



Wetland Workgroup (WWG)
 November 2014 Meeting Minutes
 November 13, 2014
 1:00-3:00 PM

Participants:

Name	Affiliation	Introduction
Amy Jacobs (Co-Chair)	TNC	Watershed restoration director with Chesapeake Bay efforts. Focusing on targeting wetland restoration for water quality and habitat improvements, having wetlands a preferred BMP, and ensuring that resources are used to maximize outcomes.
Erin McLaughlin (Co-Chair)	MDNR	Responsible for MD projects that focus on wetland and stream restoration
Hannah Martin (Staff)	CRC/Bay Program	Staff for the Chesapeake Bay Program Habitat GIT and wetland workgroup
Denise Clearwater	MDE	Wetlands and waterways program, works on special projects to improve program implementation
Jennifer Greiner	FWS	Coordinator for the Habitat GIT
Jake McPherson	DU	Regional Biologist for DU, wetland and habitat conservation
Sara Nicholas	TNC	TNC-PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed
Lora Zimmerman	FWS-PA	Project Leader, FWS-PA. Primary work includes wetland restoration through Partners for FWS program and work with NRCS (specifically working with Bog Turtle habitat)
Sharon Scarborough	NRCS-PA	Works with private landowners through Wetland Reserve Program, working in Cumberland and Franklin Counties
David Goerman	PA DEP	Waterways and Engineering, wetlands
Mark Biddle	DNREC	DE Wetland Scientist with Watershed Assessment Section, wetlands and stream restoration projects
Michael Rolband	Wetland Science and Solutions, Inc	Private wetland restoration in VA
Melissa Yearick	Upper Susquehanna Coalition	Wetlands coordinator, responsible for all wetland tracking and reporting for Chesapeake Bay in NY.
Steve Strano	NRCS	MD State biologist, wetlands work mostly on coastal plain
Joe Berg	Biohabitats	

Mary Gattis	LGAC	Local Government Advisory Committee representative, here to connect workgroup to local government officials when needed
Bill O'Donnell	NRCS	WV, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator for NRCS
Neely Law	Center for Watershed Protection	Sediment Stream Coordinator at the Chesapeake Bay Program, Co-chair of the Stream Health Workgroup and the coordinator for the Wetland Expert Panel
David Rider	EPA R3	Monitoring and Assessment
Anne Wakeford	WVDNR	
Michelle Henicheck	VA DEQ	
Jake Reilly	NFWF	

Action Items:

- Law will update the Wetland Expert Panel (WEP) protocol with clarifications about definitions and Martin will send to wetland workgroup membership for approval. If members do not reply with comments, it will be counted as a 'yes' to approve the scope.
- Jacobs reached out to the State NEIEN contacts, VA and PA did not respond.
 - Michelle Henicheck will contact Bill Keeling (VA NEIEN Contact) - *responded*
 - Dave Goerman will contact Ted Tesler (PA NEIEN Contact) – *Sara Nicholas following up after Sara and Amy met with Ted at NFWF meeting*
- Jacobs will follow up with WV Dept Ag contact Matt Monroe for tracking and reporting wetland data in WV
- Jacobs and McLaughlin will compile priority/obstacle information and come back to next meeting with proposal for how WWG should move forward in reference to the funding the WWG may receive.
- If you would like to contribute to drafting the Wetland MStrat, contact McLaughlin, Jacobs or Martin

Minutes:

Request: Approve the revised Wetland Workgroup Scope of Work and Membership List
(Neely Law)

The WWG approved the scope and purpose of the Wetland Expert Panel (WEP) at a previous meeting, however it was revised based on comments received from the Chesapeake Bay Partnership members. The comments received were to clarify that the scope of work reflects the new CBP process for expert panels and also to change the title of the panel from "Agricultural Wetlands Expert Panel" to "Wetlands Land Use Definition and Wetlands Restoration BMP Expert Panel." Panel membership was also modified to include representatives from EPA and MD regulatory agencies, the CBP Ag workgroup, and UMD.

