

Nontidal Wetland Rehabilitation, Enhancement and Creation BMP Expert Panel

The Center for Watershed Protection, Inc. (the Center) in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), submits the following scope of work to Virginia Tech to assemble an Expert Panel to evaluate the nutrient and sediment removal and runoff reduction benefits associated with nontidal wetland rehabilitation, enhancement and creation. This panel will build on work completed by the Wetland Panel (the 2016 Panel Report; CBP, 2016). The proposed scope and charge of the panel includes developing performance credits for the Creation, Rehabilitation and Enhancement of Wetlands in relation to the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP)'s established total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.

The Center has extensive experience with the CBP Expert Panel Process, and have been directly involved in the previous (2015-2016) Wetland Expert Panel (WEP). The Center has also conducted comprehensive reviews of the literature on development impacts to wetlands, benefits and functions of wetlands and wetland buffers, as well as a review of federal and state policies on wetland protection through three cooperative agreements with EPA to integrate wetlands in watershed planning. A partnership with TNC will strengthen the Center's capacity to establish science-based performance metrics for the Bay Program. Through their leadership to the Wetlands Workgroup, TNC has extensive knowledge of and experience in working through CBP expert panel process. In addition, TNC brings strong experience in watershed modeling, wetland restoration, and research and monitoring of wetland function. Currently, TNC is working with partners including USDA NRCS and USFWS, to restore more than 3,000 acres of strategically targeted wetlands across the Delmarva Peninsula, and is collaborating with USGS to measure water storage and nutrient retention among enhanced floodplains along a major tributary to the Chesapeake Bay.

The proposed Expert Panel Chair, Membership, Scope of Work, and Timeline are provided below.

Expert Panel Chair:

Neely L. Law, PhD, Director of Education and Training at the Center for Watershed Protection, will chair the Expert Panel. Neely led the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Expert Panels on Filter Strips/Stream Buffer Upgrades and Urban Tree Canopy, and participated on the Urban Nutrient Management, Enhanced Erosion and Sediment Control, Street Sweeping, Catch Basin and Storm Drain Cleaning Expert Panels, as well as the 2015-16 Wetland Panel. Neely was also a Sediment Reduction and Stream Restoration Coordinator for the CBP from 2012-2015. Her CV is provided as an attachment to this statement of work (SOW).

Expert Panel Membership:

Table 1 presents the individuals who have been invited to participate on the Expert Panel. These are recognized topic experts and have expertise in environmental and water quality related issues. Panelists who have indicated their commitment to serve on the Panel have provided letters of support, which are attachments to this scope of work. CVs for all invited Panelists are also provided as an attachment.

Table 1. Invited BMP Review Expert Panel for Nontidal Wetland Rehabilitation, Enhancement and Creation		
Panelist/Affiliation	Area of Expertise	Status
Neely L. Law, PhD, The Center for Watershed Protection (Panel Chair)	Water quality, BMPs, previous expert panel chair(s) and member	Committed
Kathleen Boomer, PhD, The Nature Conservancy	Wetland eco-hydrology, modeling and landscape ecology, previous wetland Panel member	Committed
Jeanne Christie, Association of State Wetland Managers	Regulatory and state permitting programs, including wetland mitigation	Committed
Greg Noe, U.S. Geological Survey	Wetland hydrology, groundwater, landscape modeling, familiarity with CBP process	Committed
Erin MacLaughlin, Maryland DNR	Wetlands and water quality	Committed

Solange Filoso, Chesapeake Biological Lab	Best management practice performance	Committed
Denise Wardrop, Penn State	Nutrients and wetlands	Committed
Scott Jackson, University of Massachusetts	Wetland creation	Committed
Steve Strano, NRCS	Agriculture BMPs	Committed

In addition to the topic experts, the Panel membership will include a representative from the CBP Watershed Technical Work Group (WTWG) and a representative from the CBP modeling team, to be assigned by the CBP. An additional regulatory support person will be provided by EPA Region III. All Panel members will be asked to disclose any potential conflicts of interest prior to serving on the Panel.

Scope of Work:

The specific tasks to accomplish the project objectives are described below.

Task 1. Assemble Expert Panel

The Center will work with the Panel Coordinator to finalize the charge, scope, and membership of the Panel. Recommendations will be available to the source sector Workgroups, the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (GIT) Chair and Vice Chair, and the other GITs with direct interest in the WEP's findings, as well as the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), for their review and approval.

