Chesapeake Bay Program: Fish Passage Workgroup

Spring 2025 Meeting Minutes

Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Prepared by:
Nick Staten
Habitat GIT Staffer

Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

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Chesapeake Bay Program
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FISH PASSAGE WORKGROUP SPRING 2025 MEETING

Wednesday, March 26, 2025 from 10:00am - 1:00pm

Link to Meeting Materials

Microsoft Teams Need help?

Join the meeting now

Meeting ID: **254 439 332 358**

Passcode: **op22GA27**

ATTENDEES:

- Andrews, Mary (NOAA)
- Staten, Nick (Chesapeake Research Consortium)
- Eyler, Sheila (USFWS)
- Harrison, Rachel (WVDNR)
- Weaver, Alan (VA DWR)
- Li, Ray (USFWS)
- Blackburn, Ian R (DEC)
- Thomas-Blate, Jessie (American Rivers)
- Hudson, Meredith (EPA Region 3, Wetlands Branch)
- Ombalski, Katie (CBP Brook Trout Workgroup Co-chair)
- Dippold, Dave (PFBC)
- Vidal, Alex (USFWS)
- Fuad, Alexa (DE DOT)
- Towler, Brett (USGS)
- Early, Jim (USFWS)
- Young, Emily (ICPRB)
- Watson, Jonathan (NOAA)
- Guy, Chris (USFWS)
- Devers, Julie (USDA)
- Moss, Lisa (USFWS)
- Cloyd, Rese (DOEE, DC)
- Goetz, Dan (MDNR)

Actions and Decisions from meeting:

1. **Action:** If you are interested in participating in the Brook Trout STAC Workshop in PA on May 29th or MD on June 3rd email Nick Staten at staten.nick@epa.gov
2. **Action:** If you have questions regarding the Federal Highway Administration Culvert AOP Program Eligibility reach out to JimEarley at james_earley@fws.gov
3. **Decision:** Accountability spreadsheets need to align with current reporting from state partners to other entities. Mary Andrews suggests starting with the SOP that is aligned with American River's reporting to minimize additional administrative lift on partners.

10:00 – WELCOME, ROLL CALL, & INTRODUCTIONS (15 minutes)

Presenter: Workgroup Chair Ray Li (USFWS)

10:15 – UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (10 minutes)

- **BROOK TROUT WORKGROUP'S STAC PROPOSAL :** *Blueprint For Building Partnerships And Recommendations For Scaling Brook Trout Restoration In Stronghold And Persistent Patches.*
    - Identify possible areas of collaboration
        - Thermal Barriers, AMD Barriers

          Looking at having 40-50 participants for the Maryland and the Pennsylvania Workshops

          PA Workshop: Lakeview Lodge in DuBois, PA on May 29th

          MD Workshop: McDaniel College in Westminster, MD on June 3rd

          Morning:

          Lightning round where participating organizations answer the questions:

          - A quick overview of the program,
          - What BMPs do you use,
          - What funding sources do you take advantage of,
          - How does your organization operate,
          - How does their work relate either directly or indirectly towards brooks trout habitat and/or conservation,
          - If it doesn't, how could they better incorporate or what do they need, and
          - How could they include Brook Trout prioritization into their programmatic planning?

          Afternoon:

          Breakout sessions based on morning feedback on strategies, action items, ideas for how we can collate everyone's programs together into a larget scale restoration effort.

          The workshop is centered around stronghold watersheds within Potter and Clearfield County in Pennsylvania, and Garrett, Baltimore, and Carroll counties in Maryland, but we're hoping this kind of sets the stage as a blueprint that we can repeat throughout other counties following a similar template.

          If you are interested in being a participant email staten.nick@epa.gov

          Lunch is provided for in-person participants.

We want active participation, it is not to just listen in, unless you are joining online.

