SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION
VITAL HABITAT GIT/SAV WORKGROUP

2014 WATERSHED AGREEMENT: GOAL & OUTCOME LANGUAGE

SAV OUTCOME: Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of SAV (underwater grasses) in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay. Progress toward this ultimate outcome will be measured against a target of 90,000 acres by 2017 and 130,000 acres by 2025.

VITAL HABITATS GOAL: Restore, enhance and protect a network of land and water habitats to support fish and wildlife, and to afford other public benefits, including water quality, recreational uses and scenic value across the watershed.

OUTCOME DISPOSITION ADVICE TO MANAGEMENT BOARD: **UPDATE**

Recommendation [What advice do you have for the Management Board on how to consolidate, reduce, update, remove, replace or add new outcomes within your GIT?]:

> **In 2-pager:** The SAV Outcome should be **updated** to align with jurisdictional SAV and water clarity standards. Updating the SAV Outcome to align with water clarity standards will result in an SAV acreage target higher than in the current outcome but will result in a more accurate reflection of potential SAV extent in each Bay segment.

No detailed response necessary.

SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) [What advice do you have for the Management Board on how to consolidate, reduce, update, remove, replace or add new outcomes within your GIT?[Consider if the Outcome is "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) and specifically, whether the current outcome meets the definition of an outcome, as described in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement ("Agreement"), or if that outcome is an output or indicator]:

> **In 2-pager:** The current SAV Outcome is SMART because the SAV acreage language is *measurable* and interim goals are *time-bound*. An updated SAV Outcome should include an aspiration ultimate outcome as well as incremental, time-bound targets that are ecologically feasible within the timeframe of the Agreement. The SAV Workgroup will provide draft recommendations on interim timeframes and *measurable* acreage goals for your consideration. Interim goals allow for *time-bound* success criteria while maintaining an aspirational ultimate goal.

Detailed response: The SAV Outcome is *mostly* SMART and meets the definition of an Outcome in the 2014 Watershed Agreement, but can also be considered an indicator or output depending on context. The SAV Outcome in the 2014 Agreement includes the language "Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of SAV (underwater grasses) in the Chesapeake Bay". This sentence could be considered *specific* but it is not detailed, and does not consider the other important co-benefits or ecosystem services that SAV provides.

The language regarding SAV acreage (Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay. Progress toward this ultimate outcome will be measured against a target of 90,000 acres by 2017 and 130,000 acres by 2025) makes it *measurable*, but the ultimate goal is not timebound. Interim goals in the 2014 Agreement, however, are timebound. It should be noted that the existing SAV outcome statement meets the "Smart, Measurable and Timebound" criteria as assessed by ERG.

Further, the SAV outcome includes a number of the "secret sauce" ingredients:

- Clear, succinct, and prioritized goal and outcome statements
- Measurable outcome targets for tracking, understanding, and communicating progress
- A monitoring program that supports the status and progress assessments
- Goal and outcome champions aligned at the Executive Council (EC), Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) Management Board (MB), and Goal Implementation Team (GIT) level
- Geographic targeting and place-based work aimed at multiple benefits to the community and living resources
- Using the SRS process as the management process and tool for continuing to inform and adapt the existing 2014 Agreement goals and outcomes that improves the pace of restoration
- Using the existing Governance Document as a guide to making partnership decisions (see https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/publications/cbp-governance-document)
- Building and maintaining relationships within the partnership
- Aligned regional, state, and local environmental management
- Sustaining and enhancing the science-based foundation to support effective decision-making
- Clearly specified policies at the federal, state, and local level that are aligned and supportive
- Leadership with a vision, and
- Centering the work on benefits to people and living resources, not solely water quality

Challenges and Opportunities [Consider the challenges and opportunities for achieving the outcome. You are encouraged to leverage past documentation and learnings from the Strategy Review System process, as well as Charting a Course to 2025 report and Beyond 2025 Small Group recommendations as they pertain to the outcome.]:

> **In 2-pager:** There are numerous challenges influencing the success of SAV recovery and restoration throughout the Bay. Extensive efforts are being made to address those factors and to identify what additional opportunities and efforts are necessary to reach the ultimate SAV restoration goal. These include **Habitat Conditions and Availability, Protection of Existing and Recovering SAV, SAV Restoration Potential and Activity, SAV Research and Monitoring, and Public Perception, Knowledge, and Engagement.** These are further described as Factors in the SAV Management Strategy.

