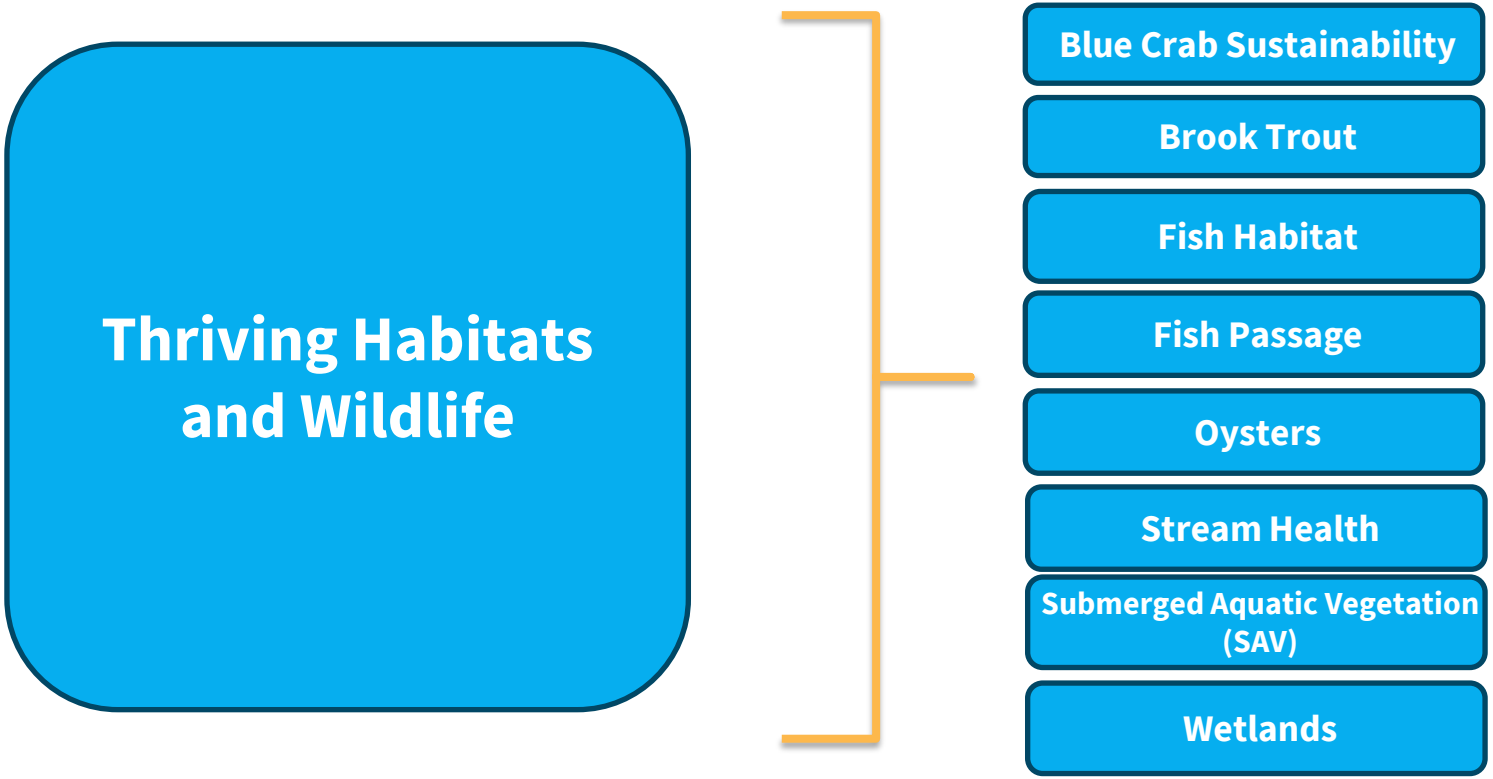
Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

September 30, 2025

Thriving Habitats and Wildlife Goal, Outcomes and Target

How Public Feedback Influenced Revisions

Thriving Habitats and Wildlife Goal and Outcomes



Blue Crab Sustainability Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Achieve a sustainable Bay-wide fishery through cross jurisdictional coordination that supports healthy blue crab populations and thriving fishing communities.