Any questions should be directed to staten.nick@epa.gov

- **HABITAT GIT SPRING MEETING**: The Habitat Goal Implementation Team Spring Meeting will be on April 29th from 9am - 5pm
    - Chris Guy: Anticipate a shorter meeting (~2-3 hours)
    - **LINK TO EVENT PAGE**
- **FISH PASSAGE WORKGROUP LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT**

  Jim Thompson is stepping down from the co-chair position

10:25 - UPDATE ON OUTCOME ASSESSMENT (30 minutes)

Presenter: Chris Guy

Jurisdictions that disagreed with the workgroup's recommendation:

1. *PA suggested to consolidate*
2. *NRCS suggested to reclassify*
3. *GIT 6 (Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management) suggested consolidate*
4. *DE stood-aside*
5. *WV stood-aside*
6. *GIT 1 (Sustainable Fisheries) stood-aside*

Current Fish Passage Outcome:

"Continually increase access to habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in Chesapeake Bay freshwater rivers and streams. By 2025, restore historical historic fish migratory routes by opening an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage, with restoration success indicated by the consistent presence of alewife, blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad, American eel and brook trout, to be monitored in accordance with available agency resources and collaboratively developed methods."

Draft Language for updated outcome:

"Improving habitat, water quality, and creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms throughout the Chesapeake Bay's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams by removing barriers to aquatic organism passage to restore connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years."

- ➔ *132 -> 150 miles annually*

➔ *focus on aquatic organisms, not just fish*

Slides:
See Appendix VIII: Slides - UPDATE ON OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

- Chris Guy: 150 miles because we were confident in achieving it based on our outcome's previous success but didn't want to be too ambitious with increasingly limited budgets anticipated in the future.

- Mary Andrews (Chat): With the new outcome, will we still count miles opened? And how?

- Mary Andrews: Well, we've talked about things like thermal barriers and things of that nature, which we have never counted as far as miles opened in the past. And I'm just wondering how we will account for those added measures. We also only count miles open for fish. We don't count miles open for every aquatic Organism that would pass, and so more clarification on that is also needed.

- Ray Li: You're right everything that we've done so far is based on fish miles and like I don't see things changing. It's the upstream functional network, right? But so the the other consideration that Chris hasn't mentioned yet and I don't know if that's included in any of your slides to come is we're starting to think about nonphysical barriers as well. Water quality, physiochemical, water temperature, those sorts of impairments to streams and rivers, and how they can be effective blockages to fish passage in the watershed as well. We haven't gotten to that level yet in terms of trying to figure out how we could measure those projects in terms of upstream functional network. I would imagine that we could and I guess the simplest strategy would be to just drop a pin at these locations, because I'm thinking for a lot of these they are point sources impairments. It's things like acid mine drainage, or urban areas where there's a direct discharge of storm water or like highly impervious surfaces. But we haven't gotten into the weeds as to how we can account for those projects. But certainly that's gonna be a conversation that we're gonna need to have as a work group, provided that this recommended outcome is approved by the management board.

- Chris Guy: Another thing I will add is that this language allows you to count more projects towards our goal, not necessarily how you will do it. If it doesn't work in application we just won't count them, but many jurisdictions are already doing work on barriers like AMD and chemical barriers who would like to see credit given for opening up fish habitat.

More from the chat:

- Alan Weaver (Chat): It is going to be difficult to define and measure some of these non-physical barriers.
    - Received 3 thumbs up from unknown users

10:55 - MEMBER UPDATES (30 minutes)

Decision: Accountability spreadsheets need to align with current reporting from state partners to other entities. Mary Andrews suggests starting with the SOP that is aligned with American River's reporting to minimize additional administrative lift on partners.

Maryland (5 minutes)

See Appendix I: Maryland Updates

Jessie Thomas-Blate: American Rivers has funding to do a feasibility study to remove Daniels Dam but DNR has not decided to remove it yet.

Pennsylvania (5 minutes)

See Appendix II: Pennsylvania Updates from David Dippold

Virginia (5 minutes)

See Appendix III: Virginia Updates from Alan Weaver

VDOT Project: James Earley (Fish and Wildlife Service , Regional office in Hadley)

I work on the Federal Highways Administration Program for the Service and currently the program has been put on a pause through federal highways because of its tie-in to the BIL or the IJA.

There were folks who for the year 1 funding who had already had agreements in place, and those projects are all moving through.

The VDOT project was working on some contract agreement amendments through December which did not make the cut in getting an agreement signed before mid January.

Those are still being finalized and yet to be signed off on, but it is my understanding that as soon as the pause is lifted, that many of those agreements are likely to be pushed through for the year 1.

