



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife

Goal Team Meeting

September 17, 2026

Agenda



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Introductions

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**Goal Team &
Workgroup
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Housekeeping

- *This meeting is being recorded for note-taking purposes*
- Security protocol overview
- In-person participants
 - Wifi Password:
 - Bathrooms
 - Name tags

Introductions

- Name
- Affiliation
- Role in the THFW Goal Team
- What is your favorite Bay habitat, fish, or wildlife?

Signatory Members & At-Large Members

Signatory Members:

Ashley Barnett (DNREC)

Rese Cloyd (DOEE)

Gina Hunt (MD DNR)

Greg Kozlowski (NY DEC)

Tyler Neimond (PA FBC)

Becky Gwynn (VA DWR)

Callie Sams (WV DEP)

Anna Killius (CBC)

Kevin Schabow (NOAA)

At-Large Voting Members:

Ron Owens (PRFC)

Kelly Maloney (USGS)

Genevieve Larouche (USFWS)

Amy Jacobs (TNC)

Lori Maloney (EBTJV)

Brandy Nevedine (DU)

Workgroup and Advisory Committee Members

Blue Crabs: Ingrid Braun-Ricks (PRFC)

Brook Trout: Katie Ombalski (WWC)

Fish Habitat: Chris Moore (CBF)

Fish Passage: Ray Li (USFWS)

Oysters: Bruce Vogt (NOAA)

Stream Health: Brock Reggi (VADEQ)

SAV: Brooke Landry (MDNR)

Wetlands: Pam Mason (VIMS Emeritus)

Freshwater Mussels: Jamie Shallenberger (SRBC)

AAC: Marty Young

STAC: Brent Murray

SAC: Matt Ehrhart

LGAC: Elizabeth Grant

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries, & Wildlife Steering Committee

Co-Chairs:



Kevin Schabow (NOAA)

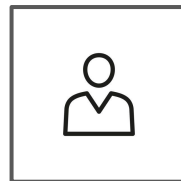


Becky Gwynn (VADWR)

Coordinators:



Chris Guy (UFWS)

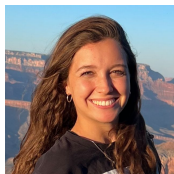


Bruce Vogt (NOAA)



Keith Bollt (EPA)

Staffers:



Christina Garvey (CRC)



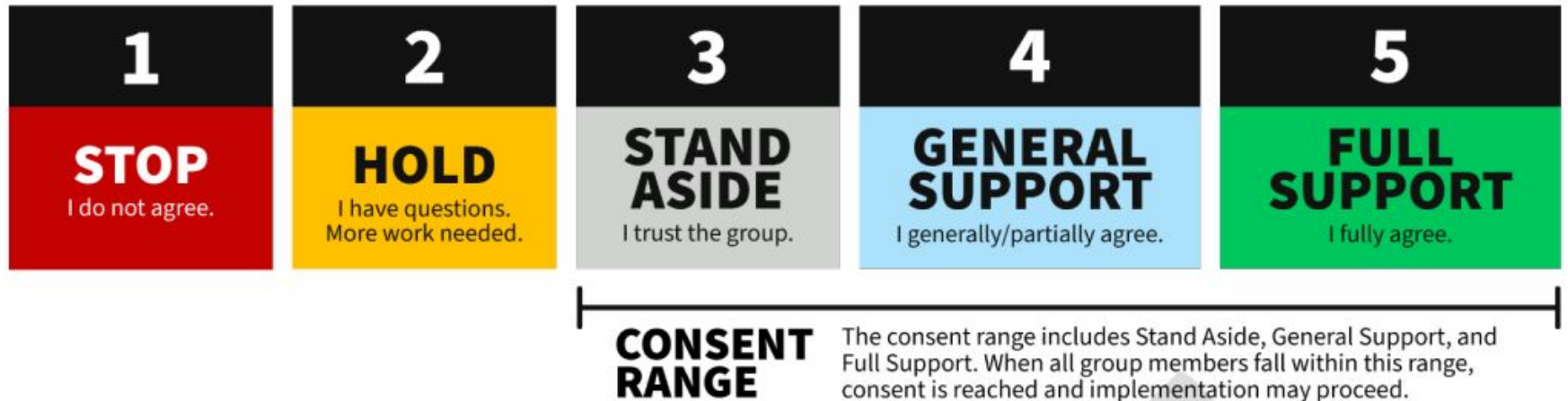
Aleyana Loughran
-Pierce (CRC)



Kami Lentzsch (CRC)

Reaching Consensus

Figure 2. Chesapeake Bay Program's Decision-Making Continuum. Based on the University of Maryland's Center for Leadership and Organizational Change Consensus Continuum.