The Center will revise the Panel scope and charge and membership based on input from these various stakeholders and will contact approved panelists about moving forward. A brief description of the key Panel roles is provided below:

- Panel Coordinator: The Panel coordinator will provide logistical support (scheduling calls/meetings, operating webinar and conference lines, etc.) and strategic guidance on the expert panel process. He/she will also serve as liaison between the Expert Panel and the wider CBP partnership.
- Panel Chair: The Chair will be the chief strategist and panel lead. The Chair will work with the Coordinator and Panel members to assign specific tasks and ensure the Panel is on schedule. The Chair will use his/her expertise to facilitate productive technical discussions among the panelists. The Panel Chair and Panel members are responsible for developing the Expert Panel report that conforms in form and content with the *Protocol for the Development, Review, and Approval of Loading and Effectiveness Estimates for Nutrient and Sediment Controls in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model* (CBP BMP Protocol).
- Panel Members: The Expert Panel is responsible for following the specific charge of the Panel, as well as adhering to the BMP Protocol. Panelists will participate and offer their own unbiased expertise and best professional judgment throughout the process, and will perform assigned or voluntary tasks that assist the development of the final Panel report.
- Modeling Team Representative: The modeling team representative will serve as liaison between the CBP modeling team and the Expert Panel, relaying and responding to questions that the Panel has for the modeling team regarding the simulation or incorporation of the BMP(s) into Phase 6 of the CBP Watershed Model. He/she will also assist with the development of the Technical Appendix, which accompanies each Panel report.
- WTWG Representative: The WTWG representative serves as a Panel participant to offer his/her expertise with BMP tracking and reporting, which is crucial for the Panel's final report and the development of the Technical Appendix.
- EPA Region III Representative: This representative will serve as a resource for regulatory questions that may arise during the Panel's work.

In addition to these key Panel roles, the following staff will support this project:

- Kathleen Boomer, PhD, Watershed Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, will provide technical capacity for developing the literature review and synthesizing report materials. As both a voting panelist and a staff team member, Boomer can ensure that feedback from the full panel membership is captured and technical challenges throughout the project period are addressed. Boomer served on the previous Wetlands Expert Panel and co-authored the report, "Wetlands and Wetland Restoration: Recommendations of the Wetland Expert Panel for the incorporation of non-tidal wetland best

management practices (BMPs) and land uses in the Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model.” She will contribute her knowledge and apply her expertise in watershed modeling and wetland biogeochemistry to synthesize information contributed by the Panel and to help develop a conceptual framework that can be fully integrated with the CBP’s watershed model.

- Bill Stack, Deputy Director of the Center will act as a technical reviewer for the Center. Bill is a professional engineer with more than 35 years of experience in water resources management. As the Sediment Reduction and Stream Restoration Coordinator for the CBP from 2012-2015, Bill co-led the Expert Panel on Stream Restoration, led the development of revised recommendations on Stream Restoration for the “test drive period,” chaired the Urban Shoreline Erosion Control Expert Panel, and participated on the Urban Stormwater Retrofits and Nutrient Discharges from Grey Infrastructure Expert Panels. He also chaired the Impervious Disconnection Expert Panel.
- Lisa Fraley-McNeal and Deb Caraco of the Center will provide technical assistance with literature review and synthesis, and statistical and GIS analysis.

Task 2. Literature Review and Synthesis

The proposed Expert Panel will build upon the findings and recommendations provided by the most recently published WEP report (2016). The report highlighted the importance of wetland type and watershed condition as primary controls of wetland water quality functions and presented a framework to evaluate wetland water quality benefits based on hydrogeologic and hydrogeomorphic settings. The recommendations have been adopted by the CBP mainly to account for water quality benefits associated with restoring prior converted wetlands (i.e., wetlands that were converted from a non-agricultural use to production of a commodity crop prior to December 23, 1985). Due to time constraints imposed by the CBP 2017 Mid-Point Assessment, the 2016 WEP requested that a future panel expand the science-based framework to relativize estimated water quality benefits across a broader range of wetland condition and wetland BMPs. Accordingly, the proposed WEP will build upon the current literature review 1) to evaluate and compare water quality benefits associated with rehabilitated, enhanced, and created wetlands, as well as natural, intact wetlands to provide comparability amongst different wetland conditions; and 2) to inform a crediting framework and resultant methods that best align with the scientific reporting and professional understanding of wetland functions.