I will say we just completed a year 2 review on other projects that is unfortunately caught up in all of this as well, but we're not stopping promoting the program for year three, which is supposed to be open for applications this June.

It might fall into some delays based on everything else that's happening with these pauses. I'm not sure there might be some adjustments to the current notice of funding opportunity which was multiyear with open and closing dates.

So more to come on that, I'll reach out to the group as soon as I know more about when that will open up.

Action:

Feel free to reach out to me and we can talk about it more as the time goes forward.

Jim Earley james_earley@fws.gov for any questions on the Federal Highway Administration Culvert AOP Program eligibility.
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/engineering/hydraulics/culverthyd/aquatic/culvertaop.cfm

New York (5 minutes)

See Appendix IV: New York Updates provided by Ian Blackburn

Delaware (5 minutes)

No updates provided.

West Virginia (5 minutes)

See Appendix II: Pennsylvania Updates provided by David Dippold

Ray Li: Keep us updated with the mitigation banking because I know in Maryland, we've been working on a calculator. It's sitting with the USACE, the Baltimore district right now, but it'll be interesting to compare and contrast different calculator formulas.

DC Update (5 minutes)

No updates provided.

11:25 - BREAK (15 minutes)

11:40 - NFWF PROJECT PROPOSAL UPDATE & DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

Presenter: Nick Staten (CRC)

See Appendix IX: Slides - NFWF PROJECT PROPOSAL UPDATE & DISCUSSION

12:10 - DEBRIEF; CLOSING REMARKS (5 minutes)

12:15 - MEETING ADJOURNED

APPENDIX I: Maryland Updates

Fish Passage Workgroup Update
11.21.24 Supplied by Jim Thompson:

Daniel's Dam: Final dam to be removed for Patapsco River. Funding secured by American Rivers and an agreement for a Conservation Service Opportunity (CSO) has been developed, signed by American Rivers, and will be signed by the department. A feasibility study by Inter-Fluve (and subcontractors) will be contracted with planning meetings scheduled spring 2025. The Department has not made a final decision on whether to remove the dam yet. DNR/American Rivers are planning extensive public outreach.

Cypress Branch Dam: Project/Design complete. Project started to remove dam, re-route river, stabilize shoreline, and prevent downstream sediment plumes. Should be completed by spring 2025. We expect most/all of the in-stream work to be completed by the end of April, see attached drone shot from 3/18.

Eden Mill: FWS/DNR and the County have secured $85k in grants as well as repurposing old sections of an eel ladder from the Potomac River. A contractor has been selected to build the eel ladder and repair a valve on the dam. A pre-construction meeting is planned for late March with work expected to begin in April. The eel ladder should be ready for testing by this summer. Eden Mill is on Deer Creek, Deer Creek has some of the highest populations of American Eel in the State and we expect this ladder to be very successful.

APPENDIX II: Pennsylvania Updates

Supplied by David Dippold:

We're trying to do a better job in Pennsylvania of tracking culvert replacements. Historically, that's not something we've really reported on because there are so many that happen across the state, and not every one is done to provide aquatic organism passage. So we've been working with some of the main players in that realm in the state to do a better job of making sure those projects get tracked.

Optimistic that we will be reporting culvert replacements that contribute to the fish passage work in the coming years.

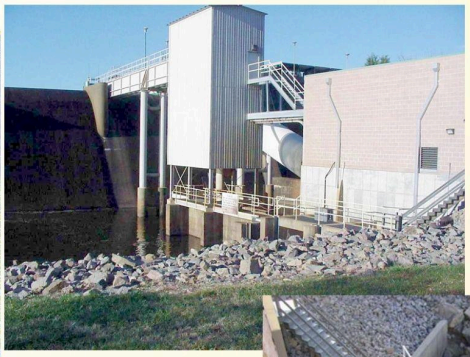
York Haven Nature Like Fishway:
Construction is underway, started late last summer. It's about a year long project, expected to be completed in late 2025. Should have fish passage there by spring of 2026.

