

MEETING: Wetlands Workgroup Meeting: Tidal & Nontidal

DATE/TIME: 09/26/2023, 10:00 - 1:00 ET

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Presenter: Pam Mason (Workgroup Chair)

- Roll Call

NONTIDAL UPDATE

Presenter: Nancy Schumm (Workgroup Vice Chair)

- Identified priorities for the Nontidal group to focus. It was decided that communication and awareness of wetlands are top priorities for the nontidal wetlands group.
- Sackett vs EPA decision came out and at the last nontidal meeting it was discussed if it had an impact on the work done in the region.
- The Workgroup Chair and Vice Chairs submitted a proposal to the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability to involve a group of master's students in a project that would help address the workgroup's science needs and strategic engagement needs. The goal is to gather science and stories throughout the region and develop a protocol for communication with all our partners and municipalities.

Comments/Question:

- **Kevin Du Bois (*in chat*)**: Have you looked at the wetlands WG factsheet prepared for VA? Is there value in doing something similar for non-tidal wetlands, other jurisdictions, etc?
 - **Chris Guy**: That would be a great thing for the students to work on.
 - **Pam Mason**: It's identified in the Wetlands Workgroup Logic and Action Plan to be more proactive in getting the right information to decision makers so this would help with that.

TIDAL UPDATE

Presenter: Tess Danielson (Workgroup Vice Chair)

- Past tidal meetings have focused on similar topics as the nontidal meetings: Beyond 2025, Reaching 2025, and Sackett vs EPA decision.
- A more tidal focus has been on the [South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative](#) (SASMI) Plan there's a document out on that and National Association for Wetlands Managers is having a webinar in November on the plan. SASMI can be a potential roadmap for Chesapeake Bay strategies.
- The tidal group ranked their top five priorities as wetland challenges, goals, tracking, promotion, and policy.

REACHING 2025 UPDATE

Presenter: Rachel Felver (ACB)

- Executive Council Charge: The Principal Staff Committee report to the Executive Council with recommendations on how best to reach 2025.
- Outline of the report: Executive Summary, Recommendations, Detailed Sections (Phase III WIPs/Bay TMDL, Forest Buffers/Wetlands, Climate Change/DEIJ, Emerging Science monitoring and Analysis), and Outcome Attainability Templates.
- 18 of 31 Chesapeake Bay Programs are on course, 11 are off course and 2 are uncertain.
 - Wetlands outcome is off course.
- What successful outcomes have in common:
 - Accounting/monitoring/systems in place.
 - Has a champion.
 - Places a role in other economic and ecologic successes.
 - Has public support and contributes to the wellbeing to the public.
 - Contributes to the success of other outcomes.
- Common challenges impeding outcome success:
 - Qualitative outcomes don't have milestones.
 - Roles/responsibilities are not defined.
 - Ambitious outcomes defined without establishing costs.
 - Community engagement networks not in place/need expansion.
- Wetlands Challenges:
 - Implementation programs
 - Dedicated funding
 - Outreach and engagement
 - Capacity
 - Tracking and verification
 - Emerging threats (Climate change and Land use conversion)
- Wetland Recommendations:
 - Establish clear geographic and numeric targets.
 - Ensure conservation of existing wetlands.
 - Build and retain professional staff capacity to scale up implementation of wetlands.

BEYOND 2025 UPDATE

Presenter: Gina Hunt (Habitat GIT Co-Chair)

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- The Beyond 2025 Steering Committee advises the development of recommendations to meet the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) charge (October 2022) to the Principals' Staff Committee on charting a course beyond 2025.
- Steering Committee Goal: Provide a path for CBP to assess where we are and identify potential changes to what we do, how we work, and where want to be in reaching our shared vision for the Bay.
- September Beyond 2025 Meeting
 - ERG is the contractor evaluating the CBP by surveying folks in the Bay Program.
 - Agreed on what the deliverables to the EC will include.
 - Voted on 2 public non-voting partners: Jana Davis (CBT) and Kristin Reilly Choose Clean Water.
- October Beyond 2025 Meeting
 - Develop high level topic areas and form small expert groups around those topics.
 - Potential topics: climate change, shallow waters, DEIJ, land conservation, habitat, water quality.
 - Public engagement discussion – how to incorporate more of the public into the meetings.
- How to stay informed
 - CBP Beyond 2025 Website:
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/group/beyond-2025-steering-committee>

