

2023 SRS Biennial Meeting
May 11-12, 2023

Chesapeake Bay Café Day 2 Question #3 Summary

★ Denotes multiple tables or persons at the same table repeating or prioritizing the same item.

(#) Denotes the table number(s) that addressed that question.

Refining the Agreement (EC Charge #3, #4)
Key Takeaways

- **Building trust and credibility** is very important, especially at the federal government level. (3)
- Use language and communication strategies that **resonate with your targeted audiences**. (3)
- **Bring in the people element** when considering updating or revising the Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes. (3)
- **Meet people where they are**; don't impose your priorities – hear from local communities what their priorities are and go from there. (3)
- General need for **more public involvement and input and integration of social science concepts** and practices. (7)
- Complex problems will require complex solutions across the Bay and the greater watershed. **Change is needed**, as doing the same things that aren't working will not lead to reaching our goals. (virtual 3)
- **Focus on what's realistic to accomplish** – incorporate more S.M.A.R.T. goals. (3)
- **Emphasize and account for the interconnectedness of outcomes in management/funding/policy decisions**. This will lead to more effective administration and restoration/protection and help communicate complexity and uncertainty (multiple factors at play) of efforts, which affects accountability (i.e., focused on outcomes and learning not counting). (7)
- Find the commonalities amongst outcomes – how can they benefit each other? Do more **cross-pollinating across the outcomes** (and GITs/workgroups) and look for those intersectionalities. (3)
- **Cross-collaboration between workgroup GITs** may be a way for the Partnership to become much nimbler is how we solve problems. (virtual 3)
- **Look at the return on investment and equity when it comes to meeting the goals and outcomes**. Understand how we got to where we are today (e.g., what was the driver in committing to a specific outcome) but **realize that today's priorities may be different**. (3)
- The current goal of "restoration" sets us up to fail, as highlighted by the CESR report. The Bay of the future will never be of the Bay of the past. We need to find common ground on **reasonable and achievable goals that protect all resources**, living and otherwise. (virtual 3)
- **Practical approaches to indicators that account for a holistic view** were seen as a path forward to assess multiple goals at once. (virtual 3)
- CBP and the Watershed Agreement provide for critical needs of focused action and shared vision, but the **size/complexity of agreement and partnership lead to silos, myopic approaches** (i.e., approaches that lack systems perspective and don't connect outcomes), and competition for resources (which leads to less effective management). (7)

- More **power-sharing across additional dimensions** (e.g., other than water quality, younger generation) was strongly advocated; possible organizational scheme that incorporates connection between traditional hierarchy and innovators was drawn, with bottom-up approach. (11)
- One emerging theme revolved around the idea we can't apply one tool or solution across the watershed, as the various regions differ in terms of environmental, social, and economic factors. **Smaller, focused action teams from across the Partnership** were seen as a potential way to tackle local problems in a focused way. (virtual 3)
- A proposed idea to **form an action team that concentrates on a specific area** was well received in the group. (virtual 3)
- The current structure (SRS and decision making) is burdensome and ineffective. Adaptive management is important, but SRS and workgroup/GIT structure could be revised and streamlined to **be less burdensome, more integrated, and more effective**...adaptation timelines should be extended and "paperwork" should be minimized so more time can be spent on implementation and doing the work. (7)
- Limitations on time and resources point to **more efficient ways of monitoring** (and verification) as possible solutions. (virtual 3)

3.0 Refining the Agreement (EC Charge #3, #4)

3.1 What is working well with the Watershed Agreement? What is not working well? (EC Charge #3)

What is working well

- The Agreement is very all encompassing. It accounts for most needs with exception of **addressing climate DEIJ needs**. (7) ★
- **Framing Bay Program Focus**. (7)
- Offers a **shared vision to focus action**. (7)
- Provides a mechanism that **brings together relevant partners** to address watershed scale issues. (but not all partners). (7)
- Set of **shared commitments**. (11)
- Partners bring **diverse set of expertise**. (11)
- Good first steps for **climate change and DEIJ**. (virtual 3)
- Partnership is still **willing to move forward**. (virtual 3)
- The **Agreement continues to invite strong partnership**. Since the start of the CBP, Agreements and their language drive folks to come to the table, break bread, work together, share resources-wisdom-insights. (virtual 3)
- **Option to revise outcome** language. (virtual 3)
- **Shared priorities and public accountability**. (virtual 3)
- **Platform to highlight needs, court advocacy, and express needs**. (virtual 3)
- Watershed Agreement is a document but also the **Partnership** (virtual 3)
- The SRS process and Chesapeake Progress has given **consistency and structure** to the work of the CBP. (virtual 3)
- **Science needs database** – long needed to consolidate and track community needs in one place, this has been a very productive development and effective use of our time. (virtual 3)

