

CWGT Office Hours Summary | September 15, 2026

This was an optional office hours session for the Clean Water Goal Team to ask questions and further discuss E3 recommendations, the Hydrologic & Critical Period, Scenario Base Year, and other decisional topics ahead of upcoming decisions at the September 28-29 CWGT meeting. The notes provided below are summaries, capturing key points and questions. If you have additional questions, please reach out to CWGT Staffers.

Announcements and Reminders

- The goal of today's office hours was to hear concerns on these topics and hopefully resolve some of those concerns since the Sept 28th meeting has a packed schedule.
- Note that there are CBLCM Office Hours September 16th and a LUWG/USWG joint meeting for approval of the CBLCM September 23rd, so that was not focused on during this session.
- CWGT Chairs will be presenting an update to the PSC at their [Sept 21st meeting](#). For those of you with PSC members, please brief your PSC members on this. We plan to describe the decisions that CWGT will be making in September as a heads up.
- We will be sending out a pulse check survey for voting members to share where they are leaning on each decision ahead of the Sept 28th CWGT meeting.

Differing Forestry/AgWG E3 Recommendations

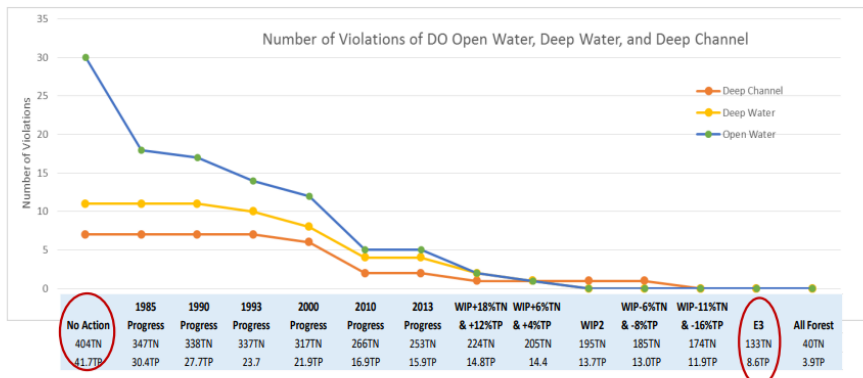
- Katie Brownson and Eric Hughes walked through ag forestry BMPs and the differences between what the Forestry and Agriculture Workgroups are putting forward for the E3 Scenario. Please refer to their [slides](#) and [memo](#).
 - Note there was a fundamental difference in approach to the two groups as they developed assumptions. FWG only considered physical limitations, while AgWG considered some other practical limitations.
 - Eric encouraged CWGT to more clearly define "practical considerations" vs. "physical constraints" for future E3 scenario development.
 - In the list of additional land use change BMPs (slide 3), which FWG didn't put forward any specific proposal, there are no substantive changes to AgWG proposal from what was in the Phase 6 E3. However, there is a difference in the total percentage of land use change between the two groups' proposals.
- Discussion
 - Norm Goulet noted that USWG did not consider practical considerations and there needs to be consistency among workgroups.
 - Olivia Martin noted concern about AgWG's proposal seeming to deviate from the definition of the E3 scenario outlined in the TMDL.

- Eric noted the 15% cap was set for Phase 6 or before, which was set across the partnership and not by the AgWG.
- Olivia Martin asked what the plan is if the controllable load does not achieve the water quality criteria for fishable and swimmable? Lee responded if that were to occur the first thing to revisit would be the E3 scenario.
- Dave Montali asked for clarification on the difference in agroforestry BMPs.
 - Eric responded that alley cropping and silvopasture are not land use change BMPs, they are efficiency BMPs. So, we aren't looking at land coming out of production in the model.
 - Katie added that we did not put the agroforestry acres in that total for FWG either.
- Dave Montali asked for clarification on the forest/grass buffer split for both groups.
 - The forest/grass split leads to 100% total for both groups, but the buffer width is the main difference.
 - From the AgWG perspective, the difference in width is significant and it is tough for producers to do 30m everywhere. Also, in small pastures if you take away 30m, it can't be pasture anymore. The AgWG proposal of 20m is the average width across all exclusion fencing classifications.
 - From the FWG perspective, 30m was the average buffer width from state reporting. Maybe in some places it can't be attained, but others are even higher. It is also the width outlined in the expert panel report.
- Dave Montali asked why 3% vs 1% on tree planting? Why are grass buffers part of this when forest buffers are always better than grass buffers?
 - FWG's 3% was an increase from P6 due to comparing to the acreage that would yield from the E3 percentage being applied with the acreage outlined in the *Watershed Agreement* target. We wanted to ensure E3 levels were above what was set in the agreement, which we said was achievable.
 - FWG started with 100% forest buffers, but after talking with AgWG and after considering there are places in the landscape (like wetlands or eastern shore with sea level rise in play) where grass buffer is more appropriate than a forest buffer, they brought it down a bit.
- Concerns were raised from multiple members about the differing interpretations between the two groups of what to consider for E3.
- Elizabeth Hoffman noted the challenge is there is not a true upper bound to what the scenario could be. In theory, it could be all trees in ag. We need to put some reasoning for a bound. The ag sector has to remain viable to produce food.
 - Norm Goulet noted a similar rationale could be said for the developed sector, since we need land to be used for housing, for example.
- It was further clarified that the E3 is theoretical and it is *not* the WIP, which is another layer of what is practical. The E3 scenario should overshoot a planning target. Lee shared the below slide to outline where the E3 Scenario should fall. We

need a scenario in between E3 and no action that meets WQ standards.

