



Healthy Landscapes Goal Team Meeting

July 30th, 2026

1:00pm - 4:00pm

[Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.](#)

Purpose: We will review and discuss progress towards the outcome management strategies and discuss cross-outcome challenges and coordination opportunities.

Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

Lead: Claire Jantz, PA DCNR and Ken Hyer, USGS

Decisions:

N/A

Actions:

N/A

Discussion Notes:

- Workgroup status updates:
 - Adaptation Workgroup: A [report](#) is ready about work we completed with four masters students at the University of Michigan, looking at marsh adaptation in the Choptank River for various tidal wetlands.
 - Land Use Workgroup: We are working on land use forecasts with the CBLCM out to 2050, and our office hours on the 12 will review some results.
 - Protected Lands: Protected Lands will have a meeting on August 4th, to discuss management strategy and our green space target.
 - Forestry Workgroup: We are not going to have an August meeting, so our next meeting will be on September 2nd.

II. Membership Discussion

We will review the Goal and Workgroup Coordinators, roles of members vs. interested parties, and the official decision making process.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Claire Jantz, PA DCNR and Ken Hyer, USGS

Materials: [Presentations posted to the meeting page](#)

Decisions [required]:

N/A

Actions [required]:

N/A

Discussion Notes:

- **Ken Hyer:** We are still operating on a consent driven approach, which relies on voting. A lot of what we will do in this goal team will be more on the consent side, where we talk about an issue and formulate a decision, or decide the best way forward. The GMF allows for some flexibility for what is best for goal teams and workgroups- a group like the Clean Water team has a lot more procedural voting they have to do. A consent based approach looks like first: identifying that a decision needs to be made before the meeting. During the meeting, checking for a quorum of voting members, discussion with **all** members, and presenting a decision proposal. If unanimous consent is not reached, we identify and modify concerns until all members have reached consent. Any differences in approach should be documented and captured in the minutes. As a recap, we can have up to 15 voting members, with CBC and federal representatives being 9 of those 15. Reminder that we also can have action teams. They should be formed about a specific topic, and have a sunset date.
- **Katherine Brownson:** We had talked about historically some of the work groups have not had a distinction between voting and non-voting members, and for Forestry, unless there is a reason not too, we will probably continue as such- where we have our voting and at-large members for decision making, and take input from anyone else who is interested.
- **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Adaptation is probably going to make a difference between an interested party and a non-voting member, we have so many interested parties it would be impossible to move forward with decisions with that many people.
- **Chris Guy:** I just came out of the Fish Habitat meeting which was having this discussion. For those who aren't going to distinguish, they wanted to distinguish so that they could give an elevated status to those who they wanted feedback from. Academics are getting pushed aside a little through this process as well, so elevating them through membership is also something to consider. The members this way have elevated status. If we are hoping to never get to a vote then it is beneficial to make sure pertinent voices are heard.
- **Ken Hyer:** At the goal team level, we are going to distinguish and have non-voting members.

III. Update on Workgroup Management Strategy Progress

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Julie Reichert-Nguyen (NOAA/ACEC Coordinator), Katie Brownson (USFS/FWG Coordinator), Jackie Pickford (USGS), Sophie Waterman (USGS/PLWG Coordinator)

Materials: [Presentations posted to the meeting page](#)

Decisions:

N/A

Actions:

Feedback on Management Strategies from members is due by August 10th
Management Strategy drafts are due to the Goal Team on September 11th.

Discussion Note:

- **Comments on Forestry:**
- **Ken Hyer:** Katie, I like the idea of you going from 11 challenges to six strategies, so it is not just 1 strategy for each challenge. I think that is helpful in aggregating and having it done

quick. Looking at the written strategy, it looks fairly complete; you said people are reviewing it and editing, but it looks like you have the majority of the document done for the outcome. Is that a fair summary?

