

QUARTERLY PROGRESS MEETING – November 2022
Chesapeake Bay Program



Wetlands

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Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...



Goal: *Vital Habitats (Wetlands)*

Outcome: *Continually increase the capacity of wetlands to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Create or reestablish 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhance function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands by 2025. These activities may occur in any land use (including urban), but primarily occur in agricultural or natural landscapes.*



Wetlands Goals

Wetlands are a critical habitat that provides for and interacts with Water Quality, Aquatic (Blue Crab, Fish Habitat, Black Duck) and Terrestrial Habitat, Healthy Watersheds, Outdoors Space and Access. Often co-occur with Streams, Floodplains, Riparian Buffers, SAV. Influence attainment of many/most CBP goals.

We need for the continued focus to be on wetlands.



What is our Outlook and Recent Progress?

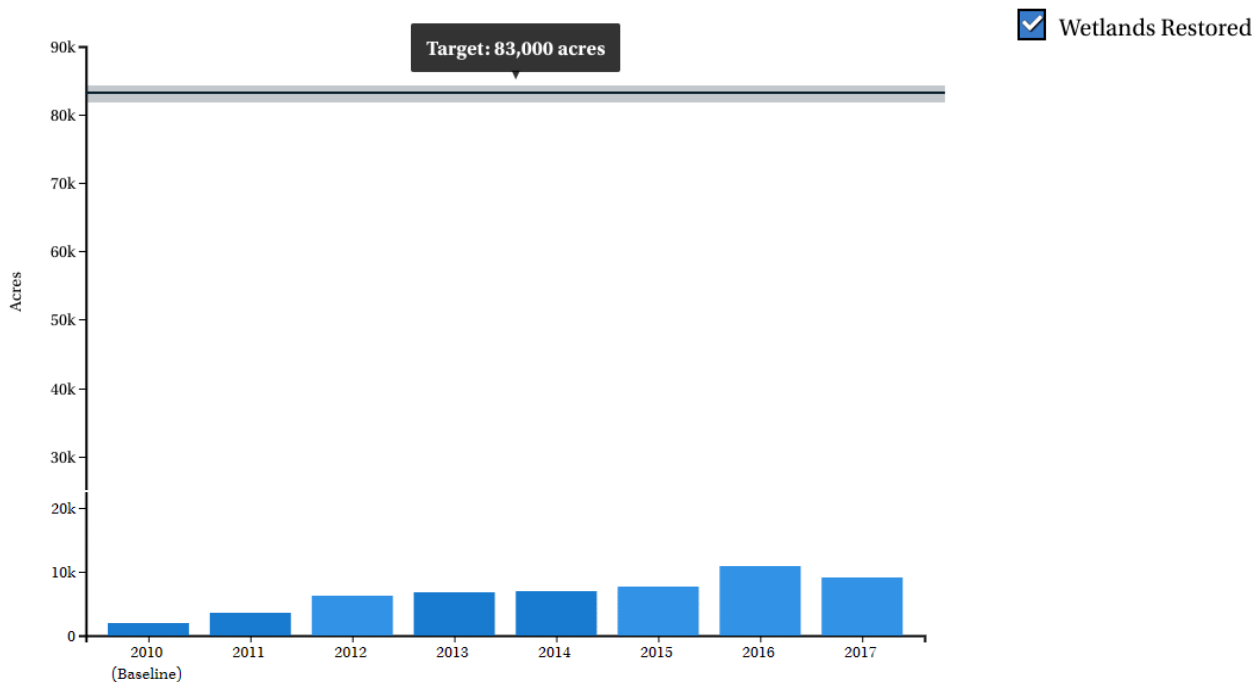


RECENT PROGRESS
INCREASE



OUTLOOK
OFF COURSE

Wetlands Restored on Agricultural Lands (Cumulative) (2010-2017)



What is our Outlook and Recent Progress?