Detailed response: As described in the most recent SAV Management Strategy (v5), there are numerous challenges (factors) influencing the success of SAV recovery and restoration throughout the Bay. Extensive efforts are being made to address those factors and to identify what additional opportunities and efforts are necessary to reach the 185,000-acre SAV restoration goal.

1. **Habitat Conditions and Availability:** High-quality habitat conditions are vital to the success of SAV persistence, recovery, and restoration efforts. Good quality habitat conditions for SAV are defined by shallow water (two meters or less) with sufficient water quality/clarity, appropriate wave and current conditions, and healthy sediment in which SAV can grow and thrive. Salinity dictates SAV species distribution but most significantly, water clarity is vital for a productive SAV habitat. Water clarity varies in time as a function of precipitation (as it affects run-off and consequently sediment and nutrient pollution entering the Bay). Water clarity improvements are being made by meeting pollutant allocations set by the Bay TMDL and through the work of the Water Quality and Maintain Healthy Watersheds GITs.

Habitat conditions and availability are impacted by additional factors, including stressors associated with climate change. The Bay is considered at high risk for sea level rise, increased water temperatures and extreme weather events from climate change, which will influence SAV habitat conditions and availability. **The SAV Workgroup advocates for management approaches and implementation of best management practices that reduce climate stressor impacts (e.g., minimize shoreline hardening/modification to allow inland migration of SAV and sediment transport as water levels increase). The SAV Workgroup also advocates for increased nutrient and sediment load reductions through the TMDL and the implementation of BMPs that offer those load reductions. A recent study showed that further limits to Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Sediment entering the Bay will lead to improved conditions for SAV and a more timely approach to our SAV acreage goals.**

Shallow-water use conflicts also influence SAV habitat availability. Aquaculture and other commercial fishing activities and SAV removal for navigational purposes are examples of these potential conflicts.

2. **Protection of Existing and Recovering SAV:** Anthropogenic activities, including dredging, propeller scarring, fishing and aquaculture practices, as well as the introduction of invasive species and marine debris, can cause direct physical disturbance to SAV. Indirect impacts from localized water quality degradation associated with activities such as shoreline alteration, sedimentation from changes in land use or in-water activities like dredging and boat wakes also influence the health of SAV beds.

Effective and enforceable regulations are necessary to adequately protect SAV. The adequate protection of existing and recovering SAV is necessary to reach the 185,000-acre Bay-wide SAV restoration goal. As new threats and conflicts (e.g., shellfish aquaculture, shoreline alteration, dredging, SAV harvesting) emerge simultaneously with recovering SAV populations, the efficacy of existing regulations may diminish. Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia all have regulations in place that protect existing SAV from harmful practices, including dredging and filling, nearshore construction, and commercial fishing, but it is unclear if those regulations will adequately protect new and expanding SAV beds as they recover throughout the Bay.

3. **SAV Restoration Potential and Activity:** Direct SAV restoration is an important component to Chesapeake Bay SAV recovery. There are a number of reasons to actively restore SAV: to provide seeds to an area where a natural seed bank is not present, to increase genotypic and phenotypic diversity, to increase species diversity and to provide outreach and educational opportunities to the parties involved in the restoration effort. Direct restoration of SAV by planting whole plants or seeds is a multi-step, labor-intensive and expensive venture, and success is based on a number of factors, ranging from

appropriate site selection (controllable) to future unpredictable weather events and water quality (uncontrollable).

Academic institutions, organizations, and agencies in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. currently work to actively restore SAV in appropriate areas throughout Chesapeake Bay using seeds and, in some limited cases, adult plants. Based on recent successes in SAV restoration attempts associated with improved water quality and clarity conditions, the SAV Workgroup developed an SAV Restoration Guide that details current protocols for seed harvesting, processing and storage, restoration site selection, and seed dispersal. Because restoration success is heavily dependent on water quality and clarity conditions, care should be given to determining when and where SAV restoration projects are appropriate. The three tiers of SAV monitoring in Chesapeake Bay provide essential data for SAV restoration site selection and timing.

Unfortunately, even in ideal habitat conditions with reduced human impacts, the limited availability of source seeds, plants, and propagules (from laboratories, nurseries, and wild collection), as well as the minimal availability of funding for restoration projects and restoration science research, has constrained the SAV Workgroup and its partners' ability to implement expansive SAV restoration efforts.

4. SAV Research and Monitoring: Annual Bay-wide SAV monitoring at multiple levels of scale is essential to guide appropriate SAV research and management actions. Annual monitoring data allow for adaptive management of SAV throughout the Bay and it is the only way to track protection and restoration efforts. As such, SAV research and monitoring is a priority management strategy for increasing and sustaining the habitat benefits of SAV in Chesapeake Bay.

