



WETLANDS

HABITAT GIT/ WETLANDS WORKGROUP

CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT OUTCOME LANGUAGE

PROPOSED DRAFT OUTCOME LANGUAGE:

Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and cultural benefits.

EXISTING 2014 OUTCOME LANGUAGE:

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.

PROPOSED TARGET (SMART, Directional, etc.). (Suggested time horizon of 2040 for achievement of draft output.)	New Target / Update of Existing Target	Date estimate for target being developed
Tidal Wetlands Target - Restore or create 5,500 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035. The Bay Program will continue to calculate and report on wetland losses occurring throughout the performance period to determine if a net positive impact is achieved.	Update of existing	December 2025
Non-tidal Wetlands Target – Restore or create 9,500 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035. The Bay Program will continue to calculate and report on wetland losses occurring throughout the performance period to determine if a net positive impact is achieved.	Update of existing	December 2025
Protection Target - Same as the Protected Lands Outcome and will be tracked under that goal.	New	December 2025
Every two years each jurisdiction implements one large-scale (to be defined by jurisdictions) or equivalent area of several smaller conservation, enhancement, or restoration projects/year.	New	July 2026
Waterbird Target: Under Construction	New	July 2026

*Detailed activities will be included in an updated work plan

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Rationale and context for proposed draft outcome language:

- The proposed outcome language highlights wetlands benefits and connections to other outcomes in the agreement.
- Separating tidal and non-tidal wetlands into two targets because the current language lacks specificity with the broad acreage goal.
- Included wetland protection because it was missing from the current language and it prioritizes important wetlands.
- We propose a 1% restoration/creation goal (15,000 acres) and a 2-3% enhancement goal (30,000-45,000 acres). This would decrease the enhancement goal, in response to Maryland's concerns that we would not be able to repeat the acres where nutria has been eradicated. While 1% is small relative to what is needed to restore a healthy Chesapeake Bay watershed, we feel it is achievable with dedicated effort across jurisdictions. If we demonstrate that we can reach this goal, then we can continue our work on scaling up, and potentially reach a 5% or 10% functional gain in wetland resources over time.
- We agree that it is critical to track and report wetland gains relative to wetland losses to be transparent about our ability to achieve net gains across the watershed.
- In several partnerships in which we are involved, which is not a comprehensive survey of all efforts across the watershed, we are aware of at least 1,600 acres of wetland restoration projects and 1,500 acres of enhancement projects that are advancing currently.
- Waterbirds are an important indicator of the health of wetlands, so once the target is developed it will be important to keep track of it.

Topics/challenges for Management Board guidance (Optional):

- Deciding whether to explicitly state "net gain" in the target language or if tracking for losses was sufficient
 - To have a positive ecological impact, the wetlands workgroup would aspire for a netgain in wetlands to keep ahead of wetlands losses to climate variability, however it is unrealistic to attain. Simply tracking wetlands losses could inform future wetland creation and restoration goals and discount voluntary effort achievements.
- Lack of capacity, and consistent funding for voluntary wetlands projects.

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

The creation and restoration targets are already tracked with the Habitat Tracker, and it will continue to be used to collect that data.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey have datasets on waterbird presence in the watershed, so that existing infrastructure will be used to track the waterbird target.

Links to documentation that provide Target justification/context and/or rationale (Optional):

