Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team

2026 Spring Meeting

April 20, 2026

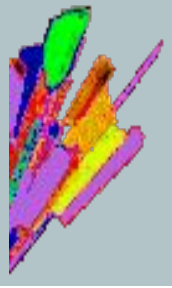
Today's Agenda

- Overview of accomplishments under 2014 Agreement
  - Oysters
  - Blue Crabs
  - Fish Habitat
  - Forage
  - Invasive Catfish Workgroup
- Transition to 2025 Agreement
  - Governance & Structure
  - Management Strategies
- Open Q&A

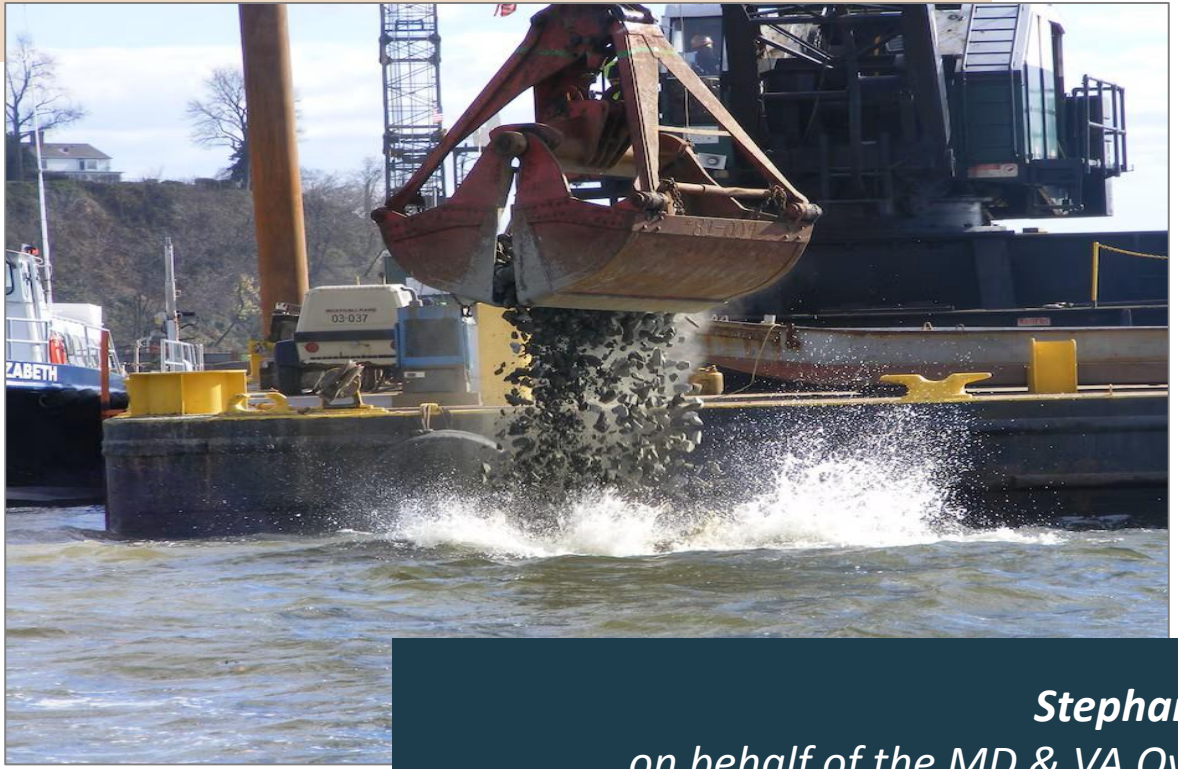
Share your thoughts on Canva!

https://canva.link/4qam6c6072lqkjg

Time to Celebrate!



‘Ten Tributaries’ Oyster Outcome



Stephanie Reynolds Westby (NOAA)
on behalf of the MD & VA Oyster Restoration Workgroups
under the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team

What did we set out to do?