The SAV Workgroup has adopted a three-tiered, hierarchical monitoring approach for SAV. The Bay-wide SAV survey—Tier 1—maps SAV acreage and density throughout the Bay and its tributaries by interpreting data collected from aerial photographs. This broad-scale monitoring program is complemented by ground surveys conducted by CBP partners and community scientists engaged in the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers Program—Tier 2. SAV Watchers is a volunteer monitoring program that partners with Riverkeepers and other watershed groups and schools to monitor a limited number of SAV habitat characteristics at a large number of locations throughout the Bay and its tributaries, which is useful for broad-scale condition assessments and for identifying and quantifying driver/response relationships. Tier 3, the Chesapeake Bay SAV Sentinel Site Monitoring Program, monitors multiple parameters in greater detail at fewer locations (the sentinel sites). Sentinel site monitoring focuses on identifying causal relationships by intensively monitoring drivers of change, ecosystem responses and ecological processes. Together, these interconnected Chesapeake Bay SAV monitoring efforts will maximize our efficiency and forecasting capabilities, while informing conservation, restoration, research, and management strategies for the Bay as a whole.

Additional support, including funding, for the three tiers of Chesapeake Bay SAV monitoring activity is needed to ensure their Bay-wide implementation and long-term sustainability. Likewise, CBP partner scientists and others in the region are currently conducting research in SAV biology, ecology, genetics, restoration, and the impacts of climate change on SAV, but because limited funding is available for SAV research, extensive gaps in our knowledge base remain. To fully restore SAV in Chesapeake Bay, SAV research and monitoring must be more effectively funded and supported.

5. Public Perception, Knowledge, and Engagement

Public perception of SAV affects its health: during periods of SAV recovery and high abundance, some members of the public perceive it as a nuisance and consequently take measures to deter its growth or directly remove it. SAV stewardship can be managed through education, outreach, and regulation, and is an important component of SAV conservation and restoration.

In an effort to educate the public about the benefits of SAV and improve their perception of SAV, the SAV Workgroup works with the Chesapeake Bay Program communications team on annual press releases of SAV acreage and goal-attainment, community-based social marketing campaigns, and the production of SAV-related web and social media content throughout the year. Although these materials reach residents throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed, some negative public perceptions regarding SAV remain. A more elaborate and effective outreach strategy is needed to reach a broader audience to communicate the socio-economic benefits and ecosystem services provided by Chesapeake Bay SAV.

SAV Outcome Relation to Chesapeake Bay Agreement Mission, Vision, and Pillars [Consider how the outcome relates or could relate to the Bay Agreement mission, vision, and themes/pillars]:

> **In 2-pager:** SAV beds are a cornerstone of the Bay's ecosystem, providing essential habitat, improving water quality, and enhancing the Bay's resilience to climate change. The SAV Outcome aligns with the Bay Program's overarching goal of achieving an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed by addressing each of the five guiding pillars of restoration – **Abundant Life, Clean Water, Climate Change, Conserved Lands, and Engaged Communities.** SAV beds support the **Fish Habitat Outcome** by providing nursery areas, shelter, and foraging grounds for key fish species. They also enhance the **Blue Crab Abundance Outcome** by offering refuge for juvenile and molting crabs. By stabilizing sediments, absorbing nutrients, and improving water clarity, SAV contributes to the **Water Quality Outcome**. As a key component of coastal resilience, SAV helps achieve the **Climate Resiliency Outcome** by sequestering carbon, buffering pH, and mitigating extreme weather impacts. Additionally, SAV restoration engages diverse stakeholders, fostering stewardship and advancing the **Environmental Literacy and Stewardship Outcome** through education, outreach, and hands-on involvement.

Detailed response: [2014 Agreement Vision: The Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage and a diversity of engaged stakeholders.]

The 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement is based on five themes, or pillars, that guide the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay:

• **Abundant life:** Ensure sustainable populations of aquatic life, restore habitats, and create a balanced ecosystem

• **Clean water:** Reduce nutrient and toxic pollution to support aquatic life

• **Climate change:** Increase the Bay's ability to withstand changing weather

• **Conserved lands**: Protect working forests, farms, and other lands with ecological, historical, and community value

• **Engaged communities:** Increase public involvement in Bay stewardship, expand public access, and educate students.

