



Chesapeake Bay Program

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Wetlands Workgroup Tidal Team Meeting

September 16th, 2025, 10:00 – 12:00 ET

[Click here to access the meeting materials](#)

Beyond 2025 Public Feedback

Presenter: Pam Mason (Wetlands Workgroup Chair)

- Public feedback period ran from July 1st – September 1st
- Bay Program received 1,465 pieces of unique feedback
- 53 comments on the wetlands outcome
 - Concern that targets are lower than in the previous Agreement for several outcomes.
 - Requests for more details that will ultimately be included in the Management Strategies.
- What's Next?
 - Outcome leads and Review Team members continue to meet to refine recommendations.
 - During the week of September 15, small review teams will meet to begin making suggested red-lined revisions to the revised Watershed Agreement.
 - Final recommendations for Agreement revisions due to Rachel Felver from outcome leads and Review Team members by Friday, September 19.
 - Red-lined version uploaded to chesapeakebay.net on September 23.
 - Recommendations in red-lined version to be discussed and approved to move forward at October Management Board retreat.

Discussion

- **Chris Guy:** A lot of comments suggested that the revised wetlands outcome was a dramatic decrease from 85,000 acres and assumed that the 2014 goal was based on science, but it wasn't. We completed a hindcast to create a baseline to move forward for the next 10 years, so the revised outcome is not aspirational, but based on past accomplishments.
- **Erin Reilly:** So, will we get to see any of the wetland specific comments?
 - Dede Lawal: You can find the Draft Watershed Agreement comments on [the Planning for 2025 and Beyond webpage](#) under "Public Feedback on the Draft Revised Watershed Agreement".
- **Elise Frazier:** Was there any feedback on the protected lands outcome that includes wetlands?
 - Pam Mason: The amount wasn't really commented on, but where it was located in the Agreement was.
- **Amy Jacobs:** Did I just hear that there will be no changes to the proposed goal? Basing on a goal on past performance does not equate to being based on science.



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- **Jeryl Phillips:** Thank you Chris. Some of the most vocal commenters seemed to have never participated in any of our workgroup meetings to draft the outcome revisions and, therefore, would have no understanding about 85K ac. not being based on science and 3K ac. new recommendation is derived from the last 4 years of monitoring and scientifically-based realistic. Nothing like trying to incorrect assumptions behind a recommendation and misinformation. Let's meet the goal and surpass it! *...trying to correct incorrect assumptions behind... Yes, public comment is needed, always in a public process where the government is involved. Was just thanking Chris for his statement to remind us of background for how we got here, that's all.
 - **Pam Mason:** A lot of the comments had people interested in how the outcome will go moving forward and what work we will do. We want you to become engaged and participate in meetings. I would love to have additional thought work and perspectives in the workgroup. Come along and push the process forward.
 - **Chris Guy:** A lot of those comments were folks saying they want to participate in the process, but there's no special password anyone can show up to meetings. In the Habitat GIT Fall meeting we want to explore how we can reach out to communities that aren't feeling like part of the process.
- **Amy Jacobs:** What was most disconcerting to me was that the wetlands workgroup presented a recommendation that wasn't accepted. So why are we still accepting those goals and not pushing back?
 - **Pam Mason:** I'm not sure how else to change the outcome in this process, but in the form of management strategies and workplans we can do more.
 - **Chris Guy:** As we prove success we can become more aspirational and the targets could adapt based on that.
- **Amy Jacobs:** Just to understand – do you feel you didn't receive enough comments to go back to the Management board?
 - **Chris Guy:** No comments suggested alternative goals, they just said that dropping from 85,000 was a large drop.
 - **Amy Jacobs:** Even a little bit of an increase would be worth the fight.
- **Jeryl Phillips:** Do we think we can demonstrate more success if we cast a wider net and learn more about local governments, state governments, etc. tracking either compensatory mitigation or voluntary? I fear we are missing a lot happening on the ground, especially voluntary efforts not necessarily funded through public \$.
- **Kristen Saacke Blunk:** My sense is that the NGOs trust - and want - the Wetlands Workgroup to exercise its best understanding of the science on wetlands systems. Given this trust and understanding that this group embodies the best thinking on this topic, I don't think that a 4Y timeframe of data is the appropriate timeframe for shifting the target so dramatically - from 10s of thousands to thousands. It's understandable why there is such concern about this shift. This level of change, alone in the wetlands, could



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undermine confidence in ANY of the numbers in all areas across the Bay program. I am concerned.

