

Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR)
Quarterly Coordination Meeting, Fall 2023
Theme: STAC, STAR, and the Strategy Review System
Thursday, November 2nd, 2023
3:00PM-5:00PM
[Meeting link](#)

This meeting was recorded for internal use only to assure the accuracy of meeting notes.

ACTION ITEMS

- STAR will create a brief document with guidance on STAR's interaction in the SRS process.
- STAR will touch base with those Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) members who signed up for the climate outcomes so they can help review the climate science needs for the Executive Council (EC) Climate Change Directive action.
 - Step 1: STAR will ask Meg Cole for the list of STAC members who signed up to help with the climate outcomes.
 - Step 2: STAR will share the prioritized climate science needs with these STAC members and STAC more broadly before bringing the list to the Management Board (MB).
- Breck will send a request to STAR for self-nominations to serve as a liaison for working in the SSRF 2.0 process.
 - STAR will develop training materials for these liaisons to help ask illuminating questions at GIT/workgroup meetings and familiarize them with the science needs database.
- STAR will ask Meg Cole and Larry Sanford to set up a broader conversation at STAC about how STAR and STAC can work together, including in the SSRF 2.0 process.
- Anyone interested in being part of the climate small group should contact Breck Sullivan (bsullivan@chesapeakebay.net) ASAP.
 - The Beyond 2025 reps assigned to climate met in early November to discuss their strategy for building a group of subject matter experts that ensures diverse representation and skill sets.

Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM **Welcome & Meeting Overview** – Breck Sullivan, STAR Coordinator (USGS), Ken Hyer, STAR Co-Chair (USGS), Bill Dennison, STAR Co-Chair (UMCES), Kim Van Meter, STAR Vice-Chair (Penn State)

3:05PM [STAC](#) and [STAR 101](#) – Meg Cole (CRC), August Goldfischer (CRC)

Meg and August gave an overview of the roles of STAC and STAR, what products come out of STAC and STAR, and how the two have groups collaborated in the past. This was followed by an open discussion on how the two groups can better collaborate in the future.

[Summary of STAC 101](#)

Meg described STAC's identity, which includes where it fits into the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP), the organizational affiliation of STAC members, how STAC members are appointed (indefinite mayoral/gubernatorial appointees, 4-year terms for at-large members). STAC's role is that of a strategic advisory body that has both proactive and reactive components.

Bill Dennison mentioned that STAC membership varies over time as different people cycle in and out of the committee. Currently there are many UMCES members, but in the last cycle there were many Virginia Tech affiliated members.

STAC receives funding from the CBP to run workshops, reviews, and synthesis projects. Over the last four fiscal years, STAC held 14 workshops, 2 reviews, and the development of the Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report. STAC also maintains a [recommendations database](#).

In the upcoming year, STAC will hold a climate change 3.0 workshop, begin utilizing the new synthesis project funding, and utilize two subcommittees (CESR communications/outreach and indigenous traditional ecological knowledge) to investigate in depth topics.

Discussion

Breck asked if there will be a request for proposals (RFP) for synthesis projects as well. Meg said STAC will likely release a more measured RFP for synthesis projects which will have a narrower list of topics compared to the traditional RFP for workshops, which will be released in December 2023. Denice Wardrop added there needs to be a conversation within STAC about the RFP for synthesis projects in December 2023, specifically about whether to have one overarching synthesis topic for multiple years. The synthesis projects will be focused on climate change and environmental justice. Denice is not sure if the synthesis projects RFP will come out this year or will be annually. The funds for synthesis projects will be \$30,000 a year for four years.

Ken asked how often are there activities that fall under both STAC and STAR responsibilities. For example, the PSC monitoring report comes to find. Denice said back in 2009, STAC was involved in the original monitoring report, which was a more high-level approach. Then the update was more detailed and done by STAR. Bill said when STAR was first created this was a concern, but both can be involved in the same project, and he has found STAC and STAR to be complimentary. To use a football analogy, STAC is like the offensive coordinator and STAR is like the quarterback. Denice said STAR has the advantage of doing on the groundwork and directly supporting the Goal Implementation Teams (GITs), whereas STAC works at the level of the MB, Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), and EC.

[Summary of STAR 101](#)

August began by reviewing the actions and decisions from the previous STAR coordination quarterly meeting in July. August then briefly walked through the high level points from the [STAR Scope and Purpose document](#) that was updated in July. August described the internal structure of STAR and the varied responsibilities of its

many workgroups. August concluded with a comparison of how [science needs](#) have been documented in the past and how we are revamping the Strategic Science and Research Framework (SSRF) to improve our tracking and addressing of science needs.