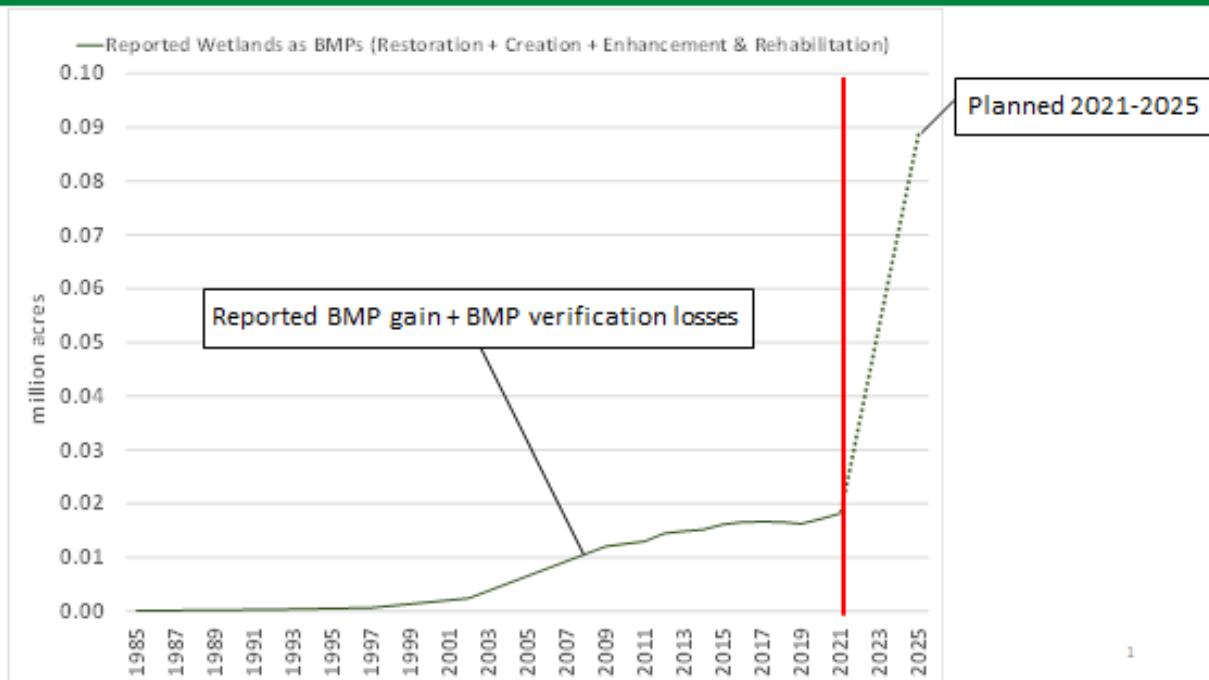
RECENT PROGRESS
INCREASE



OUTLOOK
OFF COURSE



Wetland BMP Changes (1985–2021 + 2025)





What is our Outlook and Recent Progress?



RECENT PROGRESS
INCREASE



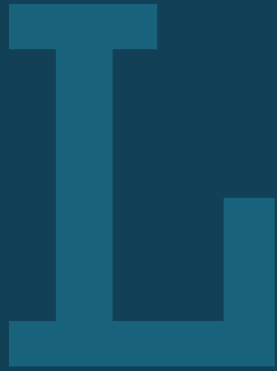
OUTLOOK
OFF COURSE

Recent Progress

Between 2010 and 2021, 16,000 acres of wetlands were established (created), rehabilitated or reestablished (restored) on agricultural lands. While this outcome includes a target to restore 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands in the watershed, 83,000 of these restored acres should take place primarily on agricultural lands. The wetlands restored between 2010 and 2017 mark an 18.8% achievement of the 85,000-acre goal.

Outlook: Achievement Uncertain

Significant Wetlands acreage gains from restoration and creation are not occurring in the watershed. Wetland acreage data are inconsistently reported and inaccurate for assessing progress toward this outcome. Work is underway to identify a consistent means for collecting data by maximizing existing data reporting processes. Small cumulative gains in tidal wetlands not accounted for.



Learn

What have we learned in the last two years?



