



**Management Board
Program Update
February 8, 2023**

CBPO Calendar

February 6	New Indicator Release for Chesapeake Webinar WQGIT
February 12	Bay Oxygen Research Group Meeting
February 15	CRWG Meeting
February 16	Stream Health Workgroup Meeting
February 20	Wetlands Workgroup Meeting
February 21	Nontidal Network (NTN) Workgroup Meeting
February 22	STAR Meeting
February 22-23	Stakeholders Advisory Committee
February 26	WQGIT Meeting
February 28	Integrated Trends Analysis Team (ITAT) Meeting
March 12	Principals Staff Committee Meeting
March 14	Management Board Meeting, Quarterly Progress Review: People Cohort

General Updates

Beyond 2025 Steering Committee Meeting to Review Preliminary Set of Workgroup Recommendations

The Beyond 2025 Steering Committee will convene for a two-day meeting on February 28 and 29 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania at the Susquehanna River Basin Commission. The purpose of the meeting is to share and refine preliminary recommendations that have been developed by five partnership workgroups (People, Climate, Clean Water, Healthy Watersheds, Shallow Waters), and to determine a clear path for delivering recommendations to the Executive Committee before 2025.

Contact: Doug Bell (bell.douglas@epa.gov)

2023 Bay Barometer Shows Promising Results

The Chesapeake Bay Program's annual report, the *Bay Barometer*, provides updates on 18 of the 2014 Watershed Agreement outcomes. Updated by the partnership in 2023, depicting the state of the estuary's blue crabs, toxic contamination levels, stream health and more. Of the 18 outcomes updated in 2023, several are on track to achieve their targets. Large-scale oyster reef restoration is on track to be completed in 11 tributaries by 2025, with reef construction already finished in eight rivers. At the end of 2022, 1.64 million acres of land has been permanently protected from development, marking an 82% achievement of the goal to protect an additional two million acres of land in the watershed by 2025. And in 2022, 11 new public access sites were added to the watershed, meeting 83% of the goal to add 300 new public access sites by 2025. An overview of all other outcomes updated in 2023 can be found in this year's [Bay Barometer](#), while information on each outcome of the *Watershed Agreement* can be accessed when it is updated on ChesapeakeProgress.com.

NFWF Releases 2024 Chesapeake WILD RFP

This week the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), released its 2024 RFP for Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape

Defense (WILD) Grants Program. Through this RFP NFWF is soliciting proposals for projects that enhance conservation, stewardship, and enhancements of fish and wildlife habitats and related conservation values in the Bay watershed. Grants for planning/technical assistance and implementation are both available and will range from \$75,000 - \$750,000. All proposals must be submitted no later than April 10, 2024. In 2024, NFWF estimates awarding up to \$8.5M in Chesapeake WILD Grants, contingent on available funding. Major funding is provided by FWS, along with important contributions by Altria Group, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. Contact: Matt Robinson (robinson.matthew@epa.gov)

New Bay TMDL Indicator

The Chesapeake Bay Program held a webinar on **Tuesday, February 6** to highlight a new indicator that demonstrates progress toward meeting the Clean Water goals of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. The Bay TMDL indicator combines monitored and modeled data to estimate the progress of [nitrogen](#) and [phosphorus](#) pollution reductions in response to implemented best management practices. Contact: Doug Bell (bell.douglas@epa.gov)

New Tracking Tool Expands Data Collection

A new tool released by the Chesapeake Bay Program last year gives us a better understanding of the amount of wetlands gained across the watershed as well as other key indicators. The new tool, Habitat Tracker, is a central repository of data from multiple agencies and partners that allows a streamlined approach to generate reports needed for ecosystem services tracking and assessments. The Tracking System also facilitates evaluating project implementation goals for trend and targeting analyses. For wetlands, the Habitat Tracker collects data for wetlands that are created, restored and enhanced. Previously, wetlands data were collected through the National Environmental Information Exchange Network, but only for those that were created or restored for the purposes of meeting water quality goals. For more information: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/wetlands-see-a-small-but-mighty-increase-across-the-chesapeake-watershed>