Comments/Questions:

- **Johnathan Phinney (*in chat*):** What is the difference between Habitat and Shallow Water (in the preliminary list of topics for beyond 2025)?
 - **Gina Hunt:** Habitat is more broad than shallow water. It can include land or aquatic habitat.
 - **Chris Guy:** Shallow water also doesn't always mean habitat it can be aquaculture.
- **Kevin Du Bois:** Anybody that wants to listen in can join the Beyond 2025 meetings, so I encourage folks to participate.

SACKETT VS EPA STATEMENT

Presenter: Pam Mason

- We were asked by Marth Shimkin, Deputy Director of CBP, to develop a comment from the wetlands workgroup around the Sackett decision. The workgroup chairs have worked on drafting a statement and would like your input. We are providing this in house to the Bay Program not intended to need a formal vote, but at this point it the statement intended as a response from Martha's request.

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- There are several avenues this statement can go. Hoping it will become a Bay Program Statement, but a lot of steps need to happen. If the workgroup agrees on the statement, it will then go to the communications team and then go up the ladder from there. If the broader Bay Program does not sign it, it will go to the workgroup chairs to sign it and then be posted on the Wetlands Workgroup webpage. The point of the document is not to criticize but state how the Bay Program will move forward to get work done under the decision. Want to put people's mind at ease that the workgroup will continue to work towards improving wetlands.

Comments/Questions:

- **Chris Guy:** It's vital for the future of wetlands to conserve and protect the landscape and the wetlands workgroup will incorporate that into its work moving forward.
- **Denise Clearwater (*in chat*):** Suggest revision to last sentence 3rd paragraph: Wetland areas previously requiring permits for impacts may now be subject to loss and/or minimal compensatory mitigation, except for areas where there is independent State authority to regulate these areas.
- **Amy Jacobs:** Has there been any state-by-state analysis on the potential impacts of this decision?
 - **Pam Mason:** The problem is each state would have to do that independently. Something to keep on the top of our list but wouldn't be in the statement.
 - **Chris Guy:** Could be a great science need.
 - **Amy Jacobs:** Might be fair to say that preliminary data indicates significant or large impacts.

CHESAPEAKE WATERSHED INVESTEMENTS FOR LANDSCAPE DEFENSE (WILD) OVERVIEW

Presenter: Faren Wolter (USFWS)

- This grant program was enacted in 2020 when Congress passed America's Conservation Enhancement Act.
- US Fish & Wildlife Service is managing this program and administering it in partnership with National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and Chesapeake Conservation Partnership
- Five priority areas:
 - Improve functionality and connectivity of habitat for imperiled and listed fish and wildlife.
 - Improve water health.
 - Enhance climate resilience and readiness using nature-based solutions.
 - Equitably connect people with nature.
 - Build capacity to access funding and implement coordinated restoration and conservation activities.

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- In 2 years about \$28 million has been invested.
- FY22 Funded Wetland Projects
 - Restore a 100-acre tidal inlet
 - Improve management of 147 acres of tidal wetlands for waterfowl and recreation benefit
 - Permanently protect 300 acres of critical wildlife habitat and marsh migration corridor
- FY23 has significant active engagement in underserved communities about 89% of WILD funds is being invested in conservation actions in underserved communities.
- [Jamboard exercise](#): What specific type of restoration and actions would be most helpful in advancing the wetlands workgroup's goals?

