

Wetland Workgroup Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2014, 1:00-3:30PM

Chesapeake Bay Program Office

Participants:

Amy Jacobs (Co-Chair)	TNC-MD
Erin McLaughlin (Co-Chair)	MDNR
Hannah Martin (Staff)	CRC, Chesapeake Bay Program
Jim Curatolo	Upper Susquehanna Coalition-NY
Denise Clearwater	MDE
Lee Haggerty	USDA-WV
Sharon Scarborough	NRCS-PA
Neely Law	Center for Watershed Protection
Regina Poeske	EPA R3
Dave Rider	EPA R3
Rich Mason	FWS-CBFO
Joe Berg	Biohabitats
Jeff Jones	NRCS-VA
Bobby Gorski	NRCS-DE
Jayne Arthurs	NRCS-DE
Lora Zimmerman	FWS-PA
Sarah Nicholas	TNC-PA
Mark Gallagher	Princeton Hydro-PA
Mary Gattis	LGAC
Melissa Yearick	Upper Susquehanna Coalition-NY
Shelby Freyermuth	DEP-PA
Steve Strano	NRCS-MD
Aileen Molloy	Tetrattech
David Byrd	FWS-VA
Sarah Hilderbrand	MDNR
Alison Armocida	MDNR
Jake McPherson	DU

Action Items

- Jacobs will put together a list of state focus areas for workgroup members to review and choose two areas in each state and bring together partner agencies. This will assemble a network of projects and details of work that is being done and how additional resources can assist.
- Martin will contact Johnston for list of NEIEN data contacts
- Workgroup will create flowchart for each state's data input process. Who inputs the data into NEIEN and where do they get the data in order to identify major gaps.
- Wetlands Expert Panel to investigate a new BMP for Urban Wetland Restoration/Creation (duplicate ag wetland restoration in the urban environment in order to distinguish from wet ponds).

- McLaughlin will share the written request to EPA for funding with the workgroup
- Next meeting discuss suggestions of methods for maximum acreage gains

Decisions

- Pending suggestions on literature review and membership list, the workgroup approves the Wetlands Expert Panel Scope and Purpose and membership list.

Welcome and Introductions (Amy Jacobs and Erin McLaughlin)

- Amy and Erin, the newly appointed workgroup co-chairs, introduced the group to the first restoration oriented workgroup meeting and outlined the following key components.
 - a) Wetland restoration and enhancement outcome included in the recently signed new Watershed Agreement. *“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.”*
 - b) Wetland protection included under land conservation in the Protected Lands Outcome. *“By 2025, protect an additional two million acres of lands throughout the watershed—currently identified as high conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level—including 225,000 acres of wetlands and 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality. (2010 baseline year)”*

Goals of the Wetland Workgroup (2014-2015) (Amy Jacobs and Erin McLaughlin)

- Purpose of the Workgroup: Convene a group of wetland professionals focused on wetland restoration and protection to leverage and accelerate efforts in priority areas in each state to assist in meeting Bay Agreement goals and developing a management strategy for wetlands. Focus on implementation and participate in regularly scheduled meetings to share information on what is happening on the ground across the watershed states and partners, identify opportunities and discuss obstacles. The workgroup can discuss and work to address these issues and identify additional resources or actions in order to continue these restoration efforts moving forward. **Possible workgroup involvement includes:**
 - a) Identifying focus areas based on existing priorities and/or targeting information
 - b) Coordinating existing funding and identify additional needs
 - c) Farm Bill programs, state programs, USFWS, local conservation partners, etc. (new private partners). Utilize these programs and work with state counterparts to advocate funds to continue to go to these programs to get more projects in the ground (Farm Bill is currently largest funder of projects in the watershed).
 - d) Testing and implementing innovative delivery mechanisms. Identify what successful/unsuccessful practices/workplans are being attempted in different areas in order to expand and implement in other areas.
 - e) Using the experience of workgroup members, develop solutions to obstacles to meeting wetland restoration goals. Continue efforts addressing permitting difficulties.
 - f) Tracking progress/ outcomes to export lessons learned to other areas.
 - g) Providing input and review to Wetland Expert Panel that is reviewing current efficiencies and crediting of agricultural wetland BMPs in the Bay Model.
- Discussion:

