

Monitoring Meeting

Wednesday, April 2nd, 2025

9:00AM – 10:00AM

This meeting was recorded for internal use only to assure the accuracy of meeting notes.

Participants:

Matt Stover (MDE), Allison Welch (CRC), Breck Sullivan (USGS), Claire Buchanan (ICPRB), Elgin Perry, Emily Young (ICPRB), Gabriel Duran (CRC), Kaylyn Gootman (EPA), Guido Yactayo (MDE), Jeremy Hanson (CRC), Ashley Hullinger (PA DEP), Jerry Frank (UMCES), KC Filippino (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission), Caroline Kleis (CRC), Marjy Friedrichs (VIMS), Jessica Marinsen (EPA), Melinda Culter (MDE), Joseph Morina (VA DEQ), Greg Noe (USGS), Efeturi Oghenekaro (DOEE), George Onyullo (DOEE), Peter Tango (USGS), Qian Zhang (UMCES), Amanda Shaver (VA DEQ), Tyler Trostle (PA DEP), Tyler Shenk (SRBC), Meighan Wisswell (VA DEQ), Mike Mallonee (ICPRB).

Action Items

- ✓ STAR will continue to ask the group for their feedback of draft logic models and outcome language. That information will be emailed out.

MINUTES

9:00 AM Welcome & Announcements

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting. He let the participants know that the Monitoring Team is usually an internal Bay Program meeting, but it is occasionally opened to a larger group to help work out Beyond 2025 updates. He also encouraged participants to look at the upcoming events and deadlines at the bottom of the agenda (and minutes).

Announcements:

- Peter gave a shout out to Breck Sullivan for earning an EPA bronze medal for her work on the team for Beyond 2025 phase 1.
- He also mentioned that the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation meeting is in November and the abstracts for sessions are due April 28th.
- Lastly, Peter congratulated a team from the Bay Program for winning the most cited paper from the Journal of American Water Research Association. The paper was titled Water Quality Impacts of Climate Change, Land Use, and Population Growth in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the team was Gopal

Bhatt, Lewis Linker, Isabella Bertani, Richard Tian, Jessica Rigelman, Kyle Hinson, and Peter Claggett.

9:10 AM Management Board (MB) and Principal Staff Committee (PSC) Meetings

Recap – Breck Sullivan (USGS)

- *Overview of the Management Board (MB) and Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) conversations regarding the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring (WQSAM) Outcome and the outcome review process.*
- *A new deadline was announced at the MB meeting. On April 25th, the revised outcome language will be due to the MB.*

Summary: Breck and the team would like to spend this meeting talking about how the group would like to update the outcome language. To provide some background information, she went over the confirmations from the MB and PSC meetings on March 27th and 28th.

Firstly, the team got consensus to update the WQSAM outcome. For the 31 outcomes, MB reached consensus to update 13, reclassify 3, remove 2, consolidate 2, replace 1, and need more follow up on 10.

At the MB meeting, they also discussed the definitions of outcomes and outputs. Currently, a lot of the outcomes are outputs and some are even activities. [ERG did an evaluation of the outcomes](#) to see if they are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). In this evaluation, the WQSAM outcome did not meet any of these criteria.

The overall consideration of what an outcome is versus an output will be made at the MB meeting on April 10th. Getting feedback and beginning to draft outcome language, even if it may not be exactly what the MB is looking for, will be important because there will be supplemental materials besides the outcome language.

The following definitions are from the guidance of the MB but have not been confirmed.

- **Outcome:** the change in state we aim to influence or the future state we aspire to reach as a consequence of our actions and their outputs. Long-term benefits and results.
- **Output:** The more direct products or actions we plan for and take as partners. Shorter-term steps and results. SMART.

For the structure of the agreement, the MB is considering three options (they have not decided which one yet). The options are as follows:

Option A:

- Agreement – all high-level Outcomes
- Logic & Action/Work plans – associated Outputs & Activities

Option B:

- Agreement – Outcome/Output “sandwiches”
- Logic & Action/Work plans – activities

Option C:

- Agreement – Outcome
- Separate Partnership Document – Outputs (elevated to a higher standing and have public emphasis)
- Logic & Action/Work plans – Activities

Breck wanted to mention that while not everything can make it into the outcome language, the important work and information can be emphasized in the outputs and activities through a logic model and work plan.

Q: Amanda Shaver: Will the guidance on how the agreement will be structured be decided on April 10th?

- **A:** Breck Sullivan: I don’t know if this will be confirmed by April 10th. We should have guidance on this by May 7th and 8th, but they are looking for feedback. If you prefer one of these, that is information we can pass along.

Q: Kaylyn: Maybe we can discuss this and possibly draft all three options?

- **A:** Breck Sullivan: I agree. We should make examples of all three. We should try to fit in what we can, but when we can’t, we should emphasize it in the following documents.