Management Strategy

Subchapter Review

An underwater photograph showing a person in a small boat above a dense field of seagrass. The water is clear and blue, with sunlight filtering through. The person in the boat is wearing a life vest and appears to be working with a long pole or net.

Fish Habitat Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
[Name of Workgroup Chair, Affiliation]
September 17, 2026

Fish Habitat

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and nontidal areas for key species through focused water quality conservation and restoration improvements informed by 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.

Baseline & Current Condition

Tidal Fish Habitat: The HSI is under development with initial demonstration models expected late 2026-early 2027

Forage: Foundational Work Complete

Nontidal Fish Habitat: Baseline assessments are ongoing to identify healthy fish communities and target conservation and restoration

Acid Mine Drainage: Baseline mileage established

Freshwater Mussels: Data variability across the Bay watershed. A number of species considered endangered, threatened or at risk by the responsible



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

- **Tidal Fish Habitat Assessment**

- The HSI is still under development and decisions regarding which elements will serve as indicators and how often the HSI will be updated will need to be determined by both the Fish habitat WG and Clean Water Goal Team.

- **Indicator: Forage Status Reports**

- Potential suite of forage metrics have been developed: (1) Relative prey abundance/biomass, (2) Diet-based indices, (3) Prey-Predator Ratios (PPR), (4) Consumption-Prey Ratios (CPR), (5) Other (e.g., predator condition) tracking 14 dominant forage groups that also assess when status is good, marginal or poor.

- **Indicator: Nontidal Habitat Suitability**

- Refinement of the existing metric-based assessment of fish habitat underway
- Occupancy and/or abundance for key species of interest
- Identify key invasive species and their effect on fish habitat in partnership with the Invasives WG
- Refinement and expansion of health assessments of key species

- **Indicator: AMD Remediation Progress**

- Stream miles restored per reporting cycle.

- **Indicator: Freshwater Mussel Plan Implementation**

- Develop conservation plans for mussel populations in non-polluted tributaries

Outcome Situational Analysis

Three Main Challenges:

- Changing Environmental Conditions
- Differences in Management Strategies Across Jurisdictions
- Funding Availability

A photograph of four people wearing waders and using tools to sample a shallow stream in a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the trees in the background. The text 'Management Approaches' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Management Approaches

Approach 1: Conduct 2026 Baseline Assessment for Tidal Fish Habitat and Utilize Results for Water Quality Prioritization

Approach 2: Integrate Forage Species into Fisheries Management

Approach 3: Continuous Assessment of Nontidal Habitat Quality

Approach 4: Prioritize Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Restoration Sites

Approach 5: Develop and Implement Freshwater Mussel Conservation Plans

Membership Status



Sue Magnan



Oyster Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
[Name of Workgroup Chair, Affiliation]
September 17, 2026



Oyster Outcome

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

- 1) 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.
- 2) Maintain sustainable oyster abundance through oyster fisheries and aquaculture practices.
- 3) Maintain reefs established under the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to achieve restoration success metrics.



Baseline & Current Condition

Oyster Restoration and Maintenance

- **Tributaries Restored:** 10 (5 in Maryland, 5 plus a 6th "bonus" tributary in Virginia).
- **Total Reef Habitat Restored (10 Tributaries Initiative):** 1,905 acres.
- **Total Oysters Planted:** 7.3 billion.
- **Total Bay-wide Cost:** \$121.16 million.
- Several new projects planned or underway in MD and VA.

Oyster Fishery and Aquaculture

- **VA&MD:** Harvest is stable (variability driven more by market forces); Populations are stable or increasing over long-term average
- **VA:** Containerized hatchery-based aquaculture (surface and bottom cages) production is stable or increasing over 10-year average
- **MD:** Maryland's hatchery-based oyster aquaculture is steadily growing in both scale and production



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

2,000-Acre Reef Restoration Target

- **Indicator:** The primary indicator will be the number of restored reef acres that meet the updated success metrics.

Maintenance (Stewardship) of ‘10 tributaries’

- **Indicator:** The workgroup will consider continuing the current success metrics for these areas or developing new metrics through the review process.

Oyster Fishery

- The Oyster Fishery and Aquaculture Action Team will spend the next 12 months developing a detailed implementation plan including indicators.



