2023 Strategy Review System (SRS)

Biennial Meeting…a stop along the journey

The Graduate Charlottesville, 1309 W. Main St., Charlottesville, VA

May 11-12, 2023

Purpose: Convene the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership to fully **integrate learnings** into the charting of a course to 2025 and beyond 2025 for all outcomes so that the response to the Executive Council (EC) charge is **representative of the full spectrum partnership**.

Objectives:

1. **Science**: Determine opportunities to leverage action for existing science challenges and identify emerging issues.
2. **Restoration**: Address outcome attainability (and non-attainment) by identifying priorities and formulating strategies to address critical knowledge gaps, and develop a communication strategy for communicating progress and challenges.
3. **Partnership**: Assess our partnership for where we have gaps and how we can ensure a diverse and robust partnership moving forward.

Follow-Up Resources

Biennial Meeting - Day 1

Related Session: Reporting on Attainability of Watershed Agreement Outcomes

To access outcome progress tracking for the Chesapeake Bay Program, please visit ChesapeakeProgress.com

Related Session: Learning Forward: Lessons for the Future

Achieving Water Quality Goals in the Chesapeake Bay: A Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) Executive Summary

An Independent Report from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) for the Chesapeake Bay Program, published in May 2023

The CESR Report, introduced to Biennial Meeting attendees by Kurt Stephenson and Denice Wardrop during their "Learning Forward: Lessons for the Future" session, includes an evaluation of why progress toward meeting the TMDL and water quality standards has been slower than expected and offers options for how progress can be accelerated. This report is a summation of a three-year investigation into the 40-year effort to reduce nutrient loads to Chesapeake Bay.

- View the full CESR Report here

Related Session: Defining the Existing & Emerging Challenges to Accomplishing Our Goals

Retrospective on Lessons Learned from the Chesapeake Bay Program Strategy Review System's 3rd Cycle with Suggested Adaptations to Address the Issues

Published by Keith Bollt (US EPA), Breck Sullivan (USGS), and Kristin Saunders (UMCES) in May 2023

This document, described by Breck Sullivan in the "Defining the Existing & Emerging Challenges to Accomplishing Our Goals" session, identifies ten lessons learned, and associated adaptations, to consider about the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership's activities and efforts to address outcome achievement.

Enhancing the Chesapeake Bay Program Monitoring Networks: *A Report to the Principal's Staff Committee*

An overview was provided to the Principal Staff Committee (PSC) at their March 2, 2021 meeting about the status of, and potential reductions to, the current Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) monitoring networks. The CBP monitoring programs presented included the nontidal nutrient and sediment network, tidal water-quality monitoring network, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), tidal benthic monitoring network, and Citizen Science monitoring. The reduction of stations and data in the CBP monitoring networks is mostly due to inflation in the cost of monitoring over the past 5 years, while funding for the networks has been held constant. The Scientific Technical Assessment and Reporting Team (STAR) listed the condition of the networks as "fair" during August 2020 SRS quarterly review to the Management Board. The PSC recognizes that monitoring is foundational to the CBP's ability to assess progress toward its goals and outcomes and utilizing adaptive-management principles. In response to the status report, they requested information be provided on what is needed to improve the CBP monitoring networks, including: (1) an overview of current status and threats to the networks, and (2) what is needed to address the monitoring networks capacity shortfalls.

The Strategic Science and Research Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program

The GITs, STAR and STAC have worked together to develop an approach that will identify, and help prioritize, both short- and longer-term science needs. The approach will result in a Strategic Science and Research Framework that will be an on-going, repeatable process that supports the SRS decision framework. The results will be used to help focus existing science resources, and leverage the research enterprise, to more effectively provide science to advance Chesapeake restoration and conservation efforts and decision making. All science needs are available on the CBP Science Needs Database.

Chesapeake Healthy Watershed Assessment

In 2017, the EPA's Healthy Watersheds Program published the results of their Preliminary Healthy Watersheds Assessments (PHWA), a project that brought together nationally consistent data to assess watershed health and vulnerability. The HWGIT agreed that a similar regional assessment utilizing jurisdiction specific data could address major gaps identified in the Healthy Watershed's Management Strategy. Building on the PHWA framework, HWGIT contracted Tetra Tech to complete a Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment (CHWA) to help partners identify "signals of change" in vulnerable or resilient healthy waters and watersheds. The final report was published in 2019 and is available below. In order to visualize the results, Innovate!, Inc. developed an application to facilitate exploration of the data. The readily available online, geospatial tool supports and informs management related to watershed health and vulnerability at the catchment scale. See the flyer here.