Discussion:

- WEP needs to address the practice definitions and that needs to be explicit in the scope of work. Ensure that the definitions will be evaluated and made consistent with national definitions before addressing crediting.
- Regulatory representatives are on the WEP to ensure conflicting language with regulations will not occur.
- **Action:** Update the protocol with clarifications about definitions, send to wetland workgroup membership for approval. If members do not reply with comments, it will be counted as a 'yes' to approve the scope.

Wetland Tracking Plan (Erin McLaughlin and Amy Jacobs)

It was determined at the last WWG meeting that some wetlands are not being reported and some are reported incorrectly. To begin to resolve the issue, Jacobs reached out to the state NEIEN contacts with a few questions.

NEIEN State Contacts

- NY: Ben Sears
- PA: Ted Tesler*
- DE: Marcia Fox
- MD: Greg Sandi
- VA: Bill Keeling* *Replied after meeting – inserted information below*
- WV: Alana Hartman
- DC: Martin Hurd

** No response received*

Questions and Responses

1. *Who provides wetland restoration and protection BMP information?*
 - *Varies from a state point-person gathering information to relying on groups to submit information.*
 - *In several states, NRCS reports separately.*
2. *For each wetland BMP, do you receive enough information to identify the specific wetland BMP that was implemented – i.e. restoration, enhancement, or creation?*
 - *Important to have someone that is diligent in gathering information to determine restoration type as well as ensure that sites are not double counted.*
 - *Some states are not receiving enough information from NRCS to correctly determine type*
3. *Are you aware of any organizations that restore/ protect wetlands but are not reporting information?*
 - *Generally felt that most projects are being captured, VA was concerned that some wetlands particularly by NGO's are not being reported*
4. *Reporting Schedule*
 - *Information is to be entered into NEIEN by December of each year.*
 - *Most start to compile information in the fall.*

Discussion:

- Jacobs reached out to the State NEIEN contacts, VA and PA did not respond.
 - **Action:** Michelle Henicheck will contact Bill - *responded*

- **Action:** Dave Goerman will contact Ted - – *Sara Nicholas following up after Sara and Amy met Ted at NFWF meeting*
- NY appears to be the most streamlined state—Melissa Yearick coordinates the entire data collection for NY, translates data received through the data call to avoid double counting, and passes along to NEIEN contact
- MD also felt it was doing due diligence to categorize projects to the best of their ability (however Denise Clearwater does not have access to MDA data)
- Next step to resolve the tracking/reporting issues: develop flow chart for each state with data sources to increase transparency.
 - Volunteers from each state to help develop a chart for their state to determine where state and NRCS data flow from.
 - DC- ?
 - MD- Denise Clearwater
 - VA- Pam Mason (nominated)
 - PA-Sara Nicholas
 - NY-Melissa Yearick
 - DE-Mark Biddle
 - WV- Dept Ag Contact, Matt Monroe (**Action:** Jacobs will follow up with Monroe)
- Pennsylvania team will come together to discuss and collaborate on this issue (NRCS, FWS, TNC, DEP). Nicholas will be the point person for now.

Accelerating Wetland Restoration Preliminary Results (Amy Jacobs, Sara Nicholas, Jake McPherson)

The overarching project goal is to accelerate wetland restoration in priority areas of four states in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed that will result in improved water quality and habitat. The three year project was funded by NFWF. The team just completed the first year of collecting information from stakeholders on obstacles affecting implementation (year 2 and 3 will be focused on targeting and implementation).

Project Components:

1. *Interview stakeholders in four states to identify technical, economic, and social obstacles and develop recommendations for addressing.*
2. *Identify locations where wetland restoration will best improve water quality and enhance habitat.*
3. *Apply selected recommendations to implement restoration in priority locations.*

Over 50 stakeholders were interviewed and obstacles were identified and specific recommendations were developed.