Outcome Situational Analysis

- Funding for long-term restoration and monitoring
- Permitting and regulatory compliance
- Environmental changes (temperature, salinity, disease, oyster reproduction levels)*
- Funding for seed production capacity
- Substrate availability, cost and acceptability
- Maintaining reef structural integrity
- Public outreach, coordination and support



Management Approaches

Management Approach 1: Strategic Expansion of new Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration or Conservation

- Collaborative approach to restore or conserve 2,000 additional acres of non-harvest oyster reef Identifying locations for the additional 2,000 acres (approximately 1,100 acres in Maryland and 900 acres in Virginia).
- Develop restoration implementation plans in coordination with multiple partners.
- Establish a process to include and account for community-based restoration projects.
- Establish revised success metrics to evaluate oyster restoration performance.
- Develop a monitoring program based on the revised oyster metrics.

Management Approach 2: Adaptive Management and Monitoring:

- Continue monitoring tributaries previously restored under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement to ensure they meet revised success metrics. Utilize monitoring data to guide adaptive management

Management Approach 3: Sustainable Oyster Fishery and Aquaculture abundance in each Jurisdiction

- Define sustainable commercial oyster harvest and aquaculture practices.
- Provide recommendations to each jurisdiction based on these definitions and establish coordination between state and federal partners.



Membership Status

- The Workgroup and Action Team membership lists are close to completion.
- Voting members are TBD.
- We've added some community based representatives and additional science support.



Blue Crab Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
Ingrid Braun-Ricks, Potomac River Fisheries Commission
September 17, 2026



Blue Crabs

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

- Maintain blue crab abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the most recent benchmark status assessment.
- Achieve cross-jurisdictional coordination by annually evaluating and communicating blue crab population status to resource managers and the public through the Blue Crab Advisory Report.

[2025 Watershed Agreement](#)



Baseline & Current Condition

- **1998-2008:** Population decline prompted management reform.
- **2011-2026:** Female-based reference points established and adopted to protect spawning stock.
 - **Since 2014** Stock has remained not overfished and overfishing did not occur.
 - **2020:** Low abundance and poor recruitment renewed concerns.
- **2026 Benchmark Assessment:** Recommended new sex-specific (male and female) reference points and a recruitment indicator.



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

- **Starting 2027:** Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) will re-run the stock assessment model with most recent available data to evaluate stock status using updated sex-specific reference points.
 - If abundance estimates fall below the threshold, the stock will be considered overfished (or depleted).
 - If fishing mortality estimates exceed the threshold, overfishing is occurring.
- Results will be published the CBSAC's annual Blue Crab Advisory Report



Outcome Situational Analysis

- Consistent high male exploitation
- Improved commercial & recreational harvest estimates
- Standardization of data across jurisdictions
- Habitat availability
- Interjurisdictional coordination
- Land-based pollution (hypoxia)
- Changing environmental conditions (temperature & salinity)
- Predation pressure (blue catfish & red drum)



Management Approaches

1. Maintain Sustainable Population Based on Best Available Science
2. Enhance Harvest Estimates and Quantification
3. Quantify Environmental and Ecological Drivers
4. Standardization and Accessibility of Data



Membership Status - 18 members (13 voting, 5 non-voting)

Signatory Partners:

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)

Other Partners:

- Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC)
- University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES)
- Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
- Morgan State University, Patuxent Environmental & Aquatic Research Laboratory (PEARL)
- Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)



WETLANDS

Management Strategy

Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting

Pam Mason - VIMS Emeritus, Tess Danielson - DOEE, Nancy Schumm - City of Gaithersburg,
and Jeff Sullivan - USGS

September 17, 2026



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.

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



Baseline & Current Condition

- Need to establish current, consistent Bay-wide baseline for **tidal** and **non-tidal** wetlands following 2025 Bay Agreement adjustments
 - Various tracking approaches for wetland acreage and function tracking based on federal/state/local conservation data and personal communication
 - New Bay-wide baseline would utilize high-resolution remote sensing and data layer synthesis
- **Tidal wetlands: Trend of net decrease in functional marsh area but increased local restoration**
 - Steady losses of coastal marshes due to sea level rise, wave erosion, shoreline hardening, and development
 - Upland migration heavily restricted by human infrastructure
 - Restoration via living shorelines, sediment additions, and flood mitigation projects increased locally
- **Non-tidal wetlands: Constant/slightly decreasing trend**
 - Massive historic losses due to agricultural drainage and urban development.
 - Altered hydrology and invasive species degrading existing wetlands, but restoration gains on agricultural lands slowing net loss rate