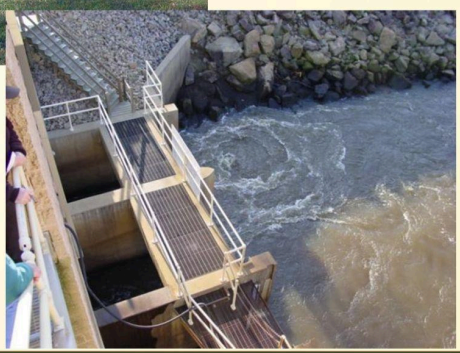
Besides 2024 Dam removals, we had 27 in Pennsylvania, not all of those were in the Bay watershed.

APPENDIX III: Virginia Updates

Supplied by Alan Weaver:

Baber's Mill Dam Removal; 43 UFN miles reconnected
Post removal sampling will start this spring (Sea Lamprey)





Confirmed passage of American Shad through Appomattox Fall Zone (April 2024)

Ongoing Fish Passage Projects

- Rapidan Mill Dam removal
  - Design and permitting phase
    - Surveying underway
    - Preliminary meeting with permit agencies
  - BIL funding questions/concerns
- Chandlers Dam Repairs Completed (Trib to Catpoint to Rappahannock)
  - New large spillway
  - Pool and weir fishway
- Cornelius Creek Road Crossing (James Trib)
  - Henrico County road
  - Some funding from HRBT Lane Expansion Mitigation
  - Technical fishway vs bridge (full AOP)
  - Needs more funding and commitment from Henrico
- Montague Road (Mud Creek – Rapp. Trib)
  - VDOT
  - Federal Hwy funds
  - Increased elliptical pipe size design

Questions ???

APPENDIX IV: New York Updates

Supplied Ian Blackburn:

We do have two dam removal projects in our earliest planning phases.

Habitat folks over in region four are working on a feasibility study for the removal of Oneonta Southside Dam on the Upper Susquehanna.

Currently, also in their region, I believe they are close to settling on a small hydro on Goodyear Lake, which is in the Susquehanna headwaters, regarding an installation of an upstream eel passage ladder.

The other dam removal project, which is just in the earliest phases of community outreach is the Candor Dam on Catatonk Creek, which is a tributary to the Owego Creek drainage system in Central Southern Tier of New York.

Other passage news of note: we are working with Trout Unlimited on a brook trout improvement restoration project on the Owego Creek drainage. Allen Peterson and Tracy Brown from TU are doing all sorts of assessments including thermal mapping with drones, assessing perched culverts for replacement, and assessing habitat deficiencies in state lands in the headwaters of the drainage..

APPENDIX V: Delaware Updates

No updates provided.

APPENDIX VI: West Virginia Updates

Supplied by Rachel Harrison:

Albright Dam:
Still in the works, timeline unclear.

We have a couple of in lieu fee projects, one of them is unsure if they'll remove the dam or not.

Elizabeth locks and dam:
Demolition is complete, the work to remove the locks is ongoing.
According to the Waterways Journal Weekly, they still have upstream low water issues.

There's a dam violation on Hazel Run:
A landowner who is trying to be in compliance. He had opened his reservoir drain gate in spring 2023 as a risk reduction measure and it's remained open since then. They're trying to figure out

what to do with that situation still and I will keep you updated. The land owners partnered with the company that's proposing to remove the dam and make it a mitigation bank site, and the IRT is still deciding if that's going to be feasible or not.

Isaac Watson League Dry Run Dams #1 and #2 near Lee Town:
Construction should be done by the end of the month according to their documents. They're not on the fish passage tool map anymore, so maybe they're finished. I'll have to ask about that.

Newberg Dam in Preston County:
Not technically in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, but they are worried about trying to do a mitigation bank around that dam, and that's another point of discussion for the IRT that I'll keep the workgroup updated about.

Izaak Walton Dams:
Dams have been removed and the Dam Safety Office will visit the site next week to confirm that the project is complete. Izaak Walton League's engineer has designed replacement structures which will be built below minimum size requirements for a jurisdictional dam. Construction for the new structures will begin in the next few weeks.

APPENDIX VII: DC Update

No updates provided.

APPENDIX VIII: Slides - UPDATE ON OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

Current Outcome & Proposed New Language

Current Fish Passage Outcome:

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Draft Language for updated outcome:

"Improving habitat, water quality, and creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms throughout the Chesapeake Bay's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams by removing barriers to aquatic organism passage to restore connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years."