CBP Publishes Paper on an Important Shallow Water Research Gap

The CBPO published a paper describing the important role that benthic algae has in shallow estuary waters. The paper was titled *Simulation of Benthic Microalgae Impacts on Water Quality in Shallow Water Systems, Corsica River, Chesapeake Bay* and was authored by Richard Tian and others. Shallow water processes in the Chesapeake are becoming a current focus area of the CBP. The paper was motivated by the need for simulating shallow water processes and fills a key gap in understanding the impact that benthic algae have on water quality in shallow waters. Unlike phytoplankton, which are in the water column, benthic algae live in Chesapeake sediments. In shallow waters where light is able to penetrate to the bottom, benthic algae thrive and compete for nutrients with phytoplankton. The paper provides valuable insights into 1) the complex dynamics of shallow water ecosystems, 2) the pivotal role of benthic microalgae in nutrient processing, and 3) implications for the management of shallow water systems.

For more information: Lew Linker, 443-875-8070, linker.lewis@epa.gov

CBPO Article on Better Planning for BMP Implementation Accepted

The CBPO has a recent article accepted for publication titled *Large Scale Multi-Objective Optimization for Watershed Planning and Assessment* which has been authored by Gregorio Toscano and others. The article was accepted by IEEE, a highly regarded collection of journals that the CBPO, through another article authored by Gregorio, won Paper of the Year recently. The article describes a process that can

identify BMPs that best minimize cost and maximize nutrient removal. The optimization process will be used with the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST) which is widely used for implementation planning in the CBP. Webinars are being planned this quarter for the CBP partnership that will describe how to apply this new tool. For a copy of the article, please contact Lew Linker.

Contact: Lew Linker, 443-875-8070

MD DNR Oyster Survey Finds “Once-in-a-Generation” Widespread Spat Fall

On January 9, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources announced that its annual fall oyster survey recorded its highest juvenile oyster, or “spat”, count in a generation. The annual survey measures oyster reproductive success and the potential for population growth. This announcement complements the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership’s success at exceeding its 2025 oyster restoration goals which calls for restoration of 10 tributaries throughout the bay.

For more information: Matt Robinson, robinson.matthew@epa.gov

Advisory Committee updates

Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC)

The Stakeholders’ Advisory Committee held their final 2023 meeting in December at Havre de Grace, MD. The members set their annual priorities which will drive their quarterly meeting themes for 2024 as they discuss and develop their annual recommendations. 2024 Priorities include: (1) engagement in the Beyond 2025 work and a deeper dive into accountability for the Bay TMDL; (2) a broad understanding of the policies and incentives across the watershed for key outcomes with a focus on forest cover and land conservation aiming an to identify gaps and opportunities; (3) continued engagement on equitable access to grants and capacity building; (4) intentional learning and development of internal Committee guiding principles that advance inclusivity and belonging so the members become better equipped to work together across difference.

The next Stakeholders’ Committee meeting will be on February 22-23, 2024 in Richmond, VA. The Water Quality Subcommittee will host the theme of Beyond 2025 and TMDL accountability. The Stakeholders’ Committee will welcome two new members at their February meeting: Sara Ramotnik, Senior Membership and Program Coordinator, Choose Clean Water Coalition (MD) and Bill Noftsinger, Senior Investment Manager, Alpha Omega Wealth Management (VA)

There are 2 PA gubernatorial vacancies.

The Stakeholders’ Committee officers are Chair- Chuck Herrick (DC) and Vice-Chair Donna Harris-Aikens (VA).

To be added to Stakeholders’ Committee Interested Parties List, please contact: Alex

LoCurto alocurto@allianceforthebay.org For program questions, contact Jess

Blackburn jblackburn@allianceforthebay.org

Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)

The purpose of the LGAC is to advise the Executive Council on how to effectively implement projects and engage the support of local governments to achieve the goals of the Bay Agreement.

LGAC’s recent quarterly meetings:

- [September 28-29, 2024 in Leola, PA](#). Members provided feedback on priorities including accounting for ecosystem services, PFAS, DoD external partnerships, managing the challenge of extensive federal funding opportunities, and the role of local governments after 2025.
- [December 1-2, 2023 in Washington DC](#). As part of the meeting, LGAC convened a Local Government Forum on Building Capacity for Collaboration. Members also heard updates from the Chesapeake Bay Program and hosted a federal panel featuring a new EPA Municipal Ombudsman.

LGAC's upcoming quarterly meeting will be on [March 21 - 22, 2024 in Luray, VA](#). Members will discuss LGAC's structure, function and effectiveness and provide preliminary feedback on the Beyond 2025 effort. LGAC's Delaware representative, Don Phillips, is a member of the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee.