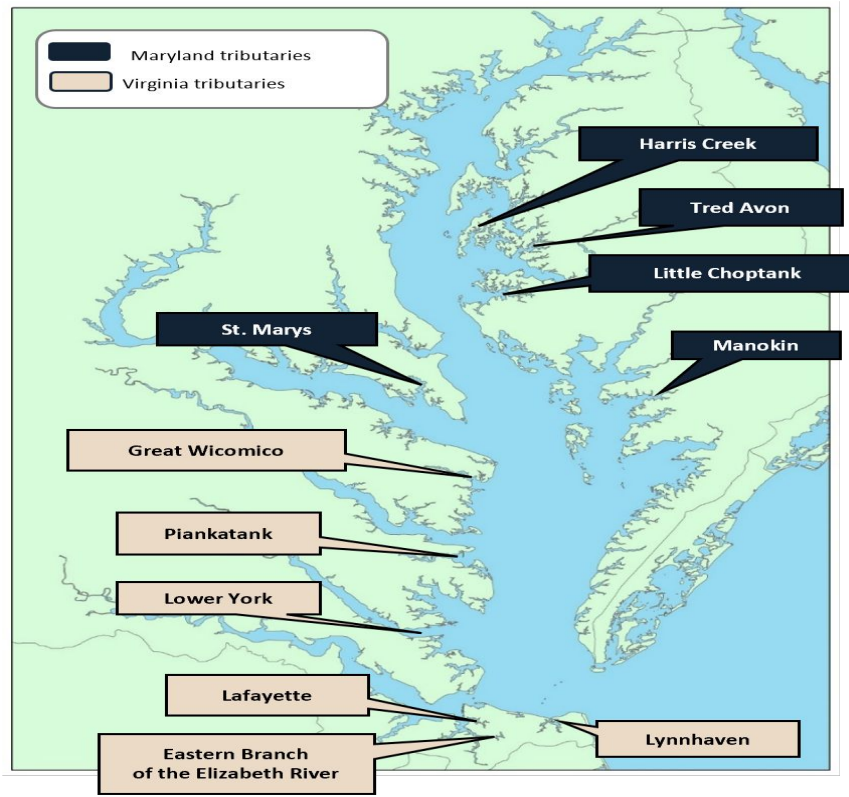
Restore native oyster populations in 10 Chesapeake Bay tributaries by 2025, and ensure their protection

"Ten Triburaties" outcome

What did we do?

We did it!

- 10 tributaries restored Bay wide
  - five in MD
  - five in VA, plus a ‘bonus’ VA tributary
- 1900 acres of reef habitat restored
  - = three square miles of new, healthy reefs.
- Global model and success story



How are the reefs doing?

Monitoring results:

- 99% of reefs are meeting the minimum threshold success criteria for oyster density & biomass
- 85% are meeting the higher, target levels.

Photo: Oyster Recovery Partnership

What did we learn?

Oyster restoration *can* be done at this scale

- Unprecedented globally
- National and international model and success story

Partnerships are key

- Secret sauce =
  collective goal setting +
  collective success criteria, planning, implementing, tracking + engaged citizenry
- Oysters are easy; people are hard

It is expensive

- Approx. $118 million over 10 years for all 10 tributaries

Ecosystem services may make it worth the investment, ex:

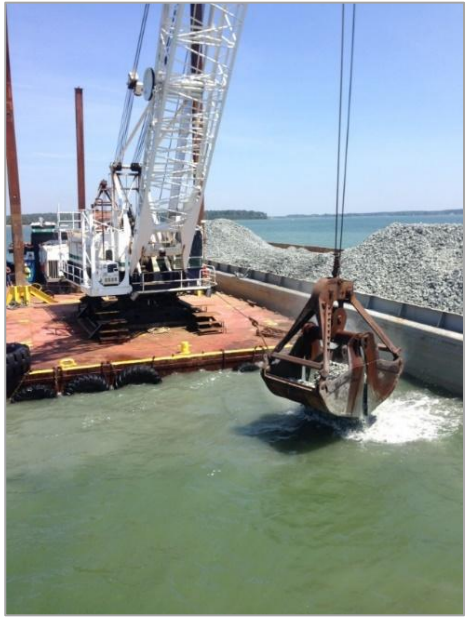
- Restoring one tributary alone cost $28m; N and P reductions estimated at $3m/ year[1]; suggests a less than10-year return-on-investment considering *just* the N and P reduction service.

- Modelling[2] shows that reefs in three of the 10 restored tributaries together would result in a fishery production increase of an estimated $22.8 million annually, compared to commercially harvested reefs.