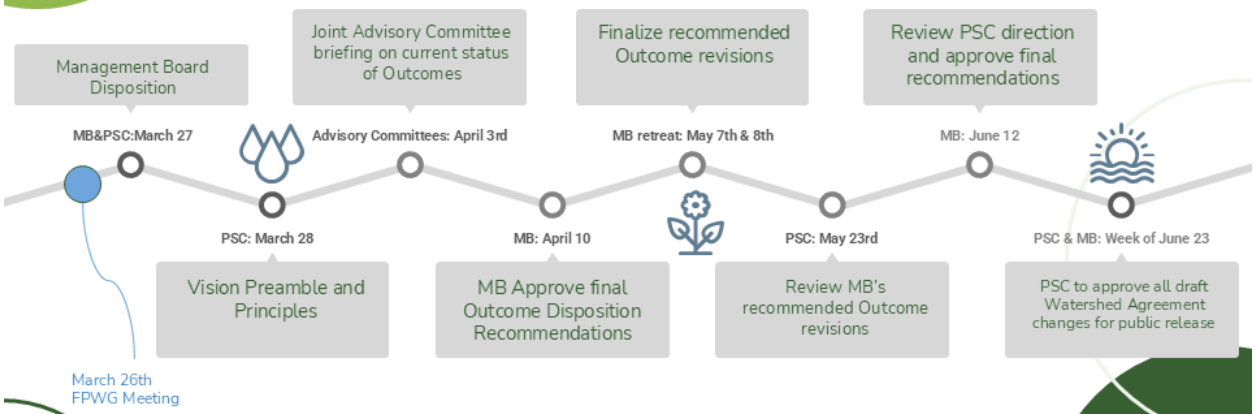
- ➔ 132 -> 150 miles annually
- ➔ focus on aquatic organisms, not just fish

Jurisdictional Preliminary Dispositions

- 29 members of the Management Board. Preliminary disposition
- 22 agreed with the recommendation and 7 did not.
- After further discussion only 1 is not agreeing with the recommendation and
- 4 remain stand aside.

1. *PA suggested to consolidate , switched to reclassify for the final pulse check.*
2. *NRCS suggested to reclassify , switched to agree with the workgroup recommendation*
3. *GIT 6 (Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management) suggested consolidate , switched to agree with the workgroup.*
4. *NPS stood-aside*
5. *DE stood-aside*
6. *WV stood-aside*
7. *GIT 1 (Sustainable Fisheries) stood-aside*

Timeline



Thank You

Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX IX: Slides - NFWF PROJECT PROPOSAL UPDATE & DISCUSSION

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's SWG Program

Nick Staten (CRC)

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01

What is NFWF's Small Watershed Grant Program?

Chesapeake Bay Program
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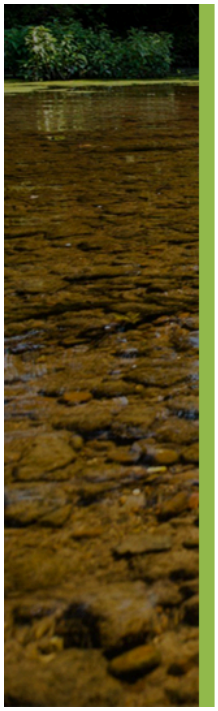
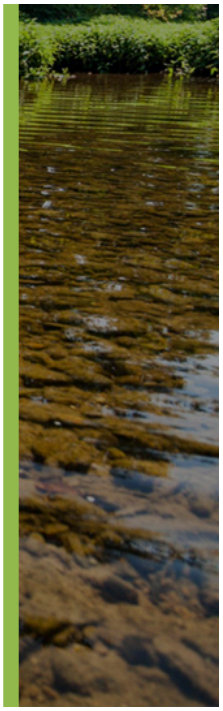


The 2025 Small Watershed Grants Program priorities are:

1. Managing Agricultural and Urban Runoff
2. Improving Water Quality and Stream Health Through Riparian Restoration and Conservation
3. Enhancing and Protecting Freshwater Habitat for Eastern Brook Trout
4. **Enhancing** and Protecting Tidal and Estuarine **Habitat**
5. **Enhancing** Nature-Based **Resilience** for Human Communities
6. **Building Capacity for Landscape-Scale** Watershed and **Habitat Planning, Design, and Implementation**