Q: Melinda Cutler: How would option B look? Would outcomes and outputs be merged together?

- **A:** Breck: I am assuming they would base it off the current agreement, where the outcome and outputs are combined in sentences. It was mentioned at the MB meeting to have bullets as outputs, but we didn’t get a clear answer. For

example, instead of having two separate sentences for outcome and outputs, they would be put together.

- Melinda: So, are all the options different ways to display the same information? Are there different weights depending on what document they are put in? Is that the reason for this discussion?
- Breck: Yes! The weight and meaning of being an outcome and being in the agreement has been talked about a lot, especially with resources and time commitments.
- Peter: Yeah, we should probably draft it in three different ways because we don't know what the MB is going to decide. Based on these different examples, we could be changing expectations, priorities, and how the work is being done.
- Kaylyn: These options are meant to help streamline by clarifying the organization of the agreement and making it easier to understand.

Amanda Shaver: I strongly support B and seeing the outcome and outputs in the agreement to be transparent on the work that is being done. It would be my preference that the outputs be bullet points underneath the outcome. I think that it would be smart to draft all three options. The outcome and outputs need to be clear to the public.

Q from chat: George Onyullo: Does order of the options signify MB's preference?

- **A:** Kaylyn: No, we don't know how the MB is feeling right now.

Peter: If you have another idea for how this could be presented, Anna Killius and the MB have been willing to hear those other ideas.

Amanda: I think it should be clearly defined as the outcome and outputs. I don't think they should be meshed together and perceived as the outcome.

- Breck: I like that too. If anything needs to be changed, it allows the outcome language to live on and the outputs to be changed more easily.
- Kaylyn: I think there would be a template or example to keep them short while still representing the outcomes and outputs. Then, the details and work would be in the work plan or supplemental material.

9:30 AM **Continued Discussion of WQSAM Outcome Updates and Homework Review** – Breck Sullivan (USGS)

- *Partners will have the chance to share their thoughts and ideas for the WQSAM logic model and revised outcome language. Breck will share some of the feedback received via email.*

- *Continued discussion around the updated outcome language, outputs, and logic model for the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring (WQSAM) Outcome.*

Summary: Next, Breck wants to look at the example logic models that have been produced, go over feedback, and visualize how parts of each model could be incorporated into the outcomes and outputs examples from the MB.

Breck reviewed the current outcome language, emphasizing how it is broken up into two pieces. Those being the capacity to monitor and using the monitoring results. The example already provides some outputs and activities.

Comment from chat: Claire Buchanan: The water quality "goal" in the agreement seems to be the Outcome the WQSAM is striving for, and the current "outcome" is more of an output. GOAL: Reduce pollutants to achieve the water quality necessary to support the aquatic living resources of the Bay and its tributaries and protect human health.

- **Response:** Breck: Yes! We see that too. We have been tackling this because the literature on logic models says the outcome should be the change you want to see, but in the CBP those are our goals. Do we base the outcomes on the literature or the Chesapeake Bay Program?
- **Response from chat:** Peter: Yes! Nothing in the existing agreement explicitly states that ecosystem accountability for bay water quality. I.e., the outputs.

Breck presented VA DEQ's logic model as follows:

VA DEQ's Example Logic Model:

- **Outcome:** Evaluate the ability of current water quality monitoring networks to characterize living resource habitats within the Bay and its tidal tributaries. Support jurisdictional partners who report on the attainment of applicable Bay DO criteria, by collaborating on development of consistent assessment methodologies that use all available data by 2030 and in every even numbered year after.
- **Outputs:** Establish a partnership-agreed-upon approach to assessing all Bay DO criteria by 2028 for reporting by 2030. Evaluate and make recommendations to ensure current water quality monitoring networks are fully able to characterize all living resource habitats of the Bay and tributaries by 2028.
- **Activities:** Re-evaluate temporal, spatial, and parametric coverage of monitoring networks every 5 years to determine if needs are met for assessment of applicable Bay criteria. Report trends in water quality data every 3 years.

Discussion on VA DEQ's Example Logic Model

Amanda Shaver (VA DEQ): I can describe the approach. From our perspective, it seems like the goal is providing the ability for us to monitor the ecosystem response. I think attainment and monitoring is hard because those are outputs and activities but it's important to do these to show the public the status of our ecosystems.

- Breck: I agree. Ours is hard to write. How do we write an outcome when the goal is written like an outcome? I appreciate incorporating the ideas for time bound.

Q: Kaylyn: What is the thought behind every even number year after 2030? Why the shift from annual reporting to every three years?

