2023 SRS Biennial Meeting
May 11-12, 2023

<u>Key Takeaways from the Day 1 Chesapeake Bay Café</u>

At the 2023 Biennial Meeting, approximately 80 in-person participants and 20 virtual participants from the Chesapeake Bay Program engaged in a World Café process, referred to as the Chesapeake Bay Café. This process facilitated large group collaborative dialogue around questions that matter to our work within the Chesapeake Bay partnership. Small groups of around five persons each engaged in three rounds of 20-minute discussions regarding specific questions as they moved from table to table or via WebEx breakout rooms for virtual participants. Participants contributed to the previous round of discussions as they further explored the new round of discussions. Participants recorded their key ideas on butcher block paper set on each of the tables or via Jamboards if they were virtual.

Pre-designated facilitators managed their respective topics and questions remaining at the same table or virtual breakout group and summarized group discussions and key takeaways, which is shared in the Café Summary document. This document summarizes those key takeaways from Day 1 that focused on ten existing or emerging challenges to accomplishing the *Watershed Agreement* goals. Full summaries are also available in a separate document.

These ten challenges focused on the fourth consideration of the Executive Council Charge to the Principals' Staff Committee on charting the course to 2025 and beyond, which is to "identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*."

These challenges are listed in no order of priority or importance:
1. To be more effective at centering people in the 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 management efforts for living resource response;
9. To incorporate learnings effectively and efficiently into all levels of decision-making across the partnership; and
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.

Each challenge statement had three framing questions:
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 #1: To be more effective at centering people in the Bay conservation/restoration effort for the future

1. There has to be a **shift in mindset from creating things** (tools, data, etc.) that we believe will serve our stakeholders, and then figuring out how to distribute them. Needs should be identified first and then data collected, tools created, etc. to meet needs.
2. To center people, we need to **understand their values and motivations** so that we can create programs and opportunities that align with them.
3. We need to have **focused listening sessions, and a broader inclusion of groups** such as the agriculture community ad developers.

Challenge #2: To develop and apply the necessary decision-science tools to allow effective and appropriate assessment of tradeoffs

1. We have a lot of tools, especially mapping tools, at our disposal. It's about the **application of these tools in our decision-making process** through things like cost-benefit analyses and comparing tools across different resources to get a more holistic picture when creating decision-making tools.
2. We have these all these goals and outcomes, but **there has never been discussion on priority or balance of resources**. Putting resources towards one action is going to result in tradeoffs, but it would be easier to make decision on tradeoffs/where to put resources if we could assign value and prioritization to our goals.
3. There needs to be recognition that **everyone's priorities are not going to be the same, but there will be some that overlap**. For those that don't come to the top, there will still be people working on it because they are the experts in that field, and it is their priority.

Challenge #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

1. We shouldn't try to convince people of the benefits of the Bay but **understand what they care about in an ideal world and what their concerns are and align these with our (CBP) goals**. We should assess where there are overlaps and use the tools to help upstream populations that will hopefully positively impact downstream communities.
2. We need to **meet people where they are.** Some community members aren't very open to always having these dialogues. Some people don't have technology to meet, for example. We need to bring it down to a scale of **how it will impact you and talk about local waters** rather than the Bay. The Bay can be overwhelming, but your own creek could be more manageable.
3. There are a lot of ways that community needs, and **environmental needs can overlap and be mutually beneficial**.
4. At **what scale should we be modeling and mapping** things?
5. We have to **care *about* the resource before caring *for* the resource**. The knowledge about the resource is the start of it.

6. It's one thing to say that sea level rise is going to be two inches, but **what does that mean at the local level**? More flooding. Or warmer ocean temps (which sounds nice but not in actuality). (3)

7. We need to **make the Bay goals and outcomes relevant to local communities**, and recognized **we have tools and expertise** within the Partnership to help make this happen. The abundance of resources available for the next few years with IIJA and IRA may allow us to accelerate our activities toward 2025.

