



**Diversity Workgroup**  
January 16, 2024 Meeting  
11:00am - 1:00pm

**Meeting Location:** Virtual  
Zoom link: Click [here](#)  
Meeting ID 995 9227 8304  
Passcode: 224076 Or dial 301-715-8592

**Diversity Outcome:** To identify stakeholder groups that are not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making, and implementation of conservation and restoration activities and create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage them in the Bay Program's efforts.

---

Attendees		
Amanda Knobloch, MSU	Britt Slattery, NPS	Rico Newman
Sherry Wit	Brittany Hall	Edgar Freeman, MDNR
Julie Lawson, SAC	Carmera Thomas-Wilhite, CBF	Melissa Sines
Sam Lott, MDNR	Kesha Braunskill, USFS	Jess Blackburn, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Phoebe Galione, ALLARM	Will Parson, CBP	Melissa Fagan, CRC
Beatrice Ohene-Okae, DC DOEE	Andrea Garcia, Chesapeake Gateways Ambassador	Shannon Sprague
Breck Sullivan, CBP	Kristin Saunders, UMCES	Ola Davis, CBT
Amber Doherty, National Aquarium	Wendy O'Sullivan, NPS	Wuillam Urvina
Schmeka Roane	Eddie Gonzalez, NPS	Noelle Chao, AAWSA
Joe Schell, DNREC	Kayli Ottomanelli, Alliance	Carrie Decker, MDNR
August Goldfischer, CRC	Trystan Sill	Jeremy Hanson, CBP
Bekura Shabazz		

**Meeting Goals:**

- To reflect on our progress over the past two years as we begin to think about the work we need to accomplish over the next two years; and
- To identify considerations for prioritizing how we center “people” in Chesapeake Bay Program work in the future, looking beyond 2025.

## 11:00 AM Welcome & Introductions

- Welcome & Opening Comments
  - **Brittany Hall:** My name is Brittany Hall. I am a Co-chair for the Diversity Workgroup. In my regular job I am also education and training Coordinator for the National Park Service, Chesapeake Gateways Office.
  - **Amanda Knobloch:** Hi, I'm Amanda Knowblock. I am the other Co-Chair for the Chesapeake Bay program's Diversity workgroup. And for my paid job, I work from Morgan State University's Patuxent environmental aquatic research laboratory with Pearl as the education coordinator. And we are so excited to have y'all here today.
- Goals for Today's Meeting, Housekeeping, and Agenda Overview
  - **Sherry Witt:** Good morning. My name is Sherry Witt and I will be your facilitator for today. My goal is to make sure that we meet our meeting goals which I will go over briefly in a second and to serve as the timekeeper of our agenda. So the goals for today's meeting are 2-fold: one is to reflect on our progress. Over the past 2 years as we begin to think about the work that we need to accomplish over the coming 2 years, and I recognize that some of you may be new to this. So this is going to be a great learning opportunity about the things that we have accomplished. And number 2, is to identify considerations for prioritizing how we center people and in the Chesapeake Bay Program work in the future looking beyond 2025. So you'll be hearing a brief presentation on this topic here. But this is where we really want to get input from all of you here today.
  - **Sherry Witt:** So what we'll do is we'll briefly open it up to introductions here, and then we'll move to about 20 min where we will reflect on the work of the workgroup over the past 2 years. We have a brief presentation. So again, I recognize that some of you may be new today. So we hope that you can learn about all of the work that we have done. We'll then move into smaller breakouts for about an hour. We'll focus on 2 topics. What the 2 topics are, what we can do in the next 2 years. And then we want to look beyond those 2 years beyond that 2025 goal that we have in the Bay program in terms of how we center the people of the Bay more prominently in our efforts. And towards the end of our meeting, we'll want input on when we should meet next, how often we want to meet and what we'll be focusing on. Then we'll move to announcements and wrap up, and we will end by one Pm.
- Introductions (all) – Note one thing related to DEIJ that you are working on, exploring, or interested in doing.
  - **Sherry Witt:** So we'll keep this [introductions] brief, and I'll keep my eye on the clock. And move us over at 11:15. Before I do so, I also want to introduce you all to Melissa Sines. She is our new DEIJ coordinator for the Diversity Workgroup. So, Melissa, if you want to say a quick hello that'd be great.
  - Introductions
    - **Melissa Sines:** Great! Yeah, thanks for calling on me first. So great to see all of you today. So, as Sherry said, my name is Melissa Sines. I just started like right at the end of last year, as the DEIJ coordinator supporting all of the goal implementation teams and working groups on their strategies and work plans and efforts to embed DEIJ across the Chesapeake Bay program. And so I am here as support to folks, and you'll be hearing from me in your various roles across the network. But I'm also here as a resource, so nice to meet all of you.

