

CAC Members Present: Bill Dickinson, Matt Ehrhart, Christy Everett, Bill Fink, Dale Gardner, Verna Harrison, Paula Jasinski (Chair), Chris Karakul, Julie Lawson, Joe Maroon, Bill Matuszeski, Jorge Ribas, Charlie Stek, Nikki Tinsley, Kendall Tyree, Neil Wilkie and CAC Staff Jessica Blackburn, Adam Bray and Jennifer Starr.

Speakers/Guests Present: Laura Free (EPA Chesapeake Bay Program), Catherine Krikstan (UMD Center for Environmental Science), Rachel Felver (Chesapeake Bay Program), Chante Coleman (Choose Water Coalition), Peter Marx (Choose Water Coalition), Eric Schaeffer (Environmental Integrity Project), Jim Edward (EPA Chesapeake Bay Program), Seth Coffman (Trout Unlimited), Quentin Kidd (Wason Center for Public Policy – CNU), Russ Baxter (Virginia Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources), Melissa Merritt (Chesapeake Research Consortium), Caitlyn Johnstone (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay), Marissa Spratley (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay).

Meeting presentations and materials are located at: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/24334/>

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

The CAC Chair, Paula Jasinski, called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. followed by introductions. Paula welcomed new CAC members, Kendall Tyree and Bill Dickinson, and new staff member Adam Bray.

Paula introduces the themes and topics of the meeting, to learn about the progress and value of the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership with the goal to better understand the role and importance of the EPA and federal funding in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in preparation for final recommendations and comments for the Chesapeake Executive Council.

Announcements: Joe Maroon announced the release of the new Chesapeake Bay Journal Local Government Edition slated to be published quarterly that is funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment, the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, and other funders.

Progress toward the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement

Laura Free, Environmental Indicators Coordinator, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program

Catherine Krikstan, Web Content Strategist, CBP, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

The presenters explained how the Chesapeake Bay Program is tracking progress towards the goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. Their presentation took a high level look of the indicators: where are they succeeding; where are they falling short; and what common factors contribute to being ahead or behind. Progress on the *Agreement* outcomes were presented by looking at indicators of 1) Healthy Watersheds, 2) Aquatic Life, 3) Water Quality, 4) A Culture of Stewardship, 5) Next-generation Stewards, 6) Climate Change & Resiliency, and 7) Local Action.

CAC members were directed to www.chesapeakeprogress.com for resources and data as well as the Bay Barometer, an annual publication highlighting progress.

The group discussed questions regarding the Water Quality Standards Attainment slide and were concerned that the way the graph is presented it appears to show no progress has been made. The presenters were encouraged to add more context to this information so that in the future it will be clear to others, including the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and to the public that progress is occurring. There was an additional concern that the chart could be misleading because population growth is not factored into the data.

The CAC Meeting recessed at 12:08pm to join the Choose Clean Water Conference for lunch.

Insights on the Conference, Communications and Coalition

Chante Coleman, Executive Director, Choose Clean Water Coalition (CCWC)

Peter Marx, Federal Affairs, Choose Clean Water Coalition

The theme of the annual Choose Clean Water conference is: “think local, act together”. They shared that one of the major highlights was Mustafa Ali with the Hip Hop Caucus and his talk on building power, diversity and equity in the environmental movement.

The presenters informed the group that the FY2018 Trump Budget cuts out EPA environmental justice programs completely. CCWC twitter campaign (#BayStrong) is raising awareness that 2/3rds of the Chesapeake Bay Program goes out in grants. Key Federal Funding for Chesapeake Bay did really well in FY17. The FY2018 strategy is to focus on appropriators - 3 members of Appropriations Committee are from WVA.

They also updated the group on the Farm Bill. It expires on Nov 30th, 2018. The challenge is to receive 2008 levels of funding. The strategy is to target the Ag Committee.

The Coalition’s communication strategy has been focused on rapid response and activating membership, concentrating on drinking water and local/neighborhood issues. They are also engaging Lobby Days to get better relationships and allies in Congress with the Coalition members. Their message is that things are better with the Bay, we are making progress, and Congress should not stop their support.

Additionally, Peter Marx informed CAC about a proposal from EPA headquarters to move the Chesapeake Bay Program Office to Fort Mead. He expressed concern that it would be difficult to hold public meetings if the Office moves to the Army Base. Lastly, the presenters highlighted the Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week in early June and the 2nd Annual Upper Susquehanna Watershed Forum.

Chesapeake Bay Clean-up and EPA Enforcement

Eric Schaeffer, Executive Director Environmental Integrity Project

Eric Schaeffer clarified that his organization is concerned about both accountability and enforcement. The purpose is to make sure programs are delivering what they are supposed to.