Photo: Oyster Recovery Partnership

1. Kellogg ML, Brush M, Cornwell J (2018) An updated model for estimating the TMDL-related benefits of oyster reef restoration Harris Creek, Maryland, U.S.A., Maryland. Virginia Institute of Marine Science, William & Mary.
2. Bruce DG, Cornwell JC, Harris L, Ihde TF, Kellogg ML, Knoche S, et al. (2021) A synopsis of research on the ecosystem services provided by large-scale oyster restoration in the Chesapeake Bay. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Technical Memorandum NMFS-OHC-8. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Annapolis, Maryland.

This feels hopeful. Can we keep it going…?



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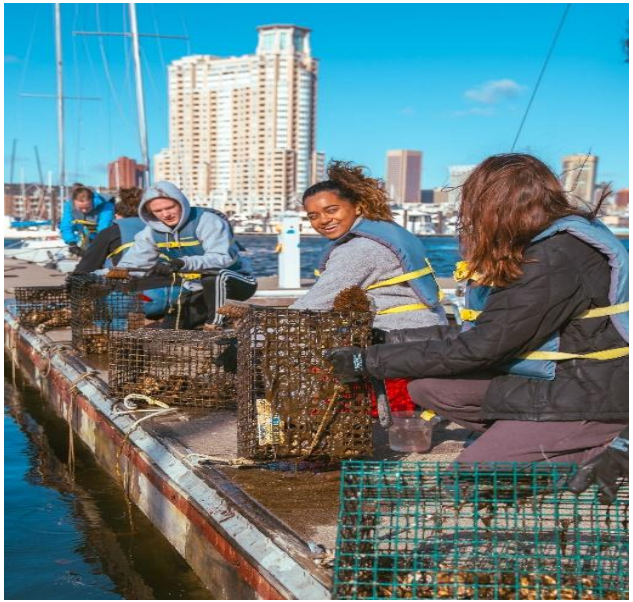


Photo: Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Blue Crab Management & Abundance Outcome

Management Outcome: Manage for a stable and productive crab fishery including working with the industry, recreational crabbers and other stakeholders to improve commercial and recreational harvest accountability. By 2018, evaluate the establishment of a Bay-wide, allocation-based management framework with annual levels set by the jurisdictions for the purpose of accounting for and adjusting harvest by each jurisdiction.

Abundance Outcome: Maintain a sustainable blue crab population based on a target of 196* million adult females. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.

Forage Outcome

Continually improve the partnership's capacity to understand the role of forage fish populations in the Chesapeake Bay. By 2016, develop a strategy for assessing the forage fish base available as food for predatory species in the Chesapeake Bay.