- **State focus areas**

- a) **Pennsylvania**

1. Freyermuth: The PADEP wetland program is still reaching out and working to identify focus areas. There is a lot of competition for viable wetland restoration opportunities. DEP is involved with mitigation, not voluntary efforts, which does not count toward these outcomes.
2. Nicholas: TNC is working with Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited to identify restorable wetlands and target areas by using existing information to overlay work with NRCS impaired streams, trout waters and other layers. TNC is working to identify one targeted area, however some counties with the highest potential include Juniata, Adams, Franklin, and Lancaster (Lower Susquehanna). TNC is focusing on subwatersheds that have overlapping priorities and have good water going into bad water with potential restorable wetlands.
3. Scarborough: NRCS has worked with Wetland Reserve Program and the field office in two counties. WREP program in PA is statewide and the main focus is on bog turtle habitat restoration. For agricultural land, it is taking advantage of opportunities that arise with interested landowners.
4. Zimmerman: USFWS is working in smaller areas, specific creeks with consolidated work with other partners (Partners for Wildlife, NRCS, DEP, County Conservation groups). Working on Conewango Creek, Limestone Run, and Mill Creek in Lebanon, Dawson, and Lancaster Counties (ag and urban lands). Limestone Run is a 303(d) impaired water body where FWS is looking forward to introducing trout. Also, Half Moon Creek (Penn State). Overall, working on consolidated focused areas with interested landowners combining a variety of conservation techniques and funding sources.
5. Gattis, LGAC: Conewango—broad initiative that includes both ag and urban lands and already a lot of good infrastructure in place to achieve implementation more quickly.
6. Ducks Unlimited: Priority area is the Lower Susquehanna.

- **New York**

1. Upper Susquehanna Coalition (Curatolo, Yearick): Wetland team for restoration relies on NRCS and WRP. It takes a long time; enhancement, not true restoration. Modeling to identify wetland restoration opportunities. Focus areas/counties include Ostego County (Cooperstown) and Herkimer County. There is high competition with mitigation for good restoration sites. Using Federal stimulus funds to continue building on state lands.
 - a. Discussion: The conflict/competition with mitigation sites is due to more funding available for mitigation vs. restoration (not restoration opportunities).

- **Delaware**

1. Arthurs: NRCS restoration is mostly WRP and WRE based with some work being done by the state. Most work is centralized in Nanticoke watershed in Sussex County with projects starting in Choptank as well. NRCS partners with FWS/CBFO and focuses on restoration along tax ditches. Overcoming some program requirements with WRP and WRE include competing with cropland restoration with agriculture and land prices for development by getting compensation rates to a level that compete with those land uses as well as getting people informed about the programs.
 2. Biddle: (DNREC) restoration adjacent to/near mitigation sites
 3. Ducks Unlimited: priority is entire state of DE and currently working in Delaware Bay watershed.
- **Maryland**
 1. McLaughlin: Maryland DNR priority areas are based on Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund priorities and include the Pocomoke and Choptank (NOAA and DE are focused on Choptank too). MDNR partners with FWS, TNC, DU, and local restoration groups. Obstacles: still running into issues with permitting but doing better at outreach through Pocomoke partnership with TNC, FWS, and NRCS.
 2. Ducks Unlimited: entire eastern shore and small strip on western shore of Chesapeake Bay.
 3. Jacobs: TNC, FWS and other groups are working in Pocomoke and Nanticoke extending from DE to VA.
 - **Virginia**
 1. Jones: NRCS currently has no targeted areas. Currently, interested landowners sign up and NRCS works with them to get in the program. Most work is tidewater area on eastern shore or east of I95 and focused on restoring old ag land. Smith Creek (Potomac) is targeted in the state to use land based practices to restore the Smith Creek watershed. WRE – 500 to 1,000 acres.
 2. Byrd: FWS is working with Partners for Wildlife (DU, TNC and other partners) on the eastern shore of VA.
 - **West Virginia**
 1. Ducks Unlimited has minimal work in WV.
- **Action:** Jacobs will put together a list of priority areas for workgroup members to review, choose two areas in each state, and bring together partner agencies. Workgroup members (by state) will decide on state priorities and help identify projects, and provide details of work being done in the watershed. This process will also help identify needs for additional resources.