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

- **[Indicator] Wetland Status and Trends:** Data monitoring wetland aerial extent collected by multiple entities over various timelines using variable approaches
- **[Indicator] Wetland Restoration and Enhancement:** Tracks annual additions in wetland acreage through voluntary programs.
- **[Indicator] Waterbird Population Estimates:** Will use population estimates from relevant biological seasons (i.e. breeding pairs, total wintering populations, etc.) to assess population trends of stakeholder-identified focal species
 - Will use scientific and citizen science survey data (to be determined) to assess historic and present populations
- **Expected changes under new 2025 Bay Agreement:** Transition towards a **wetland tracking effort** focused on acreage with intention to factor in changing environmental condition losses (e.g. sea level rise) and prioritizes functional resilience and verified wetland performance
 - Previously focused on gross historical acreage targets in 2014 Bay Agreement
 - Explicitly incorporates living resources (e.g. waterbirds and fish)



Outcome Situational Analysis

Challenges Within CBP Sphere of Influence	Challenges Outside CBP Sphere of Influence
CBP and partner capacity to sustain long-term tracking and update inventories	Accelerated tidal marsh loss due to erosion and drowning and erosion from sea level rise and changing environmental conditions
Manage for marsh migration potential including retrofits for hardened shorelines and infrastructure blocking upland marsh migration**	Regulatory updates and shifting legal definitions of federally regulated waters (WOTUS)
Workforce knowledge and technical capacity for restoration design	
Property owners' willingness to adopt voluntary restoration practices	
Inadequate, fragmented, or unaligned funding streams limit achievement of the Wetlands Goal	
Opportunities to address historic agricultural drainage networks and ongoing land conversion pressures	

***Denotes challenges associated with Changing Environmental Conditions*



Management Approaches

- 1. Seek plan implementation, enhance collaboration, engagement, funding and information transfer:** WWG/CBP sponsored plans and additional resources provide recommendations and needs for voluntary restoration, collaboration, funding, outreach, and engagement
 - WWG/CBP sponsored programs: **Accelerating Non-Tidal Wetland Restoration Across the Bay** and **The Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan**
- 2. Improve tracking, mapping, and characterization capacities:** Address severe data gaps by investigating funding opportunities/options to update outdated tidal and non-tidal wetland maps
 - Integrate satellite remote sensing and advanced remote data to accurately identify marsh migration corridors and interior headwater basins
 - Develop approaches for measuring tidal and non-tidal wetland health as relating to wetland function and resilience via remote sensing or field based data collection
- 3. Scale up landowner outreach and technical assistance:** Support and promote aligned outreach toolkits used by Bay Program Partners
 - Partner with outreach and technical experts (e.g. NGOs, academia, state entities, etc)
 - Focus efforts on demonstrating wildlife, economic, recreational (e.g. wildlife viewing), and ecological benefits and value of wetlands



Management Approaches

4. **Build restoration workforce and partnership capacity:** Establishes localized training pipelines to address regional shortage of qualified restoration professionals
 - Identify training opportunities
 - Encourage training of contractors, regulators, and conservation planners in ecological engineering for tidal and non-tidal wetland creation and restoration
5. **Understand responses of living resources:** Collaborate across partnership and integrate data across agencies to identify, assess, and evaluate needs of thriving populations of living resources (e.g. waterbirds and fish) that require suitable wetland habitats
 - Identify key environmental factors influencing species
 - Assess capacity of species to respond to changing threats
 - Evaluate impact of watershed restoration efforts
 - Further support data to be collected in manner enabling incorporation into relevant decision making processes
6. **Funding:** Recommend new and increased funding to achieve wetland outcomes
 - Critical to access and leverage increased federal and other funds when available



Membership Status

- **Signatory Members (8):**
 - Nominations from eight signatories have been received: **Federal, MD, VA, DE, NY, PA, DC, and the CBC**
- **At-Large Members (7):**
 - Nominations have been received and are being reviewed by Workgroup Chairs
- **Non-Voting Members (15):**
 - Nominations are being determined and reviewed by Workgroup Chairs



Break

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting



Stream Health Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

*Brock Reggi, Virginia DEQ, Stream Health Co-Chair
Alison Santoro, Maryland DNR, Stream Health Co-Chair
September 17, 2026*