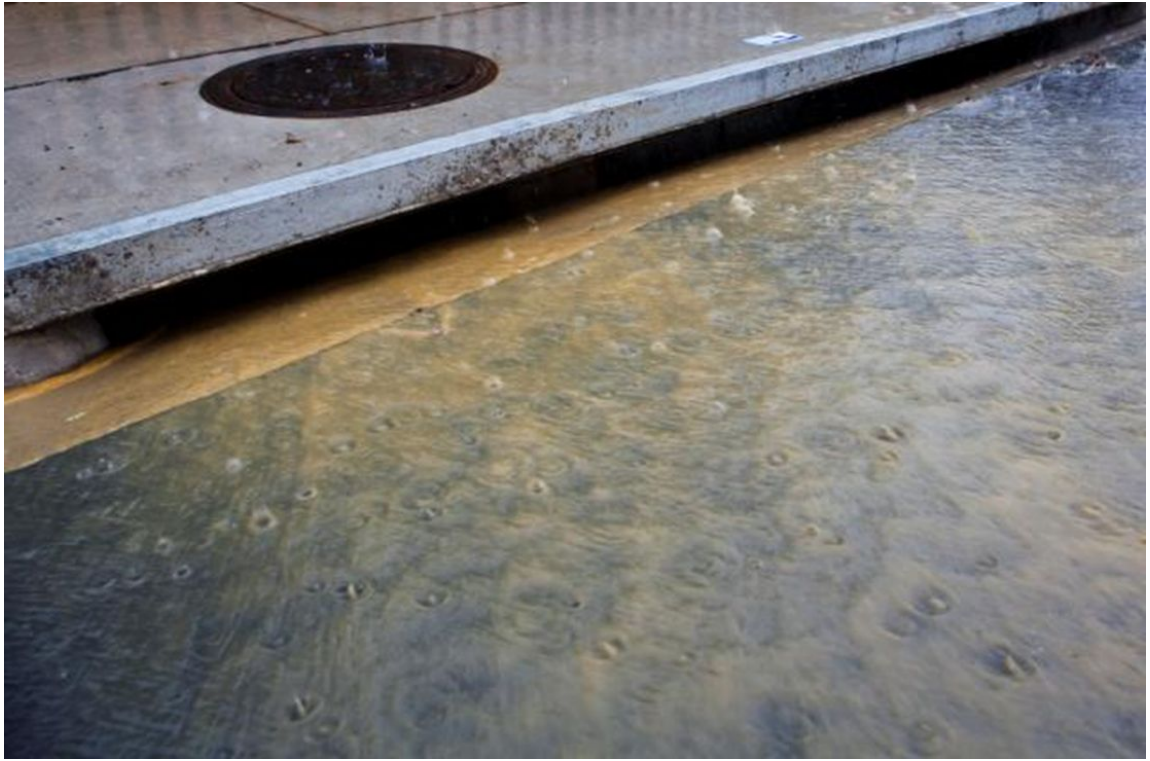
Fish Habitat Outcome

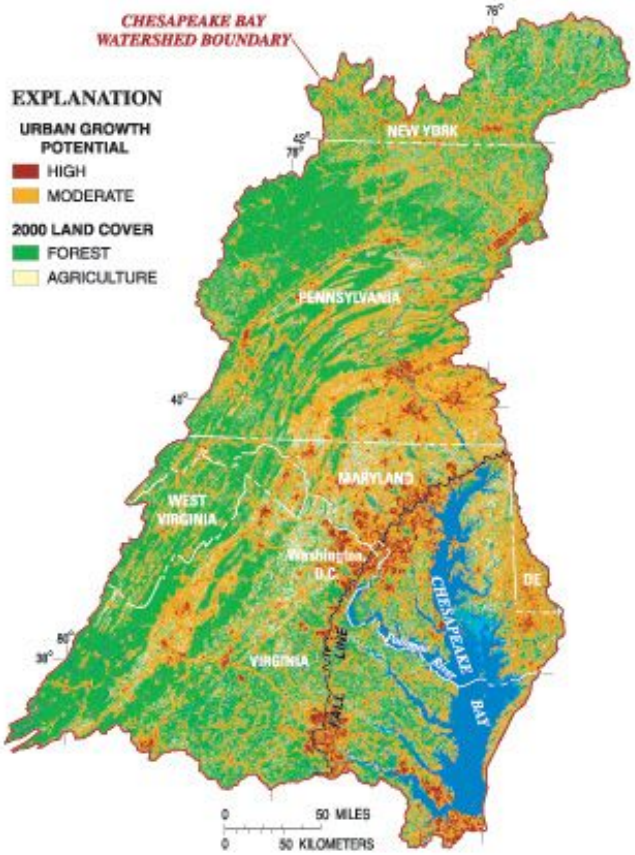
Continually improve effectiveness of fish habitat conservation and restoration efforts by identifying and characterizing critical spawning, nursery and forage areas within the Bay and tributaries for important fish and shellfish, and use existing and new tools to integrate information and conduct assessments to inform restoration and conservation efforts.

