



## Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) Team Meeting

Tuesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

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

**Purpose:** During the November STAR Meeting, Catherine Krikstan (UMCES) presented on the interim status of the ChesapeakeProgress site as they make changes to match the new Agreement's Goals, Outcomes, and Targets. Next, Rachel Felver (ACB) shared the final draft of the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and pointed out the key updates. This draft will be shared with the Executive Council on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The next STAR Meeting will be December 18<sup>th</sup> and will focus on the scientific work happening within the partnership.

### Minutes

#### I. Welcome, Introductions & Announcements

*Lead: **Ken Hyer** (U.S. Geological Survey, USGS) STAR Chair, **Breck Sullivan** (USGS) STAR Coordinator, and **Peter Tango** (USGS) CBP Monitoring Coordinator.*

#### II. [ChesapeakeProgress in the Interim](#)

*Lead: **Catherine Krikstan** (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, UMCES)*

Catherine Krikstan gave an overview of what will happen to [ChesapeakeProgress](#) when the new Watershed Agreement is adopted. This website was built to show progress towards the 2014 Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes but needs to be updated to reflect the new Watershed Agreement. Catherine shared their major goals for this transition, which are maintaining trust, ensuring indicator data remains available, and using resources wisely. Next, she shared the proposed plan for transitioning. In doing this, she also showed where and how these changes would be seen. For example, the 2025 snapshot will be in the dropdown options at the top of [the Chesapeake Data website](#). Lastly, Catherine answered some frequently asked questions. The next steps are reaching out to the Management Board, Coordinators, and Staffers during the week of December 8<sup>th</sup> and implementing these changes the week of December 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### Discussion Notes:

**Q:** *Jeremy Hanson:* You expect the holding page would go up on the 15<sup>th</sup>?

- **A:** *Catherine Krikstan:* Yes, the week of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Q:** *Peter Tango:* In the snapshot page, I see text without any graphics. Is there a reason that isn't there?

- **A:** *Catherine Krikstan:* Since this is the data site and not the progress site itself, we didn't want to include too much in terms of graphics for data because we didn't want to recreate the

progress site. We wanted a quick reference point, but we provided a summary of the latest dataset. It's kind of like a more technical Bay Barometer.

**Q: Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** It's great to show what we are doing now, but I don't want to lose our baseline and the progress we've made. I know the Bay Barometer is a good summary of that. Does it make sense to have an archive of Bay Barometers on the website?

- **A: Catherine Krikstan:** I will write that down. There should be a better connection. We don't link to an archive, but we could totally do that. Currently, on ChesapeakeProgress we have some indicators with a 2014 baseline, but we have some that go back a lot further than that. For example, the underwater grasses dataset goes back to the 80s. When we relaunch with the focus on the revised targets, we won't be starting in 2025. We can tell the story of the historical progress, but I think that will be up to the individual teams.

**Q: Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Are there any conversations to track progress towards our overarching principles? I feel like it got lost in the 2014 Watershed Agreement but was mentioned a lot in the revision process. For example, some outcomes are no longer outcomes but overarching principles, like Climate Monitoring and Assessment, where we want to bring climate science to the workgroups. Is there a way to track how many workgroups have integrated climate? If we don't do something like that, I feel like those principles will get lost again. Another overarching principle would be tribal engagement. I wonder if there is a place to track these and emphasize how important they are to us.

- **A: Catherine Krikstan:** We don't want to rebuild progress in the same template. We want to do a round of research with stakeholders to ask questions and learn what is important. In the Management Board and Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) meetings, I heard other people also asking how we would measure progress in these principles. In the new year, we will be doing that research. I wrote this down as a potential need. If multiple users say that would be beneficial, which I assume they will, then we will have to include it.

**Q: Breck Sullivan:** In the Proposed Plan slide, it says "keep funding page." What is that?

- **A: Catherine Krikstan:** Everything under the "About Us" section will remain on the website, including the [funding page](#). This is where we track or report on all of the funding that's reported through the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act (CBARA). There are also other figures including Infrastructure Act funds and grant fund allocations.
- **A: Keith Bollt:** This is on ChesapeakeProgress for accountability, transparency and communications. We are always looking for ways to streamline and present this information, like we present the other information on the website. CBARA is a 2014 legislation which requires federal and state agencies to report their investments in the Bay watershed towards Bay restoration. This website has been up the entire time and has 11 years of data. Please reach out to me ([bollt.keith@epa.gov](mailto:bollt.keith@epa.gov)) or Doug ([bell.douglas@epa.gov](mailto:bell.douglas@epa.gov)) if you have any questions.