1. *Obstacle: Outreach is limited and not coordinated*
 - a. *Identify/ designate a local leader in priority watersheds to coordinate and perform outreach*
 - b. *Increase communication/ training among program staff to understand and to be able to present options to landowners*

- c. *Integrate above into Soil Conservation District offices*
- d. *Focus outreach to individual audiences*
- e. *Convey full suite of benefits of wetlands*
- 2. *Obstacle: Limited Capacity*
 - a. *Increase local capacity to assist with design, outreach and permitting*
- 3. *Obstacle: Permitting*
 - a. *Increase communication with regulatory partners to fully understand process*
 - b. *Divide permitters between impacts and restoration*
 - c. *Reduce regulatory burden for environmentally beneficial projects*

Discussion:

- Contact Amy Jacobs if you feel a major obstacle/recommendation is missing from the preliminary results
- Potentially reach out to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay with the results. They are doing something similar with riparian buffers and they have senior leadership in other agencies that could weave opportunities into policy.
- Important to determine why the obstacles are actually obstacles. Why does the obstacle exist? Can we manage the obstacle? If so, those are the ones to focus efforts/time.
- Consider interviewing field level permitters.

Developing State Priorities and Obstacles

One of the opportunities of the WWG is to test out different ideas/processes with potential funding that will become available to the workgroup. Is there a priority area/watershed in each state that we can designate and focus efforts with multiple partners to test new ideas for wetland restoration? As a group, WWG needs to consider there may be a geographic priority or habitat type/species of interest priorities.

State	Priorities	Obstacles
Pennsylvania	Bog Turtle/Rattlesnake habitat	PA is far away from CBW (difficult to sell wetland restoration to meet Chesapeake Bay goals), lack of outreach and messaging tailored to potential clients (like farm operators)
Virginia	Waterfowl focus areas, Chesapeake Bay Wetlands (small priority in Upper James), working with grant funding on wetland condition assessment tool to priorities restoration sites and areas	Funding, paperwork, permitting, staff constraints, communication
Maryland	WIPs have individual goals, Pocomoke, Bog Turtle	Willing landowners

	Habitat (N.Central MD), Choptank, opportunity with willing landowners is most important beyond priority sites.	
New York		Concerns with the new priorities of WRE, reduced capacity across the state, reduced funds, farmers convert back to ag fields because of prices
Delaware (<i>provided via email</i>)		Landowner participation, funding, need to be able to make serious offers to landowners

Action: Jacobs and McLaughlin will compile priority/obstacle information and come back to next meeting with proposal for how WWG should move forward in reference to the funding the WWG may receive.

Wetland Management Strategy Development (Erin McLaughlin)

The Chesapeake Bay Program Watershed Agreement was signed by the six governors along with the mayor of D.C. in June 2014. The Watershed Agreement has 10 overarching goals with 31 outcomes to be met by 2025 and this includes a wetland outcome under the habitat goal.

Wetlands Outcome: *“Continually increase the capacity of wetlands to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Create or reestablish 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhance the function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands by 2025. These activities may occur in any land use (including urban) but primarily occur in agricultural or natural landscapes.”*

For each of the outcomes a management strategy is to be developed. Management strategies are individual documents that summarize the management process and the collective thinking of the Partnership for each outcome. They will articulate the overarching and specific actions necessary to achieve the goals and outcomes by 2025.

Key Elements of a Management Strategy

- *Executive Summary (to be developed by the CBP Communications Office)*
- *Outcomes and Baselines*
 - *Complete.*
- *Jurisdictions and agencies participation, including plans for local engagement*
 - *Workgroup members, state/agency contacts have been identified by the PSC, CBP online sign up for interested parties*

- *Factors influencing ability to meet goal*
 - Obstacles that WWG has been discussing
- *Current efforts and gaps*
 - Gaps in resources, staffing and what we need to accomplish these goals
- *Management approach, including plans for local engagement*
 - Comment from WWG in terms of how we are going to about accomplishing this outcome
- *Monitoring Progress*
 - tracking
- *Assessing Progress*
 - Tracking, streamlining the tracking and collecting correct information for restoring wetlands
- *Adaptively Manage*
- *Biennial Workplan*

Discussion

- **Action:** If you would like to contribute to drafting the Wetland MStrat, contact Erin, Amy or Hannah
- There are past documents that can be used to update this strategy document
- The draft MStrat will be provided to the WWG for review
- Draft: by Jan 8th to review at January meeting

Next Meeting

- January 8, 2015
- Agenda Topics
 - Draft Wetland MStrat
 - TNC/NOAA tool to prioritize tidal wetlands
 - Suggestions? Send to Erin, Amy and Hannah