Upcoming Wetlands Expert Panel (*Neely Law, Center for Watershed Protection*)

- Neely Law works with the Chesapeake Bay Program as the sediment coordinator with the Habitat GIT and will be serving as the coordinator for the upcoming Wetlands Expert Panel.
- The expert panel process was developed by the Bay Program's Water Quality Goal Implementation Team to approve new BMPs or determine if current load reductions for existing BMPs in the ag, urban and other source sectors are accurate.
- The wetlands expert panel will look at the load reductions for Nitrogen, Phosphorus and sediment associated with wetland restoration projects in the current watershed model. The panel will do a review of wetland efficiencies based on recommendations of a 2007 STAC report as well as look at literature to support wetlands as a new landuse in the Phase 6 watershed model. Each landuse in the model has a distinct loading rate and wetlands are currently equivalent to forested cover.
- Asking for the workgroup to approve the scope and purpose of the expert panel as well as the membership list.
- First Wetlands Expert Panel meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2014 (monthly 2-hour meetings that will last about a year). First priority will be literature/recommendations to support wetlands as new landuse for Phase 6 model and then focusing on wetlands as BMP. Expect preliminary recommendations in Fall 2015 and wetland workgroup approval is very important to the process.
- Discussion:
 - Clearwater: outcomes of the STAC 2007 workshop were lacking and the focus was more on creating wetlands for water quality vs. wetlands as natural systems. Would suggest the wetlands expert panel expand literature review and include more research on wetlands as natural systems and studies published before 2007 that were not included in STAC workshop.
 - Law: That can be accommodated and that literature will be very important when considering wetlands as a new landuse.
 - Role of Wetland Workgroup will be to approve the work, members and recommendations. Verbal updates can be given on expert panel progress at workgroup meetings (there are some workgroup members on the expert panel) and the preliminary list of literature reviewed can be shared with the workgroup.
 - Recommend that the expert panel membership list has more long term researchers and another expert from SERC and USGS.
 - **Decision:** Pending suggestions on literature review and membership list, the workgroup approves the Expert Panel Scope and Purpose and membership list.

Watershed Model Perspective: Overview of How Wetlands are Tracked and Credited (*Matt Johnston, University of MD*)

- Matt Johnston is the non-point source data analysis at the Chesapeake Bay Program.
- The current Watershed model is in Phase 5.3.2. The model will be updated with Phase 6 by 2017.
- Wetland data are inputted by state data contacts into the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) and the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Model receives the data from NEIEN in order to track progress and issue credits. EPA set up NEIEN as a national network to track BMPs and the Bay Program uses it to track BMPs within the Chesapeake Bay

watershed. Due to a lack of response from some state data contacts, the Habitat GIT uses the model data output to report wetland restoration acreage gains every year to report to the public via www.chesapeakebay.net. Due to the difference in how ag wetlands are tracked and reported vs. urban wet ponds/wetlands, the Habitat GIT is currently only reporting wetland restoration progress on ag lands.

- **Agricultural Wetland Restoration Definition and Model Simulation**
 - Chesapeake Bay Program Definition: Agricultural wetland restoration activities re-establish the natural hydraulic condition in a field that existed prior to the installation of subsurface or surface drainage. Projects may include restoration, creation and enhancement acreage. Restored wetlands may be any wetland classification including forested, scrub-shrub or emergent marsh.
 - Simulation Process in the Model:
 - States report number of acres
 - Each acre of wetland is simulated as a land use change from cropland to forest
 - Each acre reduces between 7-25% nitrogen, 12-50% phosphorus and 4-15% sediment from upslope cropland acres
- **Urban Wet Ponds and Wetlands Definition and Model Simulation**
 - Chesapeake Bay Program Definition: A water impoundment structure that intercepts stormwater runoff then releases it to an open water system at a specified flow rate. These structures retain a permanent pool and usually have retention times sufficient to allow settlement of some portion of the intercepted sediments and attached nutrients/toxics. Until recently, these practices were designed specifically to meet water quantity, not water quality objectives. There is little or no vegetation living within the pooled area nor are outfalls directed through vegetated areas prior to open water release. Nitrogen reduction is minimal.
 - Simulation in the Model:
 - States report number of urban acres TREATED by a wet pond
 - Each acre receives 20% nitrogen reduction, 45% phosphorus reduction and 60% sediment reduction
- Discussion:
 - Clearwater: Tidal wetlands data for shoreline stabilization are going into the shoreline stabilization category in the model and future floodplain reconnection will be in the stream restoration category which is making it difficult to get good wetland data with the current database. Also, things are being aggregated into a single category (i.e. enhancement is not supposed to count towards the restoration goal). True urban wetlands are also created with vegetation and have good reporting through MS4.
 - Johnston: Double counting is a possibility due to the absence of a third BMP to capture and treat differently for Urban Wetlands.
 - Jacobs: As the wetland workgroup, we have to report progress towards acreage goals and we want it to be accurate. Is there a way to add data entry in NEIEN to capture acreage accurately?
 - Johnston: Not within these current BMPs—but you could create a new BMP with a new name with clear definitions that the states agree to in order to have