- **Britt Slattery:** Hi, I'm Britt Slattery National Park Service, Chesapeake office. I am the Coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay program's Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship goal implementation team, which includes, among many other things, the Diversity Workgroup.
- **Will Parson:** My name is Will Parson. I'm the multimedia manager for the bay program with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, listening in today on behalf of the whole Communications team for the Bay program.
- **Wuill Urvina:** My name is Wuillam. I am the staffer that works with the Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship Goal implementation team. Most of you most likely received an email from me at some point. So it's nice to see you.
- **Beatrice Ohene-Okae:** Hi, good morning, everyone. My name is Beatrice Ohene-Okae. I'm an environmental protection specialist with the District of Columbia's Department of energy and environment. Currently working to support the stormwater retention credit trading program or the SRC program in the district. I do a lot with our funding and voluntary green infrastructure programs here within the SRC program. So little niche but we're looking to expand our environmental justice, diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes within the program. So really excited to learn more about this group, and to, you know, learn from what the be program is doing more broadly. Thanks.
- **Breck Sullivan:** Hi, everyone. I'm Breck Sullivan. I'm at the Chesapeake Bay program as the scientific technical assessment and reporting Coordinator or STAR Coordinator. I am with USGS and on the USGS side I also help them with MOUs with minority serving institutions. Thank you.
- **Carmera Thomas-Wilhite:** Good morning everyone. I'm Carmera Thomas-Wilhite and I'm the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, or DEIJ at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I'm responsible for our internal DEIJ, and also external partnerships. Nice to see you all.
- **Carrie Decker:** Hi, sorry. I'm kind of new to the group. I'm Carrie Decker. I work for the department of natural resources in Maryland and I have a program called Community Partnerships for Restoration. So not a new program, but kind of reinvigorated and realigned to really work more with underserved and disenfranchised communities as well as local governments in Maryland. Thanks.
- **Andrea Garcia:** Hi, yeah, this is also my first meeting. Sorry for not showing my face. The connection's bad where I'm at but I'm the Chesapeake Gateways Ambassador at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad, National Historical Park. I help to develop interpretive programming at the Park. Specifically highlighting untold stories and I also do community outreach to get local schools involved at the Park.
- **Amber Doherty:** Hi, I'm Amber Doherty. I'm with the National Aquarium here in Baltimore. I am the conservation community Coordinator, which means I work out of our animal care and rescue center to serve the neighbors, stakeholders, and youth around our building.
- **Eddie Gonzalez:** Hi everyone, Eddie Gonzalez. I'm director of partnerships and grants with the NPS Chesapeake Office. I work on our annual grant opportunity that does include a DEIJ focus as one of the criteria for any applications. So just looking to see where this group's going. Thanks.

- **Edgar Freeman:** Good morning everybody. I'm actually on my way to the office. I'm with the Maryland department of natural resources office of fair practices. We are charged to make sure that we are equitable, that we are abiding by all civil rights, laws and policies from the state level to the Federal level. And right now we're actually working on doing our annual Heritage Day.
- **Jess Blackburn:** Good morning, Jess Blackburn. I'm with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and I serve as the Coordinator for the Bay program's Stakeholders Advisory Committee. We are in the process of piloting our first ever need-based honorarium program for the members of the committee. So that's one of the topics that focuses around equity and inclusion.
- **Joe Schell:** Good morning everybody. My name is Joe Shell. I am a data and GIS specialist with the Delaware department of Natural Resources and Environmental control [DNREC]. I came from a job with DNREC previously that was focused on working with landowners in Chesapeake Bay watershed to install the BMPs and we talked a lot about how Delaware's portion of the Chesapeake Bay was considered an underserved community. So I'm really hoping to get a lot out of this group and bring it back to my department and my work, and use it to help us be more equitable and focus on it.
- **Julie Lawson:** Good morning, everybody. I'm Julie Lawson. I'm a member of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee. And you'll be hearing from me in a little bit about the People small group of the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee. Nice to see you all.
- **Kayli Ottominelli:** Hi! I'm Kayli Ottominelli. I'm also with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. I'm the staffer for the Local Government Advisory Committee. This is my second workgroup meeting. I was sort of at one before, but I didn't get to stay to hear much of the discussion. So I'm counting this as my official second one, and I'm just interested in hearing from the group and kind of staying up to date on what you know, what best principles and practices I can bring to my role with the committee.
- **Kesha Branskill:** Great good morning. My name is Keisha Branskill. I'm an urban and community forestry specialist with the US Forest Service. I am working in the mid-atlantic States and specifically, with IRA recipients and projects that are going on in the Mid-atlantic. Thanks.
- **Kristen Saunders:** Good morning, everybody. I'm Kristen Saunders. I'm with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. I'm known as the Cross-Program Coordinator within the Chesapeake Bay Program office. What that means is I break down silos and connect the work across the different disciplines, including trying to make sure that DEIJ considerations are sprinkled in with each of the goal teams that I'm working with.
- **Melissa Fagan:** Good morning everyone. Melissa Fagan with Chesapeake Research Consortium. I manage the Environmental Management Career development program that provides staff support through our staffers like Wuill to the Chesapeake Bay program's committees and workgroups.
- **Noelle Chao:** Hi, everyone. I'm Noel Chao with Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy [WSA], and I'm the director of Education and Equity initiatives. My 2 big jobs at WSA are managing our certification course for watershed stewards, which we host on an annual basis and also overseeing our DEIJ strategic plan. Happy to be here today.