Successes and Challenges

SUCCESSSES:

- **2022 Restoring Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Workshop** (also referred to as the **Wetland Outcome Attainability Workshop**). WWG collaboration with HGIT. **Wetlands Action Plans** due to MB in December 2022
- **2022 STAC Workshop:** “*Evaluating an Improved Systems Approach to Crediting: Consideration of Wetland Ecosystem Services*” (formerly known as “Evaluating a Systems Approach to BMP Crediting”) hosted in March 2022. Report to be completed by Dec 2022
- **Climate Resiliency & Wetlands Combined Workgroup Meetings:** joint workgroup meeting in December 2021



Successes and Challenges

SUCCESSSES:

- **GIT Funded Marsh Migration Model Study.** Final report submitted Sept. 2022
- **Wetlands CBP GIS Collaboration:** Worked with GIS folks to provide wetlands guidance on mapping
- **GIT Funded Work:**
 - Wetland Mowing Impacts. Still seeking a contractor
 - 2023 Support for USGS improved non-tidal wetland mapping



Successes and Challenges

CHALLENGES: STAFFING CAPACITY

One of the greatest limitations to accomplishing more action items is the lack of capacity in workgroup members and staff. Additionally, due to a HGIT staffer vacancy (since April 2022), progress on action items like the creation of jurisdictional or co-benefit factsheets (actions 2.3, 5.2, 5.4) have been halted entirely. If commitment to appropriate WWG membership and staffing support was provided to the workgroup, achievement of these action items will become more feasible.

Unintended Consequence

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE:

The WWG, a sub-cohort of WG members and the Co-Chair, spent too much time on the wetland verification with the BMP verification Ad-Hoc ACTION Team.



On the Horizon

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS:

- **2022 Restoring Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Workshop** → *Action Plan*
- New **living shorelines law in VA** that may help in promoting/accelerating implementation
- **WOTUS & the Clean Water Act:** may exclude some wetlands from federal jurisdiction

FISCAL DEVELOPMENTS:

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)
- NOAA/ NFWF/ FEMA and other funding

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Adapt

How does all of this impact our work?



Based on what we learned, we plan to ...

- Focus the workgroup on themes and actions identified & summarized in the Wetlands Workshop Action Plan
- Refine the outcome to define creation vs. restoration vs. enhancement as it pertains to the outcome
- Work with **STAR** and **CRWG** to define historic wetlands loss across the watershed and identify opportunities to restore/conserves/create wetlands within this historic loss and as it related to climate change



Equitable and inclusive restoration ...

What opportunities exist to work with historically underserved communities and ensure that meeting our outcomes benefits all residents of the Bay watershed?

While the current Logic & Action Plan does not contain any items specifically focused oriented to DEIJ efforts, the workgroup is prioritizing incorporating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) considerations into the all decision-making opportunities.

A large, stylized, teal-colored letter 'F' is positioned on the left side of the slide. The background behind it is a dark blue vertical band, which is part of a larger design consisting of horizontal stripes in teal, dark blue, and light green.

Fill the Gap

*How can the Management Board
help achieve the Outcome?*



Filling the Gap

Management Board

Response Options

1. Acknowledge that the MB is not committing to take specific action; Express gratitude for the work and information.
2. Handle the outcome request
3. Elevate to the PSC
4. Refer to another team/workgroup

Because the wetlands outcome is off course and the achievement of the 2025 goals is uncertain, the Partnership needs to commit to increased capacity, engagement of all wetland project processes, and additional support to progress in outcome attainability.



Filling the Gap

We need your help with...

- Ensuring that **each jurisdiction has a representative on the Wetlands Workgroup** that can speak to all programs in the jurisdiction that deal with wetlands
- **Increasing staffing support:** One of the greatest limitations to accomplishing more action items is the lack of capacity in workgroup members and staff. If greater staffing support was provided to the workgroup, specifically filling the vacant HGIT staffer, achievement of these action items will become more feasible.

Management Board

Response Options

1. Acknowledge that the MB is not committing to take specific action; Express gratitude for the work and information.
2. Handle the outcome request
3. Elevate to the PSC
4. Refer to another team/workgroup



Discussion