Fish Habitat Outcome

Fish Habitat Outcome

Fish Habitat Outcome





Invasive Catfish Workgroup

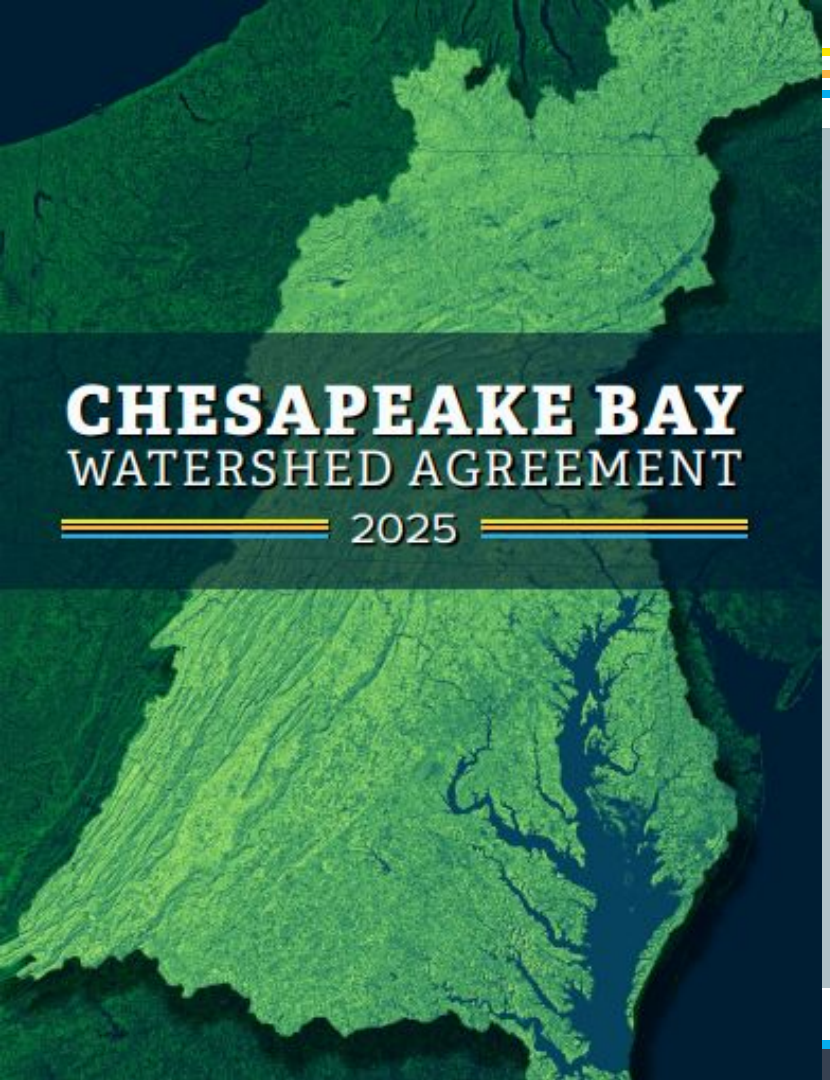
Coordinates the best available science and develops methods to evaluate the impacts of invasive catfish on the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The workgroup also coordinates activities and recommends actions to implement the five policy objectives outlined in the 2012 Invasive Catfish Policy Adoption Statement.

Invasive Catfish Workgroup

- Science
  - Abundance estimate
  - Ecological impacts
- Marketing and processing
  - Harvest gaps
  - Processing capacity
  - Value add products
- Policy
  - Legilslative changes

Thank you all for your participation & support in the FishGIT!



Transition to 2025 Watershed Agreement

10 Goals

4 Goals

31 Outcomes

21 Outcomes

assessments of habitat and fisheries information.

- Improve the quantity and quality of tidal shallow water fish habitat above baseline conditions as determined by a Bay-wide assessment of fish habitat conditions completed in 2026.
- Increase the consideration of forage species in fishery management decision-making for key predators by developing annual reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.
- Improve the quality of nontidal fish habitat by continuing to assess the overall condition and suitability in the watershed to support healthy communities and inform effective restoration, conservation and management actions.
- By 2040, improve 270 stream miles of waters impaired by acid mine drainage to continually increase available habitat supporting fish populations.
- Develop comprehensive freshwater mussel conservation plans for 10 tributaries and implement key recommendations from at least five of these plans by 2040.

Blue crabs support commercial and recreational fisheries and are managed across state lines.

The oyster aquaculture industry supports local economies and contributes to clean water.

Fish Passage

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.

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

Oysters

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

- By 2040, restore or conserve at least 2,000 additional acres of oyster reef habitat concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas to provide ecosystem service benefits.
- Maintain sustainable oyster abundance through oyster fisheries and aquaculture practices.
- Maintain reefs established under the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to achieve restoration success metrics.

management, planning and conservation.

- Improve the health and the ecological integrity of at least an additional 4,340 (approximately 3%) nontidal stream miles every six years.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,600 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay.