- **Ola Davis:** [Chat] Good morning, all. So great to see everyone today! My name is Ola-Imani Davis, Chesapeake Bay Trust. I'm a bit under the weather today, with little to no voice so I'm excited to listen in!
- **Phoebe Galione:** Good morning everyone. I'm Phoebe Gallion, and I'm with Dickinson College's alliance for aquatic resource monitoring or alarm, and one of my primary roles, or I am always interested in finding new ways to make our work with our volunteers and our students more equitable, and making sure that we have a safe environment for all people involved.
- **Rico Newman:** Good morning all. My name is Rico Newman. I'm a member of the Piscataway-conoy community. I'm retired. A former cultural information specialist with the National Museum of American Indian and a former volunteer spokesperson with Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I'm leaning in today as usual, to listen, to learn and to share what I hear and take back to my community so that they will be informed with what progress is being made on our waterways. I look forward to getting a lot of good information to take back.
- **Sam Lott:** Great. Hi, I'm Sam Lott with Maryland DNR's Chesapeake Coastal Services, I work with Carrie, I was just hired to this position recently. So I'm still learning the ropes and learning who does what and what all these different organizations are, and how they all relate to each other. So I'm here to learn a lot about what everybody does here.
- **Shannon Sprague:** Hey? Good morning, everybody. I'm Shannon Sprague. I work for NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, where I lead up our youth portfolio and also the Education Workgroup coordinator for the Bay program. And so really, we're looking at, how can we continually improve the DEI efforts for our youth engagement in the program? Yeah.
- **Schmeka Roane:** Good morning. My name is Schmeka Roane. I was recently hired at Maryland DNR as a fair practice officer. I currently work with Edgar Freeman, and I got the invite through him. So I'm just here to see what the program's about.
- **Wendy O'Sullivan:** Hi, all Wendy O'sullivan. I'm the superintendent of the National Park Service, Chesapeake Gateways Office, and so glad to see familiar faces and lots of new faces for the Diversity Workgroup so cheers to Wuill and Brittany, and Amanda and Britt for you know, really engaging you all. I'm going to put in the chat [some information]. We NPS Chesapeake Gateways, as Eddie said, we have a Grant program, but we also do other strategic partnerships. So there's one with an RFP that's out right now. We have a partnership with Preservation Maryland, related to America 250th, 2026 is the 200 and fiftieth of the nation. And our office is looking to shake that up, make it inclusive, tell broad stories, make sure that it is about the truth of those times, and how relevant it is to today related to justice and liberty. And so there's an RFP out right now for Preservation Maryland to hire a consulting firm to develop workshops that we're gonna do all across the Chesapeake watershed in communities. So look for that. Spread the word it's open till February 1st. Again, it's to hire a consultant or a consulting firm to help design those workshops to be inclusive and broad.

- **August Goldfischer:** Hi everyone. Sorry I came in a bit late. My name's August pronouns they/them. I'm a staffer with the scientific technical assessment reporting or STAR team and good to be here. Sorry if I missed something.

#### **11:15 AM      Looking Back: Reflecting on Our Work over the Past Two Years**

*After a brief review of some key successes achieved, participants will help to consider our impact.*

Considering the examples provided of recent Diversity-related achievements and successes in the Bay arena, we should discuss what is needed in order to make the most change or progress that we can toward our Outcome by 2025.

- **Brittany Hall:** So, switching to a reflective mode, we're looking back on the work that we've done over the past 2 years, and really understanding where the workgroup has come. Just a reminder that under the Chesapeake Bay watershed agreement, we have a particular outcome that we're working towards. This is our north star. This is our guide for you to know what the work of the workgroup is focused on each year. We put together a 2 Year Action Plan that kind of sets out the work that we're going to be doing for the next 2 years. And so let's take a moment to just look at our diversity outcome and remind ourselves of what direction we would like to be going in. Our outcome is to identify stakeholder groups not currently represented in the leadership, decision making or implementation of current conservation and restoration activities, and to create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage these groups in the partnership's efforts.
- **Brittany Hall:** So with that in mind, we can look at a list of successes that we've had over the past 2 years. There's been a considerable amount of work done within the workgroup and across the bay program to institute DEIJ and to work towards that ultimate outcome. So I'm not gonna read all of these but we have been doing a lot of work towards helping the Chesapeake Bay program reconsider how to implement DEIJ throughout the program itself. From removing the word citizen from the watershed agreement and from group names to diversifying the Stakeholder Advisory committee. Having developed this Chesapeake Bay program DEIJ implementation plan and having that be reflected in the hiring of Melissa, for example. And getting those goals moved forward. We've had lots of different trainings and opportunities to engage with various stakeholders, including the Scope 11 project, the Allyship trainings. We've had several webinars to help you know, challenge people's ideas about who are those stakeholders important to the restoration and conservation of the Bay. And as you can see, lots of other opportunities, including hosting internships and diversifying the Staffer program.
- **Brittany Hall:** What gaps or barriers do we need to overcome to make more progress toward meeting our Outcome by 2025? How do we start work? How do we continue to work towards the diversity outcome?
  - **Trystan Sill:** Okay, good morning. My name is Tristan Sill. My pronouns are she/her and I work for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in Maryland where I'm the resiliency education coordinator. And yeah, also part of the Bay program diversity workgroup and steering committee and the workforce action team that we have. The biggest barrier/gap to achieve this goal is that once we have engaged partners into the bay program. I keep hearing that they feel like there's not really space for them, because they might not be state agencies or government entities. The bay program tends to have, it's like heavily process-oriented which can feel overwhelming and also exclusionary. And I would really love to figure out a way that we can offer more

support or mentorship, or whatever you know suggestions other workgroups have on ways that they can make changes to how they're incorporating new folks into the process. But I keep hearing that come up and not really seeing a lot of response to that.