The Chesapeake Bay Program’s Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Outcome directly supports the mission, vision, and foundational pillars outlined in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. SAV beds are a cornerstone of the Bay's ecosystem, providing essential habitat, improving water quality, and enhancing the Bay's resilience to climate change. The SAV Outcome aligns with the Chesapeake Bay

Program's overarching goal of achieving an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed by addressing each of the five guiding pillars of restoration.

Abundant Life: SAV is a critical habitat for a variety of aquatic species, including commercially and recreationally important fish, blue crabs, and waterfowl. By focusing on the protection and restoration of SAV, the Bay Program ensures sustainable populations of aquatic life, contributing to a more balanced and thriving ecosystem. Healthy SAV beds also support the Bay's biodiversity by providing food, shelter, and nursery areas, which are essential for maintaining the Bay's ecological integrity.

Clean Water: SAV beds play a vital role in improving water quality throughout the Chesapeake Bay. These underwater plants absorb nutrients, trap sediments, and stabilize the Bay's bottom, reducing erosion and preventing excess sedimentation that can degrade water quality. The SAV Outcome supports nutrient and sediment reduction goals by fostering the conditions necessary for these natural filters to thrive. Healthy SAV beds also help mitigate the impacts of nutrient pollution by taking up excess nitrogen and phosphorus, further contributing to cleaner water that supports aquatic life.

Climate Change: SAV contributes to the Bay's resilience to climate change by stabilizing shorelines and reducing the impacts of storm surges and wave energy. Additionally, SAV beds act as significant carbon sinks, helping to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Beyond these physical benefits, SAV buffers pH levels in the water, which is critical for mitigating the impacts of ocean acidification on shellfish species such as oysters and clams. By reducing acidity in localized areas, SAV helps create more favorable conditions for the recovery and sustainability of these economically and ecologically important species. The SAV Outcome promotes strategies that enhance the Bay's ability to withstand changing weather patterns and rising sea levels, ensuring that the Bay remains resilient in the face of climate challenges.

Conserved Lands: The conservation of land and protection of watersheds directly impacts the health of SAV. Reducing runoff from agricultural lands, forests, and urban areas helps improve water quality and light conditions necessary for SAV growth. The SAV Outcome is interconnected with land conservation efforts, ensuring that protected lands contribute to a healthier Bay ecosystem by reducing pollutants that threaten SAV beds.

Engaged Communities: The SAV Outcome fosters public engagement by increasing awareness of the importance of underwater grasses to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay Program continues to develop an SAV communications strategy and implement behavior change studies to improve the public's perception of SAV. Outreach and education efforts aimed at schools, local communities, and stakeholders promote stewardship and involvement in SAV restoration and monitoring activities, including the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers program. By encouraging volunteer participation in planting and monitoring efforts and expanding public access to information about SAV, the Bay Program empowers communities to take an active role in the restoration and protection of this critical resource.

The SAV Outcome is fundamental to achieving the Chesapeake Bay Program's vision of a sustainable, healthy, and resilient Bay watershed. By addressing all five pillars—abundant life, clean water, climate change, conserved lands, and engaged communities—the SAV Outcome supports a holistic and integrated approach to restoring the Chesapeake Bay's ecological health and cultural heritage.

Relative to other outcomes in the 2014 Bay Agreement, SAV beds serve as critical habitat for numerous species, directly supporting the **Fish Habitat Outcome** by providing essential nursery areas, shelter, and foraging grounds for commercially and ecologically important fish species. Similarly, healthy SAV meadows contribute to the **Blue Crab Abundance Outcome**, offering refuge for juvenile and molting crabs, which enhances their survival and supports the resilience of this iconic Bay species. By stabilizing sediments, absorbing nutrients, and promoting clearer waters, SAV plays a vital role in achieving the

Water Quality Outcome, particularly by contributing to nutrient and sediment reductions essential for meeting water clarity standards. As a key component of coastal resilience, SAV beds sequester carbon, buffer pH, and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events, aligning with the **Climate Resiliency Outcome**. Beyond their ecological functions, SAV restoration and conservation efforts engage diverse stakeholders, fostering a greater connection to the Bay's natural resources. This supports the **Environmental Literacy and Stewardship Outcome**, encouraging active participation in Bay restoration through education, outreach, and hands-on involvement in monitoring and restoration activities.

