3/19/2024 – Wetlands Workgroup Meeting: Nontidal

MEETING: Wetlands Workgroup Meeting: Nontidal
DATE/TIME: 3/19/2024, 2:00 - 4:00 ET

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Presenter: Nancy Schumm (Workgroup Vice Chair)

- Roll Call

BLACK DUCK ACTION TEAM (BDAT) UPDATE

Presenter: Ben Lewis (BDAT Co-Chair)

- Black Duck Outcome: Restore, enhance, and preserve wetland habitats to support a wintering population of 100,000 black ducks.
- The target of 100,000 black ducks is quite ambitious because usually about 35,000 – 40,000 black ducks winter in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Populations have experienced declines due to land use change and habitat availability.
- Black ducks serve as an indicator for wetland health and food availability.
- The American Black Duck Decisions Support Tool
    - Uses remotely sensed wetland inventory maps to compare the energetic carrying capacity of HUC12 watersheds to the energetic demands of black ducks.
    - The model indicates where there is sufficient or insufficient wetland quality/quantity to support the target number of black ducks.
    - Shows conservation status of habitats, and where wetland habitat needs to be restored or enhanced.
- Using a structured decision-making framework determined there were 5 key habitats critical for overwintering black ducks: subtidal, freshwater, high marsh, low marsh, & mudflat.
- Additionally looked at sea level rise and land use change to determine how the habitat will change over time.
- To get to 1000,000 black ducks there needs to be an additional ~152,000 acres of wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Challenges
    - Tracking restoration acres towards the outcome.
    - Restoration efforts on agricultural land may not be viable habitat.
    - Reconciling Black Duck Outcome of an additional ~152,000 acres of primarily tidal marsh and the Wetlands Outcome of 85,000 acres on primarily agricultural land.
- Since both black duck and wetlands outcomes are off course, it would be best to merge the two and work towards the common goal of wetland restoration.
- Next steps: coordinate and align with the Wetlands Workgroup.

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Comments/Questions:

- **Sarah Koser** (*in chat*): For black duck novices, can you confirm that the American Black Duck habitat includes tidal and non-tidal wetlands as well as open water/SAV - and these are the habitats your decision support tool is pulling in?
    - **Ben Lewis:** Yes, that's all considered in the decision support tool.
    - **Chris Guy:** Does the decisions support tool also include open water and SAV habitat when it's calculating those 150,000 acres?
        - **Ben Lewis**: Yes.
        - **Chris Guy**: That's something we'll have to keep in mind because SAV beds are not part of the Wetlands Outcome.
- **Chris Spaur** (*in chat*): Is black duck population also substantially affected by other factors, such as biological interactions (out competition by mallards, etc.)
    - **Ben Lewis:** Yeah absolutely. Competition with eastern mallards is a big reason why black ducks declined in the 60s and 70s. There's more to consider when thinking about the Black Duck population, which is why the outcome changed to be habitat based. We realized that there's a lot outside the scope of the Chesapeake Bay Program when considering the overall population.
- **Nancy Schumm:** Have you had progress in protecting wetland habitat because of your efforts? Have you tallied the acreage?
    - **Ben Lewis:** We have had progress but will have to do a little digging to find out. We're missing a lot of the tracking of wetlands that's done outside of the Black Duck Action Team.
    - **Chris Guy:** The habitat tracker was built with wetlands as the focus but has a black duck component as well. Getting the habitat tracker to accurately count black duck projects is on the list.
- **Sarah Koser** (*in chat*): What should we be aware of that will need to be built into the wetlands outcome (like ensure there is a focus on restored ag lands)? Just wondering what other specific wetland restoration techniques/habitats should be built into the wetlands outcome.

SCIENCE NEEDS DISCUSSION

Presenter: Nancy Schumm (Workgroup Vice Chair)

*** An excel file of the Wetlands Science Needs can be found here under "Supporting Documents"**

- Science needs came about as part of the adaptive management process where outcomes would go through and identify these science needs and prioritize them to advance progress towards the outcome.

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- The science needs database can be used as a jumping off point for local entities, federal agencies, or academics looking for research projects.
- The database was put together to identify and align research needs and priorities of all the outcomes.
- During this exercise we are going to go over the current wetlands science needs and see if there are any outdated needs or new needs to add.

