the template is on the [Habitat Tracker](#) homepage and can be accessed at any time.
- **Chris Guy:** This only pertains to wetlands that are not BMPs.
- **Ben Sagara (in chat):** It has been difficult for VA to track and report wetland data as there is no historic or current "call for wetland data" or other annual collection/tracking event for wetlands. I feel like we need a strategy to collect this data separate from NEIEN, and there is some marketing or communication need to rally folks to report. Do we count constructed treatment wetlands?
  - **Denise Clearwater:** If we are talking about the wetlands created in stormwater facilities that's always been a challenge because they report on the area of watershed treated rather than the size of the wetland itself.
- **Aaron Wendt (in chat):** Pam, did we get clarity on if new marsh acreage for living shorelines reported through NEIEN as shoreline management BMP is already included in this Habitat Tracker?
  - **Chris Guy:** It's self-reporting, so if DCR reported it as acreage we would record it, but if they didn't then it didn't go in.
  - **Denise Clearwater:** In Maryland we do report living shoreline wetlands and we now we have information on when they are built rather than just when the permit was issued.
  - **Aaron Wendt:** DCR in VA has reported about 19 acres of new marsh planted with living shoreline for WIP purposes to DEQ. My question is, did you extract the data from NEIEN and already have those acres or do we need to submit those separately?
    - **Helen Golimowski:** I did not extract from NEIEN.



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- **Kevin Du Bois** (*in chat*): Since the DoD reports wetlands and streams restored to the jurisdictions, are THEY reporting our projects to the habitat tracker?
- **Julie Reichert-Nguyen** (*in chat*): Is the thought that all permitted wetland projects should be entered in NEIEN by the jurisdictions including voluntary efforts? NOAA funding could potentially be used for wetland restoration, but I don't think NOAA reports it, but this money typically goes to state agencies or nonprofits.
  - **Pam Mason** (*in chat*): Only WQ credited projects are reported to NEIEN. Typically, part of MS4 permits.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

- Franklin and Marshall College Summer Intern: Will be starting in June and they will work on cross walking commonly used definitions and terminology for wetlands practices.
- The Wetlands Workgroup submitted one GIT Funded project lead by the Nature Conservancy: *Increasing Effectiveness of Landowner Engagement to Accelerate Wetland Restoration Across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*.
- Habitat GIT Spring Meeting is May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup>, more info can be found [here](#).

### PARTICIPANTS (45):

|  |   |   |                                    |                                 |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Pam Mason</b><br>(VIMS)                       | <b>Tess Danielson</b><br>(DOEE)                 | <b>Nancy Schumm</b><br>(City of Gaithersburg) | <b>Dede Lawal</b><br>(CRC)         | <b>Chris Guy</b> (USFWS)        |
| <b>Bill Jenkins</b> (EPA)                        | <b>Gina Hunt</b> (MD DNR)                       | <b>Alicia Berlin</b><br>(USGS)                | <b>Ben Lewis</b><br>(DWR)          | <b>Edward Farely</b><br>(DU)    |
| <b>Emily Young</b><br>(ICPRB)                    | <b>Kristen Saacke Blunk</b><br>(Headwaters LLC) | <b>Sarah Ramsey</b> (U-M SEAS)                | <b>George Doumit</b><br>(DNREC)    | <b>Sarah Koser</b> (CBT)        |
| <b>Helen Golimowski</b><br>(Devereux Consulting) | <b>Greg Noe</b> (USGS)                          | <b>Katheryn Barnhart</b> (EPA)                | <b>Jennie Rhodes</b><br>(U-M SEAS) | <b>Kevin Du Bois</b><br>(USACE) |
| <b>Cassie Davis</b> (NY DEC)                     | <b>Megan Fitzgerald</b><br>(EPA)                | <b>Annie Wisner</b> (U-M SEAS)                | <b>Andrew Larkin</b><br>(NOAA)     | <b>Kevin Mclean</b><br>(DEQ)    |
| <b>Mitch Hartley</b><br>(USFWS)                  | <b>Heather Hepburn</b><br>(MDE)                 | <b>Michelle Henicheck</b> (DEQ)               | <b>Matthew Robinson</b> (EPA)      | <b>Rachael Peabody</b><br>(MRC) |
| <b>Mark Biddle</b><br>(DNREC)                    | <b>Karinna Nunez</b><br>(VIMS)                  | <b>Amy Jacobs</b> (TNC)                       | <b>Kristin Saunders</b><br>(UMCES) | <b>Sadie Drescher</b><br>(CBT)  |





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|                                   |                                     |   |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Greg Podniesinski</b><br>(DEP) | <b>Julie Reichert-Nguyen</b> (NOAA) | <b>Matthew Gerber</b><br>(U-M SEAS)                     | <b>Adrienne Kotula</b> (CBC)      | <b>Jonathan Phinney</b><br>(USFWS) |
| <b>Denise Clearwater</b><br>(MDE) | <b>Dave Goerman</b><br>(DEP)        | <b>Melissa Yearick</b><br>(Upper Susquehanna Coalition) | <b>Alison Rogerson</b><br>(DNREC) | <b>Aaron Wendt</b><br>(DCR)        |