He offered insights on things that might happen under the new Administration and discussed problems related to a lack of appointed political managers for open positions in agencies. He believes this will start a logjam as agencies are unable to get things done.

Eric discussed the impacts of the President’s EPA budget. After adjusting for inflation, Trump’s budget is less than Reagan’s by over \$2.25 billion and would result in large reductions in personnel which would hinder the EPA mission and delivery of core services. He predicted a management crisis for the EPA because expert work force will be lost and these experts are difficult to replace. He mentioned that he expected the Bay Program would get level funding, but cuts to other departments within the agency, like enforcement, will impact EPA’s

overall work. He also discussed his concern over recent federal actions to stop the use of settlement funds in criminal cases for environmental and other improvements.

Updates from Virginia

Russ Baxter, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources

Russ announced that Governor McAuliffe, whom he stated has achieved a great deal for Virginia conservation, recently made a short video about partnering with local governments for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans. To view the video click on “Governor’s Bay Message” in the “Featured Topics” blue box at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov>.

Russ discussed the challenges and approaches to meeting the Bay TMDL pollution caps in the face of future growth, like a proposed new paper plant in VA. Reaching the cap is relatively easy (short term activity), maintaining it will be hard (long term activity). This year the General Assembly passed a bill that will require periodic reviews of nutrient allocations by the State Water Control Board. It is not currently funded, but creates the ability to create future funds that can be used to offset nutrient loads.

Russ relayed plans for the 2017 Executive Council meeting in Annapolis at the Maryland Governor’s State House on June 8th. The theme of the meeting is to support the partnership and show the need for a federal role because it is an interstate effort and a nonpartisan issue. The EC Chair will be transferring from Gov. McAuliffe of VA to Gov. Hogan of MD. The EC Members will be signing a resolution in support of the Bay Program Partnership and calls for the continuation of current level of federal funding. EPA is not able to sign it because it calls for a continued budget for the Bay Program. Russ indicated that if federal funds are cut or eliminated, scores of people who administer key state environmental programs will lose their jobs since those positions are funded out of EPA grants to the state. He explained that Virginia will not be able to make up the difference because when there are cuts across many programs, the environment has a difficult time competing with funding for many other basic programs including public safety and education.

Members discussed that there are costs to the taxpayer associated with reduction or elimination of the Bay Program and the other federal agencies like agriculture, NOAA, Commerce, Department of Defense environmental programs, and other foundational programs that CAC should emphasize are important to the quality of life in our region.

CAC thanked Russ Baxter for his many years of service to the Bay and to the Commonwealth including under Governor McAuliffe.

Highlighting Local Restoration Successes

Seth Coffman, Shenandoah Headwaters Home Rivers Initiative, Trout Unlimited

Seth shared the connection between federal funding and EPA grants and how it ties into local work. The primary goals of Trout Unlimited is to restore and enhance trout populations while improving water upstream from the Chesapeake Bay. Since 2010 they have completed 18 stream restoration projects.

He explained how excessive sediment from erosion and high summer water temperatures prevent trout from swimming upstream and spawning. This is caused by things such as degraded riparian buffers, cattle in the creek, under road culverts that fragments fish populations, and acid rain.

He highlighted restoration efforts on Beaver Creek, Mossy Creek, Back Creek Project, and South Run and showed how they incorporate volunteers to plant buffers and described education and engagement with local schools and Wounded Warriors.

CAC discussed the importance of messaging how stream restoration can improve threats of flooding, increase property values and that landowners are often unaware when funding comes from the federal government.

Thursday, March 25th

The CAC called to order at 9:05 a.m.

With no discussion of the February 2017 Meeting Minutes, Charlie Stek motioned for approval and Neil Wilkie seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Paula recognized two CAC members who have received recent awards – 1) John Dawes, was awarded the Western PA Environmental Lifetime Achievement Award, and 2) Julie Lawson was recently selected for the Emerging Leaders Fund, a program of the Claneil Foundation to support innovative early-stage organizations.

Environmental Public Opinion in Virginia

Quentin Kidd, Director, Wason Center for Public Policy, Christopher Newport University

Joe Maroon, Virginia Environmental Endowment, CAC Member

Joe Maroon described how the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) was created in 1977 from a court ordered settlement involving Allied Chemical Corporation for Kepone pollution to the James River. Over the last 40 years, VEE has conducted a series of public opinion polls on the environment. The most recent one was conducted by Christopher Newport University (CNU) in early 2017 to gauge Virginian's current attitudes toward the environment. Joe introduced Dr. Quentin Kidd to share highlights of the latest poll results.