- o **Amy Jacobs:** Thank you for the discussion - I know this has been a challenge and you are doing what you can to advocate for wetlands. I second Kristen's concerns and how this will deflate efforts moving forward. To address deflated attitudes publicly or otherwise, we need to commit to telling our stories about wetlands restoration successes. However, we can. That should be a priority going forward. People don't know what they don't know.
- o **Chris Guy:** I agree with this and know that there are other efforts that are not dependent on the Bay Program to achieve wetlands restoration, and enhancement. The Bay program rolls all that up and looks at the watershed as whole, so it does serve an important function. But it is not the only game in town when it comes to wetlands restoration and enhancement. I have been working with as many of the individuals as I can to double down and use this moment and message to ensure that they are prioritizing wetlands restoration and enhancement. Hopefully we are putting fire in the belly of our partners.

Crisfield Nature Based Solutions

Presenter: Ryan Hostak (Tetra Tech)

- Started the project wanting to take a high level look at different nature based solutions that have been implemented in the mid atlantic region
- Conducted a literature review to find out the success criteria for nature based solutions
- Ranking prioritization process based on environmental conditions and the risks they can mitigate and made sure the algorithm was producing viable results
- Number of tidal marsh areas with varying health thinking about ways hard structures can be designed to be habitat positive
- Goal: evaluate NBS effectiveness at attenuating waves and storm surge to inform NBS prioritization and future design projects
- Approach: perform Delft-3D flow and wave modeling under various NBS configurations, wind fields, climate scenarios, etc
- Candidate NbS ranking approach
 - o Prioritize based on protection
 - o Prioritize NbS that are adaptive, independent, and additive
 - o Prioritize around estimated CapEx, O&M costs, and cobenefits
- Limitations:
 - o Community feedback is needed and coming soon!
 - o Model is a 2D approximation, with resolution limits, and no explicit representation of sediment transport/morphologic change.
 - o Model would benefit from local field data collection
 - o Our study focuses on science and engineering; access, property rights, material needs, and permit feasibility must also be evaluated!



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- Next Steps:
 - Modeling: 1) collect field data, 2) explicitly model sediment transport, 3) dev nearshore wave models (i.e. Xbeach) and other supporting models in support of project level feasibility and design
- Link to the project webpage:
<https://www.epa.gov/water-research/coastal-community-resilience-research>
- Reach out to Ryan for more information: ryan.hostak@tetrattech.com

Discussion:

- **Chris Spaur:** Maybe this reduction will prove to be fortunate if we end up OBE of accelerated (and presumably further accelerating) SLR. Now we're at 2 ft/century in Chesapeake Bay MD.
- **Jeryl Phillips:** Tetra Tech and EPA team with City of Crisfield have done a phenomenal job with this project over the past year with a whole bunch of public engagement input opportunities. Shout out to this team and effort - SO good! VIMS was happy to play an advisory role and weigh in as needed, since we are also working in this arena on N-NBFs multiple WQ benes and economic benefits calculators via SHOREBET calculator; also, our recent locality factsheets on where N-NBFs are recommended with total shoreline calcs and benefits.
- **Elliott Campbell:** A previous slide referred to marsh edging as a practice, what exactly does that practice entail?
 - **Ryan Hostak:** didn't explicitly model for marsh edging. A lot of areas where it wouldn't be suitable due to seagrass habitat.
- **Erin Reilly:** Why did you choose all high marsh as your marsh restoration goal and not include a mosaic of high and low marsh?
 - **Ryan Hostak:** Choose high marsh based on the limitations of the model to explicitly represent those minor changes in elevation and connectivity. Cleaner approach for the modeling resolution.
- **Chris Spaur:** Previous Corps' studies referenced found inadequate "traditional" economic benefits for Corps to cost-share any of that work.
 - **Ryan Hostak:** We do recognize that the projects weren't deemed economically viable for the corps cost-share, but there is still a real interest in the project there.
- **Pam Mason:** Could you briefly explain how it was working with the community for this project?
 - **Ryan Hostak:** It's been a great experience. We met with the city council to give them a rundown of the top 6 solutions and limitations and implications for them. The mayor has been really fantastic to work with. The grant administrator of the city is the real champion. The participation from the community has been really great.