Comments/Questions:

- **Faren Wolter**: Have marsh migration areas been identified and mapped? Is there a sense of where those are on the landscape?
 - **Pam Mason**: There's a data set in the works that is looking at marsh migration.
- **Chris Spaur**: Does it acknowledge "human habitat" needs somehow?
 - **Faren Wolter**: Throughout each pillar talk about connections to human health and human systems. Trying our best to center human communities and equities in the grant.
- **Breck Sullivan (in chat)**: You can filter for the wetland science needs through this database: <https://star.chesapeakebay.net/>

WETLANDS INDICATOR ON CHESAPEAKE PROGRESS

Presenter: Katheryn Barnhart (EPA)

- This wetlands indicator is a performance indicator that measure progress towards restoring/creating and enhancing wetlands.
- This indicator uses data from the new Habitat Tracker.
- The previous indicator needed revision because it did not incorporate enhanced wetlands or wetlands unrelated to water quality implementation.
- New indicator methodology
 - Reported by jurisdictions using Habitat Tracker
 - Habitat Tracker includes land cover, nontidal/tidal, enhanced/created, and black duck habitat.
 - Requires HUC-level data reporting.
- According to the data about 8% of the creation/restoration goal and about 40% of the enhancement goal has been achieved.

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- The indicator will show wetlands gained and enhanced cumulatively by year and it can be broken down to nontidal and tidal wetlands.
- The indicator will also show wetland enhancement and gains by jurisdiction.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

- Wetland Workshop Action Plan Update to the Management Board: Each jurisdiction will give a 5-minute presentation updating the Management Board on their progress on the Wetlands Workshop Action Plan. **The Management Board Meeting is scheduled for December 14th from 9:00 – 12:00. We will have a practice run at the next Tidal/Nontidal Wetlands Workgroup meeting on December 12th.**
- Chesapeake Conservancy was awarded the CBT GIT-funded project "Scope of Work 5: Mapping Non-Tidal Vegetated Wetlands in Areas with Outdated Wetland Maps" and has held an initial kick-off meeting with the technical officers for the project: Megan Lang and Zhenhua Zou.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program's Communications Office hosts six webinars per year focusing on a wide range of topics. The webinar series provides a platform to share information about the Chesapeake Bay watershed with the public. In November, the Communications Office would like to host a webinar focused on wetlands. The plan is to discuss the importance of wetlands, the Atlantic Flyway, and the best places for people to visit to see wetlands and waterfowl this winter.

PARTICIPANTS (44):

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| Pam Mason (VIMS) | Nancy Schumm (City of Gaithersburg) | Tess Danielson (DOEE) | Gina Hunt (MDNR) | Chris Guy (USFWS) |
| Dede Lawal (CRC) | Aaron Wendt (DCR) | Alicia Berlin (USGS) | Alison Rogerson (DNREC) | Alison Santoro (MDNR) |
| Amanda Pachomski (USFWS) | Amanda Poskaitis (NWF) | Amy Jacobs (TNC) | Anne Wakeford (WVDNR) | Ben Sagara (DWR) |
| Breck Sullivan (USGS) | Caitlin Bolton (MWCOG) | Cassandra Davis (DEC) | Charlotte Weinstein (CC) | Chris Spaur (USACE) |
| Denise Clearwater (MDNR) | Faren Wolter (USFWS) | Gregory Noe (USGS) | Jennifer Dietzen (DOEE) | Jeremy Hanson (CRC) |
| Jim Feaga (DU) | Jonathan Phinney (USFWS) | Karinna Nunez (VIMS) | Katheryn Barnhart (EPA) | Kevin Du Bois (DoD) |
| Margaret Zacharias (EPA) | Marisa Baldine (CRC) | Mark Biddle (DNREC) | Matthew Robinson (EPA) | Megan Diehl (CBT) |
| Megan Fitzgerald (EPA) | Melissa Yearick (USC) | Rachel Felver (ACB) | Rich Mason (USFWS) | Sadie Drescher (CBT) |

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| Sarah Hilderbrand (MDNR) | Sarah Koser (CBT) | Sarah Roberts (BioHabitats) | Stephanie Jacobs (EPA) | |
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