- Measure progress against the following targets for each salinity zone:
  - Tidal Fresh: 21,700 acres.
  - Low Salinity: 13,100 acres.
  - Medium Salinity: 126,000 acres.
  - High Salinity: 35,800 acres.
- Measure progress toward this Outcome against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030, 95,000 acres by 2035 and 100,000 acres by 2040.

A wetland preserve in upstate New York connects visitors with wildlife and native plants.

Climbers Run flows through Pennsylvania to join the Susquehanna River.

Wetlands

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

- Restore or create at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of tidal wetlands by 2040, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds and represent healthy wetlands across the watershed.
- Restore or create at least 3,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres of nontidal wetlands by 2040, focusing on habitats that support populations of waterbirds and represent healthy wetlands across the watershed.

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries, & Wildlife

Chesapeake Bay Program
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Questions?

Changes to the Bay Program Structure and Sustainable Fisheries GIT

- SF GIT combines with Habitat GIT
- No more Management Board
- Different Goal Team leadership
- Redefined membership structure for all Goal Teams

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries, & Wildlife Coordination Team

Co-Chairs:

Kevin Schabow (NOAA)

Becky Gwynn (VADWR)

Coordinators:

Chris Guy (UFWS)

Bruce Vogt (NOAA)

Staffers:

Christina Garvey (CRC)

Nick Staten(CRC)

Goal Team “Voting” Members

Goal Team Members		
Affiliation	*Primary*	*Alternate*
Delaware		
District of Columbia		
Maryland		
New York		
Pennsylvania		
Virginia		
West Virginia		
Chesapeake Bay Commission		
Federal Government		
At-Large		
At-Large		
At-Large		
At-Large		
At-Large		
At-Large		

“Non-voting”/ Advisory Membership

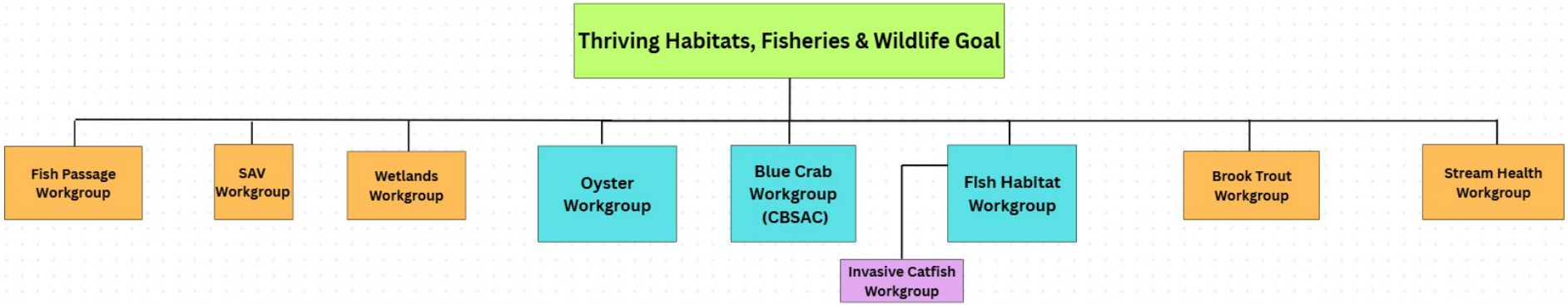
- Workgroup chairs
- Advisory Council members
- Other state/fed agency reps

All Goal Team meetings (2-4/year) are open to the public. Interested parties are always welcome to attend

Questions?