Discussion

Bill said sometimes with the science needs, we are planting seeds. Some of the needs are long term projects that need time to evolve. The important thing is STAR can keep track of these topics because no one else is doing so. We are challenged because we do not have research funds to draw from, so each source we draw on has different constraints. Therefore, to address science needs, we must work within a complex matrix, which can slow our pace. Despite the challenges, we should appreciate the progress we have made.

Breck said this morning she had a helpful conversation with CBP leadership about the utilization of the science needs database. This includes collaborating with the EPA branch chiefs when it comes to allocating funding. STAR will continue to work on prioritizing science needs when working with outcomes. Bill said we will need to continue this push, working to match the science with management needs.

Breck said STAR will be taking a role in the workplan for the climate directive, specifically the prioritizing of climate science needs across the 31 outcomes. We see our role as organizing these needs and bringing them to the MB. We will share these prioritized needs as STAC approaches its Climate Change 3.0 workshop.

Ken clarified that in the new version of SSRF (SSRF 2.0), ideally STAC would be involved earlier in science needs conversations with the GITs alongside STAR. Alex and Breck said yes that will be the case in the future. STAC was not able to be involved in the new process of science needs formulation because of scheduling challenges with the quick start of the new Strategy Review System (SRS) cycle.

Julie said for science needs, it would be helpful for STAC to help generate questions that STAR can bring to the GITs to ensure the appropriate level of detail is provided. For the climate science needs in particular, it can be a balancing act to provide enough information to communicate the need, but not overprescribe the need and prevent the scientific community from filling in the gaps with their expertise. Bill agreed we need to be more descriptive. For example, just saying we need more social science does not narrow it down. Denice said STAC is most helpful when identifying the critical uncertainties for an outcome team. If STAC only enters later in the process, the workgroups have already determined their list of science needs and STAC is of limited help. Julie replied she was thinking in the context of the climate science needs in the executive council workplan. Denice said even with that particular list of needs, she still thinks STAC could be helpful. Julie said she did not consider this possibility, but that could be helpful. Meg said Julie or STAR can ask STAC to review the prioritized climate science needs and they would consider this on a case-by-case basis, but Meg can reach out and see who can help with the prioritization. Breck agreed yes, it would be helpful to have STAC's input before going to the MB for climate science needs approval. Breck

said STAR is still getting started on developing the list of prioritized climate science needs, but she will reach out to Meg when we are farther along.

Ken asked if for the overall SSRF 2.0 process, will STAR or STAC have one designated representative for attending these workgroup meetings. Meg said she is not sure yet since she is still waiting for many of her emails to be returned. STAC leadership will be key here. Ken said STAR is still trying to figure it out also.

Bruce asked if the GITs are being asked to update climate science needs for the EC climate directive or is STAR reviewing what is already in the database. Breck said STAR is sending them what is in the database to confirm if it is still a climate science need or if the GITs have a new one or want to edit the one in the database. Breck will be reaching out to the outcomes to get their priority science needs for the directive.

3:40 PM

STAR and STAC's interaction in the new Strategy Review System Process

Sarah Brzezinski gave a [brief refresher on new SRS process](#). This was followed by a discussion on the following questions ([Jamboard was utilized as well](#)) with STAR workgroups, those who work on the Strategic Science and Research Framework, as well as Outcome leads who were able to attend. STAR will create a document with guidance on STAR's interaction in the SRS process.

Discussion

- How can STAR best interact with outcomes during this new process? How does this fit with STAC's new interaction with outcomes? Do STAC and STAR members need to align efforts before or after the outcome meeting?
 - Breck said perhaps STAR can be the connector. This might look like letting specific teams know when science needs related to their areas of interest are going to be discussed at an upcoming meeting.
 - Ken said his initial reaction is that starting the science needs conversation at the cohort dry runs is too late in the process. STAC and STAR being involved from the start, concurrently, is important. STAC can help give overall strategy while STAR can help craft the science needs.
 - Breck said that makes sense, but when we say STAR who exactly do we mean, does that mean Breck, August, and Alex? That would be a lot for three people to handle.
 - Kaylyn replied the key will be spreading the workload across multiple STAR liaisons.
 - Ken agreed we want liaisons for both STAR and STAC.
 - Bruce asked if GITs will be assigned STAC liaisons again as had been done a few years ago. That would help keep a dialogue ongoing.
 - Meg asked for clarification on what that would entail.
 - Peter Tango said in the past, he and Scott Phillips would each work with a goal team to collect information about capacity discussions and agenda planning.
 - Bruce added that in the past, we would also ask STAC liaisons with direct questions about science needs. It was almost like

they were on retainer. Earlier on we were more effective at utilizing this resource. It would require time and effort from the goal teams and liaisons to make it work.

