



STREAM HEALTH
HABITAT GIT | STREAM HEALTH WORKGROUP

CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT OUTCOME LANGUAGE

PROPOSED DRAFT OUTCOME LANGUAGE:

Continually improve **and protect** stream health **and ecological integrity, including their living resources, functions, and ecosystem services for people**, throughout the watershed **using sound science to inform land management, planning, and conservation**.

Proposed Target	New or Update of Existing Target	Estimated Date for Target Development
Improve health and ecological integrity of at least 3% of non-tidal stream miles every 6 years.	Update of Existing	n/a
Annually increase the stream miles protected by X% per year or X% over 10 years	New Target	May 2025
Develop multi-metric stream health indicators to complement the Chesapeake Basin-wide Index of Biological Integrity (Chessie BIBI) by 202X.	New Target	May 2025
Healthy Watersheds New Measurable Target TBD.	New Target	May 2025

*Detailed activities will be included in an updated work plan

EXISTING 2014 OUTCOME LANGUAGE: Continually improve stream health and function throughout the watershed. Improve health and function of ten percent of stream miles above the 2008 baseline for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Rationale and context for draft outcome language:

There are a few major changes to the 2014 outcome language:

1. The addition of protection and conservation in the broad statement and developing a metric for protection,
2. Clarifying what we mean by “stream health” and the scope of the Stream Health Workgroup,
3. Changing from “10% above 2008 baseline”, to “3% of non-tidal stream miles every 6 years”,
4. Working with the Protected Lands Workgroup, a new Healthy Watershed target is under construction, and
5. The addition of a new time-bound target: the multi-metric assessment of stream health.

The addition of language to protect and conserve streams is to align with the Executive Council’s decision to [elevate conservation as a pillar of the Bay Program](#). Recognizing that land-use changes impact stream health and are monitored, the intent of the [Healthy Watershed Outcome](#) has been reclassified as a metric of stream protection.

To address any confusion regarding what makes a stream healthy, the workgroup proposes clarifying language to be included within their high-level outcome statement: “and ecological integrity, including their living resources, functions, and ecosystem services for people”.

The addition of a new time-bound target is suggested to highlight the complexity of stream health and underline the work that is already underway to develop a multi-metric suite of stream health indicators. Achieving this target will complement the Chessie BIBI by allowing the workgroup to comprehensively look at cause and effect relationships between biotic and abiotic metrics on their potential biological uplift.

The high-level outcome statement is concluded by, “using sound science to inform land management, planning, and conservation.” Since the health of a stream is not dictated by one metric and our understanding of what affects the function of our streams is ever growing, the workgroup found it necessary to specify that it will continue to utilize the best available science in their pursuit of improving the unique functions of streams. Concurrently, leveraging partners’ expertise, identifying and filling gaps in science, and providing a watershed wide perspective is what makes the workgroup unique and valuable to its partners.

The “3% of non-tidal stream miles every 6 years” is a refinement of the 2014 agreement outcome language that had an unspecified annual improvement of ~0.58% (10% over 17 years, 2008-2025). Due to the reality of changing environmental conditions and increasing human population within the watershed, the workgroup agreed to stay conservative and strive to improve 0.5% annually (3% over 6 years).

The addition of “non-tidal waters” in certain targets is because currently the definition of a healthy stream is based on a fair, good, or excellent Chessie BIBI score, which is limited to non-tidal sampling.

Topics/challenges for Management Board guidance:

The Stream Health Workgroup held a meeting to finalize outcome language and there is general agreement on the language and metrics. Pennsylvania has asserted that they are not supportive of outcome language or metrics as they feel the metrics “are unrealistic and will create unnecessary additional resource needs and reporting burden on jurisdictions that do not align with current existing jurisdiction laws, policies and regulations.” Pennsylvania proposes the following language:

Continually improve and protect non-tidal and tidal stream health and ecological integrity throughout the watershed based on sound science, planning, technology and data. (High Level Language)

- Bi-annually measure the health and function of stream miles watershed-wide, utilizing the extensive data provided by each jurisdiction through the required U.S. EPA 305b Integrated Water Quality Reports submitted by each Chesapeake Bay jurisdiction. (Measurable Target).

Methodology for data collection and tracking of each Target (Optional):

Target 2: Annually increase the stream miles protected by X% per year or X% over 10 years

- *We will track protected land with GIS data throughout the watershed.*