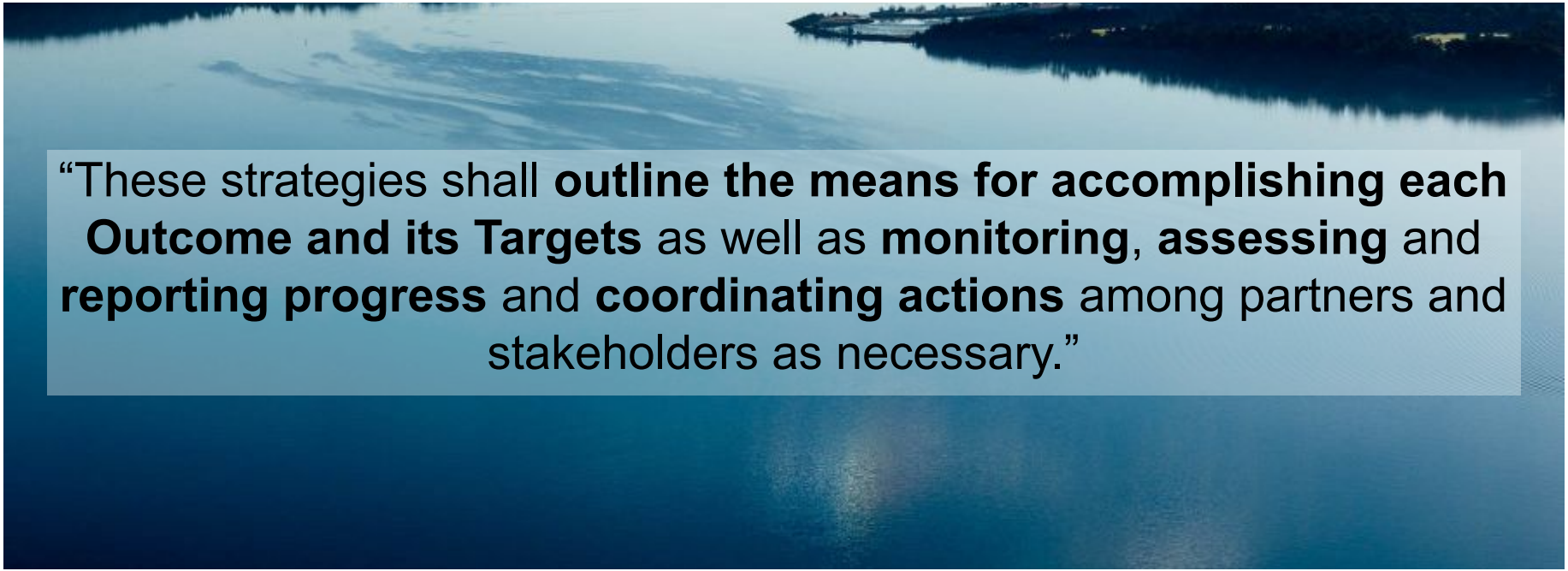
Workgroups

- Workgroups align with Outcomes
- Responsible for targets under the outcome
- Led by a chair or co-chairs (may also have vice-chairs)
- Do not have the same structure as the Goal Team


Thriving Habitats, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal
Fish Passage Workgroup
SAV Workgroup
Wetlands Workgroup
Oyster Workgroup
Blue Crab Workgroup (CBSAC)
Fish Habitat Workgroup
Invasive Catfish Workgroup
Brook Trout Workgroup
Stream Health Workgroup

Questions?

Management Strategies



Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (CBWA) (CBP, 2025)

Management Strategy Outline

Overarching Strategic Plan

➢ Management Strategy Chapter for each Goal

Management Strategy Chapter Outline:

- Goal Language and Importance
- Goal Situation Analysis
  - Shared challenges for partnership to address, including those related to Changing Environmental Conditions

Management Strategies

- Sub-Chapter for each Outcome
  - Outcome language (including targets)
  - Baseline and Current Condition
  - Measuring Progress and Indicators
  - Outcome Situation Analysis
  - Snapshot of Signatory Programs
  - Management Approaches
  - Participating Partners

- Appendix A. Signatory Statutory Authorities Driving Outcome Attainment

***A separate Workplan will be produced, including:

- A narrative summary, including a statement about the activities' impact on Outcome and Target attainment
- Descriptions of major actions to be undertaken
- The name of activity lead and a list of partners who will participate in the activity
- Human and financial resources needed and committed, as well as potential sources to fill gaps
- A timeline for completion
- Performance targets and deliverables

Management Strategy Timeline

Questions?

Next Steps:

- April - July 2026 : Identify & finalize workgroup chairs & membership
  - Bruce & Kevin schedule/attend upcoming workgroup meetings

- May - October 2026: Draft management strategies (begin draft of workplans)

- September 2026 - June 2027: Develop outcome workplans

Feel free to add your comments to the Canva Whiteboard

https://canva.link/4qam6c6072lqkjg

Open Q&A

Thank you!

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