



**Chesapeake  
Bay Trust**



**Chesapeake Bay Program**  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

# EPA Wetlands Capacity Building

Tidal Wetlands Workgroup Meeting  
February 17, 2026



**Tidal  
Wetlands**  
Strategic Planning Team

# Agenda

- Strategic Plan – *Final*
  - Overview and Purpose
  - Next Steps and Schedule





# Tidal Wetlands Planning Team Overview & Reminders



**Tidal  
Wetlands**  
Strategic Planning Team

**PSC Meeting Purpose and Goals Reminder:** work together to shape the Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Our goal is to have focused discussions that are **action-oriented** to move the Strategic Plan forward and stay on schedule.

**PSC Charge Reminder:** The Chesapeake Bay Trust is leading the Tidal Wetlands Capacity Building work supported by EPA CBPO for strategic planning, capacity building, landowner/community engagement, program sustainability/financing, and project design. We are completing strategic planning first so this can guide us on the other tasks. We are looking to you, the experts in this field, to realize the best outcomes together.

**Meet Monthly for focused discussions around Tidal Wetlands and Strategic Planning:**

Includes experts in the field across the watershed committed to support this effort  
Current count: ~50 folks representing Bay jurisdictions w/tidal wetlands: DE/DC/MD/VA

Shared and transparent space: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fPkuyq0KsO5U7IPp-2J\\_0vqL3syQwiBA](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fPkuyq0KsO5U7IPp-2J_0vqL3syQwiBA)

# THANK YOU AND KUDOS TO OUR PLANNING TEAM!



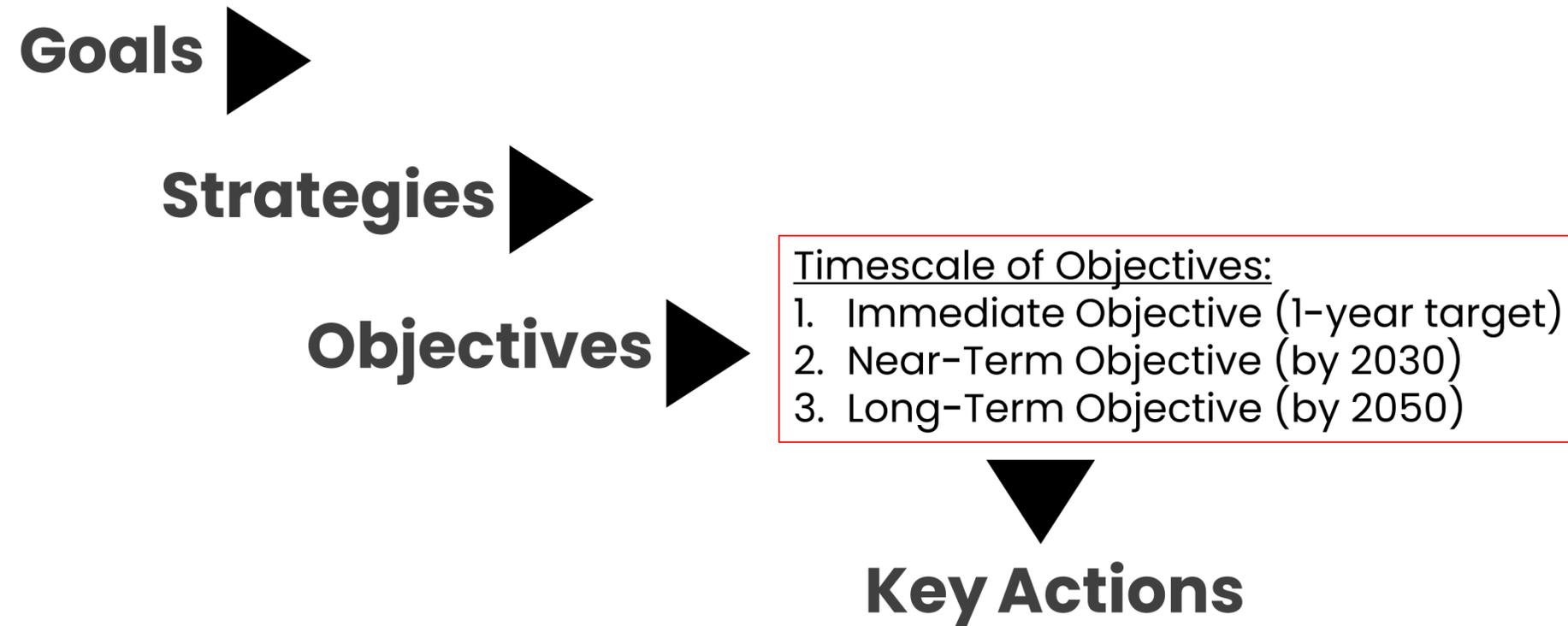
- This is a collaborative process
- This is YOUR plan
- We cannot do our work without your dedication
- Awards to thank Planning Team Members for comments!