- reliable reporting. At the moment, the Chesapeake Bay Program does not know how the states are inputting into NEIEN and how they define each project.
- Clearwater: the separate fields are there for different practices, but then they are aggregated up within NEIEN and that's what goes into the model.
 - Berg: rehabilitation and enhancement definitions are not clearly defined from a practitioner's standpoint. We may not have the same interpretation of the definition.
- Jacobs: Two options: 1. Collect our own data from the states (which has been done in the past, but not all states were willing to participate in an extra data call) or 2. Stick with NEIEN and improve the data input
 - **Action:** Create flowchart for each state's data input process. Who inputs the data into NEIEN and where do they get the data? Identify major gaps (is everyone covered and are their numbers being reported?).
 - Zimmerman: FWS in PA does not give data to Ted Tesler (PA NEIEN contact).
 - Gattis: The other option is to create a new wetland landuse in the Phase 6 model. We want to distinguish between true wetland creation in the urban environment and practices put in place for stormwater credits. This would be tracked as a landuse change from urban to wetlands. This could be a part of the scope and purpose of the upcoming Wetland Expert Panel.
 - **Action:** Ask the Wetlands Expert Panel to duplicate ag wetland restoration in the urban environment in order to distinguish from wet ponds.

Possible funding from Bay Program to support Wetland Workgroup needs *(Amy Jacobs and Erin McLaughlin)*

- A request for funding (\$40K) for wetlands projects was submitted by the Habitat GIT with the intent to receive the funding for moving initiatives forward (**Action:** McLaughlin will share the written request to CBT for funding with the workgroup). Asking the workgroup for input on where we can use the funding to fill in data gaps, help with outreach. What are the workgroup needs in the next year?
 - Clearwater: At a previous workgroup meeting there was interest in a single type of field form and repository to enter in information which could be a good tool for Bay Program to fund. This might also help with NEIEN issue if it is an online form to assist with data collection to report wetland gains by improving consistency (proper crediting).
 - Berg: staff support to go to each states to get more information for data for urban wetlands and ag wetlands, but primarily urban. Also, geographic focus on where wetland work may happen is important and the funding is a huge obstacle. We should look at the mechanisms to achieve the goal by identifying opportunities for large gains (i.e. Living shorelines and hybrid shoreline techniques, mosquito ditches)
 - Denise: if reporting for these projects are through MS4 process, their reporting is thorough and it would be possible to get project information.
 - Living shorelines are popular and funding should be prioritized based on amount of wetland that is being projected behind those systems. Will help meet the goals.

- Byrd: Living shorelines are popular in VA and preferential when applicable as opposed to traditional hardening, but problems are in the cost and credit of the project. Most of these living shorelines do not create a lot of wetland habitat.
- Berg: Encountered similar challenges because of the change in policy. We should push management in different direction to prioritize projects that have high habitat/wetland yield.
- Strano: NRCS does not fund living shoreline projects because they are so expensive. They could be cheaper if people would be willing to go back into the land instead of into the water.
- Jacobs: **Action**: Next meeting discuss suggestions of methods for maximum acreage gains

Wetland Workgroup moving forward

- Regularly scheduled meetings/conference calls (monthly or bimonthly)
- Training, field visits, presentations.
- Site visits are useful if you can target a specific practice or new idea.
- Possible future presentations: someone who is doing MS4 reporting

Wetland Restoration BMPs (acres)

AG	Progress				2013 milestone	2025 WIPgoal	Net Ag wetland restoration goals
	2009	2010	2011	2012			
NY	5,360	5,725	6,363	6,216	6,363	13,792	7,575
PA	3,837	4,708	4,709	4,549	5,720	54,135	49,586
MD	7,716	8,248	8,614	9,037	9,259	12,849	3,812
VA	214	213	411	420	727	19,215	18,795
WV	203	203	203	203	406	406	203
DE	286	438	588	2,694	1,145	5,725	3,031
DC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals:	17,616	19,536	20,888	23,119	23,620	106,121	83,003