Two Types of Small Watershed Grants

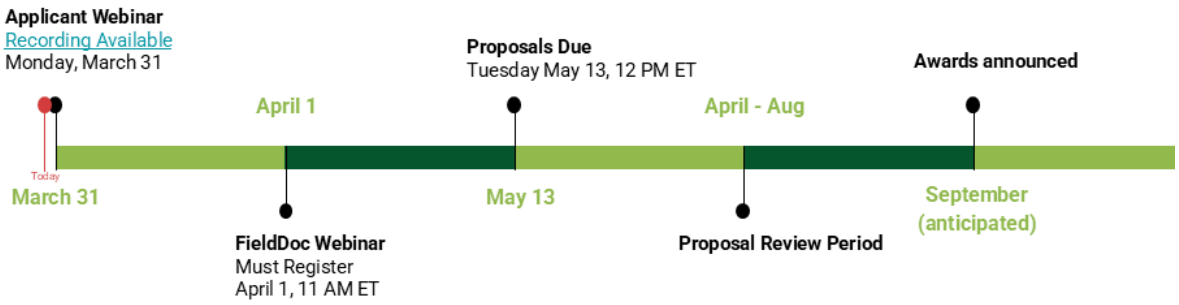
1. SWG Implementation (SWG-I)

- $150,000-1,000,000
- projects that result in voluntary, direct, on-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats in the Bay watershed.
- NFWF expects all SWG-I proposals to have any necessary preliminary designs completed for proposed activities by the time of application.

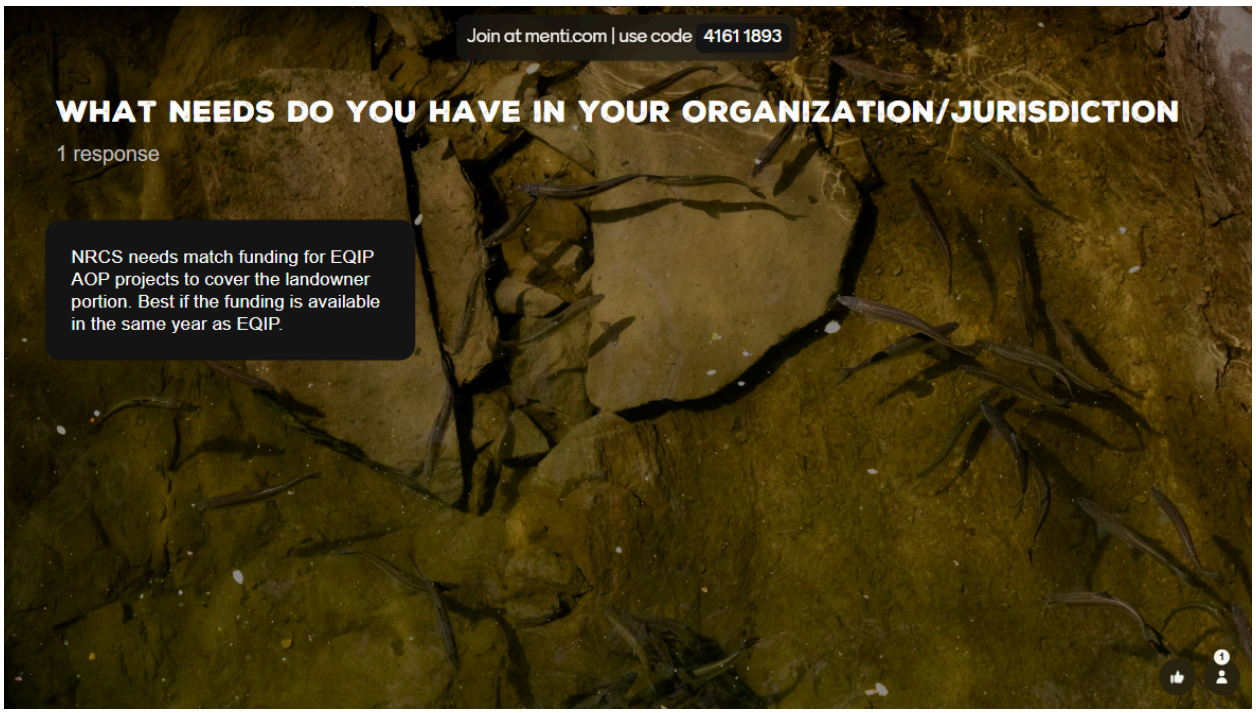
2. SWG Planning and Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA)

- $150,000 will be awarded
- projects that enhance local capacity to advance future on-the-ground actions, consistent with SWG Program priorities, through community-based assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.