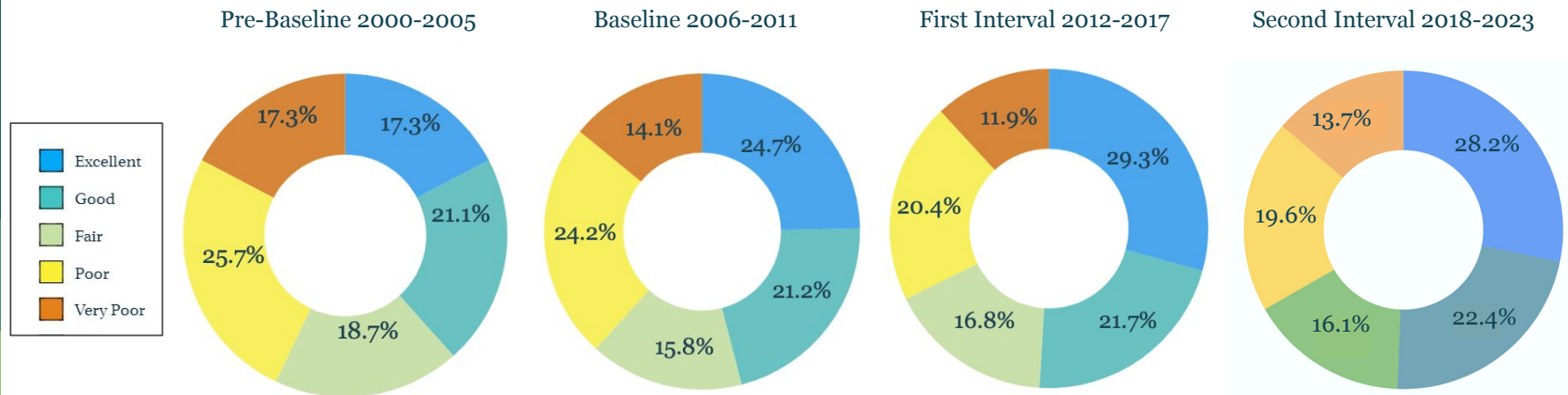
Stream Health Outcome

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.

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



Baseline & Current Conditions



Chesapeake Basin-wide Index of Biotic Integrity
(Chessie BIBI) for stream macroinvertebrates



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

- The **Chessie BIBI** is a multi-metric index of biological health from benthic macroinvertebrate data and serves as the **primary stream health indicator**.
- The Chessie BIBI does not necessarily reflect Best Management Practice (BMP)-driven improvements in **hydraulics, geomorphology, and physicochemical qualities**.
- The workgroup is exploring additional metrics for a variety of environmental stressors to help future investigations characterize Chesapeake watershed health and assess the reasons for the current trends.



Outcome Situational Analysis

Challenges	Within CBPs ability to influence	Outside of CBP's ability to influence
Challenges to Improving Stream Health		
Limited integration of water quality and living resource goals during WIP BMP implementation.	X	
Limited research into resource tradeoffs for BMP implementation	X	
Need additional biological stressor identification and prioritization procedures.	X	
Need additional monitored metrics that correlate with priority stressors identified for measurement.	X	
Need to examine the differences between observed and modeled trends in stream health metrics.	X	
More research is needed to guide the selection of achievable reference conditions/design approaches based on watershed and stream functions to include an urban reference continuum.	X	



Management Approaches

- ❑ **Management Approach 1:** This Management Strategy proposes a new definition of stream health that provides a common framework for additional reporting and tracking incremental improvements in stream health using multi-metric indicators, rather than only Chessie BIBI.
- ❑ **Management Approach 2:** The provision of adequate funding and technical resources for watershed management practice implementation.
- ❑ **Management Approach 3:** Active and engaged participation by local communities with federal and state partners is central to Bay watershed restoration.
- ❑ **Management Approach 4:** Develop and promote holistic Stream Restoration Best Management Practice design guidelines that identify the level of degradation and improvement of stream biology and key stressors/factors limiting potential biological improvement.



Membership Status

The Stream Health workgroup has signatory jurisdictional nominations for 6 states (MD, DE, NY, PA, WV, VA).

We are currently recruiting for At-Large members and non-voting members.



Fish Passage Outcome Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
Ray Li, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Shannon Boyle, Unaffiliated (Co-Chair)
September 17, 2026



Fish Passage Workgroup

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.