- **A:** Amanda: The Clean Water Act requires us to report through integrated reporting in every even numbered year. 2030 was the first goal and then making sure we are able to generate a report every two years after. For trends, to me an annual report isn't meaningful. We do it every six years. To split up the difference between those two standards, we went with every three years.
- Kaylyn: For our outcome, we have the tidal and non-tidal aspect. The Non-Tidal Network agreed that the river input monitoring stations are annual updates, and the rest of the network is updated every other year. It's good to hear about what you have to do for the Clean Water Act. Does the network evaluation piece belong in an output level, or should that be an activity? That ties nicely to the current language of "continually improving."

Q: Breck: We have to balance making sure it's working in collaboration with the integrated reports that the states have to do and that the Chesapeake Bay Program is asked to report progress annually as part of the strategy review system. If we have to do that, is there a way we can make sure the collaboration is more timely? How could we help you, the states, and not be a burden on you, while we're doing it annually in-house?

- Amanda: Can you explain the strategic plan more?
- Breck: Our strategy review system is our adaptive management. We are sharing with the MB and then ultimately the public on the progress of our outcomes. Currently it is annual but that may change.
- **A:** Amanda: For the trends, our state law requires it, but I don't think it is in the Clean Water Act that we report on it through the integrated report process. We have gotten public comment that it is hard to decipher what is happening between the Bay Program, USGS, and our trend data, since they tend to be

different. Maybe we could work towards a consistent or complementary approach. I don't know if we find it a burden to report every year, but it may not be as clear to the public if we are having multiple sources attempting to say the same thing.

- Mike: I don't think it would be a burden on them because we have the data every year anyway. They are already providing everything we need to do that.
- Peter: I think what we are talking about is more communications related. We have the Bay Barometer and Chesapeake Progress which are created and updated annually. Maybe we should talk to the Strategic Engagement Team because they are helping with the public facing aspect.
- Kaylyn: I know every jurisdiction is different, but maybe as you are approaching your integrated report we can get together and talk about what you need from us and how it can be best packaged. We want to be supportive of what you have to do.
- Peter: We can also emphasize the release of the data every even number year and try our best to raise the importance of the information that is coming out then. I'd like to talk to our communications folks about that.
- Matt: I think there is value in aligning the different assessments. I agree with Amanda too that I don't see much value added in reporting trends yearly. Trends and integrated reports (IRs) are two different things, although the integrated report includes a piece on trends. We would like to include the trends from the Bay Program in there. There may be some efficiencies gained from every other year so the states can include the trends assessment in the IRs, while also including the attainment assessments. That's why we have talked to the Bay Program about getting the stoplight reports on July 1 of the year preceding our integrated report. I know in the past the Bay Program communications office was holding those assessments back from the states. To Breck's original question, it would make it easier for the states to not hold those back for some press release since we have the regulatory deadlines and we're usually not releasing them until the following January.

Q: Kaylyn: Is your every other year the same as Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, DC, etc.?

- Matt: Yes. It's April 1st of every even numbered year. Each state works at a different pace in terms of when they like to get each step done. We have to have a full final draft by November of the year before because we have a public comment period and have to submit it to EPA.

Q: Peter: There is a delay for data deliverables from when they are measured from the Bay. Is that delay an issue? With each type of sample, there are different timelines. Some data might be right up to date, while others might be a year behind. Is that part of the challenge with aligning or is it something else?

- **A:** Matt: I think it's a little of both. What we're asking for July 1st will be an assessment of a three-year period of 2021-2023. The timeline of when that work is being done is later which makes it tough for us to get the IR out in time. We should probably bring this up in the CAP WG. Virginia and Maryland haven't been aligning the attainment assessments for our IRs for several cycles. I think it is because Virginia will often wait for the additional year of data. For the 2026 integrated report, MD will report on 2021 to 2023, while VA will report on 2022 to 2024. I would love to see us get onto the same page and align attainment assessments and trend assessments. Also, by not reporting on trends yearly, there may be a chance to put resources in other places.
- Peter: Folks have requested short term trends and there have been multiple adjustments over the years in recognition of the fact that long term trends may not fluctuate much. The short-term trends are showing something closer to management. Point taken. We are trying to accommodate your perspective and the perspective of managers.
- Matt: I do realize that at the Bay Program there may be a need to report yearly to the public to stay relevant. I understand that there may be reasons to do this on an annual basis.

Breck: Thank you for this discussion. We didn't have time to go through all of the examples today. STAR leadership is getting together to consider how to try to get more input. We are thinking about doing a survey or meeting again to get more feedback. We are looking at those different possibilities for our outcome language and logic models. We are keeping track of everything that is being emailed and will be sending out more information on how to get your feedback incorporated.

10:00 AM Adjorn

Other Notes:

Upcoming Management Board (MB) Meetings and Important Dates

April 10th – MB Meeting: “Approve final Outcome Disposition and novel Outcomes; begin updates to revise Outcome language.”

April 25th – Revised Outcome Language due to the Management Board