

LAND USE OPTIONS EVALUATION HEALTHY WATERSHEDS GIT

2014 WATERSHED AGREEMENT: GOAL & OUTCOME LANGUAGE

LAND USE OPTIONS EVALUATION OUTCOME:

By the end of 2017, with the direct involvement of local governments or their representatives, evaluate policy options, incentives and planning tools that could assist them in continually improving their capacity to reduce the rate of conversion of agricultural lands, forests and wetlands as well as the rate of changing landscapes from more natural lands that soak up pollutants to those that are paved over, hardscaped or otherwise impervious. Strategies should be developed for supporting local governments' and others' efforts in reducing these rates by 2025 and beyond.

LAND CONSERVATION GOAL:

Conserve treasured landscapes in order to maintain water quality and habitat; sustain working forests, farms and maritime communities; and conserve lands of cultural, indigenous and community value.

OUTCOME DISPOSITION ADVICE TO MANAGEMENT BOARD:

REPLACE

Status and Evaluation:

The principal output from this outcome occurred in 2017 with the release of the Conservation Land-Use Policy Toolkit produced by the National Center for Smart Growth. This outcome represents more of a strategy or output and should be replaced with one focused more on support for land use planning. While the intent of this outcome is still needed, as written it is difficult to understand in both name and description.

Why this outcome is still needed:

Consistently over the past 40 years and in every Bay Agreement, the CBP Partners recognized the importance of minimizing the conversion of natural lands and farms to development. The Bay watershed population continues to increase by ~ 1 million persons per decade and this trend is forecast to continue through 2050. While land use decisions are mostly made at local levels of government, land use change affects most outcomes in the Bay Agreement and information about the environmental effects of change can inform planning decisions to minimize adverse impacts. Land conservation and land use planning remain the principal means for accommodating growth while minimizing rates of land conversion and maintaining the ecosystem and social services provided by natural landscapes and open space.

Value added contribution of the CBP Partnership:

The CBP Partners have the need, knowledge, and resources to monitor land use/land cover change consistently at high spatial, temporal, and categorical resolution; forecast future changes in land use, and to assess the impacts of land use change to the Bay and its watershed. When communicated strategically to local decisionmakers, this information can inform better land use decisions that minimize the conversion of valued landscapes to development.

Local land use is typically mapped by counties and varies from county to county. Only Maryland has a consistent state-wide land use map. Spatially, temporally, and categorically consistent land use and land cover maps watershed-wide are needed for calibrating the Phase 7 Watershed Model, accounting for pollution sources in CAST, assessing rates of land conversion to development, and forecasting future land use change. High-resolution (1-meter cells) land use and land cover mapping is needed to improve the accuracy and transparency of models, inform the implementation of restoration and conservation

actions, and to support several other outcomes, such as forest buffers and tree canopy. Unlike most states and counties, the CBP Partners have the needs and resources to support long-term consistent mapping and monitoring of high-resolution land use and land cover conditions and change.

Recommendations:

- Replace the current outcome with a **Land Use Decision Support Outcome: Develop and disseminate locally-relevant and actionable information to organizations involved in the land use planning process on past, present, and future landscape conditions and the potential environmental consequences of landscape change.**
- Reconstitute the Land Use Workgroup as a community of practice for land use planning in the watershed and charge them with implementing the revised outcome.
- Consider moving this outcome under a new Conservation GIT or reconstituted Watershed Health GIT that would include outcomes and workgroups related to protected lands, watershed health, stream health, forestry, and local leadership.

Potential Outputs and Strategies:

- Develop actionable land use, land use change, and terrain information to inform restoration, conservation, and land use planning decisions with both short-term (5-year) and long-term (20-year) SMarT (Specific, Measurable, and Timebound) outputs and indicators. Metrics could include the number of use cases of high-resolution land use data to planning and conservation related issues (which are already being tracked as part of EPA's Cooperative Agreement with the Chesapeake Conservancy).
- Implement the new [CBP Land Use Strategy](#) to produce and communicate science, data, and information use cases relevant to local land use planning and conservation decisions. Such data could include information on protecting and connecting open spaces, infill and redevelopment, land conversion, and the impacts of land conversion to water quality, stream and fish health, flood risk, ecosystem services, and other local community concerns.
- Formally integrate land use mapping, monitoring, and derived metrics into the management strategies of relevant outcomes: Local Leadership, Protected Lands, Public Access, Wetlands, Stream Health, Brook Trout, Forest Buffers, Tree Canopy, Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring, and Monitoring & Assessment.
- Work with the Local Leadership Workgroup, Local Government Advisory Committee, and existing state networks to disseminate actionable land use and ecosystem service information and to solicit feedback on related issues important to local officials.