- **Quantitative outcomes** – most of the quantitative outcomes have indicators, monitoring support, and associated management actions that generate measurable, reportable results by which to judge progress. (virtual 3)
- **Raised awareness on diverse issues**, more than water quality targets, including stewardship, leadership, and climate change. (virtual 3)
- **Inspiring innovation** – as a function of addressing measurement of status and progress tracking needs, we have seen significant advances in land use land change monitoring (hyperspectral), satellite-based SAV assessment, continuous monitoring sensor arrays useful in evaluating offshore habitats, 4-dimensional interpolator, and more. (virtual 3)
- **GIT funding in support of science needs** – the annual funding has helped answer many science needs outlined by the GITs and STAR, generating teamwork, review-revision-understanding of information needs at a workgroup, GIT and cross-GIT level. This collaborative body of work generates partnership relationships and is worth much more to the CBP than the dollars alone. (virtual 3)
- **Limited Goals and Outcomes.** This is an improvement over the >100 commitments that were established in the Chesapeake 2000 which gave us a more manageable organization structure. (virtual 3)

What is not working well

- There's no insight into **what the "Bay Plan" actually means**. People associate it with water quality. (3)
- What is communicated in the actual Agreement is **not necessarily communicated to the public**. People working on the Agreement speak in the terms of the Bay Agreement. (3)
- The leadership around that is absent. (e.g., GIT chairs, etc.). **Stronger leadership** will help. (3)
- The Bay Program and Agreement doesn't break through all of the chatter at the local level and conversations. **Local communities and stakeholders need to hear about progress**, what we're doing that's worth time and money, and it needs to be engaging enough. (3)
- **Not using social-economic modelling** expertise to adjust goals/outcomes. (11)
- Outcomes as written **do not incentivize right things/behaviors**. (11)
- **Not spatially targeting actions** for goals/outcomes. (11)
- Agreement **does not consider all the parties that are outlined in the executive order**. (virtual 3)
- Too much emphasis on water quality and **not enough on the human dimension**. (virtual 3)
- **Management Board members** don't represent most of the outcomes. (virtual 3)
- **Lack of diversity** in all conversations. (virtual 3)
- Various technical **issues with CAST**. (virtual 3)
- Hard deadlines, that are not reachable from the start. They set up public perception for failure. Need to make the science case. ★ (virtual 3)
- Making everything about the Bay **limits connections to stakeholders**. There is more to the Bay than just water quality. We should go to places where we want to meet goals. (virtual 3)
- Current EC charge and 2025 and beyond are way too limited and focused on restoration, which the group sees as limiting (virtual 3)
 - Proposed protection on the same level
- No incentive as written for cross-collaboration between workgroup GITs (virtual 3)

Recommendations for improvement

- Maybe we need to consolidate some things to ensure people have a stronger voice. How can we combine things, in terms of **cross coordination across the goals and outcomes?** (3)
- **Trusted source of knowledge on the Bay** makes us generate a lot of data. (7)
- Need **more balance in voices** to meet Agreement, e.g., water quality versus others. (11) ★
- **Reach people where they are** (virtual 3)
- Get rid of restore/restoration → set up to fail. Recovery was seen as much better than restoration. (virtual 3)
- Complex problems require **complex solutions**. We should be wary of simple solutions. Need to create solutions through standardization. (virtual 3)
- Need to **tie into CESR recommendations** (e.g., shallow waters). (virtual 3)
- **Climate resiliency** needs to be built into the next Watershed Agreement. (3)