Blue Crab ~~Sustainability~~ Outcome (September 23, 2025)

Achieve a sustainable Bay-wide blue crab fishery through cross-jurisdictional coordination that supports healthy blue crab populations and thriving fish communities.

Blue Crab Sustainability Targets (July 1, 2025)

Continually maintain abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the 2026 benchmark stock assessment.

Blue Crab ~~Sustainability~~ Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Continually~~ Maintain blue crab abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the most recent ~~2026~~ benchmark stock assessment.

Blue Crab Sustainability Targets (July 1, 2025)

Achieve cross-jurisdictional coordination by jointly evaluating and communicating stock status annually through the Blue Crab Advisory Report and refining targets, as needed, through the next stock assessment.

Blue Crab ~~Sustainability~~ Targets (September 23, 2025)

Achieve cross-jurisdictional coordination by annually ~~jointly~~ evaluating and communicating blue crab population ~~stock~~ status ~~annually~~ to resource managers and the public through the Blue Crab Advisory Report ~~and refining targets, as needed, through the next stock assessment~~.

Unique Received Feedback

- Comments requested clearer, more measurable and public-friendly language.
  - Provided some minor edits to address this.

- Some comments requested specific abundance targets (e.g., female population floors) or conducting more frequent assessments.
  - Many of these will be addressed in the Management Strategy.

Brook Trout Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay watershed by increasing occupancy, abundance and resilience to changing environmental conditions.

(No revisions recommended in September 23, 2025 version.)

Brook Trout Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 2035, increase brook trout occupancy by 1% in watersheds, supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds.

Brook Trout Targets (September 23, 2025)

By 2040~~35~~, increase brook trout occupancy by 1.5% or 233 miles in watersheds, supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds (increase by 1% or 155 miles by 2035).

Brook Trout Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 2035, increase abundance at 10 long-term monitoring sites.

Brook Trout Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 2035/40, increase abundance at 10 long-term monitoring sites.

Brook Trout Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 2035, reduce identified threats by XX% to increase brook trout resilience in watersheds supporting healthy populations.

Brook Trout Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 20~~35~~40, reduce identified threats by 15% to increase brook trout resilience in watersheds supporting healthy populations (reduce by 10% by 2035).

Unique Received Feedback

- Felt 1% occupancy target was “too modest.”
  - Recommend changing to 1.5%
- Request to define baseline length of streams.
  - This distance was added.
- Add interim milestones.
  - No change recommended.
- Mixed feedback on scope—strong support for focusing on stronghold/persistent patches but some mentioned including recolonization and marginal habitats.
  - No change.
- Broad support for elevating brook trout as a “flagship species” with noted co-benefits.
  - No change.

Fish Habitat Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water habitat in tidal and non-tidal areas for key species through focused water quality, conservation and restoration improvements informed by a synthesis of fisheries science and habitat assessments.

Fish Habitat Outcome (September 23, 2025)

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water habitat in tidal and non-tidal areas for key species through focused water quality, conservation and restoration improvements informed by ~~a synthesis of fisheries science and habitat~~ an assessment~~s~~ of habitat and fisheries information.

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Continually improve the quantity and quality of shallow water fish habitat in tidal areas above baseline conditions as determined by a Bay-wide assessment of fish habitat conditions completed in 2026.

Fish Habitat Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Continually i~~Improve the quantity and quality of tidal shallow water fish habitat ~~in tidal areas~~ above baseline conditions continually as determined by a Bay-wide assessment of fish habitat conditions completed in 2026.

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Increase the consideration of forage species in fishery management decision-making for key predators by annually developing reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.

Fish Habitat Targets (September 23, 2025)

Increase the consideration of forage species in fishery management decision-making for key predators by ~~annually~~ developing annual reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Establish a baseline and assess the overall condition and suitability of fish habitat in the watershed to support healthy communities and inform effective restoration, conservation and management actions.