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- **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Do you have any sense of how long it would take to implement these solutions? The Adaptation Workgroup wants to support more of this type of work and wants to get a sense of how long it would take to implement this. Got a sense of 6 years or would it take longer?
 - **Pam Mason:** 6 years would be the low end. The amount of work and analysis that went into this effort is a little more unique, so I would think 10 years is a better timeframe.
 - **Ryan:** there are efficiencies when you jump into a project and this is more analysis than would be done typically for a usual project and this builds momentum
- **Elliott Campbell:** DNR is partners on a Climate Pollution Reduction grant and would love to leverage some of this work you have already done in this area. We have very significant funding we need to spend in the next 4.5 years, so want to follow up with you and Roxolanna to talk more about this.
- **Chris Spaur:** Critical for blue carbon: consider fossil fuel combustion. Good chance most of these projects would generate greater GHG than they could sequester. Basically, from a climate change perspective there is a high risk of more harm than good.
- **Taryn Sudol:** Along with Julie's question, could you share again what national/regional/state resources or models allowed this work to progress quicker? It seems like these municipal/local level projects always require a deep dive that larger-scale models can't yield enough insight on.
 - **Ryan Hostak:** Technical working group was a strong benefit of this project in terms of building momentum for the city. From a modeling and data resource perspective one of the most useful was the coastal resource dataset NOAA put out.
- **Elise Frazier:** Are there any plans to work more with the city on funding streams to support future project work? Do they have funding in place already or are they exploring any innovative financing streams to support this?
 - **Ryan Hostak:** That's a question for the city. I believe they hope to leverage some of this work to apply to a couple different grant opportunities.

Announcements

- [Habitat GIT Fall 2025 Meeting](#) is October 14th – 15th at the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Lewes Field Office
- Paste talking points from CBT
- **Jeryl Phillips:** We got word from VA CZM on NOAA release of next fiscal year grants!!!! This will enable us to continue some of our wetlands enhancements research (post-Sackett) and our annual Tidal Wetlands Mgmt Technical Assistance Program - local government, other entities outreach, training programs, annual Tidal Wetlands workshop, etc.



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- **Julie Reichert-Nguyen:** Climate Resiliency Workgroup Meeting: SEAS student presenting <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/climate-resiliency-workgroup-meeting-3>
- **Alison Rogerson:** The call for abstracts for the 2026 Delaware Wetlands Conference is now open. Abstracts for oral presentations are accepted until Oct. 17, 2025. Poster proposals are accepted until Dec. 19, 2025.
 - Abstract Submission Form:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSec7fXNF6AADuxJDq0bms2bMTU0KJQ0vG7kFneVbHvCrJ4Dbw/viewform>
 - General information here:
<https://dnrec.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/wetlands/conference/>

PARTICIPANTS (23): Pam Mason (VIMS), Tess Danielson (DOEE), Nancy Schumm (City of Gaithersburg), Dede Lawal (CRC), Chris Guy (USFWS), Joe Berg (Biohabitats), Erin Reilly (CBNERR-VA), Ryan Hostak (Tetra Tech), Karinna Nunez (VIMS), Aaron Wendt (DCR), Heather Hepburn (MDE), Elise Frazier (VA DEQ), Kristen Saacke Blunk (Headwaters LLC), Aaron Blair (EPA), Jeryl Phillips (VIMS), Ben Sagara (DWR), Taryn Sudol (MD Sea Grant), Alison Rogerson (DNREC), Chris Spaur (USACE), Elliott Campbell (MD DNR), Amy Jacobs (TNC), Emily Young (ICPRB), Edwuan Whitehead