- o **Katie Brownson:** Yea I think so, there are a couple missing pieces but we are on our way.
- **Rob Schnabel:** Since this is a broader level work group, there are sometimes conflicting MS4 land use, and you know MS4 can be positive or negative for forests depending on the BMP you are implementing, especially in the community forest cover and riparian buffer loss due to something like stream construction type projects, and its due to how heavily weighted that particular BMP is to meet the MS4 credit. The big driver in counties is going to that practice instead of impervious acres so it is resulting in significant forest loss in our urban centers and stream corridors. But that is due to the bay program elevating that, and the co-chair person that helped develop that came out 6 years after that was included as a BMP saying that it is not making sense, so if there is a way to look at that, Baltimore county and Virginia urban areas are suffering due to this.
- **Katie Brownson:** Yea, Rob brought this up at the office hours yesterday and I am still chewing on that, and if it is something that could be in a work plan or at a higher level at the goal team looking crediting issues and how we can insure our incentives are aligned so that we are promoting the practices we want to see in the landscape that are going to driver the greatest benefit.
- **Peter Claggett:** In terms of some of the metrics for the baseline- are you structuring your management strategy so that there is flexibility in how you track things like tree canopy, for example? In the future, there may be interest in looking at tree loss and canopy as separate but complimentary metrics. I am thinking of the expansion of existing canopy that could cancel out and overwhelm tree loss, and distinguishing those things might be important moving forward. Second, with the Riparian indicator: it shows net change in forests in the riparian zone, but it is not necessarily net change to developed classes. I think parsing that a little to distinguish what forest is changing too when it is being lost in a riparian area, because I get the sense that most of the time it is not development. That is sort of a bigger question about what level of interpretation we are doing. Bay Program wanted limited interpretation at the baseline, but I agree that more nuance would be helpful to tell the story.
- **Comments on Land Use:**
- **Jeffery Lerner:** I like the idea of the Land Use report for the Chesapeake Bay. I was wondering if you have thought about incorporating what we have done on the landscape to address some of these challenges. Things like green stormwater infrastructure in developing areas for example, so we would tell the story about how we are expanding and impacting landscape. I was curious if the idea is still new to you or if you did talk about what is happening in the urbanizing part of the watershed.
 - o **Jackie Pickford:** It is definitely a new concept, we have not really gotten into the details of what would be included in the report and if the workgroup even wants to take it on, but I like your idea, and that you are framing it in a positive way. A lot of the feedback we got from the Land Use workgroup was concern about making assumptions about what is happening at the local level and that people might not be receptive to hearing that. Framing it like you have, more like looking at the things we are trying to do to mitigate what is happening on the landscape would be a way of addressing that.
 - o **Peter Claggett:** I think this is a challenge of who the messenger to the localities is. The messenger will have to be chosen carefully. We will also have to think about who we are trying to inform and their mechanism for informing decision makers and their reputation with the community and levels of trust, etc.

- **Sarah Xenophon:** Are we engaging many, if any, municipal partners in our land use related workgroups or teams? Are they typically individual municipal reps, or are we asking associations and/or leagues? Might get more bang for our engagement buck if we approach groups of municipal entities.
 - **Jackie Pickford:** we have tried to get engagement or increase it related to this, most of those partners would probably be in different workgroups like Local Leadership. Right now we only have two regional commissions (in VA) in the land use workgroup membership. When we had a call for nominations in May, I reached out to regional associations in PA, WV, and a few other states to see if they were interested in joining, but unfortunately didn't get any interest. This is something I would like to revisit moving forward, though and would definitely appreciate any connections!!
 - **Claire Jantz:** That is a good point, Sarah. We have so much overlap here with the Local Government Leadership Workgroup (under Engaged Communities Goal Team) that we should engage with them sooner rather than later.
- **Comments on Adaptation:**
- **Rob Schnabel:** One metric that might be helpful for you guys is to have a testimonial metric. It doesn't have to be a number of testimonials, but just have them where communities or people who have implemented something can say yes, this really helped me, having access to these resources or going to this workshop hosted by the Adaptation Workgroup. Could just be people filling out a form. I've noticed in our conversations with the EPA, for example, being able to tell them x or y is using our information and thinks it is awesome goes further than any quantitative metric I could have given.
- **Steve Saari:** Is the idea that there would be one subwatershed per signatory state? What is the proposed scale of subwatershed?
 - **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** We are still putting together the membership for the Adaptation Workgroup. The questions above will be items to be discussed as we move forward.
- **Rob Schnabel:** Doing a Watershed Plan should be done first, with focus on upland projects restoring watershed function (water infiltration and retention, slow release of cool, clean water for fisheries). MD Whole Watershed Act did Not do this and has overly focused on in-channel given it is easier to do yet expensive and may Not lead to long term success, outcomes.
 - **Ben McFarlane:** The last time we had one of our workgroup meetings we talked about Maryland's new watershed approach, so that is an example of a regional partnership we will be looking at. I work with a planning district commission, so I am trying to think how we can work at different scales, and see different opportunities
- **Ken Hyer:** Looking between the Powerpoint and the draft Management Strategy, it looks like you guys are in a pretty good spot. Is it fair to say you feel in a good spot to get it done?
 - **Ben McFarlane:** I think so, but we are interested in getting feedback from the workgroup on what is in there, so once we get some membership established we are looking forward to hearing from them.
 - **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** To build off of that, because we are short on membership, we did a web search with Gemini to find existing programs and jurisdictions. We really need jurisdictional support to identify key programs that work, so I want to add that these are caveats and gaps that we need filled.
- **Ken Hyer:** Just a couple of quick thoughts. We always knew that the three-year workplan would go along with the management strategy, and that these would be at a higher level. So we are doing well there. While we are talking about reviews, these are the initial reviews, because the goal is to have these Management Strategies finalized by the end of June next year- so we have plenty of time. In October, we need to get them in for an initial PSC review