What is working well, but there are challenges

- The Agreement does a nice job talking about the specific issues, but we have **trouble connecting the Agreement with the priorities of the communities**. Finding ways to communicate the Agreement that would resonate with difference audiences would be good. (3)
- Transparency is a strength but creates a **messaging challenge**. (7)
- **Compelling organizational framework but implementation too hierarchical** and not collaborative enough. (7)
- Have **recognized DEIJ and Climate outcomes** BUT they are siloed. (11)
- The Agreement is able to be adapted BUT **need a people indicator** (in many of the current goals people are the vehicle for achieving the goal, not the goal itself) (11) ★

Water quality/clean water considerations

- Communities outside of us primarily want clean water. **Things that they care about directly impact them day to day**. (3)
- Water quality is **clean water** – the latter is what resonates with people. (3)
- We **don't talk about the Bay in PA, we talk about local waters**. Clean for the Bay, good for PA. (3)
- The water quality discussion here is demonized. **We view water quality from a clean water lens**. (3)
- **Water quality will help all of the outcomes** – water quality is the heart of all the outcomes. Not just in the context of the Bay Program. It's broader on how we message it out. The big holistic picture is clean water. This feeds into wetlands and species programs. It all connects. (3)
- Common theme – whatever stakeholder group you're leaning into, the **point of consensus they understand is clean water**. (3)
- **Management Board representation for each jurisdiction should be multidimensional**, not just water quality related. (11) ★

3.2 If we were going to refine the Watershed Agreement, what would those things be (i.e., vision, principles, goals, and/or outcomes)? (EC Charge #4)

Vision

- Like the vision. (11)
- If you don't have a **vision of what is long term resiliency**, you are not building towards anything. (3)

New Outcomes

- Synthesize an **outcome for shoreline Integrity** which is a keystone, cross cutting habitat challenge that forms the nexus of habitat management needs for the better of multiple, if not many of our

outcomes. This outcome can be established for management units of sub-estuaries in the bay. Managing to limit sub-estuaries developing beyond thresholds of hardening and phragmites have scientific foundations behind them for waterbird management, SAV recovery potential (such as fish forage, water clarity, and fish community integrity). (virtual 3)

- **If you want to add a Goal/Outcome to the Agreement**, it needs to be approved as a package deal – Clear, explainable, understandable statement of goal/outcome, full protocol on what will be measured and how will it be assessed, show explicitly its method of measurement, show explicitly its measure of change over time/progress toward goal. Otherwise, it can be put in the parking lot for future goal/outcomes to be approved when the full package of needs is ready for presentation and review.

Reducing or Restructuring Outcomes

- **Fewer outcomes. Can't have 31 outcomes!** All compete for same pool of resources. (3) (7) ★
- **Intersectional outcomes.** (3)
- **Reconfigure how the outcomes are written to reduce the silos** and to get more at the heart (root?) or the goals themselves. For example, wetland restoration should be in same grouping as wetland protection. (7)
- Goals were broad enough to be easily connected, but **outcomes created silos.** (11) ★
- Give a deadline to taking any remaining qualitative outcomes for **translating the outcome into a meaningful quantitative outcome.** (virtual 3)
- **Reinforce interconnectedness and relationship of goals and outcomes** to the people who use/rely on and live in the resource (7)
- Most people can't identify a black duck. Whose idea was it to have black ducks included in the Watershed Agreement? Need to **go back to the past to understand** why we're here. There's a subsection of the population that found black duck and brook trout important enough to incorporate into the Agreement. (3)
- **Brook Trout** needs to commit to an outcome and monitoring program or be removed as an outcome. Brook trout populations continue to decline while 15 years has gone by without adopting the outcome, the monitoring program, or modification of both to move beyond the holding pattern it is in. Brook Trout had a viable outcome that was open to tweaking. The target gain expected was made to counter the century-plus trend of declining Eastern brook trout populations. Brook trout had a published recommended monitoring program 15 years ago. (virtual 3)
- Need to **connect outcomes in a better way** and consolidate (e.g., connecting water quality to Living Resources) (11)
- For the diversity outcome as an example, perhaps we need to **revisit how goals were written to assess: is how we wrote it getting to where we need to be?** (3)
- Include **consideration of tradeoffs and net benefits across all outcomes** early in process (11) ★
- Manage expectations from the start - We could improve our lives going forward with either a more equitable distribution of resources (time and money) across the 10 goals and 31 outcomes, or, reduce the number of goals and outcomes to **create a stronger focus with fewer goals/outcomes going forward.** (virtual 3)
- A rule should be put in place beyond 2025 – any residual goal/outcomes that have not been clarified by, say Dec 31, 2027, will **be demoted or removed from the Agreement until they have matured to have clear statements of goal, a viable method of status evaluation** (indicator,

census, population estimate, etc.), a monitoring program that is supported –accepting the uncertainties, a means of tracking change over time, and a reporting method.

