Nontidal Network Workgroup April 2026 Meeting

Wednesday, April 15th, 2026

1:00PM – 2:00PM

This meeting was recorded for internal use only to assure the accuracy of meeting notes.

I. Welcome, Introductions & Announcements (1:00 – 1:05)

- ***Welcome to Mary Stack as a new NTN Leader!***

Upcoming Conferences, Meetings, Workshops and Webinars

- Choose Clean Water Conference – May 18-20, 2026. Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- Chesapeake Community Research Symposium – June 1-3, 2026. Annapolis, Maryland. Register here, deadline: May 22nd.

Workgroup Updates:

- *Lucretia Brown:* For our monitoring stations, we are continuing to maintain funding and operations. There have not been major changes for us. As long as we are able, we intend to maintain those stations and continue using the data for MS4, TMDL, and related needs.
- *Chris Mason:* We are targeting a late May release for the latest RIM site load and trend data.
- *Kristin Heyer:* This water year has been challenging due to dry fall conditions and extended freezing this winter, which delayed sampling. We're beginning to catch up now and are hoping for spring rain.

II. Update: NTN's New Home (1:05 – 1:25)

Peter Tango: The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) finalized an updated Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in 2025 following several years of collaborative development. As part of this transition, the program's governance structure has been significantly reorganized. The previous framework of six Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) and ten goals has been streamlined into four primary goal teams: Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife, Healthy Landscapes, Engaged Communities, and Clean Water. While many technical workgroups, including the Nontidal Network (NTN), previously operated under the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) framework, the NTN Workgroup will now formally reside within the Clean Water Goal Team. This change reshapes reporting relationships and encourages broader collaboration across teams on issues such as habitat, land use, education, and participatory science.

Under the new structure, monitoring and observational data are expected to play a much more prominent role in program decision-making. Historically, interactions with the Water Quality GIT were often dominated by modeling discussions, leaving monitoring results less central to management conversations. The new Clean Water Goal Team aims to create a more balanced, data-driven approach that elevates the visibility of monitoring analyses, trend assessments, and watershed storytelling. This shift creates important opportunities for the NTN and related monitoring groups to engage more directly with managers, policy teams, and restoration planning efforts.

This transition is already influencing ongoing technical work. For example, the modeling team has partnered with USGS staff to reassess hydrologic periods used in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) modeling framework. These typical and critical flow conditions were originally established decades ago, and the availability of more than 15 additional years of monitoring data has prompted renewed evaluation of whether those baselines still reflect current watershed conditions. This effort demonstrates how long-term monitoring data are increasingly being integrated into model refinement and management support.

The restructuring also introduces many new leaders, coordinators, and participants across the partnership, creating a renewed need to communicate the purpose and value of the monitoring network. Many individuals entering the process may come from primarily modeling or BMP-focused (Best Management Practices) backgrounds and may be unfamiliar with the role of long-term observational monitoring. As a result, each interaction becomes an opportunity to explain how the monitoring network operates, why it exists, and how its data support restoration and management decisions. Overall, the transition positions the NTN and the broader monitoring community to play a more visible and influential role in shaping Chesapeake Bay science and management moving forward.

III. Loads/Trends and Connection to Yields (1:25 – 1:45)

Peter Tango: The long-term work led by NTN members and leaders on watershed loads and trends has been foundational to Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts since the mid-1980s. Over time, these analyses have evolved to include flow-adjusted concentrations, flow-normalized loads, and many different approaches to quantify and express watershed delivery and mass balance. These monitoring products are critical for understanding how watershed conditions influence nutrient limitation, chlorophyll dynamics, and overall Bay response.

As CBP shifts toward a stronger emphasis on accelerating restoration progress, which requires understanding where improvements are occurring, where problems persist, and where management efforts can be most effective. The incorporation of yields alongside traditional trends analyses presents an opportunity to strengthen reporting, improve storytelling, and better support management decisions under the new Clean Water Goal Team structure. Recent USGS national assessments using seasonal SPARROW modeling further reinforced the importance of understanding both the magnitude of loads and the spatial intensity of watershed yields when prioritizing restoration efforts.

Discussion:

Q: *Doug Moyer:* Yields are not new to CBP. They have long been part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model framework, typically expressed as pounds per acre or watershed-area normalized values. I think the question is really about how we are positioning or reintroducing yields within the context of the new Goal Teams. Are we trying to help new leadership better understand the concept? Are we elevating its visibility? I just want to ensure we are all aligned.

- ***A:*** *Kaylyn Gootman:* I have noticed that leadership within EPA and across partner agencies tend to focus heavily on trends and, to some extent, loads. The conversation often centers around whether conditions in a watershed are improving or degrading. What sometimes gets overlooked is the importance of yields. A watershed can show improving trends while still remaining one of the highest-yielding watersheds in the Bay region. In that case, there is still a major management concern. I think considering loads, trends, and yields together provides a much fuller picture and can help inform restoration targeting, BMP investments, and resource allocation.

- ***A:*** *Pater Tango:* I would add that leadership frequently talks about prioritization and improving storytelling. Yields contribute significantly to both. They help identify where the greatest amount of material is being generated relative to watershed size and can strengthen how we communicate restoration priorities. Yields have always been part of the technical foundation, but this may be an opportunity to elevate their visibility and value in the broader management conversation.

- ***Response:*** *Doug Moyer:* This reminds me of previous efforts where leadership asked us to focus specifically on the highest-yielding watersheds. For example, highlighting the top 10% of yielders and evaluating whether those areas were improving or worsening over time. I think what I'm hearing now is the importance of keeping trends in context with yields. Before even discussing trends, it may be important to ensure people understand where the greatest amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, or sediment is being generated per acre. Those locations are not always the largest watersheds; sometimes smaller watersheds are disproportionately contributing material.