Baseline & Current Condition

- Rivers and stream across the Chesapeake Bay watershed are fragmented by 8,357 **severe** barriers
 - 6,960 dams and 1,397 road-stream crossings
- Instream barriers may be physical (dams, road-stream crossings), chemical (acid mine drainage, water quality), or biological (temperature)
- Fragmented habitat impedes the recovery and success of migratory species like American Shad, American Eel, and river herring as well as resident species like Brook Trout
- Removing or remediating instream barriers are necessary to protect species and ecosystems but also provide social benefits including risk reduction and recreation
- From 1989 to 2025, approximately 28,919 miles of river and stream habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have been reopened to fish passage

Monitoring Progress & Indicators

Indicator: Miles of Aquatic Habitat Opened

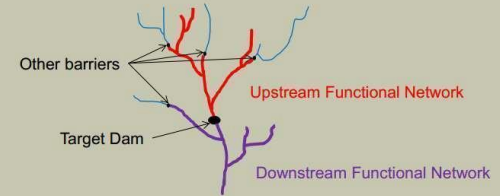
Upstream Functional Network is reported every two years.

Upstream Functional Network Length

19

- Category: Connectivity Improvement
- Length of the functional network upstream of a barrier. The functional network is defined by those sections of river that a fish could theoretically access from any other point within that functional network. Its terminal ends are barriers, headwaters, and/or the river mouth.

- Unit: meters





Outcome Situational Analysis

- Community/landowner willingness to allow barrier removal projects
- Limited State and Federal legislation to facilitate fish passage
- Insufficient funding to incentivize projects or support implementation and capacity building
- Limited understanding of ancillary social and safety benefits among dam owners, policymakers, and local governments
- Length, complex permitting processes and infrastructure conflicts (e.g., sewer/water line relocations) for barrier removal and road-stream crossing projects
- Selecting the most cost-effective projects for implementation given limited funding

Outside CBP's ability to influence and associated with changing environmental conditions

- Target species populations in decline region-wide



Management Approaches

- Prioritization Efforts for Fish Passage Projects
- Funding Fish Passage Projects
- Project Development
- Dam Removal
- Road-Stream Crossings
- Local Participation



Membership Status

The Fish Passage Workgroup (FPWG) has substantial membership from a diverse array of organizations spanning federal, state, non-profit, and private sectors.

To support the management approaches, the FPWG intends to pursue membership from additional organizations including state transportation agencies. Further expanding local participation at county or city levels as well as private landowners per Management Approach 1.4.6 may lead to additional membership.



Brook Trout Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
Katie Ombalski-Woods and Waters Consulting
Dan Goetz- MD-DNR
September 17, 2026



Brook Trout Outcome

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

- By 2040, increase brook trout **occupancy** by 1.5% (233 miles) in watersheds supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds.
- By 2040, increase **abundance** at 10 long-term monitoring sites.
- By 2040, reduce identified threats by 15% to increase brook trout **resilience** in watersheds supporting healthy populations.



Baseline & Current Condition

- Brook trout occupy ~30% of their historic range
- Baseline established by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
 - 1,713 wild brook trout patches remain in the Chesapeake Bay (33,250 square kilometers)
- A 0.5% net increase in occupancy from 2016–2023 was documented by the CBP Brook Trout Workgroup (2024 GIT-funded report).
 - Result of restoration efforts and newly discovered populations (previously unassessed waters)



Monitoring Progress & Indicators

Indicator: Brook Trout Occupancy

- EBTJV 3-5 year range-wide assessment data provided by CB jurisdictional fisheries biologists

Indicator: Abundance Monitoring

- Jurisdictional fisheries biologists conduct annual monitoring at 10 long-term Brook Trout Abundance Monitoring Sites (BTAMS) and report to the Brook Trout Workgroup

Indicator: Reducing Identified Threats

- Restoration partners and jurisdictional fisheries biologists report projects annually to Habitat Tracker
 - Primary project types include: Forested riparian buffers, aquatic organism passage, acid mine drainage, dirt and gravel road improvements, and land conservation



Outcome Situational Analysis

Challenges within CBP Sphere of Influence	Challenges outside CBP Sphere of Influence
• Land development/ habitat fragmentation	• Increased water temperature, droughts, flashier storms
• Changes in water chemistry (e.g., 6PPD-q, fracking water)	• Changes in water chemistry (e.g., 6PPD-q, fracking water)
• Legacy acid mine drainage	• Increasing human population strain
• Undersized culverts blocking fish passage	• Consistency in interjurisdictional funding
• Livestock access to streams	