- Denice said we need to keep in mind STAC members have very little time since they are voluntary positions. They would be better served as consultants on specific topics.
 - Denice said we should let STAC members be defined by their expertise and their interests. They should self-select which topics and groups they provide expertise on.
 - Sarah said we had talked about the STAC touch point being an advisor role, so they can provide focused questions to reflect on what has been learned.
 - Meg said she created a list of STAC members who indicated they would be interested in participating and their relevant expertise. If one is interested in accessing this list, they can contact Meg (colem@chesapeake.org).
 - Kaylyn asked if there could be ad hoc (and shorter) meetings between the STAC and STAR liaisons.
 - Denice suggested perhaps we act in an adaptive way and try one approach and assess if it needs revision.
 - Kaylyn said we could do a pilot study and get some baseline data to determine if the approach needs to change.
- Julie said her concern is about capacity. Julie does not draft science needs before the Quarterly Progress Meeting (QPM). Julie does not know if she would have the time to do both before the QPM. It could be difficult to get that done ahead of time.
 - Peter said hopefully the kernel of the science needs get formulated in those initial discussions, so it reduces the need for capacity from the GITs and workgroups themselves.
 - Ken added that science needs do not need to be refined at the early stage. These are only initial conversations to start the process.
 - Sarah agreed and said the science needs seemed to come about quite organically in the Brook Trout Workgroup meeting the other day.
 - Julie said she feels that would work - broadly define the science needs during the adaptive management conversation and then refine the language of the needs after the QPM.
 - Breck said we are not expecting the language of the science needs to be finalized before the QPM. Breck is thinking the science needs should be done 12 weeks after the QPM, same deadline as when the workplan is also due.

- Kaylyn said this same concept applies to involving social scientists early in the process when addressing big issues.
 - August said perhaps we will need a different approach for climate than the other outcomes because of the scale of the needs.
- Julie asked are there any STAC members part of STAR to help with the climate and water quality monitoring outcomes.
 - Breck said Meg would have the list of who self-identified in this category.
 - Julie said maybe we can touch base with those STAC members who signed up for the climate outcomes to help review the climate science needs for the EC Climate Change Directive action.
 - Breck said this is a good point and STAR will do this.
 - Ken said it seems like we can build off the 4th SRS cycle calendar to identify the two meetings when STAC and STAR can attend to ensure the right questions are being asked.
 - Sarah said we will have 90 days advance notice to know if the outcome is deciding to go forward with their QPM.
 - Ken said that helps with capacity concerns since not every outcome will be going every year.
 - Meg said there is an hour planned at the upcoming December agenda for STAC members to touch base on their experience in the new SRS process, so we could also cover the science needs component.
- Breck said we will send an email to solicit people who can serve as liaisons for STAR at GIT and workgroup meetings so they can listen for science needs and bring up the science needs database when relevant. Any STAR member who volunteers for this task will be provided guidance on the science needs database and how to approach this role in a GIT/workgroup meeting.
- Bruce asked who the STAC members are who can help with the Fish GIT.
 - Meg said Sustainable Fisheries STAC experts were identified as Joe Reustle (Hampton University), Mike Runge (USGS), Mark Monaco (NOAA), Kenny Rose (UMCES), and Joe Wood (CBF).

4:50 PM

Beyond 2025 Small Group Updates

- STAR leadership will be dispersed across the small groups.
 - Breck will be leading the Climate small group with Bo Williams. Julie Reichert-Nguyen will be a participant in this group.
 - Ken will be on Healthy Watersheds small group.
 - Peter will be on Clean Water small group.
 - Kim will be on Shallow Water small group.
- Julie said some small groups are quite small, like climate. Julie asked if we should recruit more experts, such as from the Climate Resiliency Workgroup (CRWG).

- Ken said we may have some more representatives reassign themselves, so it is possible the group will grow that way. Additionally, each small group will also likely send a call for subject matter experts to join the conversations.
- Breck said yes, we should reach out to members of the CRWG.
- Julie said perhaps we can be strategic in gaps in skill and representation. For example, we lack a local government perspective.
- Breck said we can also note that people can be an active contributor or just an interested party. This will help us with scheduling the upcoming climate small group meetings.
- Ken said his understanding is the small group should be pulled together in the first week of November, then each group should devise a strategy for how to build out the subject matter experts and develop a timeline of when the report needs to be completed.
- Breck said if anyone is interested in being a part of the climate small group, please let her know ASAP.

5:00 PM Adjourn

Participants: Alex Gunnerson, August Goldfischer, Bill Dennison, Breck Sullivan, Brian Burch, Bruce Vogt, Denice Wardrop, Doug Bell, Jamileh Soueidan, John Wolf, Julie Reichert-Nguyen, Katheryn Barnhart, Ken Hyer, Kim Van Meter, Meg Cole, Natahnee Miller, Peter Tango, Sarah Brzezinski, Tou Matthews.