Dr. Kidd relayed that the Wason Center for Public Policy at CNU tries to gauge attitudes without using political triggers because answers change when questions are viewed through a partisan political lens. The polling results did not show a significant difference in attitudes about the environment across sub-regions of Virginia. Participants in all regions graded the overall environment as a "B" in the 2017 poll, an increase from a grade of a "C" in a 1997 poll. The results show that recent media information about the improvements in the James River, other rivers and the Chesapeake Bay influences the consciousness of voters and is reflected in public opinion polls. There is a consensus about carbon emissions being bad for the environment, but not on the role of government to address it.

Quentin relayed a summary of the polling results:

- Practical water quality issues like drinking water and local rivers are the top concern
- Voter support for the Bay restoration was among the strongest opinions expressed.
- Respondents do not favor rolling back federal environmental protections or the federal role.
- The poll also showed a large percentage of Virginia voters need additional information about concerns associated with sea level rise and other current issues.

Federal Funding for Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Jim Edward, Deputy Director, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program

Jim prefaced his presentation that most people are not very familiar with the Budget process and how it affects the EPA. He went over the timeline. This year's budget is a continuing resolution of the previous year's funding. Since receiving the "skinny budget" in March, delegations from various geographic programs (Puget Sound, Great Lakes, etc...) have been working together to maintain current funding.

Jim described various scenarios of what could happen with buy-outs, furloughs and reduction in the workforce. Scenarios for FY2018 budget are (1) No funding, (2) Congress ignores the President's budget proposal and enacts the current funding, and (3) 31% reduction or some other percentage reduction. The CBP Office staff is defining their core work, deciding what work could continue with reduced funding, and what work could be eliminated for now.

Jim explained that the EPA cannot cut any program in the agency by more than 10% or \$5 million, whichever is less, without going to Congress first. There has been broad nonpartisan support for CBP Funding and a letter by several House members in support of level funding.

The President's budget reflects the philosophy that EPA should refocus on core national work and that local efforts should instead be done by state and local agencies and groups. Jim described the impact of the full President's budget: the Chesapeake Bay program for USGS, which does monitoring and trend analysis, is cut by 80%; 12-15% cuts for the Department of the Interior; science and research development also got hit hard. Also, if federal agencies currently on the Annapolis EPA campus are forced to move, it will negatively impact the partnership because it negates co-location of several agencies involved in Bay work. Jim directed CAC to two websites (not hosted on EPA servers) with updated funding information: 1) www.chesapeakeprogress.com (focusing on goals and outcomes), and 2) www.chesapeakebay.net (which has a budget and financing section).

Jim ended his presentation by responding to the group's concern about the Water Quality Standards Attainment slide from the previous day's presentation. It is hard to tell from the chart, but water quality has improved 10% since the TMDL. He said that they would improve the presentation to make the progress more evident.

Snapshot of recent Bay Program Communication Products

Rachel Felver, Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Director, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Rachel began by expressing appreciation for supporters of the Chesapeake Bay Program and for speaking out after the budget proposal. She shared some strategies and images they have been creating and using. The CBP has been contacting other areas about communication. The Puget Sound partnership is very engaged.

The CBP website blog features things going on around the watershed - signs of resiliency, projects funded by Bay Program, NFWF funded projects, and the economic value of clean water. They have recently doubled their audience on social media (their biggest audience) and have started collecting stories from citizens about the Bay using #Chesapeakestories on their Facebook page.

Discussion: Charlie Stek suggested that stories be shared about waterways being removed from the impaired water list and that "acres preserved" and "public access" need to be put in greater context to show how vast the watershed is. He also suggested having a series that focuses on specific progress on local watersheds to show local impact. Paula offered CAC to be a resource and to give feedback to help the Chesapeake Bay Program around messaging and communication. Joe Maroon thought that CAC could serve as a type of focus group.

CAC Discussion and Final Thoughts:

Paula gave an overview of the draft letter written to Governor McAuliffe with CAC's annual recommendations and advice to the Executive Council. She shared with the group that part of the EC meeting is open to the public and that she will be making CAC comments in the public meeting. The letter (due the next day, May 26th) is asking to preserve the program and offering CAC as a sounding board. Bill Matuszeski shared that the response letter from the EPA on CAC's concerns about the proposed budget cuts was dismissive and suggested CAC should include a response to the EPA letter in the EC letter. The group discussed the issue of audience.

Charlie said that the letter should be in bullet points – 1) to support the EC resolution supporting the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, 2) to restore budget cuts for the EPA and federal agencies that have been impacted. Joe added that federal oversight is important for states to move forward and they can't make up the difference. The message about the negative impact on the states should not be lost. Members agreed with the basic points and agreed to add recognition that the Bay Program partnership is one of the most successful in the world and that budget cuts will not only threaten restoration, but also cut jobs and hurt the economy. Members also agreed to reference the polling results about environmental attitudes.

Paula will draft the letter and a small group from CAC will provide comments to Jess by Noon to submit the final letter tomorrow. Jorge added that he thought as many CAC members as possible should try to be at the EC Meeting.

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:56pm.