

WINTER QUARTERLY MEETING – March 15th, 2023

Chesapeake Bay Program



Identifying High-Priority Areas for SAV Conservation in Chesapeake Bay

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Maryland DNR and
Chair, SAV Workgroup*



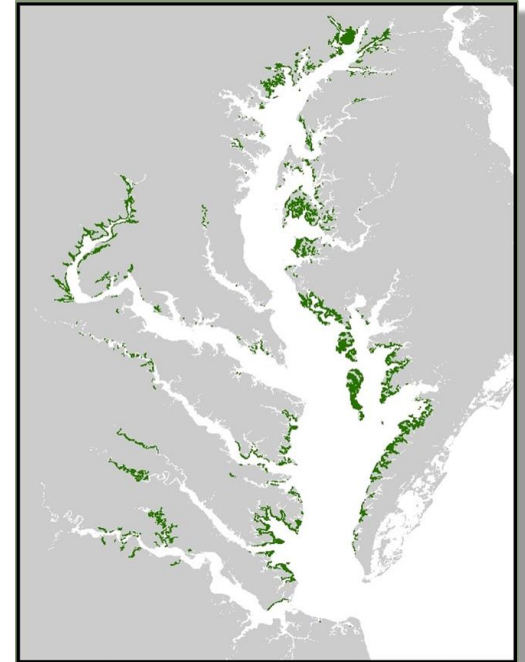
- The Bay's vulnerability to climate change was demonstrated with a catastrophic loss of SAV in 2019.
- Unusually high flows were implicated in the loss, highlighting the immediate need to develop solutions beyond the TMDL to protect and expand SAV beds at the local scale given changing hydrologic conditions.
- The 2023 SAV Workgroup GIT-funded project will identify high-priority SAV areas throughout Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries and develop solutions to protect and expand those SAV beds locally.

Today's Goal: Identify the criteria that will be used in High-Priority SAV Area selection.

High-Priority Areas for SAV Conservation in Chesapeake Bay

Criteria for consideration are based on a blend of the criteria used to identify:

- Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas
- Marine Protected Areas
- Biodiversity Hotspots





SAV Workgroup Expert Opinion

- 1. Bed Size and Density**
- 2. Species Richness and Diversity**
- 3. Bed Maturity/Stability**
- 4. Sensitive/rare species**
- 5. Habitat Value**
- 6. Representativeness**
- 7. Priority Area Distribution**



SAV Workgroup Expert Opinion

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- 7. Priority Area Distribution – Should there be an equal number of priority areas identified in each salinity regime/community type (this is specific to this project)?**



SAV Workgroup Expert Opinion

Are there any other criteria that should be considered?

Next Steps

This week: Today's comments, recommendations, and decisions will be recorded, consolidated, and summarized.

Late March-Early April: SAV Workgroup leadership will develop guidance material for Chesapeake Bay SAV High-Priority Area Identification.

Mid-Late April: Guidance material will be sent to the Workgroup for review.

Early May: Workgroup edits and recommendations will be incorporated into a final guidance document.

Mid-May: A finalized guidance document will be provided to the contractor that wins the bid for the 2023-2024 GIT-funded project on BMPs and SAV.



Questions?

Strategic Habitat Conservation Area



SHC is an iterative process with five consecutive elements that feed into each other, leading to continually improving results. The five elements are:

- **Biological Planning:** Identify priority resources, determine associated population objectives, and model relationships between habitat and populations.
- **Conservation Design:** Identify priority areas for conservation and determine population-based objectives.
- **Conservation Delivery:** Implement conservation actions through partnerships and programs.
- **Outcome-Based Monitoring:** Evaluate the success of conservation delivery activities to inform future Biological Planning, Conservation Design, and Conservation Delivery.
- **Assumption-Based Research:** Test standard assumptions used in Biological Planning to improve future activities.