**Tidal  
Wetlands**  
Strategic Planning Team



# Results of our Small Group Conversations:



## REMINDERS:

- **Goals:** Clearly defined, actionable, and measurable conditions and multiple timeframes.
- **Strategies:** Methods applied to achieve stated goals and outcomes. These are typically broad and encompass multiple goals.
- **Objectives:** Outcomes (i.e., changes in ecosystem condition, behavior, and policy) with a timescale that contributes to achieving goals.
- **Key Actions:** Specific activities that occur across the timespan of the plan.

**\*Small Groups defined 11 total strategies\***

# Goals and Strategies to Protect and Restore Tidal Wetlands



## **GOAL 1: PROTECT, RESTORE, AND CREATE TIDAL MARSHES**

Strategy 1: Develop spatially informed and time-stamped tidal wetland acreage goals for each jurisdiction in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

## **GOAL 2: MANAGE AND RESTORE LARGE-SCALE TIDAL MARSHES**

Strategy 2: Develop and implement wetland management plans on existing large-scale tidal marshes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed to support key indicator species, habitats, communities, and local economies

Strategy 3: Restore, enhance, and create large-scale tidal marshes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed to support key indicator species, habitats, communities, and local economies

## **GOAL 3: PROTECT AND EXPAND TIDAL MARSHES, INCLUDING CONSERVATION OF MIGRATION CORRIDORS**

Strategy 4: Protect and expand tidal marshes in the Chesapeake Bay, focusing on high-quality habitats to support the health of existing marshes

Strategy 5: Conserve and facilitate the migration of tidal marshes in the Chesapeake Bay to minimize loss of function, benefits, and acreage as a result of sea level rise.

Strategy 6: Employ nature-based solutions to protect existing tidal wetlands and create new living shorelines to enhance community resilience to natural hazards, changing environmental conditions, and provide protection, ecosystem services, and benefits to species



## GOAL 4: IMPLEMENT CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

Strategy 7: Build capacity to provide long-term program implementation support for tidal wetlands

Strategy 8: Align Policies and Coordinate Research, including enhanced collaboration across partners and regions to further leverage tidal wetland conservation and expansion efforts

Strategy 9: Develop and implement effective engagement and outreach strategies to build long-lasting relationships with landowners to advance tidal wetland conservation efforts

Strategy 10: Utilize the best available science to collect data, perform monitoring, and conduct mapping to advance tidal wetland protection and restoration

Strategy 11: Evaluate, update, develop, and implement sustainable policy, planning, and funding mechanisms to ensure the long-term protection of tidal wetlands



# Strategic Planning Key Terms



The core **actionable** components of the plan :

- **Goals:** What implementation of the plan is designed to achieve.
- **Strategies:** overarching approaches to achieve the larger goals
- **Objectives:** How the strategies are implemented and is operationalized. Can be defined as Outcomes (i.e., changes in ecosystem condition, behavior, and policy) in the near term that contribute to achieving goals,
- **Key Actions:** High-priority actions necessary to meet specific strategy objectives. These actions are not listed in any priority ranking. Specific activities that are assigned to teams, partners, and staff that occur across the timespan of the plan. **Actions are specific steps that we can take to achieve goals!** Actions should be forward-thinking (not a continuation of ongoing projects), realistic, and achievable based on the capabilities and capacities of the team.
- **Outputs:** The expected deliverables for each action
- **Success Indicator:** A description for how to measure success of each Key Action
- **Effective Example:** A useful similar project in progress or previously completed that could be used an example to meet outputs and move towards to success
- **Recommended Resource:** A useful resource that could be used to meet outputs and move towards success

# Example Actions Moving Forward Now!



## GOAL: PROTECT AND EXPAND TIDAL WETLANDS, INCLUDING CONSERVATION OF MIGRATION CORRIDORS

**Strategy 4: Protect and expand tidal wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay, focusing on high-quality habitats to support the health of existing wetlands.**

Strategy 4 Stakeholders: Habitat GIT; Tidal WWG; VMRC; Virginia CZM; DNREC; MDNR; DOEE; NOAA Fisheries, Sentinel Landscape Partnerships; MD Critical Area Commission; VA Critical Area Commission, Tribes; DOD; USFWS; NPS, VDWR, NGOs

<p><b>Action 4G:</b> Explore opportunities for collaborative wetland restoration and conservation in existing and new designated or expanded DoD Sentinel Landscapes [near-term objective]</p>	<p><b>Description:</b> The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and private organizations that work with willing landowners and land managers to advance sustainable land use practices around military installations and ranges to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, increase public access to outdoor recreation, and enhance landscape resilience. Sentinel landscapes (SL) are areas where conservation, working lands, and national defense interests converge. They are anchored by at least one military installation or range and contain high priority lands for USDA, DOD, and DOI.</p>	<p><b>Outputs:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore designation of a SL in the District of Columbia that provides wetland benefits.</li> <li>2. Establish strategic priorities in MD and VA SLs that will result in wetland protection, creation, restoration, enhancement, or conservation.</li> <li>3. Work to collaboratively identify opportunities for wetland acres to be protected, conserved, created, enhanced, or restored in SLs in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.</li> </ol> <p><b>Success Indicator:</b> MD and VA could each identify at least one wetland protection, restoration, or conservation project within a Sentinel Landscape.</p> <p><b>Effective Example:</b> Tidewater and Potomac Sentinel Landscapes (VA) designated in 2023; Middle Chesapeake SL (MD)</p>
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**DNR Received a \$1M NCWC Grant to place 1,000 acres under CE protection within the MCSL (matched with REPI Challenge funds)**