**Q: Ken Hyer:** Is there an equal representation of the economic value of the system? I ask because when we were updating the Watershed Agreement, members of the Management Board wanted to take a purpose-driven approach to paying attention to the economics of the system. I love the idea of balancing federal investment, partnership investment, and value. Is it on the group's mind to show both sides of the economic piece?

- **A: Keith Bollt:** That's really important. Investments are used as a heuristic for benefits or as units of work, but they're not the same thing. CBARA is a piece of legislation which asks the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), inside the White House, to come up with a report.

The report doesn't measure what the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) is doing. It measures what CBP partners are doing in restoration of the Bay watershed. It also mentions a couple of studies in the text. Because of what OMB asks us to do, the CBARA report doesn't measure the added value of CBP, but more so what we are doing in the watershed. We're trying to come up with creative ways to demonstrate that there is productivity coming from the partnership itself, not just the partners. We're highlighting EPA grants that come from the CBP. We are highlighting in the text and graphs that we are greater than the sum of our parts.

- **Comment from chat:** Rachel Felter: Ken, we've been tracking economic studies of the watershed for the past few years. Post-Executive Council (EC) meeting, perhaps we can chat about how they would be useful.
- **Response:** Ken Hyer: I think we want to make sure that highlighted text is front and center to tell the whole story.

**Comment:** Doug Bell: CBARA will usually be accepted in January, and we will try to update the page in March. Among the things we want to update initially is the accompanying data file. If you download the file, there is a lot of information, and we'd like to structure it more clearly. We'd also like to make a stronger attempt at visualizing where appropriations go so people can better understand how resources go into jurisdictions, grant programs, etc. CBARA report the categories of our investments and we are looking to tweak that to show what our audience is interested in rather than the categories that OMB sets. In three or four months, this page will be given some TLC. Ken, ideas like yours will be more than welcome.

**Comment from chat:** Julie Reichert-Nguyen: It would be great to have a chart that shows how this statement is allocated to the goals in the new Watershed Agreement, "More than two-thirds (\$62.4 million) of the \$92 million Congressional allocation to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Program was awarded through grant programs that provide support to state governments, local governments and other partners to help them meet the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL)." Categorizing by goals could help align with other aspects of ChesapeakeProgress.

### III. State of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

**Lead:** Rachel Felter (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, ACB)

In this presentation, Rachel shared the finalized Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which is going in front of the EC on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, and pointed out some key differences. The first is the Vision, which was written by a watershed resident. Another was the addition of conservation in the Principles. The existing 10 goals have been consolidated into four.

In the Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife Goal, Rachel highlighted the focus on acid mine drainage and freshwater mussel conservation in the Fish Habitat Outcome. The Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Outcome includes different targets for different salinity zones, which has never been done before. The Oysters Outcome is pointing out aquaculture practices. The Wetlands Outcome is highlighting tidal and nontidal separately for the first time, and they have included all waterbirds.

Rachel also highlighted the water quality-related outcomes, especially the timelines in the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome, the information sharing focus of the Toxic Contaminants Outcome and the mention of specific parameters in the Water Quality, Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome.

Within the Healthy Landscapes Goal, they have added Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions. The Healthy Forests and Trees Outcome is including conservation and reducing the rate of forest conversion for the first time. The Land Use Planning and Decision Support

Outcome focuses on communicating land use changes to communities and promoting tools, while the Protected Lands Outcome is specifying specific target types of protected lands for the first time.

Lastly, for the Engaged Communities Goal, what was previously the Local Leadership Outcome is now the Local Governmental Leadership Outcome. The Public Access Outcome expanded to help maintain existing public access sites. It also calls out water and land access sites and accessibility with the Americans with Disabilities and Architectural Barriers Acts. The three former Environmental Literacy Outcomes are now two outcomes, the School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome and the Student Environmental Literacy Experiences Outcome. There is also the addition of the new Workforce Outcome.

The Management Strategy plan talks about how the management strategies will be developed over the 18-month period decided by the PSC. They have also included the original signature page from the 2014 Watershed Agreement and a paragraph explaining how the new Watershed Agreement was adopted in 2025.

#### **Discussion Notes:**

**Q:** *Breck Sullivan:* If waterbirds wants to have a target later on, can they go through the adaptive management process of creating one?

- **A:** *Catherine Krikstan:* I think that's under management strategies in the last paragraph of the new Watershed Agreement.
- **A:** *Ken Hyer:* I think they would have to go through the process and get approved by the PSC.
- **A:** *Rachel Felter:* I don't remember if that was planned. I don't think that level was discussed, but someone can correct me if I'm wrong.
- **Response from chat:** Nick Staten: I think there is affinity for a waterbird target; the potential data sources and point of contacts from jurisdictions is unknown at the moment. We need to speak to experts about what species to track (ex. osprey, colonial nesters, other?) and the data availability for those species/groups. Stay tuned!

