



HEALTHY WATERSHEDS OUTCOME JUNE 2024 QUARTERLY PROGRESS MEETING

LOOKING BACK: LEARNING FROM THE LAST TWO YEARS

Celebrate Our Accomplishments & Best Practices

1. Since your last QPM, what key successes would you like to highlight to the Management Board? **NOTE:**

The high-resolution land use/land cover data for 2013/14 and 2017/18, Maryland Healthy Watersheds Assessment, [Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment \(CHWA\) 2.0](#), and a draft Healthy Watersheds Indicator were developed over the past two years. The CHWA 2.0 and Indicator were developed using high-resolution land use and land use change data. These products were showcased at the Maryland Water Monitoring Council Annual Workshop and via a webinar delivered to [Mid-Atlantic Planning Collaboration](#).

2. Are we, as a partnership, making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve this outcome? Would you define our outlook as on course, off course, uncertain, or completed? Upon what basis are you forecasting this outlook?

The Healthy Watersheds outcome is off-course because streams within State-Identified Healthy Watersheds (SIHWs) are not routinely monitored and because the dates of land protection efforts are not consistently recorded making it impossible to know whether protected lands in healthy watersheds have recently increased. In partial response to the deficit in stream monitoring resources, the HWGIT developed CHWA 2.0 to infer the condition of watersheds based on landscape conditions which we are monitoring. For example, increases in impervious surfaces are indicative of potential declines in watershed and stream health and have been incorporated into the draft Healthy Watersheds Outcome Indicator. The proposed indicator represents changes in the percent and acres of impervious surfaces and protected natural lands from 2013/14 to 2017/18. Unfortunately, we cannot track protected land change over time, and therefore the current indicator is incomplete and unbalanced.

3. How would you summarize your recent progress toward achieving your outcome (since your last QPM)? Would you characterize this progress as an increase, decrease, no change, or completed?

Despite our achievements, they reflect achievements in outputs, not the outcome. We do not have the data needed to ascertain progress towards achieving the Healthy Watersheds outcome.

Lessons Learned

4. If our outlook is off course, what has been the most critical influencing factor or gap that needs to be addressed to accelerate progress?

- Monitoring land protection efforts with information about their level of protection, location, extent, and date of protection.
- Capacity to monitor stream conditions, protect land, and strengthen land use regulations and permit conditions to better manage land conversion within SIHWs.
- Potential lack of public awareness about the existence and significance of SIHWs.
- Lack of coordination between CBP stream health, protected lands, and healthy watersheds outcomes.
- Lack of funding directed towards land protection efforts within SIHWs.

5. Consider and reflect on the actions you intended to take during the past cycle. For action that have not begun, or which have encountered a serious barrier, what is preventing us from taking action? Are these actions still needed?

The biggest barriers to the healthy watershed outcome's success include a lack of capacity to fulfill actions within our work plan, a lack of focus on healthy watersheds protection by the jurisdictions, a lack of integration of relevant outcomes within the healthy watershed strategy, and the restricted focus on SIHWs (vs all sub-watersheds throughout the Bay Basin).

6. What have we learned over the past two years that we'll need to consider in the coming two years?

The role of the HWGIT in the CBP needs to be reconsidered. It currently has no workgroups under it but is dependent on the successes of the Protected Lands, Land Use, and Stream Health workgroups. Both land use outcomes, LUMM and LUOE, fall under the purview of the HWGIT but the expertise of its members lies in water quality regulation and permitting. More importantly, however, there is zero accountability associated with this outcome because stream health and land protection within healthy watersheds are not monitored.

ASSESSING OUR EFFORTS AND GAPS

Factors

7. Summarize here any newly identified influencing factors, and why they were added to your Management Strategy. If any factors have been deleted, are they the result of our actions, and what have we learned as a result?

Previously identified gaps remain and have not been resolved. The CHWA 2.0 tool was an attempt to monitor stream condition by proxy (land use change), but with no commitment from the jurisdictions to use this tool to inform their decisions and the overall lack of committed actions to maintain healthy watersheds, progress on this outcome is unknown (at best) or failing (at worst).

8. Prioritize and summarize here the factors best tackled as a Partnership (or GIT/workgroup), that have the greatest impact to achieve our outcome.

Data, Tools and Monitoring:

- Provide consistent and integrated watershed-wide characterization and monitoring of stream and watershed health and land conservation efforts.
- Provide science, data, and tools to enable targeting and prioritization of land conservation and stream restoration actions at multiple scales.

Planning:

- Provide science, data, models, and tools to enable green infrastructure planning (e.g., forests, farms, and open space) to protect watershed health at multiple scales.

Local Engagement and Capacity:

- Create and support a network of networks enabling two-way communication with local and NGO implementers to share needs, information, and data and to improve the functionality and utility of tools.

Watershed Actions:

- Integrate land conservation, management, and stewardship more explicitly into the goals of the Bay Program
- Expand public access to waters and natural lands through the creation, stewardship and improvement of more parks and trail networks.

Measure Watershed Outcomes:

- Quantify ecosystem services and integrate them into restoration and conservation decision processes.

Gaps

9. For those high priority factors summarized above, what is getting in the way of addressing them or what gaps continue to exist despite the current efforts to address those factors?

Addressing (and achieving) the high priority actions will require implementation of several Beyond 2025 recommendations including combining outcomes and streamlining and simplifying the CBP structure.

FOCUSING ON THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Actions And Needed Support

10. Describe any scientific, environmental, fiscal, or policy-related developments that have already or may influence your work over the next two years.

Development of the high-resolution land use/land cover data have enabled CBP Partners to track changes on the landscape every 4-5 years at a scale relevant to local land use planning and land conservation decisions.

11. Based on these developments and the learning discussed in the previous sections, summarize any new actions you are planning to address these gaps over the next two years.

- Revise the scope of the healthy watersheds outcome to include all healthy streams and their watersheds in the Bay basin (not just State-Identified Healthy Watersheds).
- Align stream and watershed health outcomes, data, science, policies, and management.
- Align CBP support activities for local land use planning and land conservation efforts.
- Track land protection over time.
- Implement the Land Use Workgroup's new Land Use Strategy.

12. Have you identified new needs, or have previously unmet needs, that are beyond the ability of your group to meet and, therefore, you need the assistance of the Management Board to achieve?

See answer as #11. The HWGIT can take measures towards addressing those recommendations but is not empowered nor have the resources to do so independently.

13. What steps are you continuing, or can you take, to ensure your actions and work will be equitably distributed and focused in geographic areas and communities that have been underserved in the past?

Expand scope of the outcome to include all sub-watersheds in the Bay basin.