People

- Strategic imperative to bring in the people element. If you keep asking why, eventually someone is going to say something about people. Come up with **succinct statements about people**. (3)
- **More public involvement**—does the public know there is opportunity to refine agreement? (7)
- **Weaving in people-centered approach** across all goals versus only in climate and DEIJ (11) ★
- Our vision anticipates bay and watershed health will include for humans. Our agreement needs some clear **human health outcomes** – across the watershed our stakeholders use bacteria results to consider swimmability and fishability. We should consider bacteria goals and bacteria management targets. (virtual 3)

Focus

- When you only focus on the Bay part, you're leaving out a huge chunk of people. **Keep it a watershed focused**. Kept hearing “the Bay” – does that mean we're abandoning the watershed? Does that mean we focus only on tidal waters? Is the **role of the Bay Program** in the watershed? (3)

Staffing

- Create the **network of translators and technical folks** to serve as bridges to CBP. (7)
- Need an employed **position that understands structure/org planning and social science** (consultant brought in might be too short-term, may need long term, continual support). (7) ★

General considerations for change

- Don't burn down **existing Agreement**. (11)
- Consider when perfect is the enemy of good. (11)
- **Don't rush** to have a new Agreement. Good collaboration process takes many years. Take time to think about where there's **true intersections in the work**. Frankly we know a lot about this. Have lock step meetings - perhaps they should be together in the first place. Already have a lot to pull from. (3)
- **Be very strategic** about the degree of revision – not too much or too little. There are pros and cons and many unintended consequences to change. (11)
- Really big ideas can be **broken down into smaller things**. (3)
- Need to **make sure what we're doing is realistic and achievable**. Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time bound (SMART) goals. (3)
- Really need to look at the **return on investment** and equity – both from audience and impact perspectives. Who are the people, what are the size of those audiences – **think about return on investment**. Are we spending a ton of money and time on less than 1% of the population that hunts duck? What about 30% of the population that has access to green space? (3)
- Looking at the CESR report, what's the **return on our investment**? Is it more about our approach and to demonstrate progress? It's especially difficult to talk to stormwater folks who are investing BMPs over the years and it's not really improving water quality. Need some consistency. (3)
- **What's relevant and why were some things picked?** In 2023, we're thinking about different things and have different priorities. Be really cognizant of what we're picking. (3)
- Healthy watersheds are resilient watersheds. Don't make a vague vision – can't go back to pre-colonization; **what can we do to ensure we're doing the best for the Bay and watershed?** (3)
- Need to **tie the tools to incentives and policies to it** – give people a financial reason. How do we **create that incentive**? Crediting land conservation under the Bay TMDL? (3)

- What are the **policy levers to affect change** for a goal and outcome? We can't expect to have influence in all the spaces. Need to reign ourselves in. (3)
- The basic goal of the CWA is to preserve and maintain the biological and physical integrity of a watershed / waterway. **Organize our science** around this. (3)
- Recognize the interdependence of outcomes, for example, new features on CAST to connect WQ w/ other outcomes. BUT more **needs to be done to emphasize the connections**. (7)
- One way to group things is tidal and watershed. What are those actions that have multiple benefits – what are the keystone features? If one of those commitments only had one benefit, it was low priority. Look for **ways to group the commitments** by mutually reinforcing elements. (3)
- **Consider tradeoffs** between silos versus teams versus synthesis of goals. (11)
- Perhaps our environmental management efforts are built around the co-benefits of **managing for cultural and heritage considerations**. Can we use our landscape management designs to consider how to co-design with mutual consideration for living resource and heritage resources? (virtual 3)
- There remains an ongoing **uncertainty about what an indicator is**. We spend so much time trying to design the perfect indicator. Indicators are meant to indicate, provide guidance. If people want a full accounting, that is a census, a huge resource suck. An indicator comes with error bars, it is meant to be a quick-ish way to evaluate if work is going in the right direction, be affordable, cost effective. As we consider revisions, we need everyone to consider if they really need every bean to be counted for some reason, or, do we need a sense about progress that allows for error bars on how we are doing. (virtual 3)