- Wendy O'Sullivan: I think as a group we've talked about [how] a fundamental [issue] - I guess it's both a gap and a barrier - is that our diversity outcome is, as written here, the ways that we are tracking the targets don't relate to the outcome, they relate to the internal makeup of the Bay program partnership versus looking out [at the external makeup of the bay] the way the outcome is written. So there's some sort of disconnect between the metrics that have been set up for tracking success versus the outcome itself. So I know we've identified that. And we've reported that up through various opportunities. I think it's something that we have to continually keep identifying. And in this, including in the sessions later today about beyond 2025.
- Brittany Hall: So I know that we've heard about the need for more guidance and training; more accountability from the Chesapeake Bay program leadership; more intentional collaboration across the Chesapeake Bay program groups that Trystan just mentioned; more work to be done on the grant process and funding equitable funding, which we did have a recent you know, project, GIT funding project to support, but definitely more work to be done. And especially more work to eliminate bias and promote inclusiveness in recruitment, hiring and retention, which is really important amongst Chesapeake Bay program partners
- Brittany Hall: For folks that are kind of new to this space, it may be kind of jarring to have, you know, to feel like you can make a comment on how things are run when you don't really necessarily always see behind the scenes. But we appreciate everyone you know, thinking about these questions and participating in this process. So I am going to pass it on. After we've been looking back, we're gonna now start looking forward. So Sherry go ahead and take over.

11:35 AM      Looking Forward: Prioritizing How We Center "People" in the Bay Program Work

- Sherry Witt: So I'll move us next to our next topic which is looking forward, prioritizing how we center people in the bay program work. So we'll hear a brief background from Britt Slattery and Julie Lawson so that we have the context that we need to have the conversations about the near-term and beyond 2025 outcome.
- Britt Slattery: Okay. So we're gonna look at this in 2 different ways. One is the very near-term in the next year and the following year. So the next 2 years as well as more into the future. So for those who are maybe not steeped in what happens deep in the Chesapeake Bay program, each of the outcomes has the responsibility to develop and implement an action plan every 2 years. And then we go through every, at the end of each 2 year cycle, we go through a review process and then we develop a new action plan. So. It is time for us now to redo our review in early March, and then, right after that, we will start working on our new action plan. So as we think back about what we've just accomplished then we end thinking about, you know what are the things that we still need to make more progress on that can help inform what we will put into our new action plan. And we hope that everyone here will be very participatory in developing that plan as well as putting it into place.
- Britt Slattery: So today, in our breakouts, we're gonna think a little bit about that piece. And then we're also gonna think beyond that. So the current Chesapeake Bay watershed agreement doesn't really end but many of our targets are set for 2025. So we're now in this process of thinking about what happens beyond 2025 and I'm gonna sort of turn it over to Julie to talk about one piece of how that is happening.

- Julie Lawson: So you may know that a lot of the targets in the bay program's outcomes and goals are tied to the benchmark year of 2025. About half of those outcomes are on track to meet their goals and what they're expected to do by 2025, and about half of them are not. So as part of thinking about what the program looks like after 2025 there's been some work so far to think about how we could accelerate some work to make more of those outcomes meet their goals, be accomplished, be on track by 2025. And also, what does it look like for this program? What have we learned from the last 40 years of the bay program that can make the next 40 years better? And so, there's a steering committee of about 28 people, plus their alternates that have been working on wrestling with this, in order to provide recommendations to the Executive Council - which is the Governors [of the Chesapeake States], the Mayor of DC, the EPA. Administrator, and the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission - by the end of 2024 to provide recommendations to them on what the bay program might look like after 2025. So because it's a large steering committee, 56 people, we've broken it down into 5 small groups where people self-selected based on the issue area that they wanted to focus on and those include climate, healthy watersheds, shallow water habitats, clean water and people. All 5 of the groups are expected to look at people, and how they can be incorporated across the work. As they make their recommendations, these small groups will all be providing their recommendations for an initial conversation to start pulling things together at the end of February; and we're hoping that some of our conversation today can actually inform that group as we continue to work on what our recommendations are.
- Julie Lawson: So let's see. Broadly speaking, with this, our small group, I'm a co-lead of the People small group, along with Julia, of the department of energy and environment in DC. And what we've been hearing so far from our participants as well as from folks out in the broader community, and what we hope to hear more from y'all today, are strong interest in more use of social science and inclusion of broader populations and more representation of watershed residents. What is the role of the bay program with the public, hearing from the public, using that input in decision making, and the bay program's role in capacity building. Where is it supporting, providing funding, guidance and support to nonprofit organizations, state and local entities, credible messengers into the community?
- Julie Lawson: And so obviously, you can't really [cover everything], people [as a topic] is all encompassing. All of our work in the bay program needs to include people. And so really, our critical issues that we've been talking about have been representation, both ensuring that we have people included at the table and that the bay program is ready to respond to the feedback; that signatories are responding to that feedback and really encouraging public input, not just saying that meetings are public. Also looking at governance and accountability. Our notes on this are very rough, but I definitely encourage feedback in our breakout sessions. So changing focus with political will and how do we spread power beyond just the principal Staff Committee, just the agency secretaries and the Management Board, which are those agency staff for the most part.
- Julie Lawson: And looking at how we apply social science to both the governance as well as to landowner decisions and stewardship, and people across the watershed whose day to day lives [are] impacted [by] both environmental quality as well as human health and the economy. Looking at how we engage our nonprofits and use them better, more effectively as credible messengers, and also receive their feedback. Building relationships and not just being transactional. Workforce development, including starting in the K to 12 environmental education space to build a stewardship ethic and then ensuring that it's clear how public health is connected to all of this environmental health work. So, as I am just describing this to you, it sounds like a lot of loose strings. We still have time to work on this. There will be a



