Reaching 2025: Draft Report Discussion

Management Board

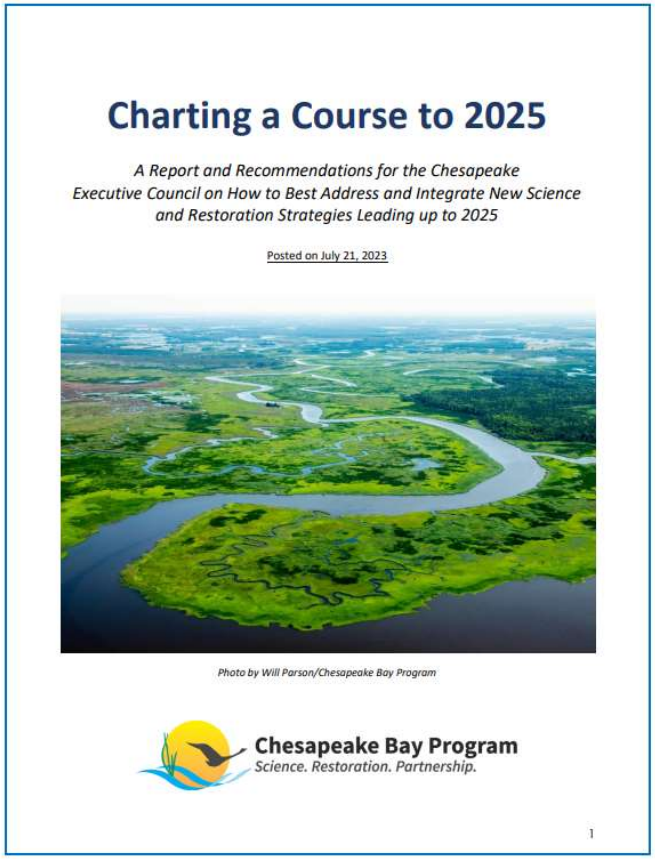
August 10, 2023

Current Status

Draft Report is out for Management Board and public comment until **Monday, August 21, 2023**.

Comments accepted through comments@chesapeakebay.net.

https://d18lev1ok5leia.cloudfront.net/chesapeakebay/documents/Charting-a-Course-to-2025_CBP_2023-07-26-001306_jvtn.pdf



Charting a Course to 2025

A Report and Recommendations for the Chesapeake Executive Council on How to Best Address and Integrate New Science and Restoration Strategies Leading up to 2025

Posted on July 21, 2023

Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

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Why are we here today?

Create a space for an open dialogue on the report and to answer any questions.

Provide an update on next steps and share the timeline to finalize the report.

Report Structure

- Executive Summary (including overview of recommendations).
- Further information:
  - Bay TMDL and Phase III WIPs
  - Emerging science, monitoring and analysis
  - Climate change and DEIJ
  - Forest buffers and wetlands
- Outcome attainability templates
  - Outcome
  - Status
  - What has helped achieve success since 2014?
  - What challenges have hindered progress?
  - What is needed to continue current trajectory/accelerate progress?

Recommendations Related to Outcomes

- Quantitative and qualitative outcomes can be effective. The latter often serving as a precursor for the former. However, successful qualitative outcomes require concrete milestones and measures of progress or milestones to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Successful quantifiable outcomes have clear geographic and numerical targets, measures of success, accounting systems and monitoring protocols in place. It may be impossible to achieve quantitative success without these in place.
- Jurisdictional and federal commitments, costs, roles and responsibilities must be clear. The success of many quantitative outcomes is driven by a federal champion and/or coordinator looking across the jurisdictions, in coordination with one or more state or non-governmental champions or coordinators for regional relevance and legitimacy.
- Ambitious outcomes are inspiring and can help drive change, but they must be established with a reasonable understanding of the costs, commitments and who is responsible for them.

Recommendations Related to Outcomes

- Outcome efforts must operate at the appropriate scale in order to make progress. For those large or nearly all encompassing in scope, such as climate change or diversity, establishing or modifying outcomes to focus on manageable pieces of these challenges, while maintaining a sense of their place in the broader context, could generate meaningful progress. Efforts should focus on high-impact actions and avoid implementation of many small, disconnected projects that can dilute staff and financial resources.
- Working with local communities, governments and non-profit organizations helps to identify high-priority geographies and match outcomes with local partner interests. Identifying priority geographies to implement measures to achieve outcomes and matching those with local partners would accelerate progress.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program is a distributed network centered on the EPA. The EPA is the only Chesapeake Bay Program partner to have a mandate, staff and funding to work across all partnership issues. However, their annual funding is modest compared to the total annual investment in the region, and it is highly constrained. A 6 mechanism to match Chesapeake Bay Program needs with staff support and funding from across the partnership should be instituted through the Management Board.