before the public review. I don't think anything you have shared is consistent with meeting these milestones.

- **Comments on Protected Lands**

- **Jeffrey Lerner:** For some additional context I will add that part of our working theory is we believe that there are people out there who support open space conservation. One of the big reasons they support that is because they understand the connection between land and water, so when we protect land they think we are getting good water quality. That is an important message for the Bay Program to be thinking about, and where possible we would like to lean into the existing partnerships doing protection work. When Sophie was talking about these protected lands networks, we are trying to identify more of those, where there is something that is already put in place and people are working on the ground effectively with private landowners. How can we connect with them and help them be more effective and scale up what they are doing?

- **Rob Schnabel:** We talked in the Forestry workgroup about how critical it is to leverage public spending when protecting lands to get the biggest community conservation benefits. One of those benefits from the forestry workgroup is getting more forest on the ground. I noticed Maryland's percent of protected lands and forests is like 20% below other states because the big ag preservation program doesn't require buffers like trees. It just had to stay farmland. So the assumption from the public that ag conservation will help water quality may or may not be true depending on the type of agriculture. I want to highlight that as a way to educate counties and states on their programs and the mapping you all do to show existing protected lands.

- **Sophie Waterman:** I hope you join us at our August 4th meeting, we will be talking about our agricultural lands target. That is one of the components we want to talk about, you can have a conservation easement but cows are pooping in the stream and it is still counted as a protected land. There are other ways we can look at these easements to give them additional credit or additional ways of tracking the benefits.

- **Jeffrey Lerner:** That is a good point. There is a disconnect between the protection and the BMP's, because they don't always go together. We have places where we are applying BMP's but we don't know if they are going to be durable. Or places where we are doing protection but not doing it with BMP's. To build on Sophie's comment, how do we think about protection of working lands and having appropriate BMP's that are going to be good for water quality together?

- Peter Claggett: That sounds like a good goal team level challenge, actually. Probably in coordination with the Clean Water goal team.

- **Ken Hyer:** Before we move forward, I am super impressed with what everyone brought to the table. What I want to talk about is what we want to get out of this first round of reviews and the timeline, knowing that around the middle of October we need to submit these to the PSC

- PSC will review early November
- Revisions in December
- January 2027 public review
- Revisions in February and March
- Now, we should focus on big level gaps and missing pieces vs. wordsmithing. Drafts are due on **September 11th** to allow time for revisions after feedback.
- Julia will send a link to Management Strategy documents for Goal Team members to review.