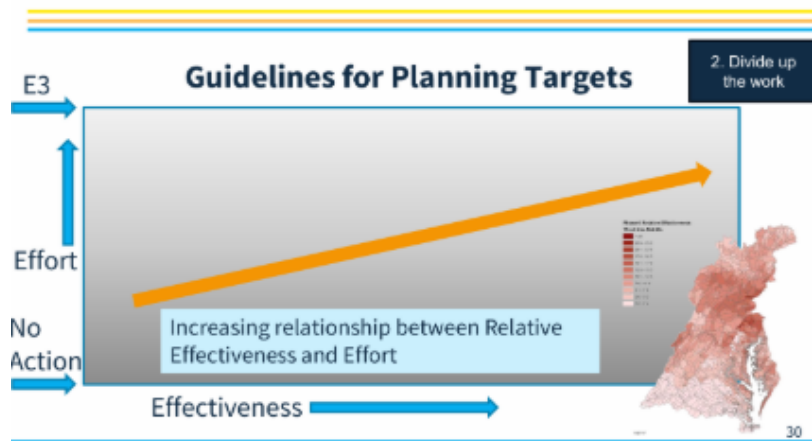
E3 Scenario Assumptions

Assimilative capacity (maximum amount of nutrient load the Bay can handle for the whole Bay) is explored by comparing scenarios.



*A violation occurs when a segment doesn't meet water quality standards under a given loading scenario.

- Alex Gunnerson further clarified that controllable loads (difference between E3 and No Action) inform planning targets by serving as the y-axis of the hockey stick (see slide below). Planning targets consider the level of effort (% from No Action to E3) for a given state-basin.



Scenario Base Year

- Lee McDonnell shared that after informal talks with voting members there is recognition that we have to account for growth, which is part of the TMDL. 2022a accounts for growth in the areas where it occurred (assigned to state basins where it occurred). 2022b keeps the special offset for WV and NY and divides up the rest of the responsibility for growth between the other jurisdictions. Many support 2022a, some support keeping 2010. Many acknowledged it is confusing, but that isn't a reason enough to not update to 2022a.
- Discussion

- It was confirmed the scenario base year is only used for the No Action, E3 and All Forest scenarios. It is not used for the WIPs, which will be for 2040.
- Alex Gunnerson noted the end result of using 2010 and 2022a is the same, but using 2022a would be an example to the partnership to show we took into account the new data, but we found it was more important to account for growth. One of the concerns raised with 2022b is that it introduces a lot of uncertainty on how it would actually work.
- Lee McDonnell noted the other thing to consider is that using 2022a provides us with a more up to date/accurate controllable load. There's probably some kind of reconciliation needed if we can't find a solution that falls between No Action and E3 that meets WQ standards.

Hydrologic/Critical Period

- Robin Glas walked through the [overview](#) of her analysis and the options for Hydrologic and Critical Period. A few clarifications and reminders:
 - The RIM stations were weighted based on nutrient effectiveness on dissolved oxygen. They are *not* flow weights.
 - For hydrologic period, 1998-2007 is both tight to the long-term average and shows less variability between the RIM stations (see slide 6).
 - For critical period, we're looking for a period that lands in the 90th percentile, which indicates it has a 10-year return period. Recent years are much too low to use as a Critical Period (see slide 8).
- Discussion:
 - Lee McDonnell clarified that you can think of the hydrologic period as determining how we slice the pie and the critical period as determining how big the pie is. So, even though we see the Susquehanna as an outlier higher up on slide 9 about the critical period, that doesn't mean that it will get a larger slice necessarily. It is just a main driver for making the overall pie bigger.

- Robin shared the spread of RIM stations for the top ranked hydrologic period of 1998-2007 (individual departure from the long-term mean).

Position on dot plot	Basin	Departure
Top dot	Appomattox	+2.8%
	Choptank	+2.4%
	Susquehanna	+1.3%
	Patuxent	+0.9%
(near zero)	Potomac	-2.5%
	Pamunkey	-2.7%
	Rappahannock	-4.4%
	James	-4.7%
Bottom dot	Mattaponi	-5.5%

Hydrologic/Critical Period: Impacts on P7 Schedule

- Tom Butler walked through a brief [presentation](#) on potential impacts to the Phase 7 Model development schedule which would result from a change to the hydrologic and critical period if CWGT chooses to do so.
- Tom noted some people have asked about having multiple versions of the model. This would mean having two versions of everything (CAST, CalCAST, MBM, Estuarine, etc.) and that's not computationally feasible. Also, some of these changes aren't expected to be linear across the board so we can't necessarily guess how it will change.
- Lee McDonnell stressed the timeframes outlined are the estimated maximum, so it could be shorter.
- Discussion
 - Dave Montali asked about the impact on the later stages of the timeline like planning target and WIP development.
 - Lee noted right now WIP development is set for Jan 2029 – Dec 2030. Planning targets were set to start in 2028. The intent was to give ourselves wiggle room, but this might be pushing against that a little bit.
 - Dave responded it will be difficult to keep our Dec 2030 commitment for WIP development if we still have a full year of review and may take up to 9 months to get the model out.
 - Lee noted we are also talking through many possibilities on what the workflow could look like to see if any part of the model review could continue as planned while these updates to the hydrologic and critical period are being made. Then we aren't fully waiting the whole 9-month period to wait to begin the review.
 - Olivia Martin commented since the Bay responds to changes in inputs nonlinearly, we absolutely need to use the better/improved/more robust data or the WIPs and

management decisions will not be well-founded. The nonlinear response curve is based on decades of Bay-estuarine research.