Timescale [Consider the timescale for completing the outcome (5, 10, 15 years). Determine if achieving the outcome is an incremental step or is it a final outcome]:

This question and response were not included in the 2-pager: As in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, the updated SAV Outcome should include an ultimate outcome as well as incremental or interim, timebound outcomes/targets that are scientifically and/or technically feasible. The SAV Workgroup will provide draft recommendations on interim timeframes and acreage goals for your consideration on April 10.

Resources Needed [Consider resource needs and availability]:

> **In 2-pager:** Extensive resources are needed to achieve the SAV Outcome, including continued and significant funding to achieve the TMDL which impacts SAV recovery through improvements in Water Quality. Continued funding is also necessary for the annual, Bay-wide SAV survey (Tier 1 of our SAV monitoring approach). Additional funding would benefit the continued implementation of the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers program (Tier 2), as well as the implementation of the Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Site program that will include SAV (Tier 3; Beyond 2025 small group recommendation). GIT funding should be continued and prioritized in the future, as well as funding to support the expansion of direct SAV restoration capacity, and additional research efforts.

No detailed response necessary.

Unintended Consequences of Removing the Outcome [Consider the risk or unintended consequences of removing the Outcome]:

> **In 2-pager:** Removing the SAV Outcome from the Chesapeake Bay Agreement would pose significant ecological, economic, and social risks. SAV plays a foundational role in maintaining the health and resilience of the Bay ecosystem and the SAV Outcome is a critical component of the Bay Program's holistic approach to restoration. Without a focused effort on SAV restoration and protection, several unintended consequences could occur, including **Decreased Water Quality, Loss of Critical Habitat, Increased Vulnerability to Climate Change, Economic Impacts, and Reduced Community Engagement and Stewardship.**

Detailed response: Removing the SAV Outcome from the Chesapeake Bay Program/Agreement would pose significant ecological, economic, and social risks. SAV plays a foundational role in maintaining the

health and resilience of the Bay ecosystem. Without a focused effort on SAV restoration and protection, several unintended consequences could occur:

1. **Decreased Water Quality:** SAV beds are natural filters that trap sediments, absorb excess nutrients, and reduce shoreline erosion. Removing the SAV Outcome would undermine efforts to achieve clean water goals, potentially leading to increased sedimentation and nutrient pollution, which would degrade water quality and harm aquatic life.
2. **Loss of Critical Habitat:** SAV provides essential habitat for a wide range of species, including blue crabs, fish, and waterfowl. Without a targeted SAV Outcome, habitat loss could accelerate, negatively impacting species populations and disrupting the Bay's food web.
3. **Increased Vulnerability to Climate Change:** SAV beds help stabilize shorelines and reduce the impact of storm surges and wave energy. They also act as carbon sinks and buffer pH levels, mitigating the effects of ocean acidification. Removing the SAV Outcome would weaken the Bay's resilience to climate change, making the ecosystem more vulnerable to extreme weather events and rising sea levels.
4. **Economic Impacts:** Many industries in the Chesapeake Bay region, such as fisheries and tourism, depend on a healthy Bay ecosystem. The loss of SAV habitat would threaten these industries, leading to economic losses and decreased quality of life for local communities.
5. **Reduced Community Engagement and Stewardship:** The SAV Outcome includes outreach and education efforts that promote public involvement in Bay restoration. Removing this focus could result in decreased public awareness and participation, weakening the collective effort needed to achieve long-term restoration goals.

The SAV Outcome is a critical component of the Chesapeake Bay Program's holistic approach to restoration. Its removal would compromise the Program's ability to achieve clean water, abundant life, and resilience to climate change, ultimately threatening the health and sustainability of the Bay ecosystem and the communities that depend on it. Additionally, a number of federal and state jurisdictional mandates are tied to SAV acreage and associated water clarity attainment standards. Removing the outcome may impede the ability of federal and state agencies to meet those mandates.

Value Added from Chesapeake Bay Program [What value is added by having the Chesapeake Bay Program work on the outcome?]:

In 2-pager: The Chesapeake Bay Program's leadership and coordination of the SAV Outcome through the SAV Workgroup adds significant value to the restoration and protection of SAV in the Bay. As a multi-jurisdictional partnership, the Chesapeake Bay Program's SAV Workgroup brings together federal, state, and local governments, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders to achieve the shared goal of SAV recovery. This collaborative framework is uniquely positioned to: **Provide Regional Coordination and Consistency, Leverage Expertise and Resources, Set Science-Based Goals and Track Progress, Facilitate Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing, and Enhance Public Engagement and Outreach.** The SAV Workgroup and the Bay Program as a whole play a critical role in increasing public awareness of SAV's importance and engaging communities in restoration activities. Its outreach efforts inspire stewardship and encourage local action to protect and restore SAV beds, particularly through the Chesapeake Bay SAV Watchers program.