Recommendations Related to Bay TMDL/Phase III WIPs

- Non-point source pollution is where future reduction efforts will need to be focused. Moving toward 2025, expand the existing conversation around how to best address pollution from nonpoint sources.

- Increase understanding of desired system response resulting from BMP implementation using tools such as high-resolution land use and land cover data and high frequency water column monitoring.

- Evaluate the discrepancies in the fertilizer application estimates generated by CAST and update the Bay TMDL compliance accordingly.

- The EPA will continue to provide oversight and support to the jurisdictions as we collectively look for ways to accelerate implementation progress, particularly in the nonpoint sector.

Recommendations Related to Bay TMDL/Phase III WIPs

- Target BMP implementation in high-impact areas throughout the watershed to improve local conditions, and in the culturally, ecologically and economically important shallow water areas of the Bay; prioritize resources in these locations.

- Draw on recent STAC analyses to implement non-point source strategies that utilize geographically based targeting to improve conditions for living resources of the Bay.

- Craft succinct messaging acknowledging the partnership will not meet water quality goals by 2025 but affirming efforts will continue to make progress.

- Maintain a focus on addressing increased loads attributed to climate change and population growth and implement the Conowingo WIP.

Recommendations Related to Emerging Science, Monitoring and Analysis

- Continue to investigate long-term funding sources to maintain Bay Program monitoring networks, support modeling efforts and finalize new water quality monitoring network developments funded in response to the PSC Monitoring Review report recommendations.

- Evaluate satellite-based and other new technologies such as machine learning opportunities, for a more comprehensive monitoring and analysis of Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

- Incorporate more social information and data (e.g., population, languages spoken, household income) into geospatial products to foster increased understanding of the demographics and vulnerabilities of communities across the watershed in order to build relationships, better target communications and increase engagement opportunities.

- Implement high-resolution monitoring and modeling in prioritized areas to provide feedback on living resources and habitat conditions. This can lead to improved indicators linking environmental change and living resource responses that can be integrated with existing synthesis products and used to evaluate the vulnerability of key species and habitats to guide management.

Recommendations Related to Emerging Science, Monitoring and Analysis

- Incorporate recommendations from STAC reports.
  - The Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response, which suggests shifting the emphasis of science and monitoring from tracking water quality standards attainment in the deep trenches of the Bay, to focusing on improving conditions in culturally, ecologically and economically important places in the watershed with an increased focus on shallow-water areas beyond 2025.
  - Recommendations from the Rising Watershed and Bay Water Temperatures report demonstrates that warming waters will make it more difficult for the Bay Program to meet its water quality and living resources goals and recommends that the partnership incorporate water temperature considerations more explicitly into its goals, outcomes and management strategies.
- Enhance capacity building and community engagement strategies to develop a collective vision resulting in scientifically informed conservation and restoration practices that achieve the Watershed Agreement outcomes in prioritized geographies.

Recommendations Related to Climate Change and DEIJ

- Identify champions to take responsibility for leading and coordinating these efforts. Often, champions include a federal representative along with someone from a jurisdiction, or in some cases, a nonprofit. They contribute and advocate for catalyzing funding, staff and resources. Effective GITs and workgroups often have sustained funding from a partner committed to the work (e.g., Environmental Literacy outcomes are supported through NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training Program).
- To move the work of the climate and DEIJ directives and other cross-cutting initiatives forward, the Bay Program must strategically evaluate how to support this sort of distributed work. Network theory and other coordination models should be used to determine how best to structure this work. Leadership level support and sufficient staff resources should be identified to promote systemic change within the Chesapeake Bay Program to effectively include and 9 amplify diverse voices and participants in our work; and to ensure the partnership considers and addresses the impacts of climate change effectively.
- Climate change and DEIJ were identified as the high priority actions for the Executive Council, but resources did not follow to address these issues despite increasing budgets. One necessary action is to fund critical projects outside of the GIT-funding process. In addition, providing a better accounting of federal and state resources contributing to the outcomes could help address the funding shortfall by allowing partners to strategically align efforts, thereby increasing efficiencies.