public comment period in early summer where we hope you'll see the recommendations as they are getting closer and closer to finalizing and we hope that you'll feel that you have an opportunity both today and in an additional public engagement period to give your input, have your voices included in what these recommendations end up looking like once they're compiled and a bit more coherent than what I am explaining hopefully. Then provide another round of input and then all of that information will go to the Executive Council later in the year. And hopefully, we will see after 2025 a bay program that really understands that people at the end of the day are what we need to think about and focus on as we move toward a restored and protected Chesapeake watershed. So Britt, I think I covered everything that you were hoping for.

- Britt Slattery: So we will have some time in the small groups to really sort of pick your brains. What we would really like to have happen today is for you to just - even if you're not particularly familiar with the inner workings of the bay program - we wanna take a step back. And even just think about what do you hope for in the bay watershed, and how people are part of that picture. So we want your ideas today so that you can help us plan that future for the bay watershed and for the local environment that you want to see.
- Britt Slattery: So for the near term. Again, we're going to think about the next one to 2 years. Where should we put the most energy? Where do we focus in order to make more progress toward our current outcome (the one that Brittany covered)? And then over the rest of this year and next year, we hope that you'll participate in helping to make that happen, both putting the plan together and getting the things in the plan done because we need a huge team to do everything that we need to do.
- Britt Slattery: And then looking beyond 2025, where do we want our efforts to go? This is the vision statement that's in the current Chesapeake bay watershed agreement and it includes "a vibrant cultural heritage and a diversity of engaged stakeholders". The People group is looking at this and thinking about whether or not this is it. Does this do the trick? Is there something missing? Does it express all of our goals and our priorities? Or do we need to do something different? We hope in the small groups we're gonna collect some big ideas. We're not gonna WordSmith but thinking about, you know, what is that vision? And how can we be more effective at centering people in the bay efforts in the future and how can that be reflected in the vision statement? Again, not wordsmithing but what are the big ideas?
- Sherry Witt: We have a minute or two and I wanted to open it up to any questions that people may have.
  - Trystan Sill: I wanted to make sure. The disconnect that Wendy brought up between our metrics and our outcome. I wanna make sure I understand, this is not an opportunity to change those metrics right, like make sure they're more aligned?
    - Britt Slattery: I think that it's appropriate to think about if we need to do work in the next 18 months to prepare us to measure something better in the future. So we're not going to rethink the metrics today but if that's a task we should consider doing very soon, then I think that should be part of the discussion.
      - Wendy O'Sullivan: I was just gonna share sort of this thinking of [the fact that] this is a very important point in time [in terms of] what is happening right now with these small breakouts focused on the future. So you know, really, I think it is important for the diversity workgroup to think about [years] 24-25, right? So you know, we really should hone in on what collectively we can achieve to bring more, you know, to bring more diverse stakeholders into the Bay program. Right?

So that's important for the next 2 years. As important, maybe more important, is this little window of time right now to influence the recommendations that are rolling up about beyond 2025. And to give you a sense of how hard it was and what a very purposeful effort was done for the current watershed agreement to have such a focus, to actually call out in the vision, to have you know, culturally diverse heritage, and you know, and to have stakeholders named. That was, you know, it's all before our time, I mean, maybe, you know Kristen or Rico, or or maybe some folks that are on with us were here when that all went down, but it was something like a 4 year process to like hammer and hammer and hammer to make sure there were pieces in the current watershed agreement that valued people and valued culture and valued education and diversity. And so we want to make sure that our group and different parts of our side of the program have an equal voice here. We currently do not have equal funding right, like if we did a pie chart of where all the dollars are going for the Chesapeake Bay program to just give a sense from the NPS side, our appropriation is 3 million a year. EPA's appropriation for water quality is over 200 million. Right? So there's a need to keep the voices loud. So the more things we can put forward in the future beyond 2025, the better chance we have of holding our space, if not growing our space.

***Near term:** As we move into our next two years (2024-2025), it is time to start planning how to best affect change and progress toward our Diversity Outcome. We will be developing the Diversity Workgroup action plan between March and May. Today, we will begin to identify priorities to make the most impact from now through 2025.*

***Future - Beyond 2025:** The Bay Program is currently going through a planning process to reconsider what we do and how we work for the next iteration of the partnership. One area of focus is the residents in our watershed. How can we center people more prominently in future Chesapeake Bay efforts?*

- **DWG January 2024 BREAKOUT - Brittany/Wuill**
  - **Brittany Hall:** The CBP's structure doesn't allow for the general public to have input in the decision-making, leadership, and implementation. There definitely is a failure about implementing public/stakeholder feedback. There is a lack of understanding when it comes to the importance of public feedback.
  - **Trystan Sill:** It's going to take a longer time to get feedback when it comes to people, communities, because they are more widespread. We really need to get the process of actually getting feedback together.
    - **Brittany Hall:** That is my issue with the Stakeholders Advisory committee and how it is by appointment. It is hard to have a representation of diverse individuals when it's done through that mechanism.
      - **Carrie Decker:** The Local Government committee could be a tool to help include the local communities and governments as well as keep them engaged and onboard. They want to be more effective. My other thought was that to get to the community level, it takes more work. I would like to see more kinds of watershed specialists (watershed restoration specialists) since those people help get into the community.