IV. Identify and Refine Cross-outcome Challenges

We will review and discuss proposed cross-outcome challenges in the Goal Team Management Strategy Chapter. We will also discuss management approaches that could be developed to address the identified challenges.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Claire Jantz, PA DCNR and Ken Hyer, USGS

Materials: [Presentations posted to the meeting page](#)

Decisions:

N/A

Actions:

N/A

Discussion Notes:

- **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Regarding the BMP challenge, I think it could also be applicable for adaptation work, because a lot of the BMPs coincide with nature based strategies. It would be interesting if there was a way to write that challenge in a way that encompasses looking at BMP's from a conservation standpoint, which can enhance resiliency within the subwatershed areas we are working in. Trying to align practices in a way, using nature based solutions for resilience, but they do overlap with BMPs and conservation, so I feel like there is a connection. In the past, the climate resiliency workgroup did work closely with the water quality goal implementation team, which is now the clean water goal team, on thinking about BMPs and climate resilience type work. It could be a good collaborative sort of challenge across other goal teams.
 - **Peter Claggett:** I was thinking too, we might want to engage with NFWF, because they have already reached out to our GIS team here, thinking about how they can be more strategic in some of their grants. Maybe one opportunity would be to build some tools so when projects are implemented, we look at the bigger picture and some of the other issues as NFWF asked.
 - **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Yes, and also we are planning to work with jurisdictions to see where they have resilience plans. A lot of times these plans cross into the comprehensive plans with the counties that have BMPs integrated, so there are a lot of connecting points.
- **Jeffrey Lerner:** I was wondering if we have any information at our fingertips that would make it easier for us to work on these, thinking specifically about the policy and regulation challenge. All the states and localities are different, is there something we can look at like a summary of what is out there, maybe someone like the Bay Commission, to help shepherd some of that conversation.
 - **Peter Claggett:** 20 years ago, the Bay Program worked with the Environmental Law Institute. They conducted a lot of policy evaluation. There may be other entities too where this type of analysis would be low hanging fruit for them.
- **Ken Hyer:** When I think about how we can make progress as we develop strategies for these challenges, I am thinking maybe we want to explore having an action team for one or two of them. Reminder that action teams are supposed to have finite lifespans. The one that stood out to me that could benefit the most is local engagement, since all four teams are thinking about this.
- **Chris Guy:** I think back to the old indicators we tried to do under the old agreement that failed several times. I look at this and I still see there's a huge need. We have some of these workgroups and each have their outcomes and each of them are saying something, but they aren't saying what we need them to say. I don't have an answer for this, but I keep going back

- to needing something to bring this all together and then communicate out beyond the technical experts, beyond the scientists, beyond people who are here, and to the general public. What is a healthy landscape? And is the landscape that you are in healthy?
- o **Peter Claggett:** You are saying, to consider a metric to aid in communicating landscape health and in communication with the public?
 - o **Chris Guy:** Yea, but for the goal team, not for any one workgroup to take on. Ultimately, how do you communicate a healthy landscape?
 - o **Peter Claggett:** I agree, that is something we have to have an intelligent response too because our goal itself is a healthy landscape. At our first meeting I had a slide showing a rural to urban continuum, because landscapes differ in their potential and what is considered healthy. There is a lot of complexity we need to distill. But we need to be careful to not oversimplify, on the same hand. As a partnership, we have a measure of watershed health, which is based on IBI's, based on 3 measures over 5 years and a HUC 12, which fixes the watershed to good or fair or whatever. It is kind of a stretch to make those claims at that scale.
 - o **Chris Guy:** I think we can look at it this way. We have forestry, land use, protected lands. What does it mean if you have so much protected land? Is that enough? If we have so much healthy forest, what is enough to achieve a healthy landscape? Is each outcome achieved equally enough?
 - o **Rob Schnabel:** How about living communities, but it is really about watershed function. Whether you are on agricultural land, if your water is infiltrating and retaining, whether you are a suburban lawn and the ability for a lawn, or water in an urban area. Having water quantity be the basis and what that means to individuals. No matter what the landscape is, if we focus on water quantity issues, infiltration retention for watershed function, base flow to streams during dry periods and reducing flooding during wet periods, and making that connection on a water quantity issue.
 - o **Chris Guy:** I think that could be a way to go. I wasn't necessarily asking for a solution, it is something that the goal team can take on. Your idea certainly could be a part of it but there are other things.
 - **Katie Brownson:** Another challenge that might be cross-cutting is around our big program crediting frameworks for water quality benefits. How do we get some of the funding that is going into the Bay Program restoration to go towards some of these things that aren't directly creditable through our water quality framework? If there are opportunities to revisit crediting, how do we improve our crediting framework to be able to better incentivize conservation and stewardship and management and resilience? To add a little emphasis to the watershed function comment, hydrology is the primary. Sediment and nutrients are secondary. If we get at the primary, we have less of the secondary, to emphasize in terms of crediting.
 - **Ken Hyer:** Quick question about 3.0.6. The first management strategy for the goal team was improved coordination. We had an example earlier of enhancing how we work with the water quality goal team. I wonder if 3.0.6 is an example of what we mean when we talk about coordinating across goal teams and connecting the durability of BMP's. Is this a subset of what we had under the first strategy? Just a thought, and I also don't know how many strategies we want at the goal team level so it could be an opportunity to consolidate.
 - o **Katie Brownson:** To build on that, elucidating it as a separate challenge could be okay, but the means for addressing it are through improved coordination, so maybe the management approach covers multiple challenges, but having a bit more specificity on what the challenges are might be helpful in that case.
 - **Elizabeth Hoffman:** Can you expand on what you mean by crediting conservation or stewardship?