Detailed response: The Chesapeake Bay Program's leadership and coordination of the SAV Outcome through the SAV Workgroup adds significant value to the restoration and protection of SAV in the Bay. As a multi-jurisdictional partnership, the Chesapeake Bay Program's SAV Workgroup brings together federal, state, and local governments, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders to achieve shared goals. This collaborative framework is uniquely positioned to:

1. **Provide Regional Coordination and Consistency:** The SAV Workgroup ensures that SAV restoration efforts are coordinated across state boundaries and jurisdictions. This regional approach prevents fragmentation of efforts and ensures that restoration strategies are consistent and comprehensive across the watershed.
2. **Leverage Expertise and Resources:** The SAV Workgroup provides access to scientific expertise, data, and resources that individual jurisdictions may not have on their own. By pooling resources and knowledge, the SAV Workgroup enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of SAV restoration efforts.
3. **Set Science-Based Goals and Track Progress:** The Bay Program, through the SAV Workgroup, establishes science-based SAV restoration goals and monitors progress through robust tracking and reporting mechanisms. This accountability framework helps ensure that restoration efforts are evidence-based and adaptive to changing conditions.
4. **Facilitate Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** The SAV Workgroup fosters collaboration among scientists, resource managers, policymakers, and stakeholders. Through workgroup meetings and workshops, the Bay Program provides a platform for sharing best practices, addressing challenges, and advancing innovative restoration techniques.
5. **Enhance Public Engagement and Outreach:** The SAV Workgroup and the Bay Program as a whole plays a critical role in increasing public awareness of SAV's importance and engaging communities in restoration activities. Its outreach efforts inspire stewardship and encourage local action to protect and restore SAV beds, particularly through the SAV Watchers program.

The Chesapeake Bay Program's and SAV Workgroup's work on the SAV Outcome amplifies restoration efforts by providing regional coordination, leveraging resources, setting science-based goals, fostering collaboration, and engaging communities. The Program's leadership ensures that SAV restoration is approached in a comprehensive, efficient, and sustainable manner, maximizing the ecological and economic benefits of a healthy Bay ecosystem.

Public Benefit [Consider how the Outcome, as written, benefits the public. Does the outcome reflect public input already received and have the potential to galvanize public support/engagement?]:

In 2-pager: The SAV Outcome, as written, directly benefits the public by addressing critical ecological, economic, and social values tied to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. SAV restoration enhances water quality, supports commercial and recreational fisheries, and strengthens the Bay's resilience to climate change. These benefits directly impact residents, businesses, and visitors who rely on the Bay for their livelihoods, recreational opportunities, and quality of life.

By framing the SAV Outcome as a shared goal with measurable targets and visible impacts, the Chesapeake Bay Program can strengthen public commitment to restoration efforts. This

connection between outcome-driven action and community involvement reinforces the notion that everyone has a role in ensuring a sustainable future for Chesapeake Bay.

Detailed response: The SAV Outcome directly benefits the public by addressing critical ecological, economic, and social values tied to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. SAV restoration enhances water quality, supports commercial and recreational fisheries, and strengthens the Bay's resilience to climate change. These benefits directly impact residents, businesses, and visitors who rely on the Bay for their livelihoods, recreational opportunities, and quality of life.

The Chesapeake Bay Program's work on the SAV Outcome also reflects public concerns already expressed in feedback on water quality, habitat protection, and climate resilience. The emphasis on achieving acreage targets for SAV restoration resonates with community values around clean water and healthy ecosystems, which are central to the Bay's cultural and economic identity. Moreover, public support for Bay restoration initiatives, such as tree planting and shoreline stabilization, indicates a readiness to engage in efforts that benefit SAV.

The outcome has significant potential to galvanize further public engagement by highlighting the tangible benefits of SAV, such as improving water clarity, increasing fish and crab populations, and protecting shorelines from erosion. Educational campaigns that emphasize the role of SAV as a natural solution to many of the Bay's challenges can inspire volunteer participation in restoration projects, increase support for policies that protect SAV, and foster a greater sense of stewardship among residents.

By framing the SAV Outcome as a shared goal with measurable targets and visible impacts, the Chesapeake Bay Program can strengthen public commitment to restoration efforts. This connection between outcome-driven action and community involvement reinforces the notion that everyone has a role in ensuring a sustainable future for the Chesapeake Bay.