- **Brittany Hall: How can we be more effective at centering people in Bay conservation/restoration efforts for the future? And how can that be reflected in the vision statement?**
  - **Eddie Gonzalez: When would the CBP find out about organizations that are doing some of the things we need to get done?**
    - **Brittany Hall: There isn't a lot of tracking done strategically. The stewardship metric is looking at how many groups/people are exhibiting behavior change? I think there is the possibility of looking at the CBP and seeing who should be tracking the groups doing the work needed within the dwg.**
    - **Eddie Gonzalez: (chat) If I was on the CBP steering committee, I would want to know what success looks like and who are the examples of this successful work.**
      - **Brittany Hall: Right now, their success measures are done with water quality metrics/parameters.**
  - **Joe Schell: Is it the case that we are looking at quantitative data and not qualitative instead? Because if so, we should be focusing on that within the next few years.**
  - **Carrie Decker: (chat) Can we include language to include: "Engaged, equitable/inclusive, and educated communities" (not stakeholders)**
  - **Trystan Sill: There is no clear leader/responsible party for some of the work that needs to be done.**
- **Other Notes by Notetaker**

#### **NEAR TERM (2024-2025):**

- **There needs to be an understanding of the interests and concerns of the diverse communities we want to engage with in order to have the stakeholder groups have more buy-in/interest.**
- **We need to understand the concerns of diverse community members, we don't just want to show up and talk; an emphasis on accountability.**
- **There has been a failure to properly plan for public/stakeholders to provide feedback and collect information; there needs to be enough time for appropriate information to be gathered (last minute asks are not effective).**
- **We need to develop a strong group of stakeholders that represent diverse communities.**
- **We should lean on LGAC as a tool for local community representation.**
- **Fund structures/connector groups (watershed restoration specialists like in MD). We should build trust or work with those who are already trusted/familiar within the community. Working through these trusted individuals and groups it may appear more personal rather than from a group as large as the Bay Program.**
- **We should train these people in DEIJ.**
- **We should build capacity for local organizations to LEAD.**
- **Connecting with communities may not mean engaging directly through/to environmental groups - it is necessary to find overlap.**

#### **FUTURE – BEYOND 2025:**

- Are there already organizations that are doing amazing work getting to these goals? How can we learn about them, and is there a place where their work can be showcased? How can those skills/experiences be learned about/tapped into?
- Are there ways to include metrics that are not numerical? How would it be tracked and who would track it?
- How do we create effective metrics for success that center people? Are there more qualitative metrics that can be included in the future?
- We need to ADDRESS THE DEIJ Implementation Plan!
- Can we include language to include: "Engaged, equitable/inclusive, and educated communities" (not stakeholders)
- Encourage more flexibility, "ADAPTIVE"
- DWG January 2024 BREAKOUT - Amanda.docx - Google Docs

#### NEAR TERM (2024-2025):

- How do you determine how to increase something, but there isn't a clear documented baseline?
- Need to identify stakeholder groups that are currently involved in the three things: leadership, decision-making and implementation (gathering information to help us move forward).
- Important for the management board to hear about the successes from the diversity workgroup; raise the topics and issues now to set up the future thinking and decision-making for the future outcomes (including new DEIJ coordinator) - leadership needs to be involved.
- Management board membership needs refinement.
- Politics will influence the decision-making, leadership and landscape of the Bay program (elections, state leadership).
- Include voices other than politics and management board

#### FUTURE – BEYOND 2025:

- Separating the regulatory side from the CBP partnerships.
- The role of EPA as federal agency - regulatory pieces constrain federal agency
  - Include more of its agency in this work (not just the water regulatory part but other parts as well)
- Change the order and the emphasis of the CBP vision statement to center people. Also health and environmental justice should be added.
- Need to think about how to include stakeholders - there are still folks in the "public", people that still don't have the awareness and understanding. So, how do we create opportunities to raise awareness and educate people about the connections of public health and the water TMDL goals?
- If there is a bias towards the "meaningful" opportunities - and we haven't figured out how stakeholders have not been engaged; define and articulate what those meaningful opportunities are first.
- Engaging communities that haven't been included- who are the other funded organizations? Connecting with each other to do the work better and sharing what is being learned in a meaningful way.
- Network of Networks: stakeholders working together to co-create outcomes and impact the work.