**Comment:** *Julie Reichert-Nyugen:* For the Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions Outcome, it doesn't say it in the language, but the sub watershed areas could be tidal, nontidal, or a combination of both. We couldn't go into great detail in the new Watershed Agreement, but in our Management Strategy, we will be covering how we select those seven sub watershed areas.

**Q from chat:** Jeremy Hanson: Does someone know the final count of targets under the 21 outcomes? I haven't counted them since the summer.

- **A from chat:** Sarah Brzezinski: 4 goals, 21 outcomes, pretty sure it is 47 targets (someone double check my count).
- **A from chat:** *Catherine Krikstan:* 47

**Comment:** *Breck Sullivan:* Thank you, Rachel. And thank you, Dave Yayak and the team for the beautiful setup. The new Watershed Agreement was beautiful.

**Comment from chat:** *John Wolf:* Looks great!

**Comment from chat:** Julie Reichert-Nguyen: Awesome job Rachel and everyone! Neat to see the 1+ years of work leading to this new Watershed Agreement in such a nice document.

**Comment:** *William Dennison:* Well done!

**Comment:** *Ken Hyer:* As someone who has been grinding through paper copies without pictures, I love this layout. It really brought it to life. In that Management Strategy section, we have the 18-month period to get things set up, then we have a six-year period that brings us to 2033, which is the midpoint check-in. Then, we will have another six-year period that brings us to 2040. I think the Management Board and PSC heard that we need more working time and the 2033 midpoint check-in aligns with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partnership, which will be a great time to reflect. I think this timeline works very well and we all need to keep it in mind as we are creating our management strategies.

**Q:** *Larry Sanford:* Has there been any thoughts to coordinating between the Water Quality Goal and the focus of healthy watersheds in the specific sub-basins? Moving forward, do we emphasize improving water quality everywhere, or do we focus efforts in those identified sub-watersheds in the Healthy Landscapes Goal?

- **Comment:** *Julie Reichert-Nguyen:* I want to put a plug in for the Healthy Landscapes Goal meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup>. All of the outcomes under the Healthy Landscapes Goal will be coming together to have similar discussions to this, including how we will identify the sub-watershed locations and build our networks together. Anyone is welcome if you are interested!
- **Comment from chat:** *Julie Reichert-Nguyen:* Here is the Healthy Landscapes meeting page that will have the agenda posted next week.  
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/healthy-landscapes-goal-joint-meeting>

**Comment:** *Rachel Felver:* The new Watershed Agreement is available online if you'd like to take a look, but it has not been formally approved yet, so be careful in sharing it.

**Comment:** *Ken Hyer:* While we have the new Watershed Agreement going to the EC, please keep in mind that the conversation around the structure of the partnership is heating up. Now that we have our goals, outcomes, and targets, we need to think of how to operationalize those into goal teams and workgroups. Pay particular attention to these discussions. We should all weigh in on these conversations.

**Comment:** *Breck Sullivan:* The next STAR Meeting will be December 18th. After spending much of the year talking about Beyond 2025, we will be using this meeting to shift the focus back to science and hear about some of the amazing work happening around the partnership.

#### **IV. STAR Member and Interested Parties Check-in**

**Lead:** *Breck Sullivan (USGS)*

The group was unable to cover this agenda item due to time.

#### **V. Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, December 18, 2025

**Attendees:**

- Alex LoCurto, ACB
- Allison Welch, CRC
- Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
- Auston Smith, EPA
- Breck Sullivan, USGS
- Catherine Krikstan, UMCES
- Christina Garvey, CRC
- Doug Bell, EPA
- Emily Young, ICPRB
- Gabriel Duran, CRC
- George Doumit, DNREC
- Jeremy Hanson, CRC
- John Lancaster
- John Wolf, USGS
- Joseph Schell, DNREC
- Julia Fucci, CRC
- Julie Reichert-Nguyen, NOAA
- Jun Suk Byun, UMCES
- Katie Ayers, EPA
- Keith Bollt, EPA
- Ken Hyer, USGS
- Larry Sanford, UMCES
- Liz Chudoba, ACB
- Marisa Baldine, ACB
- Mary Stack, ICPRB
- Megan Thyng, EPA
- Nick Staten, CRC
- Patrick Thompson, Energy Works
- Petra Baldwin, CRC
- Qian Zhang, UMCES
- Rachel Felver, ACB
- Rebecca Murphy, UMCES
- Rick Mittler, ACB
- Sarah Brzezinski, EPA
- Tou Matthews, CRC
- William Dennison, UMCES