Management Approaches

- Identify and Communicate Priority Focal Areas
- Refine and Apply Decision Support Tools
- Continue and Expand Monitoring.
- Targeted Restoration of Strongholds
- Address Emerging Stressors
- Coordinate with other CBP workgroups
- Implement recommendations of 2026 STAC Report, as funding and partner interest allows



Membership Status

Voting Members	Status	At-Large Member	Status
Federal Government	Nominated	EBTJV	Nominated
Maryland	Nominated	Western PA Conservancy	Nominated
New York	Nominated	Trout Unlimited	TBD
Pennsylvania	Nominated		
Virginia	Nominated		
West Virginia	Nominated		



Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Management Strategy Subchapter Summary

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries & Wildlife Goal Team Meeting
Brooke Landry, Maryland DNR, Chair; Erin Shields, VIMS/CB-NERR, Vice-Chair
September 17, 2026



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.

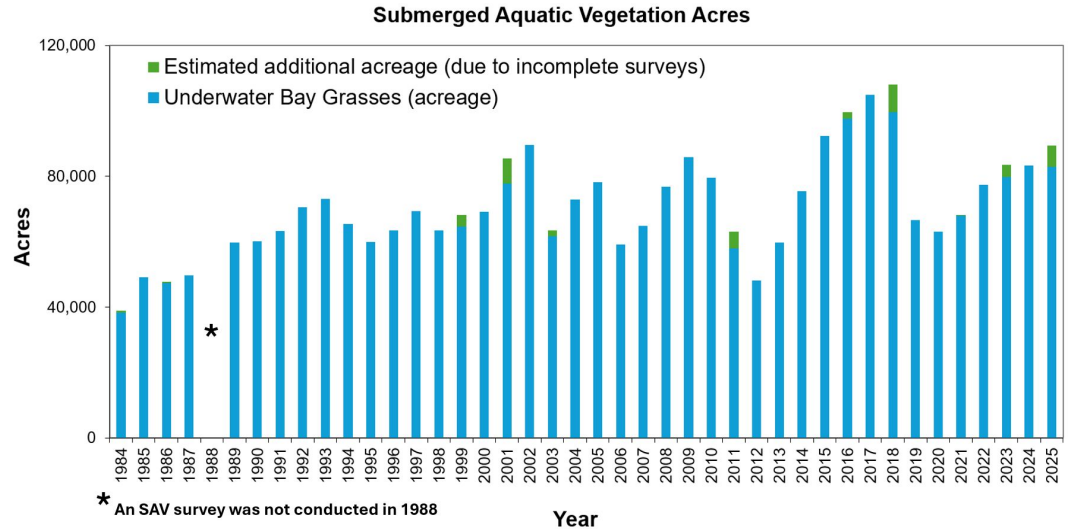


Baseline & Current Condition

- The Bay has historically supported at least 196,600 acres of SAV, based on historic records and photographic evidence from 1930s to present.
- In 1984, 38,958 acres of SAV were mapped in Chesapeake Bay. Since then, estimated totals have ranged from that historic low to a high of 108,078 acres in 2019. The long-term average is 70,890 acres.
- Most recently, in 2025, SAV covered an estimated 89,385 acres of Bay bottom.

Monitoring Progress & Indicators

- The Chesapeake Bay-wide SAV survey began in 1984 and continues to be the primary mechanism for tracking SAV Outcome progress.
- Acreage data from the survey will be used to assess progress towards the SAV Outcome, as well as its interim and salinity zone goals, on an annual basis.





Outcome Situational Analysis

Challenges

1. **Habitat Conditions and Availability:** Degraded water quality, shallow water use conflicts, shoreline alteration/armoring, changing environmental conditions
2. **Protection of Existing and Recovering SAV:** Regulations prohibiting activities that are detrimental to SAV must be adequate (dredging/filling in potential habitat, fishing/aquaculture practices). Necessary regulatory updates are challenging.
3. **SAV Restoration Potential and Activity:** Lack of funding, inadequate capacity and infrastructure, lack of commercial SAV seed supply, restoration site selection, lack of formal training programs for restoration techniques.
4. **SAV Research and Monitoring:** Monitoring and research are essential to track progress, set priorities, guide management decisions. Uncertain capacity to maintain long-term funding for Bay-wide survey, no funding for SAV Watchers Program, no funding for SAV Sentinel Site Program, limited funding for research.
5. **Public Perception, Knowledge, an Engagement:** Growing, but remains limited. Stakeholders generally unaware of SAV importance or regard it negatively; need for additional SAV-specific curriculum in public education.