(No revisions recommended for September 23, 2025 version.

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Develop an acid mine drainage target, in collaboration with the Brook Trout Outcome, that strives to better understand the impacts and mitigation opportunities for acid mine drainage throughout the watershed.

Fish Habitat Targets (September 23, 2025)

Increase available habitat continually to support fish populations by improving 180 stream miles impaired by ~~Develop an~~ acid mine drainage by 2035 (270 stream miles by 2040). ~~target, in collaboration with the Brook Trout Outcome, that strives to better understand the impacts and mitigation opportunities for acid mine drainage throughout the watershed.~~

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Develop freshwater mussel conservation plans for five tributaries and begin implementation by 2035.

Fish Habitat Targets (July 1, 2025)

Develop comprehensive freshwater mussel conservation plans for ~~five~~ 10 tributaries and implement key recommendations from five of these plans by 2035 (same target for 2040). ~~begin implementation by 2035.~~

Unique Received Feedback

- Need to clearly differentiate tidal vs. non-tidal habitats, as they are related and strongly connected, but rather different communities of practitioners.
  - Clarified through minor edits.
- Consider moving the freshwater mussels and acid mine drainage targets to the Stream Health Outcome.
  - No change.
- Expand conservation efforts for freshwater mussels to 10 tributaries.
  - Changed from five to 10.
- Include an invasive species outcome or target.
  - Target included for Management Board discussion.
- Revised acid mine drainage target based on input from acid mine drainage practitioners.

Fish Passage Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Improve habitat and water quality, while creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms by removing barriers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams.

(No revisions recommended for September 23, 2025 version.)

Fish Passage Target (July 1, 2025)

Restore passage and connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years.

(No revisions recommended for September 23, 2025 version.)

Unique Received Feedback

No changes made to the following received feedback:

- Current target is too low—several comments called for a cumulative 2035 target.
- Broaden outcome from Fish Passage to Aquatic Organism Passage or Wildlife Passage.
- Concern that raw mileage totals don’t capture ecological value—need for prioritization framework.
- Region-specific comments on Susquehanna dam removals; emphasis on headwater culvert retrofits.

Oysters Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Increase ecosystem benefits from oysters through reef habitat restoration, sustainable harvest and aquaculture.

Oysters Outcome (September 23, 2025)

Increase ecosystem benefits from oysters through reef habitat restoration, sustainable harvest and aquaculture.

(No revisions recommended)

Oysters Targets (July 1, 2025)

Restore or conserve at least 1,800 additional acres of oyster reef habitat concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas to provide ecosystem service benefits.

Oysters Targets (July 1, 2025)

By 2035, ~~R~~restore or conserve at least 1,800 additional acres of oyster reef habitat concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas to provide ecosystem service benefits.

(Note: Motion to increase 1,800 acres to 2,000 acres.)

Oysters Targets (July 1, 2025)

Maintain sustainable oyster abundance through oyster fisheries and aquaculture species.

(No revisions recommended in September 23, 2025 version.)

Oysters Targets (July 1, 2025)

Maintain reefs established under the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to achieve restoration success metrics.

(No revisions recommended in September 23, 2025 version.)

Unique Received Feedback

- Increase acreage goal from 1,800 to 2,400.
  - Recommend increasing goal to 2,000.

- Broaden scope of restoration areas by including reference to sanctuaries, non-sanctuary harvest area and managed harvest areas.
  - No changes recommended.

- Further define metrics to measure success for oyster restoration and reef health, such as survival rates, biomass and density.
  - Recommended for inclusion in Management Strategy.

Stream Health Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Continually improve and protect local stream health and function, including their living resources and ecosystem services throughout the watershed using the best available science to inform land management, planning and conservation.

Stream Health Outcome (September 23, 2025)

~~Continually i~~Improve and protect local stream health and function, including their living resources and ecosystem services throughout the watershed using the best available science to inform land management, planning and conservation.