Communication

- **Emphasize the progress made since 1983** and how these refinements build on/learn from, move beyond our efforts to date. (7)
- **Articulate benefits of management actions** across all outcomes (11)

3.3 Does our governance structure and process need to be changed? Why? (EC Charge #3, #4)

Issues with SRS

- It takes two years to get through the full SRS process. The **length of meetings** it takes to get through this is divided too much. (3)
- In practice, each outcome only has 9 months between finishing the previous cycle and starting prep for the new one. This **doesn't give much time for implementation**. (7)
- So much to do in terms of connecting with all of the parts and reporting and coordinating that we **don't have enough time to actually do the things in our action plans!** (7)
- Feels like we are **spinning our wheels** and work is unnoticed (7) ★
- **Not focused enough on evolving/refining our targets and strategies** to advance goals more effectively. (7)
- Strategies with longer time horizons—**if you're materials are good, only then change a little**. (7)
- **SRS materials** are not thoughtfully reviewed or considered. (7)
- **SRS needs to change** (7) ★
- Reliance on volunteers can create or increase **potential for bias**. (e.g., lack of focus on nontidal climate impacts in climate resiliency workgroup) (7)
- **Innovations not easily scaled up**. (11)
- **No adaptive management/decision-making processes at higher levels of hierarchy**. (11)

Governance Structure

- Some **confusion** about which part of the governance structure. (virtual 3)

- So complicated! GITs, WGs, Cohorts, Action Teams, MB...oh MY! (7)

Management Board

- Management Board **does not respond**. One rep only represents one agency and not interested in many other outcomes. (7) ★
- Management Board **needs to increase effectiveness** via: 1) not only water quality representation; 2) not given agency for decision requested of it; 3) level of preparation is inadequate (11) ★
- **What is the point** of the Management Board? Are decisions being made at that level? You get lip service. Although the Management Board is supposed to speak for the Bay, some members speak for their agency. (3)

Structure

- Find a structure that provides a **larger voice to public and nonprofit**. (7)
- The **CBP cannot get out from under its own weight**. (7)
- EPA as a representative for all agencies and noting that **all agencies are not formally engaged in the decisions** (e.g., DHS) (virtual 3)
- **State reps** need to talk to others in their state not just their agency. (7) ★
- Get the **Workgroup Chairs together more often**. (3)
- Having less layers would probably help – **too much bureaucracy**. Don't get rid of it altogether. (3)
- How stove-piped are the WQGIT workgroups? Seems to be very model focused. Not getting **what's happening across the workgroups**. We're not there yet. (3)
- Have **more cross pollination** (e.g., SAV and WQGIT). People want to do the cross pollination, but everyone is busy doing their own thing. There's a lack of awareness of what other groups within the partnership are doing. Can't affect progress towards the GIT goals and outcomes. (3)
- **Align CBP initiatives with national initiatives** (Clean Water Act, climate). (7)

Process Needs

- **Reorganize GIT/workgroups** to encourage better cross outcomes collaboration. (7)
- **Creation of effective deadlines** to address elements of Agreement expectation, and if something really doesn't fit, be ok with making a decision to edit/cut/add and move on. (virtual 3)
- Explicit packaging details for **how to get approval of a new goal/outcome**. (virtual 3)
- **More power sharing of decision-making**. Implementers and beneficiaries of our plan are young, and need to be included in decision-making. Creating feedback channels on way to power-sharing (11) ★
- Rules for withdrawing ineffective, **unmeasurable goals or outcomes** until they are mature enough to have clear statements of need, explicit protocols of measurement and reporting and explicit monitoring support so there is full accountability in place upon approval. (virtual 3)
- Look at **other models in other watersheds?** (7)
- Flipping script from top down to bottom up, **creating a "customer service" mentality**. (11) ★