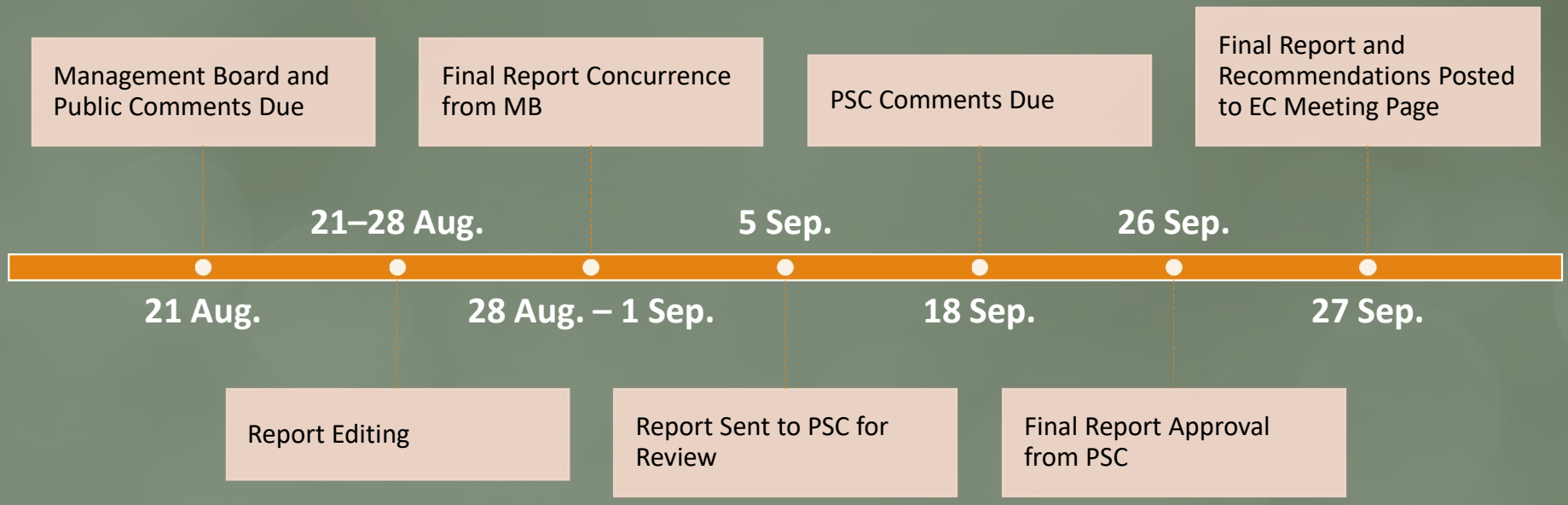
Recommendations Related to Forest Buffers and Wetlands

- Support effective, flexible buffer and wetland programs to limit or eliminate out-of-pocket costs for landowners, provide maintenance, fund practices on a rolling basis and limit eligibility requirements.
- Build and retain staff capacity to scale-up implementation of both buffers and wetlands and offer high-quality technical and maintenance services.
- Cultivate partnerships to support sustained funding and to coordinate outreach and technical assistance efforts.
- Explore additional funding options to enhance data collection and ensure the wetlands tracker remains upgraded.

Recommendations Related to Forest Buffers and Wetlands

- Develop more strategic approaches and increase capacity for outreach and engagement. These could include:
  - Encourage time and effort to cultivate relationships with private landowners to understand their barriers to wetlands and forest buffers.
  - Develop targeted communications materials for different audiences (e.g., landowners, policymakers, agricultural technical service providers) that emphasize the value and co-benefits of forest buffers and wetlands using case studies and success stories.
  - Ensure messages are in easily understood terms, spread frequently and through a variety of communications mediums to ensure all audiences are being reached.
- Expand tracking and reporting to ensure all forest buffers and wetlands are appropriately accounted for and verified. In particular, develop a strategy to conduct outreach to nonprofits, state agencies and other entities to ensure they know how to report their work to the new wetlands tracking tool that will be available in fall 2023. Additionally, review current tracking systems to make sure everything is working normally and being reported accurately.
- Establish clear geographic and numerical targets, measures of success, accounting systems and monitoring protocols for tidal wetland restoration

Timeline


Management Board and Public Comments Due
Final Report Concurrence from MB
PSC Comments Due
Final Report and Recommendations Posted to EC Meeting Page
21–28 Aug.
5 Sep.
26 Sep.
21 Aug.
28 Aug. – 1 Sep.
18 Sep.
27 Sep.
Report Editing
Report Sent to PSC for Review
Final Report Approval from PSC

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