

MEETING: Wetlands Workgroup Meeting: Tidal

DATE/TIME: 06/20/2023, 10:00 - 12:00 ET

Welcome and Introductions

Presenter: Tess Danielson (DOEE, Workgroup Vice Chair)

- Round of Introductions: Name, Affiliation, Field of Work, Why Wetlands

Workgroup Restructuring Update

Presenter: Chris Guy (HGIT Coordinator)

- Two new vice chairs
 - Nancy Schumm: Nontidal Wetlands
 - Tess Danielson: Tidal Wetlands
- The addition of these positions allows the workgroup to have 2 subgroups with dedicated meetings.
 - Alternating each month there will be a tidal or nontidal meeting.
- The wetlands workgroup chair remains Pam Mason and she will be responsible for the bureaucratic and administrative tasks.
- The vice chairs will be responsible for driving each workgroup meeting and day to day actions.
- The Habitat GIT staffer supports the workgroup chairs.
- The separate meetings should lead to more effective use of workgroup members' time because they will be attending meetings on the topic of their interest.
- Joint meetings between tidal & nontidal will be on September 20th & December 12th.
 - These meetings will probably focus on indicators and progress towards the outcome.
- [Jamboard Activity](#): What would you like tidal meetings to focus on?
 - **Rachael Peabody**: VA will be receiving funding in the fall to work on a beneficial use manual, so would like to think about innovative ways to use dredge material to further wetlands restoration.
 - **Alison Rogerson** (*in chat*): Has there been any recent efforts to quantify tidal wetland loss bay-wide? MD/VA/DE combined?
 - **Ben Sagara**: How do we maintain a level of protection for tidal marshes when the goal (enhancement/restoration) doesn't really align with protection?
 - **Chris Guy**: This is probably something for the bigger group to think about and not just tidal, but maybe we need to go back to these definitions. What do we mean by enhancement, creation, and restoration? And what about conservation, which isn't part of the wetlands outcome?

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- **Alison Santoro:** The enhancement, restoration, creation terms are defined for nutrient and sediment BMPs, but not properly defined for wetland acreage amounts towards the wetland goal.
- **Rachael Peabody:** Is there a document that defines restoration, creation, and enhancement that we could update?
 - **Ben Sagara:** There is a [document](#) (p.90) that is specific to nontidal wetlands, but it gives Chesapeake Bay Program definitions for those terms.
 - **Megan Fitzgerald** (*in chat*): For the [404-program](#) (definitions start on p. 96) restoration, creation, enhancement is defined.
 - **Michelle Henicheck** (*in chat*): DEQ's VA Wetland Permitting definition are: "Enhancement" means activities conducted in existing wetlands or other portions of the aquatic environment that increase one or more aquatic functions. "Creation" means the establishment of a wetland or other aquatic resource where one did not formerly exist. "Restoration" means the reestablishment of a wetland or other aquatic resource in an area where it previously existed. Wetland restoration means the reestablishment of wetland hydrology and vegetation in an area where a wetland previously existed. Stream restoration means the process of converting an unstable, altered, or degraded stream corridor, including adjacent areas and floodplains, to its natural conditions.
- **Ben Sagara:** Shoreline protection could be enhancing a wetlands function of shoreline protection for flood mitigation, but how do we calculate the area of wetland enhanced? We need to find unified methodology for determining acres impacted.
- **Chris Guy:** What's the maximum number of tidal wetlands that the Chesapeake Bay can actually support under a climate change scenario?

Getting to 2025: Wetland Workshop Action Plan

Presenter: Dede Lawal (HGIT Staffer)

- Due to the wetlands outcome being way off course the Principal Staff Committee (PSC) and Management Board (MB) directed the Bay Program to come up with a plan to accelerate progress towards the outcome by 2025.
- On August 2-3, Restoring the Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Workshop was held where the participants identified barriers and 5 recommendations on how to move forward.
 - Cohesive Strategy
 - Long-term Capacity
 - Outreach & Design
 - Increased Funding
 - Reporting of Progress
- The [Wetlands Workshop Action Plan](#) was finalized January 2023.

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- **Jamboard Activity**: How can we replicate what is going well in other states and find solutions to challenges? Has anyone seen successful protection?
 - **Rachael Peabody**: The way we're going to get restoration is to actually design projects rather than encouraging them.
 - **Chris Guy**: Would that be the idea of using GIT funding or discretionary BIL funds to create dedicated shovel ready projects?
 - **Arron Wendt**: Through the WIP, VA has significant agricultural cost share dollars available and one of the practices available is shoreline protection, which includes wetlands creation and living shorelines. We have the dollars to do the construction and implementation, but it comes back to the issue of having shovel ready projects because for cost share programs they need to have PE stamped designs.
 - **Rachael Peabody**: What is the staff capacity of people working on wetland restoration in other states? Is there a way to gain an understanding of where everyone's capacity is as a baseline to see how many full-time employees there are focused on this and possibly share each other's capacity?
 - **Tess Danielson**: Interested in information sharing and learning from others, so maybe we can start highlighting projects from partners across the country that address similar issues.
 - **Ben Sagara**: The [Atlantic Coast Joint Venture](#) is doing something similar with their [restoration project mapping](#) so if we'd want to, we can use that as a way to get started.