8. **Marry the overall regional/watershed needs with meeting the needs of local communities** by connecting what we are trying to do for the Bay with the needs of local communities and people. We would encourage more action in support of Bay-wide goals at the local level if those actions are relevant to local communities to meet their needs (e.g., flooding, recreation, local jobs, local water quality, local habitat, and biodiversity, etc.). For example, quantifying and monetizing the benefits that communities receive from Bay protection and restoration activities. The MD DNR Accounting for Ecosystem Services (AMES) report is valuable in this regard and covers all of MD. It could be replicated but currently not available for the entire Bay watershed.

9. There was agreement that the **CBP has created a lot of tools** and has a wealth of information. But there were some **questions about their utility and whether we could do better** to make them more accessible and used more throughout the watershed.

10. There was acknowledgement of the **role of local watershed groups and continuing to work with them** as a resource and potential local delivery mechanism for action toward Bay Outcomes and Goals. Capacity building of these groups may be needed and linking together groups working within a local watershed (e.g., linking restoration-oriented groups with land protection groups or linking urban groups with upstream groups working in rural areas).

11. Perceptions of the CBP changed with the Bay-wide TMDL and that the program may now be perceived as more of an enforcer of the TMDL than a partner in proactive conservation. The reality going forward may be that it is a bit of both and that we need to **emphasize the proactive and flexible nature of the partnership with the backstop of the TMDL**.

Challenge #4: To estimate what the future Bay and its watershed will look like under different scenarios of management

1. There is a need for **strong communication channels within the partnership and with external stakeholders**. We can create fact sheets and tools, but if they aren't resonating, that is a problem. (4)

2. We need to accept that the Bay is changing, for better or worse, and we need to **allow for outcome target shifts to reflect rising populations, temperatures, waters**, meaning we need to shift from very fixed targets to using "response functions" as targets with envelopes of uncertainty (probability-based management). (14)

3. **Do we need all 31 outcomes?** (14)

4. **We have lots of needs**: community collaboration, communication tools, finer scale modeling/monitoring (maybe for non-water quality outcomes), tools to evaluate uncertainty, analytical tools for living resources, better understanding of behavior change, intermediate stability model, etc. (14)

5. **Sandboxing is needed to foster institutional innovation**. Need incentives. (14)

6. Look at **alternatives to BMP counting** (i.e., manage to outcomes not the number of BMPs put in place.)

Challenge #5: To craft approaches to balance attention and efforts across all outcomes in the *Watershed Agreement*

1. **Cooperation** is good.
2. Whenever, whatever the **vision should be expressed/characterized in terms of data, narrative, visualization**. Expect that people think and vision differently.
3. **Fewer and cross-cutting goals**.
4. **Benefits of partnership work should matter to the people**, the communities. They don't care that we have a partnership but rather that the habitats, waters, and the Bay are accessible, safe, clean.
5. **If you don't measure it, you can't manage it**. Needs – we have a decade of experience with the *Agreement*.
6. If I were a Governor, **I would never sign an agreement with outcome expectations that you cannot explain** to me. What is our target? What are we measuring to provide me with a status evaluation of where we are toward the target? What is the monitoring and analysis that I will see so we understand status change, i.e., progress toward achieving the target?
7. **Qualitative targets are ineffective**, diffusing resources without effective accounting to justify any and all investments and understand the return on investment. Make you goals and outcomes quantitative.
8. There are **issues of nexus to invite cross outcome interests to collaborate**, such as shoreline integrity. If we come together in the next iteration of the *b*, include shoreline management goal/outcome with the following intersects: wetlands, black duck (community waterbird integrity), forage/benthic invertebrate integrity, fish/shellfish habitat integrity, water clarity, SAV, SAV recovery capacity, wave energy, stewardship, and crab production.