Urban	Progress				2013 milestone	2025 WIPgoal	Net urban wet pond/wetland goals
	2009	2010	2011	2012			
NY	0	0	0	0	0	9,209	9,209
PA	75,990	75,990	76,244	77,506	76,710	145,722	68,217
MD	51,578	54,030	54,415	54,887	54,415	67,721	12,834
VA	156,707	156,838	158,293	173,484	169,649	177,773	4,289
WV	9,546	9,670	10,039	10,246	9,670	0	
DE	1,392	5,777	5,750	6,466	5,956	5,776	
DC	99	99	99	146	199	99	
Totals:	295,312	302,403	304,840	322,733	316,598	406,300	94,549

This is the request for \$40,000 – 50,000 to support the Wetland Workgroup. It was submitted to EPA by the Habitat GIT (Jana Davis).

Objective 8	Accelerate Wetland Restoration in support of WIPs/GIT Integration – GIT 2	Budget for this Objective:	\$50,000
Timeline for this objective	September 2014-September 2015		
Narrative Summary of Outputs for this Objective:	Implementation Project: A wetland initiative project is being led by TNC (with support from DU) under a NFWF grant to accelerate wetland restoration across four states (VA, MD, DE, and PA). As part of this project, the Wetland Workgroup of the Habitat GIT would conduct a needs assessment of barriers/obstacles to wetlands restoration (e.g., increased outreach, on-the-ground work with private landowners, technical assistance, incentive program, etc), prioritize those barriers, select one barrier, and then implement solutions to these obstacles. We will then analyze the success and cost-effectiveness of removing obstacles to restoration.		
Description of Objective:	<p>Wetland Restoration is an outcome in the new agreement, an indicator tracked by CBP, and part of WIPs. The current 2025 WIP goal for wetland restoration in agricultural landscapes within the watershed is 106,121 acres. These targeted projects need to be funded and accelerated in order to meet the WIP targets, as well as the goals set in the new agreement and CBP indicator. Implementation phase of these projects will include targeted watersheds based on strategy maps that show optimal locations for restoration</p> <p>This project will be undertaken through a subcontract with TNC and DU</p>		
Tasks Under this Objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - needs assessment of barriers/obstacles to wetlands restoration - prioritization of barriers list - analysis of barriers - implement of solutions to the top priority barrier 		
Specific Outputs for this Objective	<p>Programmatic</p> <p>Analysis of return on investment for removing obstacles for wetland restoration.</p> <p><u>Administrative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semiannual report of progress and deliverable submitted to EPA 		

<p>Outcomes for this Objective:</p>	<p>Chesapeake 2000 Commitments: 3.1 Nutrients and Sediments, and specifically 2.2.1, 5.2.7, 5.2.1</p> <p><u>Chesapeake Action Plan Goal:</u> Vital Habitats Goal,</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Wetlands Outcome</p>
<p>Link to EPA's Strategic Plan</p>	<p><u>EPA Strategic Plan Goal</u></p> <p>Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters</p> <p><u>EPA Strategic Plan Objective</u></p> <p>2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems</p>
<p>Link to Jurisdiction's WIP Commitment(s)</p>	<p>Wetland creation/restoration/enhancement/protection is a strategy in many WIPs. These projects will go directly towards implementation of WIPs.</p>
<p>Link to Priority Practices and/or Priority Watersheds</p>	<p>Priority Practices</p> <p>1) Which priority practices will be implemented in this objective?</p> <p>Wetland creation/restoration/enhancement/protection</p> <p>2) Please provide a short justification as to why the practice is a priority Acres of wetland created/restored/enhanced/protected is a specific goal in the Bay Agreement and used in many WIPs to meet nutrient and sediment goals (in addition to, separately, habitat goals)</p> <p>3) Which priority strategies will be implemented in this objective? Wetland creation/restoration/enhancement/protection</p> <p>Priority Watershed</p> <p>1.) Which priority watershed will be addressed by this objective?</p> <p>This project will complement efforts in VA, MD, DE, and PA.</p> <p>2.) Watershed considered priority by (please check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> COAST http://chesapeake.usgs.gov/coast/index.html</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPARROW http://www.chesapeakebay.net/recoveryinvest.aspx?menuitem=34712</p> <p>USDA Core 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please include a short justification as to why this watershed is considered a priority)</p>