Moving Beyond 2025 Introduction

Presenter: Tess Danielson

- **Jamboard Activity**: Do we like the current [Wetlands Outcome](#) for 2025? What do we think it should be? How do we get there? What are our thoughts on the outcome? Is it realistic, is it achievable?
 - **Chris Spaur**: A fan of splitting the outcome into tidal and nontidal, so we can attempt to address the large loss of tidal wetlands. For nontidal we can have a goal of increase and for tidal not necessarily asking for an increase.
 - **Chris Guy**: Sea level rise will continue to happen, so should the outcome say something like retain and perhaps protect so many acres of tidal wetlands.
 - **Rachael Peabody**: That's when we can start using concepts like rolling easements and more innovative resilient strategies that can now be incorporated into the outcome.
 - **Rachael Peabody**: 85,000 acres is a big number if just relying on tidal wetlands, so try to find a more realistic goal. We can even call them coastal instead of tidal.
 - **Sarah Koser**: Areas may not be considered wetlands now, but may become wetlands in the future so how do we capture that? Keeping marsh migration in mind.

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- **Chris Guy:** We don't have the baseline information that we need to make the outcome: how much wetlands we have now, how fast we're losing them, and where they're most stable.

General Announcements & Updates

- [South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative \(SASMI\) Plan](#)
 - The SASMI is a regional plan to address the future of the South Atlantic Coast's salt marsh ecosystem with the goal to enhance the long-term abundance, health, and resilience of the approximately 1 million acres of salt marshes. A partnership with the DOD, southeastern states, conservationists, and local community members throughout the region came together to create the plan. In creating a similar plan for the Chesapeake Bay/Mid-Atlantic it could be a way the wetlands workgroup approaches the tidal wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay.
- USGS RFP Selected for Funding: "Coastal wetland vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise: understanding ecological thresholds and transformations" – *Greg Noe*
 - The USGS has a project funded to conduct a national scale synthesis of coastal wetlands responses to climate change and sea level rise, with a focus on transition in coastal wetlands. The Chesapeake Bay is one of the regions they will be focusing on.
 - 4 project themes: ecological thresholds, ecosystem transformation, national/regional-scale data and modeling, & management actions used to enable stakeholders to resist/accept/direct change due to sea level rise.
 - Would like input from workgroup members on the following:
 - Start thinking about the critical coastal wetland thresholds/transformations in the Chesapeake Bay region.
 - What are your needs/interests related to the thresholds/transformations?
 - How can this work connect to your existing/future activities?
 - If you have any input, email Greg Noe at gnoe@usgs.gov.
- 2023 NOAA Notice of Funding: "Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant" – *Sarah Koser*
 - EPA Wetlands Capacity Building in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed – is a cooperative agreement between the EPA, Chesapeake Bay Program, and Chesapeake Bay Trust
 - Two of their objectives are to create a wetlands strategic plan and design a tidal wetlands project
 - Tidal Wetlands Design
 - Provide funding to plan/design tidal wetlands at an identified location supported by project partners
 - Proposed Project: Pocomoke Sound Climate Adaptation Initiative

Meeting Adjourned

- Next wetlands tidal workgroup meeting date: **August 15, 2023; 10:00-12:00 ET**

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Participants (27): Tess Danielson (DOEE/WWG Vice Chair), Nancy Schumm (PRIME AE Group Inc./WWG Vice Chair), Chris Guy (USFWS/Habitat GIT Coordinator), Dede Lawal (CRC/Habitat GIT Staffer), Alison Rogerson (DNREC), Alison Santoro (MDNR), Amanda Poskaitis (NWF), Arron Wendt (DCR), Ben Sagara (DWR), Chris Spaur (USACE), Gregory Noe (USGS), Heather Hepburn (MDE), Jayme Arthurs (DE NRCS), Jaclyn Woollard (EPA), Jennifer Dietzen (DOEE), Leah Franzluebbbers (USFWS), Mark Hoffman (CBC), Matthew Robinson (EPA/CBP), Megan Fitzgerald (EPA), Michelle Henicheck (DEQ), Rachael Peabody (MRC), Sadie Drescher (CBT), Sarah Hilderbrand (MDNR), Sarah Koser (CBT), Sarah Roberts (Biohabitats), Stephanie Jacobs (EPA), Zachary Greenberg (Pew Trust)