- o **Katie Brownson:** I think it could take different forms, but right now conserving land doesn't get you any sort of water quality credit, even though it is kind of an insurance policy for any restoration work that is happening on a landscape. So there are different ways that could be done, whether it is a standalone BMP that gets credit for avoiding conversion to other land use or a plus to a restoration practice where you are doing restoration in an area that is already conserved. Some mechanism for providing a water quality credit for jurisdictions for their TMDL for conservation work.

V. Adjourn

Next Meeting: TBD

Attendees:

- Julia Fucci, CRC
- Arianna Johns, DEQ
- Ben McFarlane, HRPDC
- Christopher Peters, FPAC-NRCS, PA
- Caitlin Verdu, VOR
- Steve Saari, DOEE
- Deborah Herr Cornwell, MDP
- Kenneth Hyer, USGS
- Richard Turcotte, FS, WV
- Cass Klingaman, DEC
- Sarah Xenophon, SCC
- Peter Claggett, USGS
- Tyler Trostle, PA DEP
- Joseph Schell, DNREC
- Linnea Sherman, PEC
- Julie Reichert-Nguyen, NOAA
- Claire Jantz, DCNR PA
- Nick Miller, MDA
- John Rowe, Unverified
- Michaela Kuykendall, MDA
- Nicole Carlozo, DNR
- Sara Coleman, DNR
- Robert Corletta, DDOT
- Amanda Cather, Ag Advisory Committee
- Jess Blackburn, SAC
- Megan Beever, CBC | Sea Grant Fellow
- Lori Brown, DNREC
- Cassandra Davis, DEC
- Daniel Koval, CRC
- Scott Settle, WVDEP
- Jeffrey Lerner, EPA
- KC Filippino, HRPDC
- Maggie Woodward, CRC
- Molly Hassett, DEC
- Jacqueline Pickford, USGS
- Natalie Snider, MDNR
- Chris Guy, FWS
- Holly Walker, DNREC DE

- Patrick McDonnell, PennFuture, SAC
- Craig Highfield, Alliance for the Chesapeake
- Rachel Owruksy, DNREC
- Lara Johnson, DOF VA
- Katherine Brownson, FS, MD
- Marel King, CBC
- Cheryl S Wise, DNR
- Emily Rice, DOEE
- Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
- Bruce Naylor, DEP PA
- Jarred Kinlein, DOF WV
- Sophie Waterman, USGS
- Rob Schnabel, CBF
- Emily Beach, CIC
- Brendan Durkin, DOEE
- Young Tsuei, DOEE
- Jeremy Hanson, CRC
- Cathryn Soriano, DNREC
- Natalie Snider, MDNR
- Douglas Bell, EPA
- Suzan Bulbulkaya, DCR
- Patricia Nylander, DOF
- Rosa Hance, Choose Clean Water Coalition
- Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
- Sarah McDonald, EPA
- Michelle Katoski, uSGS