Q: *Kaylyn Gootman:* I'm curious to hear from others across the watershed. Are the leaders and partners you work with interested in yields? Are yields being used in restoration targeting, project prioritization, or resource allocation?

- ***A:*** *Carol Cain:* Part of the Whole Watershed Program is trying to do exactly what you're describing. We are trying to target watersheds that have both the opportunity and the capacity to support intensive BMP implementation and restoration efforts. At the same time, because this is a five-year pilot program, we are under pressure to demonstrate measurable progress quickly, which is not easy. The legislation specifically references goals like delisting impaired waters or showing rapid improvements in smaller watersheds, particularly at the HUC-8 scale (Hydrologic Unit Codes). That may be smaller than the scale this group usually works at, but it does not change the fact that I'm still expected to help figure out how to make it happen.

- ***Q:*** *Peter Tango:* Within those watersheds, are you doing any additional point sampling or targeted monitoring to refine the understanding of where the highest loading areas are? For example, are you trying to identify specific high-loading fields, reservoirs, erosion hotspots, or other localized contributors within those larger watersheds?

- ***A:*** *Carol Cain:* Because capacity is such an important factor, we are focusing heavily on projects that already have public support, stakeholder buy-in and identified problems such as flooding or severe erosion. There are also some watersheds that do not yet have strong monitoring programs in place, so we are helping them establish the appropriate types of monitoring. And then, of course, we will likely rely heavily on NTN to help provide some level of extrapolation or broader context for understanding what changes may be occurring across those watersheds.

- ***Comment:*** *Kaylyn Gootman:* I also want to point out that you may be able to leverage both the NTN and tidal monitoring networks, since some of these watersheds include tidal areas.

The NTN information is valuable, but the tidal network also includes parameters such as dissolved oxygen and chlorophyll-a, which could strengthen the assessment.

Comment: *Doug Moyer:* One additional point we have been discussing is the idea of tying yields and trends directly to management goals or target conditions. In other words, what is the target yield for a watershed, and are we moving toward or away from that target? As we highlight areas generating the greatest amount of material, it would be helpful to also communicate how far those areas are from where they need to be. That would give people clearer context when interpreting the information. Right now, our results often indicate whether something is high or low, or whether conditions are improving or worsening, but they do not necessarily tell people how far away they are from desired conditions. This is easier said than done, but if we can connect monitoring results and modeling outputs to clear management targets, it would really strengthen how people interpret and use the information.

IV. NTN Summer Meeting Planning (1:45 – 2:00)

Peter Tango: NTN is planning a joint meeting between the Integrated Trends Analysis Team (ITAT) and the NTN Workgroup. A lot of the loads and trends products developed by this group have already been integrated into tributary summary reports. What has been especially encouraging is seeing how different teams are increasingly working together to better connect watershed sources, transport processes, and what is ultimately being expressed in the Bay itself. For example, the Blue Crab Advisory group is currently trying to better understand the drivers influencing blue crab recruitment and life history dynamics. They were asking specifically about loads and trends information because they want to evaluate those patterns relative to freshwater flow entering the Bay, productivity changes, and potential downstream ecological impacts on blue crab populations. The work this group is doing extends well beyond simply reporting watershed trends. The information is increasingly being used to support broader ecological questions and management decisions on the tidal Bay side as well. That is part of why I think a joint meeting later this year could be very valuable. It would give us an opportunity to showcase the excellent work already being done, examine how these products are currently being integrated across teams, and think collectively about how to further expand their applicability under the new governance structure and emerging partnership priorities.

NTN Leaders would also like to revisit the idea of an in-person field visit. One timely opportunity may involve the Susquehanna River Basin near Harrisburg. There is upcoming bridge work in that area which could affect an existing monitoring station and potentially require temporary relocation of the site. Those types of operational and monitoring decisions are exactly the kinds of discussions that are extremely valuable to have in person. It would be helpful to visit the site, evaluate possible alternatives, and hear directly from the field teams about why certain locations may be preferable over others and how those decisions affect long-term monitoring integrity and continuity. If people are interested in that idea, Alex and others can begin helping organize logistics and identify a timeframe that would be particularly useful. And if there are other field locations or operational topics that would benefit from a similar site visit format, we would certainly welcome those suggestions as well.

V. Adjourn (2:00)

Next Meeting: *Wednesday, June 17th from 1-2:30 PM.*

Attendees:

- Lucretia Brown, DOEE
- Andrew Keppel, MD DNR
- Matt Kearns, USGS WV
- Carol Cain, MD DNR
- Brandon Fleming, USGS PA
- Matt Stover, MDE
- Peter Tango, USGS CBPO
- Chris Mason, USGS VA/WV
- Molly Pulket, PA DEP
- Alex Soroka, USGS MD/DE/DC
- Cassandra Davis, DEC
- Tyler Shenk, SRBC
- Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
- Doug Moyer, USGS VA/WV
- Kristen Heyer, MD DNR
- Kaylyn Gootman, EPA CBPO
- Gabriel Duran, CRC CBPO
- Allison Welch, CRC CBPO
- Lori Brown, DNREC
- Cynthia Johnson, DEQ
- Bhanu Paudel, DNREC
- Josh Inners, SRBC
- Cass Klingaman, DEC
- Mary Stack, ICPRB CBPO
- Meighan Wisswell, DEQ