



Maintain Healthy Watersheds GIT Meeting

October 17, 2022

11:00 am-1:00pm

Kristin Saunders, UMCES
Scott Phillips, USGS
Debbie Herr Cornwell, MDP
Holly Walker, DNREC
Renee Thompson, USGS CBP HWGIT
Coordinator
Jason Dubow, Maryland Planning
Kelly Maloney, USGS
Katie Brownson, USFS
Adrienne Kotula, Chesapeake Bay Commission
Steve Epting, US EPA HQ
Alison Santoro, MD DNR, SHWG Co-chair
Dan Murphy, USFWS
Jennifer Walls, DE DNREC
Taylor Woods, USGS

Scott Heidel PA DEP
Kara Ogburn, MDE
John Wolf, USGS and Chesapeake Bay Program
GIS Team
Laura Cattell Noll, Local Leadership Workgroup
Charles Rice, Charles County
Scott Stranko Maryland DNR
Michael Blair, Innovate
Bonnie Bick
Angel Valdez, MDE
Debra Krahling
Cassandra Davis, NYS DEC
Sophie Waterman, CRC, HWGIT Staffer
Jeff Lerner, EPA

11:00 AM Welcome and Member Updates – Jeff Lerner, HWGIT Chair, Partnerships Program Branch Chief within EPA's Office of Wetlands Oceans and Watersheds'

11:15 AM GIT Funding Update and Land Use Methods and Metrics Update - Renee Thompson, USGS
Renee ran through some updates and happenings that are relevant to the GIT. You can view the updates [here](#).

She also took some time to talk about GIT Funding projects:

- The HWGIT has made the 2022 GIT funding project Community Response to Land Use Changes a priority project. The project seeks to identify communities throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed where valued habitats and species are at risk of degradation through the use of the Chesapeake Bay Program's existing tools, such as the very high-resolution land use/land cover and change data, forecasts of future urbanization, as well as publicly available decision support tools. The aim is to increase knowledge about the environmental values and perceptions of local communities and demonstrate how decision-support tools and analyses can be actionable and operational at the community level. The project includes interactions with individuals within a small subset of vulnerable communities identified to understand how they understand and react to this type of information.
- The other GIT Funding project of interest is the Protected Lands: Communicating Chesapeake Land Conservation through a Storymap. This project would utilize a refined Chesapeake Bay Protected Lands dataset for reporting progress through a visualization tool to communicate

trends in progress toward meeting the CBP 2 million acre goal by 2025 as well as expand on communicating progress towards protecting 30% of the watershed by 2030, utilizing stakeholder input to frame interpretation of results and data, and create an improved platform to package, visualize and interpret progress toward protecting high value lands for effective communication.

11:30 AM The Maryland Healthy Watershed Assessment Final Results and Next Steps – Renee Thompson, USGS

During our June meeting Nancy Roth, Tetra Tech presented the MDHWA preliminary results. Renee Thompson took some time during the October meeting to present on the Maryland Healthy Watershed Assessment (MDHWA). The MDHWA analyses utilized the Maryland Biological Stream Survey (MBSS) data to examine relationships between landscape variables and stream response to assess the predictive power of metrics for use in modeling stream conditions. These models can subsequently be used to predict (1) current stream condition for unsampled areas and (2) future stream condition under new predicted future landscape conditions. Several CBP high resolution land use land cover data (2017) metrics including percent tree canopy, natural area and impervious surface in the riparian area were found to be consistently important. In addition, streambank and streambed erosion metrics, road stream crossing, population and housing unit density were also significant. You can find the report [here](#).

If you would like more information on the data and code, please email Renee (rthompso@chesapeakebay.net).

A conversation about metrics, catchments, and how some of the data came together occurred. Communication of the data and analysis, and communication to locals was also brought up. Renee noted that we are now just starting to get to that point.

This presentation supports the HWGIT's SRS Logic and [Action plan Actions](#): 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 4.2, and 5.1

12:00 PM Charles County Comprehensive Plan- Charles Rice, Charles County Government, Planning and Growth Management

Mr. Rice gave a presentation on Charles County's Comprehensive plan and its contents related to protecting the Mattawoman Creek. The protection of the creek is spelled out in the Natural Resources chapter of the [comprehensive plan](#).

Mr. Rice walked through the different tools that were used to help identify the need of protection of the creek. There have been a wide variety of different reports done that identify the Mattawoman creek as an area with high value ecosystem services. When Charles County updated their comprehensive plan, they also updated their watershed conservation zones and intentionally set aside land in the Mattawoman Creek watershed for protection. Watershed Conservation Zoning has played a key role in the protection of the creek. Priority perseveration areas are also crucial to the protection of the creek, much of the southern portion of the creek are located in priority preservation areas. The southern portion of mattawoman creek watershed has recently been designated a rural legacy area, which means it is slated for preservation through grant fudning.

There is a current effort going on that is looking at the Bryans Road area of the county to better identify future areas of development. A contractor is using MD DNRs biodiversity index tool to determine what areas should remain as priority for preservation and what areas may be good for future development.

Discussion on the Mattawoman protection and conservation then occurred.

(SRS Logic and [Action plan Actions](#): 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, and 3.2)

12:30 PM Chesapeake Healthy Watershed Assessment User Needs Activity

As the HWGIT coordination team and contractor Innovate Inc. develop the Chesapeake Healthy Watershed Assessment 2.0, they want to make sure that user needs are addressed and considered. To ensure that they are refining a tool for target audiences including, *HWGIT members, land conservation professionals, watershed practitioners and local planners*, they asked members to participate in an activity. Sophie led the whole group through an example activity and then sent folks to break out groups. The breakout groups worked through a simplified series of hands-on activities where they used the current [Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment Tool](#) from the perspective of the user groups mentioned above and then answered some questions about the tool and their experience.

The breakout groups came back together to share some of the things they discussed.

Land Conservation Professional:

Demonstrated more than one way to go about the questions

Filtering tool was helpful to understanding.

There are some real opportunities to communicate how to use the tool: webinars, tutorials, getting the info out there in every way for every type of learner.

HWGIT Member:

ESRI products are not familiar to everyone. There needs to be a very specific and step by step for those who are not familiar with the tool. This could help with increasing confidence in using the tool.

Interaction with the tool and how to use it took a bulk of the time with this group.

Local Planner:

Capacity issues at the local level might impact people's ability to use and understanding the tool. A step-by-step format could be a great way to get people comfortable with the tool. Something that explains a "how to" and how to apply the tool could be a useful product.

The communication portion of the tool (reports and maps) is beatifical. The diversity in those communication tools is awesome. The issue is just getting people exposed and up to speed with the CHWA. Some of our smaller jurisdictions are going to have a harder learning curve compared to larger planning offices.

The floor was then opened for general comments:

Scott Heidel asked: Can you add impaired streams and TMDL layers to the tool? That could help make this a screening tool to help prioritize high impact TMDL development. Renee noted that an overlay could help achieve that and could be a great add to the tool.

(SRS Logic and Action plan Actions: 1.4, and 4.2)