Comments/Questions:

- **Chris Spaur** (*in chat*): If not already on the list, some sort of quantitative estimate of regulated vs non-regulated non-tidal wetlands by watershed, and then implications for management. While we have restoration focus, how do we deal with the effects of Sackett Decision. Perhaps need goal/objective of increased voluntary preservation/protection. How would we do that?
- **Chris Guy:** I would say projected loss or changes due to climate change in nontidal wetlands.
- **Denise Clearwater:** The translating of this information to some of our constituents who may not have an appreciation of wetlands. Going back to the basics and promoting their benefit might be helpful.
- **Alison Santoro:** Wetlands have a huge opportunity to sequester carbon and that's something important to compile. That would be a good thing to know as we are moving forward to help highlight why wetland restoration is important.
    - **Sarah Hilderbrand:** If we are trying to do a promotional opportunity for wetlands, including their ability combat climate change and sequester carbon is definitely worth highlighting.
    - **Katie Stahl:** Certain funding sources request an estimate of the amount of carbon sequestered from a project and it's difficult to know the exact amount of carbon that will be sequestered. Having some sort of project to point to as a reference would be useful.
    - **Tess Danielson:** The cooling effects of urban wetlands is a hot topic and if we show that urban wetlands have that positive outcome it could be in our favor.
    - **Denise Clearwater:** Coming up with a way to compare carbon sequestration by the various types of wetlands systems would be useful.
    - **Nancy Schumm:** What I'm hearing is we'd like to see a study of social science to understand the societal approach to wetlands, a quantitative analysis of the ecosystem functions of wetlands, and how that plays a role in climate resiliency.
- **Chris Spaur** (*in chat*): Could also check if not already done what portion of wetlands might receive some measure of de facto protection from floodplain regulations as part of prioritization efforts.
- **Kristen Saacke Blunck:** 1) There's been really great social science delves that have happened within the agricultural workgroup that Loretta Collins helped lead that

discussed why more wetland restoration may not be being picked up in an agricultural area. 2) We have to think about who our audience is. There are a lot of wetland learning centers around the region. Are there any gaps with those learning centers? Are there specific communities that are high priority landscape where centers need to be established? 3) Grant submitted to NFWF that focus on wetlands are usually prioritized. Is there data in both the funded and nonfunded proposals to lift our understanding on who's delivering those acres? Like consulting firms.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

- The Wetlands Workgroup's Statement on the Sackett v EPA decision is now on the WWG webpage.
- The wetlands indicator was updated on Chesapeake Progress. Here's a link to the press release: https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/pressrelease/chesapeake-bay-program-notes-increase-in-wetlands-across-the-watershed
- **ACTION:** When thinking about the Wetlands Outcome beyond 2025, it would be helpful if jurisdiction leads can gather estimates of what wetlands projects might be in the pipeline and what is already happening on the ground to get an estimate of wetland acres (both tidal and nontidal). Please send those numbers to Dede Lawal (lawal.dede@epa.gov).

PARTICIPANTS (28):

Nancy Schumm (City of Gaithersburg)	**Tess Danielson** (DOEE)	**Dede Lawal** (CRC)	**Chris Guy** (USFWS)
Ben Lewis (DWR)	**Greg Noe** (USGS)	**Cassandra Davis** (DEC)	**Alison Rogerson** (DNREC)
Duncan Simpson (Princeton Hydro)	**Sarah Koser** (CBT)	**Michelle Henicheck** (DEQ)	**Megan Diehl** (CBT)
Chris Spaur (USACE)	**Megan Fitzgerald** (EPA)	**Katie Stahl** (USFWS)	**Adrienne Kotula** (CBC)
Sarah Hildebrand (MDNR)	**Melissa Yearick** (USC)	**Denise Clearwater** (MDE)	**Alison Santoro** (MDNR)
Ashley Hullinger (DEP)	**Ben Sagara** (DWR)	**Amanda Poskaitis** (Underwood & Associates)	**Mark Hoffman** (CBC)
Katheryn Barnhart (EPA)	**Su Fanok** (TNC)	**Amy Jacobs** (TNC)	**Kristen Saacke Blunk** (Headwaters LLC)