The Expert Panel chair will coordinate a review and synthesis of the literature, including the 2016 WEP report, peer-reviewed publications and technical reports, and “gray” literature to address the following research questions:

- 1) *How do rehabilitated, enhanced, and created wetland water quality functions differ from those of restored wetlands?*
- 2) *How do rehabilitated, enhanced, created, and restored wetland water quality functions compare with those of intact, natural wetlands? Importantly, the findings will be evaluated using the current CBP adopted framework, specifically with consideration to hydrogeologic and geomorphic setting (i.e., physiographic province, watershed position, watershed condition, and climate).*
- 3) *To what extent have the water quality benefits of wetland rehabilitation or enhancement been directly documented?*
- 4) *What are critical research opportunities (i.e., knowledge gaps) essential to predicting wetland function at a local and regional scale, based on condition, location, and climate trends?*

These questions are in addition to the elements listed in the BMP Protocol and [the Charge provided to the Panel by the Wetland Workgroup](#). ~~they~~ [The above questions will](#) provide additional guidance for the literature review for the Panel members to assess the nutrient and sediment functions of the BMPs.

Importantly, the proposed WEP will build upon work by the previous expert panel to provide improved clarity for wetland BMP function and their associated nutrient and sediment reduction benefits with associated qualifications to receive credit. To do so, similar to the past WEP, a conceptual framework to quantify the benefits of wetland BMPs will be created leveraging knowledge from past work of Jordan et al (2007) used in the Phase 5.3.2 model, but modified for wetland restoration, along with frameworks that provided a way to categorize wetland performance (e.g. by hydrogeomorphic classification). Further, the WEP will consider findings and recommendations provided by previous expert panels related to the current panel charge. For

example, the proposed WEP will consider a report developed by a CBP Stream Restoration Expert Panel (2013) and a STAC workshop report that provided a comprehensive review of nutrient reduction rates associated with wetland restoration projects in rural areas (CBP, 2008). Most of the research reviewed in these previous reports focused on restored wetlands that received stormflow and in some cases groundwater, as opposed to engineered or created wetlands.

Task 3. Panel Meetings

The Panel Chair will facilitate productive technical discussions among the panelists by convening up to twelve WEP meetings, including a stakeholder forum. At least two and as many as three meetings will be organized as in-person meetings and held in the Annapolis-Baltimore area, including an early introductory stakeholder meeting (meeting #2), and a mid-point assessment meeting (meeting #6). If needed, a third in-person meeting may be organized to finalize a summary of findings and recommendations (meeting #11 or 12). The remaining (nine or ten) meetings will be held by telephone conference. At least one WEP meeting will be dedicated to review/discussion of the literature review results and one meeting will be centered around preliminary (strawman) recommendations for developing effectiveness estimates. All meetings will be shared through Webex or a similar platform to ensure full participation by distant panel members. Panel members may also participate in up to two meetings in-person as the travel expenses allow. The Panel Chair will prepare materials for presentation at each Panel meeting to highlight key discussion questions, identify critical decisions, summarize outcomes, and confirm task assignments.

The second Panel meeting will be dedicated to an open stakeholder forum where interested parties, other than the Expert Panel members, can share and present scientific data with the Panel members. The intent is to provide an open exchange of information that may help inform the Panel as it moves forward with its deliberations. Working with the Panel Coordinator, the Center will co-lead the Forum, which will be a half day meeting to be held at the CBP in Annapolis. At this meeting, the Panel Chair will present the charge of the Panel and will solicit feedback from attendees on specific issues to address with the Panel and relevant resources and research. The first part of the meeting will be open to stakeholders and the second part will constitute just the Panel members.

Efficiently approaching the panel meetings will be paramount for this panel, since the panel is tasked with quantifying the benefits of three practices (Wetland Rehabilitation, Wetland Enhancement, and Wetland Creation), which will likely have different benefits depending on the region in which they are implemented and their location (i.e., floodplain versus upland). Consequently, the first Panel meeting will focus on practice definitions and other overarching issues that the Panel will address throughout the project period. Specific items in the first meeting will include the following:

- 1) *Are current definitions of wetland BMPs adequate for assessing local and cumulative water quality benefits within the CBP watershed modeling framework (e.g., what is the distinction between Wetland Rehabilitation and Wetland Enhancement)?* Notes from the 2015-16 Panel discussed differences between these two practices, and there was some discussion of possibly combining them. The Expert Panel will explore the range of definitions and decide how best to describe different wetland types and conditions in the context of the Bay model and the TMDL accounting framework. The panel will be asked to address this question early in the process, because this decision will help guide both the Literature Review and the Panel process.
- 2) *How should we account for functional differences between Created versus Restored and Natural Wetlands?* This question will be a major focus on the literature review, and the Expert Panel will provide early guidance to inform this research.
- 3) *Should the same geophysical regions defined in the 2016 Panel Report be used by this Expert Panel?* The 2016 Panel Report defined nine Physiographic Subregions to refine the estimated nutrient reduction of wetlands. The Panel members will review these subregions and determine their applicability as part the BMP recommendations, recognizing modifications to the classifications would be limited to aggregation.
- 4) *Should the Expert Panel Report address the Wetland Restoration Credit Recommendations?* Currently, water quality benefits of existing wetlands are reflected through low pollutant loading rates also assigned to forested land use; no additional retention benefits are considered. In contrast, wetland