# Example Actions Moving Forward Now!



## GOAL: PROTECT AND EXPAND TIDAL WETLANDS, INCLUDING CONSERVATION OF MIGRATION CORRIDORS

**Strategy 5: Conserve and facilitate the migration of tidal wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay to minimize loss of function, benefits, and acreage as a result of sea level rise.**

Strategy 5 Stakeholders: Habitat GIT; Tidal WWG; MDE; MDNR; VMRC; Virginia CZM; DNREC; DOEE; NOAA, MD Critical Area Commission; VA Critical Area Commission

### Strategy 5 Near-term objective (Action 5F):

<b>Action 5F:</b> Expand current protection efforts through land acquisition and easements of migration corridors [near-term objective]	<b>Description:</b> Legally protect migration spaces for priority tidal wetlands through the development of new programs and continue to protect through existing programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wetland Fee Simple Acquisitions</li><li>• Wetland Easements</li><li>• Buffer Fee Simple/ Easement</li><li>• Agricultural Conservation Easement-Wetland Reserve Easement Program</li><li>• Coastal Resilience Easements</li><li>• Permanent floodplain easements</li><li>• Coastal Resilience Easements</li></ul> <i>Ensure that both VA and MD have similar protection and easement programs that are fully functional and funded</i>	<b>Outputs:</b> Migration corridors protected prior to need, including across jurisdictional boundaries (MD and VA)
		<b>Success Indicator:</b> Easement programs are functional and the number of acres placed under easement within tidal wetlands migration corridors increases annually; implement at least one joint protection project that extends across the jurisdictional boundaries of MD and VA and protects a large-scale migration corridor
		<b>Recommended Resource:</b> Coastal Resilience Easements on private lands <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/EWP-FPE%20Factsheet.pdf">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/EWP-FPE%20Factsheet.pdf</a>



**Collaboration between DNR/CAC/Counties to ID sites for CREs (that are not options for MALPF due to wet soils**

# Example Actions Moving Forward Now!



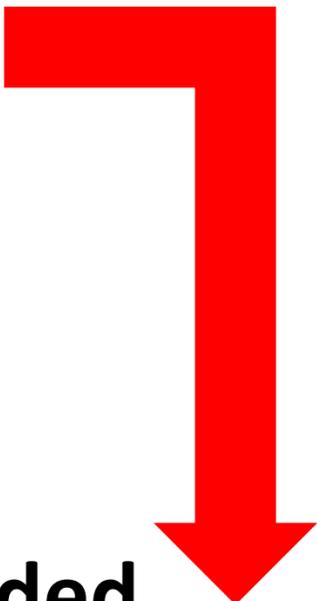
## GOAL: IMPLEMENT CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

**Strategy 8: Align policies and coordinate research, including enhanced collaboration across partners and regions to further leverage tidal wetland conservation and expansion efforts**

Strategy 8 Stakeholders: MD CZM, MDNR, VADWR, DOEE, VA CZM; USACE/DOD, EPA CBP, researchers, policy-makers, state agencies

### Strategy 8 One-year objective (Action 8F):

<p><b>Action 8F:</b> Develop a regulatory sandbox [1-year objective]</p>	<p><b>Description:</b> A regulatory sandbox invites innovative solutions to broad or specific restoration challenges by removing regulatory barriers to allow for expedited and unburdened experimentation. Establish requirements, timelines, and objectives, approve applicants, and then share lessons learned.</p>	<p><b>Outputs:</b> Regulatory Sandbox created in at least one jurisdiction.</p> <p><b>Success Indicator:</b> New and improved approaches and methods for restoration are achieved.</p> <p><b>Recommend Resource:</b> Environmental Policy Innovation Center: <a href="https://www.policyinnovation.org/insights/what-arent-sandboxes">https://www.policyinnovation.org/insights/what-arent-sandboxes</a></p>
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**Collaboration between DNR/MDE/BPW to sandbox expanded MDE delegation for voluntary wetland restoration R4R projects**

# Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan

## Schedule:

- Draft Version 1.0 released on April 9, 2025
- Draft Version 2.0 released on July 9, 2025
- Draft Version 3.0 released on August 28, 2025
- **Final Strategic Plan January 2026**

## Supplements and Appendices:

- Landowner and Community Engagement:
  - Final Review
- Sustainable Programs (Financing)
  - Final Review
- Developing Capacity
  - Completion Spring 2026



# Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan

## Implementation:

- This strategic plan is intended to be an adaptable, action-based document with the primary purpose of advancing tidal wetland health, restoration, and expansion across the Chesapeake Bay. The efficacy of the strategic plan depends on active implementation of actions across multiple levels of government, Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partners, and communities in a highly collaborative manner.





Thank You!

For more information visit  
**cbtrust.org**