- Daylight the funding allocated to the 10 outcomes to create a more equitable investment in the watershed agreement.
- Are the right public agencies at the table? ex. FEMA/EMMA (MD), HUD and/or other social justice organizations/agencies.
- Tribes should have a voting seat at all levels of the CBP leadership (MB, PSC, EC)
- Reframing the vision statement to have a greater emphasis on people and environmental health is really important. From speaking with elected officials in the watershed, there are many who view people and diversity outcomes as entirely separate from the CBP watershed outcomes.
- DWG January 2024 BREAKOUT - Sherry.docx - Google Docs

#### NEAR TERM (2024-2025):

- How do we better leverage existing talent and capacity that is already out there doing our work to enhance our mission? Not just asking them to join a group, but resourcing them and building those relationships. (See important note below about establishing a TRUE partnership). We are not always the experts and we often do not have the existing relationships, expertise, and capacity needed to do this work effectively.
- Partnering with - more than just resourcing - need to focus on TRUE partnership, have someone from the CBP to lend aid and support. Embed a staff member into an organization to benefit off of CBP expertise to truly be in partnerships. Doing the work together, not just using someone's work.
  - Any guidance or case studies within the CBP for this model?
- Keep in mind - what does TRUE PARTNERSHIP look like? How do we embrace that within the Bay Program? Active engagement in an intentional manner.
- Note from chat - I love the suggestion from BeKura. In terms of the next two years, the other goal implementation teams are ready and interested in incorporating and embedding diversity and people in their work and have asked for help. Melissa Sines will be working with the living resources goal teams (fisheries and habitat) to start with, and it occurs to me that intentional conversations and connections between diversity workgroup members and members of those goal teams to help them think about centering people and how to consult with and consider community and people's needs as they update their own work plans over the next two years.
- How do the standards, goals, legal requirements, etc. fit within meeting the workgroups goals and objectives? How do we prioritize the watershed goals while enhancing DEIJ objectives? How do we uphold DEIJ values within the Bay Program's work?
  - We need to know what the requirements are and how to work within them. Meet people where they are to get them interested in this work. Make it understandable. Use connectors to get folks involved and interested - builds future investment in our work.
  - Trying to get feedback, real public input - how do we do this?
    - Note from chat - On feedback: Listening to feedback no matter the tone or form.
  - Note from chat - It also bears noting that we could do a better job of linking any of the restoration work with impacts and benefits to living resources and people. Drinking water, toxics, acid mine drainage, coastal flooding....all impact people, all have a linkage to the work of the bay program but are not

the primary intention of that work, and could be. Flip it to be people and living resource impacts first.

- How do certain priorities fit within certain communities? Leads to more authentic relationships and partnerships. Need to utilize community leaders and others already invested in those communities to be able to bring those important messages into those communities. Not done effectively (if at all) in the past. Use who we already have to help make it relevant, get folks interested, etc.

#### **FUTURE – BEYOND 2025:**

- See notes from question on near-term activities above!
- Vision statement - the people part comes last (and we want to be people centered)! Is there a different approach we should be thinking about? Using health as a central piece to bridge the EJ aspects.
  - Note from the chat - The healthy watersheds small group is toying with the idea of having everyone understand where their local waters fall on the spectrum of watershed health and using our Chesapeake healthy watersheds assessment to determine that spectrum (so we are not just focused on nitrogen, sediment, phosphorus) and provide the minimum habitat people and living resources need to thrive. Empowering communities with information about where their local waters land on this spectrum and identify what needs to happen to move them along the spectrum to healthy designation (including removing toxics, handling inland or coastal flooding, access to nature, etc)
  - Note from the chat - In the current vision, people come LAST on the list... what would it look like to put them first, and not just as "stakeholders" but as people in their own right. I agree on the health and health equity framing Britt mentioned!
  - Use of the word "stakeholder" not supported by the tribal community, felt it was insulting - they do not view themselves as just a stakeholder. We need to be mindful of this moving forward. We need to better understand the culture and customs of the groups we want to engage in. We cannot assume we have that knowledge. We need to be humble and learn.
    - Note from the chat - Yes, the term feels a bit "less than," even though it's meant to imply the opposite! If you have a stake in it, you should be central!
  - Note from the chat - The vision statement doesn't really say anything about the decision making or the ultimate distribution of power and resources. "Abundant life" should include that we are actively devoting our resources to tackle environmental racism which changes life and health chances based on race.
- Objective/Outcome statement - disconnect between statement and metrics used to evaluate.
- Does the outcome also need an upgrade?
  - What's missing is the how! The how is sometimes reflected in the action plan, supporting this statement.
  - Do we need to do more?
- Note from chat - It might also be effective to see the change over time in where resources are being invested and whether they are achieving equitable distribution of

restoration funds across the watershed to diverse community organizations. (in terms of the outcome we track). We could also intentionally hold our meetings or some meetings in the evening or weekends and IN COMMUNITY. We have made no changes in how we work.