02 Timeline


Applicant Webinar
Recording Available
Monday, March 31
Proposals Due
Tuesday May 13, 12 PM ET
Awards announced
April 1
April - Aug
Today
March 31
May 13
September
(anticipated)
FieldDoc Webinar
Must Register
April 1, 11 AM ET
Proposal Review Period


What needs do you have?
Mentimeter



03

Logic and Action Plan-identified Needs

Planning, Design, and Implementation of projects

Dam removal, fish passage, and culvert replacement projects prioritizing using the fish passage prioritization tool.

Leverage state dam safety programs

Use state dam safety programs to help inform dam owners of the benefits of removal

Road/stream crossing activities

Coordinate with agencies responsible for maintaining and replacing road/stream Culverts. Use the recommendations for Aquatic Organism Passage at Maryland Road Stream Crossings document and discuss expanding this procedures to other States.

Finalize USACE mitigation calculator

Finalize USACE mitigation calculator, complete final guidance document, and distribute the document to regulatory and dam removal practitioners for implementation

Encourage landowners to say yes to removing their dams

Consult with Chesapeake Bay Program Communications and social scientists to develop communications products and supportive policies to encourage dam removal

Document presence of target species

Document presence of target species upstream of dam removal and fish passage projects

03 Other Identified Needs

On-the-ground Capacity

Capacity for on-the-ground partners to remove barriers to fish passage

Identify Unstable Dams

Understand main dams that are a threat to public safety due to aging infrastructure and the susceptibility to intense flooding events.

Private landowner incentive to remove their dams

Convincing reluctant private landowners to agree to have their dam removed.

Community of Practices

Enriching community of practices.

Obvious Value

Providing obvious benefit for partners / jurisdictions to participate in the Fish Passage Workgroup.

04 Ideas

Idea 1: Small Grant Program

- $$$ to fund "Chesapeake Bay Program Fish Passage Workgroup Small Grant Program"
  - $150,000 (SWG-PTA) (enough funds to fund multiple smaller projects) where the workgroup would fund local/regional environmental groups to provide grassroot support and act as liaisons to implementing Bay Program fish passage priorities on a local scale.
  - Workgroup members could score proposals and we could decide on a project to fund in the Spring.
  - State representative on the workgroup would qualify a jurisdiction to propose a project or allow a project to score higher.

Needs Addressed: Encourage landowners to say yes to removing their dams, On-the-ground Capacity, Obvious Value, Enriching Communities of Practice

Idea 2: Identify what it would take to get landowners to say yes, and identify priority project lists

- Landowner outreach to determine what it would take to remove the dam.
- List of projects that are quick wins, major projects, etc.

Jane Doe would remove her dam, but wants in exchange:
1. $5,000
2. Cost of removal taken on by DNR
3. Wants to keep part of the structure in one of her nearby fields

Needs Addressed: On-the-ground Capacity, Private landowner incentive to remove their dams, Identify Unstable Dams

Idea 3: Priority Dam Removal Program

- $$$ for addressing of high priority dams. The workgroup would decide which dams we would fund for removal through voting.
  - Voting member would need to be from a jurisdiction that is signed onto the fish passage outcome in the Watershed Agreement.
  - $50,000 per dam
    - Max $10,000 incentive paid directly to land-owner
    - Remaining $40,000 for removal logistics
  - Removal of 3 dams with an SWG-PTA or more with a SWG-I, but we would need to have dams identified and removal plans drawn up.

Needs Addressed: On-the-ground Capacity, Private landowner incentive to remove their dams, Obvious Value

Idea 4: Enrich communities of practice throughout the watershed

- Funds could…
  - Fund trainings
  - Establishing active target project lists

- In-person meeting/workshop to identify a sub-committee and major players within each jurisdiction

Needs Addressed: On-the-ground Capacity

Thank You

Do you have any questions?