LGAC is pleased to welcome two new members: Takoma Park (Maryland) Councilmember Cindy Dyballa and York County (Virginia) Supervisor Sheila Noll. LGAC still seeks a New York representative.

If there are MB asks or requests to get LGAC feedback during future quarterly meetings, please contact the LGAC Coordinator, Laura Cattell Noll at lnoll@allianceforthebay.org. To be added to the Interested Parties list, please contact LGAC Staffer, Kayli Ottomaneli at lgac@allianceforthebay.org.

Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

For any inquiries, or to be added to STAC's Interested Parties list, contact STAC Coordinator, Meg Cole (colem@chesapeake.org)

Visit the STAC website at www.chesapeake.org/stac

STAC Welcomes New Mayoral Appointee, Dr. Amirreza (Amir) Sharifi (DOEE)

Dr. Amir Sharifi is an environmental protection specialist with a background in TMDLs, water quality standards, and water quality modeling. Sharifi is a core member of DOEE's TMDL team, supporting Anacostia Toxics TMDL and DC Bacteria TMDLs. STAC welcomes Sharifi as the second Mayoral appointee, serving alongside Dr. Efeturi Oghenekaro (DOEE).

Upcoming STAC 2024 Quarterly Meetings

The upcoming STAC March Quarterly Meeting will be held virtually on March 5th and 6th. The second day will center on outputs from the Beyond2025 Symposium in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. If you are interested in attending either in-person or virtually, you can find more information on the [meeting webpage](#) or reach out to STAC Coordinator, Meg Cole (colem@chesapeake.org).

Remaining 2024 STAC quarterly meeting dates are the following: June 4-5th, September 10-11th, and December 3-4th. June and September meetings will be held in-person, locations TBA.

STAC-Sponsored Workshops

The FY23 STAC-sponsored workshop, [CBP Climate Change Modeling III: Post-2025 decisions](#), will convene in-person on Tuesday-Thursday, May 7-9, 2024 at the Virginia Tech Executive Briefing Center in Arlington, Virginia. The goals of this effort are to produce recommendations for (1) new or refined modeling techniques and methods to assess climate change, (2) modeling experiment design that will assess the impact of climate change on watershed loads and estuarine processes, and (3) the

development of protocol to determine load reductions needed to maintain water quality standards. Workshop participants include CBP managers and modelers, and outside experts in climate change, estuarine, and watershed sciences. This activity follows two prior STAC-led climate modeling workshops ([Johnson et al. 2016](#) and [Shenk et al. 2021](#)), both which resulted in findings and recommendations that were science-based, timely, and realistic.

STAC is accepting proposals for STAC-sponsored workshops for the first round of funding for the STAC fiscal year 2024 budget cycle (beginning June 1, 2024). Workshops are organized to gather critically needed scientific and/or technical information related to protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Workshops funded through this RFP must be convened by May 31, 2025. If you have any questions, please reach out to STAC Coordinator Meg Cole (colem@chesapeake.org). Proposals are due by COB February 5th, 2024. The Request for Workshop Proposals can be [viewed here](#).

Information regarding future workshops, including agendas, presentations, and reports (as they become available) can be found on the STAC [workshop homepage](#).

STAC Reports

STAC recently released the following reports:

1. *Using Local Monitoring Results to Inform the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Model* (FY22)
2. *Best Management Practices to Minimize Impacts of Solar Farms on Landscape Hydrology and Water Quality Lens* (FY22)
3. *Using Ecosystem Services to Increase Progress Toward, and Quantify the Benefits of, Multiple CBP Outcomes* (FY22)

Upcoming Reports:

STAC is working to finalize the following reports. Information regarding workshops held prior to January 2018 can be found on the [STAC publication page](#). STAC Staff and the Executive Board are working with leads of reports from prior to FY2018 to potentially produce fact sheets or other products that would quicken the process of getting recommendations out to the Partnership.

Reports in bold are undergoing final review stages and will be released within the next quarter.