- Support from the group to focus on the needed changes to the vision statement and to address the disconnect between the outcome and the metric used to track.
- Look at ways to bring in more community members into the workgroup. See what on the ground they are feeling and utilize that information to be a better partner.
  - We could also intentionally hold our meetings or some meetings in the evening or weekends and IN COMMUNITY.
  - We have made no changes in how we work.
- Sherry Witt: So what we'll do now. Bekura is a briefing for us, so perhaps we'll go last. So thank you everybody for taking the time to do that. These breakouts allow us to hear from all of you more than we could in a bigger group. But this is the time where we want to hear what you guys had to say. So that's why we're kind of focused on, you know, what were your key takeaways from your discussion? There were 2 key questions. One is, you know, over the next one to 2 years where can we put the most energy in order to make progress towards the current one. And then the second one is, where can we focus on the future? How can we be more effective at centering people in the bay efforts for the future? And I have one reflection on my breakout. It is that the conversation actually continued. It wasn't just looking at one to 2 years out. It was like, What can we do now? And beyond 2025. There wasn't a real differentiation between the near and the far. That was my observation. So now what we'll do is hear from the volunteer report out person to hear what your key takeaways were from those 2 questions. And then, you know, if there's any questions or reflection on that. We'll have a little bit of time, and then we'll open it up at the end for additional comments. So perhaps we'll go ahead and Amanda with your group. Do you have a volunteer?
- Amanda Knobloch: Yeah. So I'll be reporting for the first question, and then Carmera will be reporting for our second question. So for us, the first question, the key ideas that we had were we really need to identify stakeholder groups that are currently involved in things and we need to have a baseline sort of understanding of who's who's working on this, We think it's really important for the Management Board to hear about the successes from the Diversity Workgroup and to raise issues and topics now to set up future thinking and decision making. We noted that politics will likely influence the decision making and leadership and landscape of the Bay program, especially with the upcoming Presidential election, and how things might change that way. And that it is important to include voices other than politics and the management board.
- Carmera Thomas-Wilhite: Yup, so the second question, thinking about being more effective, we talked a lot about different stakeholders and different groups to create meaningful opportunities, but really needing to separate that engagement from the regulatory side, and not really having that mandate of regulation around the agency itself. But how do we include other agencies and engage communities outside of the regulatory actions. There's more in the notes. But just really, that really boils down to that.
- Sherry Witt: Any additional input from Amanda's group?
  - Wendy O'Sullivan: Yeah, I would just share that. There's a lot in the notes, you know, even as basic as with the vision statement itself. You know, we had this really great conversation about reorganizing and putting an emphasis on communities and people. Right now, it's like this little run-on sentence where it feels like people are literally tacked on at the last minute in the sentence. So there's, you know, a need to sort of

more artfully write that so that people are centered and then there was an idea put in about in the future, making sure that tribes have a tribal representative that is a signatory to the watershed agreement, and they would be on all levels of of the partnership leadership including the Executive Council.

- Sherry Witt: Let's move on to Brittany's group.
- Brittany Hall: So my group is great. I thank everybody for giving their feedback. We have folks that are completely new to this, to this space. And then folks that have been here for a while. So I really appreciated everyone's comments. Sorry, 2 things that came out were very similar to the first group. So I'm not gonna repeat that. The second thing, I think, that came up was that in the near term we need to ensure that we're digging into the DEIJ implementation plan and other guidance and feedback that we've received; that we've put all this effort into gathering and asked signatories and partnership members to take on their responsibility and action; and that tracking and holding folks accountable was really important moving forward. So there was a question about how we can measure success without actually knowing how actively people are being involved and included in the bay programs work. So figuring out where in the structure we can hold partners accountable. So that's something that can be done in the near future and moving forward as well. Hope that makes sense.
- Sherri Witt: Is there anyone from my group that wants to speak on behalf of the key takeaways?
- Melissa Fagan: Hi, everyone, Melissa Fagan from CRC. I was the note taker. So I'm gonna wing it. But I think one of the central themes from our group that came up in both sections was true partnership, and what that looks like. We know it's not just telling people how to do things, and we know that it's not even just providing resources and you know better enhancing their work - that is also a transactional relationship. But really, if we want to develop partnerships, you know, we need to have a clear picture of what the true partnership looks like, whether it's embedding our staff with their staff and doing cross support and really listening to those needs or holding meetings at times in communities where we can get that true engagement and build those relationships. So that was a theme. We have a lot of great notes that will pass on to folks about that with some great discussion and input from folks. But that concept of true partnership kept coming to the surface. And really, like we, we need to start embodying that and figure out what that looks like for our work. We also had similar ideas about the vision statement, how it's not very people centered and there were some just suggestions about how we might be able to change that by incorporating some aspects about human health to maybe help bridge some of the environmental justice issues in and expand and broaden that vision statement. And then there was just a lot of talk at the end, too, about how you know, we need to not assume that we, under have an understanding of communities that we're going to be working in and spending some time learning the culture and customs before we even are, you know, reaching out, and I know that that has come up. But there was a conversation within our group about the word stakeholder, and how sometimes that was off putting to the tribes. And that's, you wouldn't think that. But obviously, that's a very important point of concern. So you know, as we continue to move forward again with that meaning of true partnership, just really, how do we get familiar with the group so that we can move forward in a really positive and supportive way. I was skimming the notes. There might be other important points people want to highlight.
- Britt Slattery: Bekura is back, and she would like to talk more about the true partnership.
  - Melissa Fagan: Yeah, please do, Bekura.
- Bekura: I was saying that folks wanted to know more about true partnership. And so I was just stating that, you know, embedding someone from the Chesapeake Bay program in smaller



organizations to lend aid and support would be a great example of true partnership, instead of lending just resources and being able to say “Hey, we did this thing because the organization did it”. But to truly be involved in that organization and be invested in their success. And then the work that we're doing is an example of a true partnership. Not just, you know, like funding or you know, possibly technical assistance, or something like that. To just to really be actively engaged in an intentional manner is what I had offered.

**12:45 PM      Meeting Schedule for 2024**

- Next meeting: March TBD, 2024
  - Brief report-out from our biennial progress review
  - Begin planning the new two-year action plan
- Plan for remaining meetings

**12:55 PM      Summary, Wrap-up, & Announcements**

**1:00 PM      Adjourn**