Rising Water Temperatures in Chesapeake Bay and Watershed flyer

The Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) management strategies and action plans to meet goals set by the 2014 Watershed Agreement need to take account of a critical, basic condition— water temperature—that has been changing and will continue to do so. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) workshop was structured to initiate full consideration of rising water temperatures in nearly every restoration, conservation,

education and public communication decision—made individually as well as collectively—by the CBP partners. The recommendations include many actions which can be initiated now, as well as actions in science, monitoring, modeling and program implementation which will help guide the Program in setting future goals.

Chesapeake Behavior Change

In 2017, the Chesapeake Bay Program conducted the Stewardship Index Survey, its first comprehensive survey of people's actions and attitudes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The survey was developed and conducted by OpinionWorks, LLC on behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The data was collected through mobile and landline phone interviews with 5,212 randomly selected watershed residents between March 14 and June 13, 2017. The Chesapeake Bay Program intends to repeat the survey every five years.

Fish Consumption Advisory Project

The Chesapeake Bay Program developed the Fish Consumption Advisory (FCA) infographic and an accompanying user guide (below) in order to better communicate the dangers of toxic contaminants in locally caught fish and the subsequent risks to human health. The FCA infographic is intended to raise awareness about the risks of consuming contaminated fish by highlighting safe angling and cooking practices in a simple, easy-to-understand and relevant fashion. The infographic features four panels that collectively promote the safe catching, sharing, preparing and consumption of fish.

Marsh Resilience Summit 2019

In 2018, the CBSSC management team recognized the need for a multi-faceted, regional discussion on marsh resilience in relation to sea-level rise in the Chesapeake Bay. To address this, the CBSSC proposed holding a Marsh Resilience Summit (Summit) with the following goals: 1. Present the latest science on the current and anticipated status of coastal Maryland and Virginia marshes and the associated human dimensions of marsh change. 2. Use feedback from attendees to identify priorities and next steps to improve marsh and coastal community resilience. 3. Strengthen the CBSSC network to effectively collaborate and implement marsh and coastal community resilience needs identified at the Summit. In addition, the Summit would advance the work of the CBSSC by: 1. Attracting a broad, multi-disciplinary audience who would become more aware of the CBSSC's mission and current efforts to understand marsh resilience across the Bay. 2. Strengthening existing relationships and developing new partnerships to increase the CBSSC's network connections and resources. 3. Identifying potential new topics for the CBSSC to pursue in coastal resilience.

Chesapeake Bay Environmental Justice and Equity Dashboard

The Chesapeake Executive Council's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Statement commits to including DEIJ in all areas of Chesapeake Bay restoration and conservation. To help workgroup leaders identify opportunities to implement DEIJ into their work, we have developed the Chesapeake Environmental Justice and Equity Dashboard, a web application that integrates data from multiple sources to convey demographic, socioeconomic, environmental, and programmatic topics connected to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Chesapeake specific DEIJ initiatives.

Related Session: Gallery Walks

Gallery Walk Posters Combined PDF

This document, prepared by Gallery Walk coordinator Keith Bollt (US EPA) is a combined PDF of all the posters on display throughout the 2-day Biennial meeting and showcased during the gallery walks by the authors of the posters.

Biennial Meeting - Day 2

Related Session: Stakeholders' Perspectives on Community Input Beyond 2025

Why are so many trees falling in this Baltimore forest?

By Clara Longo de Freitas, published in *The Baltimore Banner* on May 12, 2023

This article, referenced by "Stakeholders' Perspectives on Community Input Beyond 2025" panelist Julie Patton Lawson, describes a community-tended meadow in Frankford in East Baltimore where an unusually large number trees have fallen. Since taking guardianship of the once abandoned lot in 2019, the environmental community organization Backyard Basecamp has created a thriving meadow, community garden and trails, which it uses to reconnect Black people to land and nature in Baltimore. Falling trees and the effects of climate change may place this nature-based community stronghold at risk.

Related Session: Screening of *Eroding History* with filmmaker Rona Kobell

Commentary: Documenting what remains of Deal Island's Black communities

By Rona Kobell, published in *The Baltimore Banner* on May 08, 2023

This article, shared by Rona Kobell, a Banner contributor and the co-founder of the Environmental Justice Journalism Initiative, which produced "Eroding History," describes how the peninsula's residents endure hardships from racism, poverty and climate change as they cling to land where enslaved ancestors once lived. It also challenges state and federal governments to develop policies that protect Black lands and Black lives.