Challenge #6: To efficiently monitor to assess progress on all ten goals of the *Watershed Agreement*

1. **More monitoring is needed for all goals and outcomes** and additional monitoring resources are needed.
2. Engage to encourage **more community science and monitoring** and expand the scope of community monitoring and make better use of the information gathered by community scientists.
3. Focus more on **explaining what our monitoring data tells us**. More resources need to be allocated to communications.
4. Allocate time, effort, and energy to **understand the impact of rising temperatures**. This includes but it not limited to monitoring.
5. Inject **more social science into our monitoring efforts**. Engage with people to understand what is important to them and make sure our monitoring efforts reflect that.
6. We are trying to do too much and understand way too much for a large geographic area. We don't **understand how these different pieces work together across the watershed**. An action team should concentrate on a specific area (e.g., sub-catchment or community) and focus on what we can "wring' out of the area (e.g., BMP implantation, toxics, water quality). We would use a systems-based approach with a focus on geographic area of interest and the people.

7. **Strong collaborations** within jurisdictions between state/local/government agencies, academia, and Federal partners has been helpful and to keep this going.

Challenge #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)

1. **The "vision" for a restored Chesapeake Bay should account for the effects of climate change.** This means changing our systems of implementation, evaluation, and accountability to reflect uncertainty and the effects of multiple stressors/non stationarity. Science/information is needed to understand how climate affects this vision (what will the Bay be like in warmer climate?) and how we manage for restoration.

2. Communication, education, and information is needed to **address barriers for climate-adapted policy and implementation** and have a general acceptance and realization of shared vision/mission.

Challenge #8: To maximize the impact of management efforts for living resource response

1. Establish clear, easy-to-digest, easy-to-explain **definition for living resource response**.

2. Important to now **continue shifting of messaging based on what data is saying this week**. We can't always be showing that we are changing gears and have the locals react to that and then we return and change our minds three years later.

3. **Citizen/Community Science awareness**: Identify and share best practices that result in living resource response. How do we use social diffusion to get to this point? Have a town hall to share what is going on in their city.

4. **Continued funding commitment to Habitat Tracker**: If we don't have wetlands and buffers, we don't have living resources. SAV has always received financial and academic data commitment. (8)

5. **Focus water quality impacts beyond just nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment**. There are other factors that influence living resources.

6. The TDML is the only thing we give incentives for because it is regulated. The TMDL process is taking us away from other focus areas. **Temperature should be added as a water quality standard attainment element in the TMDL**.

7. Most effected basins are focused on the deep trench, we are **missing the focus on the shallow waters**.

8. Coolers and heaters – **need incentives for more trees and riparian forest buffers**.

9. There are **opportunities to improve how we work**, such as communicating in simpler language, building relationships with relevant entities beyond the CBP, and improving our feedback loops (e.g., ecosystem responses, environmental monitoring, targeting our work/ management decisions, and organizational action).

Challenge #9: To incorporate learnings effectively and efficiently into all levels of decision-making across the partnership

1. **Expand the communications staff to simply package messages for PSC/MB for full context decision-making**. STAC is a tool for translating the science into talking points and recommendations.

2. **As issues/problems increase in complexity, they require increased engagement**. Issues in the lower left of the graph require outreach of the science to stakeholders. As problems become more

complex, collaboration is necessary. Finally, the most difficult or "wicked" problems require co-production. **The necessary elements to reach a solution are trust, time, facilitation, and investment**.

3. **Longer Management Board meetings are needed with time to discuss issues for decisions**. Longer, in-person (particularly for Quarterly Progress Meetings) with thoughtful meeting structure. Shorter virtual meetings that utilize good meeting hygiene (i.e., no multi-tasking, pay attention to the conversations).

Challenge #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

1. **Expand the knowledge and capacity within our program for how to embed social science into our programs and thinking**. We have great resources for expanding social science, but we need to USE them.
2. **Co-develop with stakeholders**, investing in dedicated staff to keep those connections, and staying engaged after the work is done is essential and missing from our current approaches.
3. **Invest in community organizers and watershed organizations and conservation districts** may fill essential gaps to make us more effective.
4. STAC CESR and Rising Water Temps reports along with some other key lessons learned and spelled out in our retrospective for the Biennial meeting provide **clear first step opportunities to utilize social science tools to effectively engage and serve communities in a way that centers their needs but match our desired outcomes**.