Stream Health Target (July 1, 2025)

Improve health and ecological integrity of at least 3% of non-tidal stream miles every six years.

Stream Health Target (September 23, 2025)

Improve health and ecological integrity of at least 3%, or 4,340 ~~of~~ non-tidal stream miles, every six years.

Unique Received Feedback

- Add miles, in addition to percent improvement.
  - Miles added, along with percent improvement.
- Welcome others to get involved with the development of the Management Strategy—how do we actively recruit and welcome new members into the partnership?
  - Important concept for Management Board to consider.
- Request to potentially add several targets and outcomes under stream health (i.e., fish passage, non-tidal habitat, acid mine drainage, freshwater mussels).
  - Would not be an improvement to add these targets here; would still have many workgroups under this outcome, not improving efficiency.
- Add additional terms and metrics.
  - Recommend adding to Management Strategy.
- No change recommended to the following feedback:
  - New target is too low.
  - Data limitations may cause an inconsistency with 2035/2040.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide, which is necessary for a restored Bay.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Outcome (September 23, 2025)

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,635 ~~000~~ acres of SAV Bay-wide, ~~which is~~ necessary for a restored Bay.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Targets (July 1, 2025)

Progress toward this Outcome will be measured against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030 and 95,000 acres by 2035.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Targets (September 23, 2025)

Measure ~~P~~progress toward this Outcome ~~will be measured~~ against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030, ~~and~~ 95,000 acres by 2035 and 100,000 acres by 2040.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Targets (July 1, 2025)

Progress will also be measured against the following targets for each salinity zone:

- Tidal Fresh: 21,330 acres
- Low Salinity: 13,094 acres
- Medium Salinity: 126,032 acres
- High Salinity: 35,790 acres

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Targets (September 23, 2025)

Measure ~~P~~progress ~~will also be measured~~ against the following targets for each salinity zone:

- Tidal Fresh: 21,~~330~~ 719 acres
- Low Salinity: 13,094 acres
- Medium Salinity: 126,032 acres
- High Salinity: 35,790 acres

Unique Received Feedback

- Errors noted in SAV acreage totals and opinions on specific numbers and timelines vary with some finding total acreage either not achievable or not enough.
  - Target numbers corrected.
- Questions around SAV species usage and tracking growth.
  - No changes recommended.

Wetlands Outcome (July 1, 2025)

Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and other valuable benefits to people.

(No revisions recommended for September 23, 2025 version.)

Wetlands Targets (July 1, 2025)

Tidal Wetlands Target: Restore or create 1,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035.

Wetlands Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Tidal Wetlands Target:~~ Restore or create 1,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of tidal wetlands by 2035.

Wetlands Targets (July 1, 2025)

Non-Tidal Wetlands Target: Restore or create 2,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035.

Wetlands Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Non-Tidal Wetlands Target:~~ Restore or create 2,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of non-tidal wetlands by 2035.

Wetlands Targets (July 1, 2025)

Buffer Protection Target: Same as the Protected Lands Outcome and will be tracked under that Outcome.

Wetlands Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Buffer Protection Target: Same as the Protected Lands Outcome and will be tracked under that Outcome.~~

Wetlands Targets (July 1, 2025)

Waterbirds represent wetlands functioning at its highest level; priorities for specific species will be developed over the next 12 to 18 months.

Wetlands Targets (September 23, 2025)

~~Waterbirds represent wetlands functioning at its highest level;~~ Develop priorities for specific waterbird species ~~will be developed~~ over the next 12 to 18 months.

Unique Received Feedback

- Target is too low; Wetlands Workgroup would prefer a higher target as well.
  - Management Board to discuss.
- Cross-listing with Protected Lands Outcome is confusing and inconsistent with other listed targets.
  - Target removed from Wetlands Outcome.
- More detail needed on metrics, approach and terminology.
  - Recommend including in Management Strategy.
- Waterbirds target is under development for the next 12 to 18 months.
  - No change recommended.

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&

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Thank you!

Any questions?

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