Additional Resources:

Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership

Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee: Charting a Course to 2025 and Beyond

As the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership nears the 2025 date that the partnership set for several of the goals and outcomes under the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* (Watershed Agreement), there are many successes to celebrate. At the same time, emerging issues and changing conditions (e.g., climate change, growth, new scientific data) have impacted the levels of effort needed to meet our collective restoration priorities. We, as a partnership, remain committed to using the best available science in restoring the Chesapeake Bay as we accelerate toward the deadline and anticipate continued progress post-2025.

Thus, this Executive Council charges the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) in recommending a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement* leading up to and beyond 2025. The PSC is to report back to the Executive Council at our 2023 annual meeting with recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025. At our 2024 annual meeting, the PSC is to prepare recommendations that continue to address new advances in science and restoration, along with a focus on our partnership for going beyond 2025.

In undertaking such a process, the PSC should address the following considerations:

Science

1. Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the *Watershed Agreement*.
2. Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.
3. Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions, increasing growth, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice considerations) to accomplishing the partnership's work under the *Watershed Agreement*, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.
4. Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*.

Restoration

5. Develop and begin to implement a communication strategy that identifies key partnership successes, associated ecosystem improvements and areas where more effort is needed.
6. Provide snapshots of outcome attainability under the Agreement (e.g., which outcomes are likely to be met by the date(s) set by the partnership, which won't, and why) and options for communicating these snapshots to demonstrate progress in achieving our outcomes and the remaining work to be done, including gaps to be addressed.

Partnership

7. Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.
8. Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we
    a. Are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders, and
    b. Have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources.
9. Based on this assessment, develop recommendations for potential improvement.

Chesapeake Bay Café Questions

A "World Café" style collaborative process is being used at the Biennial Meeting to explore questions that matter to our work and provide input on the Executive Council charge. This process includes 20-minute conversations as groups move table to table (or virtual breakouts). Participants weigh in on three different topics or questions per day. Participants will be randomly assigned to groups. All topics and questions are provided below.

<u>Day 1: Opportunities to Leverage Action Across Multiple Goals & Outcomes of the Watershed Agreement through the Application of Available Tools</u>

For each challenge topic, three questions are being asked:

1. What tools and resources do we currently have that can be applied?
2. What might we need to address the challenge that we do not have?
3. What is the next step we can take in implementing recommendations we already have on these topics?

Challenge Topics:

1. To be more effective at centering people in Bay conservation/restoration efforts for the future
2. To develop and apply the necessary decision-science tools to allow effective and appropriate assessment of tradeoffs
3. To express and illustrate the benefits to society of watershed and Bay conditions at a relevant spatial scale and how human activities, interventions, and climate change affect it
4. To estimate what the future Bay and its watershed will look like under different scenarios of management
5. To craft approaches to balance attention and efforts across all outcomes in the Watershed Agreement
6. To efficiently monitor to assess progress on all ten goals of the Watershed Agreement
7. To develop and implement approaches accounting for the interactions of climate change with other issues (vulnerability to communities, increasing resiliency, land use/land change)
8. To maximize the impact of water quality management efforts for living resource response
9. To incorporate learnings effectively and efficiently into all levels of decision-making across the partnership
10. To develop and apply the necessary social science tools to effectively involve and serve communities in ways that are equitable, fair, and just for all

<u>Day 2: Adapting our Agreement Outcomes to Reflect New & Emerging Science & Make Them Relevant to All Communities Beyond 2025</u>

1. Value of the Partnership
    a. What is the value of the Partnership to you in restoring the Bay? What would make it more valuable to you? What would add more value?
    b. How would you make the Partnership more valuable to all communities?
    c. What is at risk without having the Partnership?
2. Stakeholder Engagement
    a. What concerns do you have with stakeholder engagement?
    b. What excites you about stakeholder engagement?
    c. Consider the stakeholders represented on the three Advisory Committees, what does "effectively hearing from and listening to" them look like?
3. Refining the Agreement
    a. What is working well with the Watershed Agreement? What is not working well?
    b. If we were going to refine the Watershed Agreement, what would those things be (i.e., vision, principles, goals, and/or outcomes)?
    c. Does our governance structure and process need to be changed? Why?
4. Additional Information for the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee
    a. What do you care most about that you want the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee to know, focus on, or include in the planning for their work?
    b. Where are some areas for meaningful change that need to occur?