restoration BMPs are assigned the same low loading rate, plus an additional coefficient is applied to reflect the unique capacity of restored wetlands to provide water quality benefits. The 2016 WEP raised concerns that this results in an unequal accounting framework that may lead to a disincentive for wetland preservation and conservation; however, the available time did not allow for development of a more equitable framework. While the Expert Panel scope will not explicitly revisit the restoration wetland credit, recommendations resulting from the three other wetland BMPs may require Panel recommendations for future updates to the CBWM to ensure there is consistency, or alignment, or relative comparability with the nutrient and sediment reduction benefits.

5) *What recent research could better inform the work of the Expert Panel?*

This discussion will be used to identify speakers for the second panel meeting.

Task 4. Develop Report

Based on their findings, in part supported by expanding the WEP 2016 literature review, the proposed WEP will provide recommendations for improving upon the CBP modeling and accounting framework. The final report will include all the required elements described in the *Protocol for the Development, Review and Approval of Loading and Effectiveness Estimates for Nutrient and Sediment Controls in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model*.

Task 5. Approval Process

The Panel Chair will work with the Panel Coordinator to go through the CBP review and approval process. This will involve presenting the draft recommendations to the Wetlands Work Group (WWG), WTWG and the WQGIT and addressing and responding to any comments received during the comment period. The budget and schedule assume only one meeting with each workgroup plus two additional meetings with the Modeling Team if needed. Any additional meetings would be subject to additional expenses and an extension of the timeline. The Chair will seek the Panel's input in the event that significant comments are made, or major revisions are requested, as the report is reviewed by the CBP partnership. Although the Panel Chair and Coordinator are responsible for managing the comment process, Panel members may be expected to address and respond to comments received during the comment period, as appropriate.

Project Timeline:

The project will be completed over an 18-month timeframe as shown in Table 2. Month 1 represents September 2017 if the Wetland Workgroup approves the panel membership following partnership review and feedback.

Table 2. Project Timeline		
Task	Key Deliverables	Completion Date (Months from Award)
Task 1. Assemble Panel	Final panel charge and membership	Month 1
Task 2. Literature Review and Synthesis	Draft tabularized summary of research studies studying retention benefits of rehabilitated, enhanced, created, and natural wetlands.	Month 4
Task 3. Panel Meetings	1 st WEP meeting - prioritize panel questions	Month 2
	2 nd WEP meeting - stakeholder forum	Month 3
	3 rd WEP meeting - define panel strategies, tasks	Month 4
	4 th WEP meeting - review lit review updates	Month 5
	5 th WEP meeting - review panel contributions	Month 6
	6 th WEP meeting - midpoint assessment	Month 7
	7 th WEP meeting - adjust strategies, as needed	Month 8
	8 th WEP meeting - review panel contributions	Month 9
	9 th WEP meeting - discuss preliminary findings	Month 10
	10 th WEP meeting - outline final report	Month 11
	11 th WEP meeting - review remaining report tasks	Month 12
	12 th WEP meeting - approve draft WEP report	Month 14
	Minutes from the Panel meetings	Months 2-14

Table 2. Project Timeline		
Task	Key Deliverables	Completion Date (Months from Award)
Task 4. Develop Report	Complete technical review and editing of draft WEP report, including finalized tabular summary of published wetland studies.	Month 13
Task 5. Approval Process	Review and approval by WWG Review and approval by WTWG Review and approval by WQ GIT Final approved report with recommendations	Month 15 Month 16 Month 17 Month 18

References:

Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). 2008. STAC Responsive Workshop: Quantifying the role of wetlands in achieving nutrient and sediment reductions in Chesapeake Bay. Annapolis, MD. STAC Publication 08-006.

Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). 2016. Wetlands and Wetland Restoration; Recommendations of the wetland expert panel for the incorporation of non-tidal wetland best management practices (BMPs) and land uses in the Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model. Annapolis, MD. CBP/TRS-314-16.

Jordan, T. 2007. Wetland restoration and creation best management practice (agricultural). Definition of nutrient and sediment reduction efficiencies for use in calibration of the phase 5.0 Chesapeake Bay Program Watershed Model. Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Edgewater, MD.