Management Approaches

1. Support Efforts to Conserve and Restore Current and Future SAV Habitat and Habitat Conditions
 - Support efforts to achieve the Clean Water Goal
2. Protect Existing and Recovering SAV
 - Support efforts to develop protection measures, evaluate laws and regulations, make recommendations to update laws, regulations, and policies when necessary
3. Restore SAV
 - Lead and support efforts to actively restore and mitigate SAV loss; target sites with suitable habitat quality and high potential to benefit living resources and vulnerable communities
4. Enhance SAV Research and Monitoring
 - Lead and support efforts to continue three-tiered monitoring effort and address data gaps
5. Enhance Community Involvement, Education, and Outreach
 - Expand efforts to educate and engage the public and include community scientists/volunteers in SAV monitoring and restoration



Membership Status

Signatory Voting Members

Maryland ★
Virginia ★
Washington, D.C. ★
Delaware ★
New York ?
West Virginia ?
Pennsylvania ★
Federal Gov ★
~~Chesapeake Bay Commission~~ X

At-Large Voting Members

Seven (7) invited and confirmed

-waiting on signatories to
determine if additional slots are
open.

Non-Voting Members

Sorted

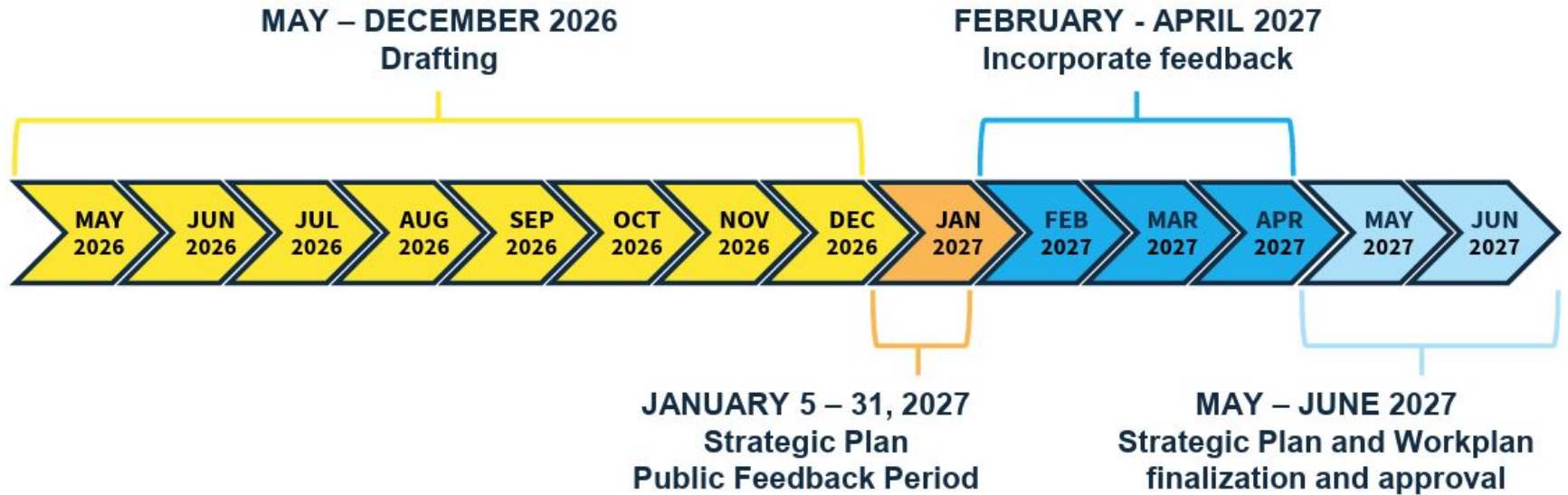


A Look Ahead

Goal Team Consensus on MS

- Comments from GT is due 1 week from today
 - COB Thurs, September 24th
- Workgroups addressed comments
 - Possible one-on-one conversations needed
- Call for consensus from GT via email by Oct 19

Timeline



Timeline





Discussion



A Look Ahead: Workplans

- Workplan drafting:
 - **Who:** Workgroup chairs and voting members; process open to all
 - **What:** Drafting and signing up for specific actions from 2027-2030 to implement the 2027-2033 Management Strategies
 - **When:** Fall 2026
- Workplan review by THFW GT in early 2027



Thank you!



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.