1. **Using Carbon to Achieve Chesapeake Bay (and Watershed) Water Quality Goals and Climate Resiliency: The Science, Gaps, Implementation Activities and Opportunities** (FY22): [Workshop webpage](#)
2. **The State of the Science and Practice of Stream Restoration in the Chesapeake: Lessons Learned to Inform Better Implementation, Assessment and Outcomes** (FY22): [Workshop webpage](#)
3. **Evaluating an Improved Systems Approach to Crediting: Consideration of Wetland Ecosystem Services** (FY21): [Workshop webpage](#)
4. **Advancing Monitoring Approaches to Enhance Tidal Chesapeake Bay Habitat Assessment including Water Quality Standards for Chesapeake Bay Dissolved Oxygen, Water Clarity/SAV and Chlorophyll a Criteria** (FY21): [Workshop webpage](#)
5. *Improving Modeling and Mitigation Strategies for Poultry Ammonia Emissions Across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed* (FY21): [Final Workshop Session webpage](#)

Several workshop steering committees are in the process of drafting activity reports and other workshop outcomes that will be distributed to the Partnership over the next few months. More information on recent workshop reports can be found on the [STAC past workshop webpage](#).

Goal Implementation Team, STAR and Communication Workgroup Updates

Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team (STAR)

The [January STAR meeting](#) continued STAR's focus over the previous few months on supporting the climate change component of the Beyond 2025 Small Group effort. The meeting began with a brief review of STAR priorities for 2024, but the rest of the meeting was organized around the theme of cross-cutting topics across Beyond 2025 Small Groups. The first presentation narrowed in on the [ecosystem service/environmental accounting efforts](#) being led by Maryland DNR to integrate the value of nature into decision making. The second presentation then zoomed out to the national scale to provide an overview of the [U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index](#). Following the presentations, there was a discussion to understand the climate considerations of other small groups and the main themes coming out of the Climate small group. The next STAR meeting is on February 22nd, 2024.

Modeling Workgroup - The Modeling Workgroup held its [quarterly review on January 9th and 10th](#), 2024. The January 2024 CBP Modeling Quarterly Review outlined the schedule and provided status updates on [the Phase 7 suite of models in development](#). The 11 presentations ranged from updates on the BMP optimization approaches, to discussions of crop yield calculations for estimating nutrient application and projecting future demand in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Decisions were made on applying the new wave-powered shoreline erosion recession rate Bay-wide and the temperature dependent algal growth rate curve for green algae. The next CBP Modeling Quarterly will be held in a hybrid format on April 2nd and 3rd, 2024.

Integrated Trends Analysis Team (ITAT) - The [January ITAT meeting](#) featured data release and preparation plans for the upcoming year and a presentation on new research. USGS provided an update on plans for releasing River Input Monitoring (RIM) and Nontidal Network (NTN) data releases. 2023 RIM data will be published in May 2024 and 2022 and 2023 NTN data will be published in September 2024. For the Bay trends data analysis products, the team discussed the schedule for when certain components of the analysis will be completed. The meeting also included a presentation from a researcher at Penn State on how deep learning approaches can provide insights on water quality in a changing climate. The next ITAT meeting will take place on February 28th, 2024.

The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) and its partners previously compiled tributary basin summaries for 12 major tributaries or tributary groups in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. In efforts to distribute the Tributary Summaries to interested parties, ITAT has presented information and examples on how to use the information to inform management decisions to multiple groups including the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), CBP Modeling Workgroup, Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee, and the Mid-Atlantic Planning Collaboration. If interested in having the Tributary Summaries presented at your jurisdictional or local meetings, please contact ITAT co-coordinators Breck Sullivan (bsullivan@chesapeakebay.net) and Kaylyn Gootman (gootman.kaylyn@epa.gov).

Data Integrity Workgroup - The Data Integrity Workgroup held a lab specific meeting in [October 2023](#). Participants shared sampling and laboratory updates and Alex Fries (UMCES) shared community science monitoring updates. Jerry Frank (CBL) shared that due to the funding for the blind audit program being interrupted and redirected, there won't be a fall round this time around. Jerry will send the first batch

out in January 2024 and the second in July 2024 with 2024's combined report going out at the end of the calendar year. Maryland Department of Health showed a video explaining their recent issue with Total Dissolved Phosphorous (TDP) data anomalies, and how they successfully resolved this issue. The group then had a thorough discussion on switching to new flow analyzers since the Lachat is being discontinued and most labs are switching to SEAL Analytical instruments. At the next meeting the group will follow up on this topic by discussing requirements for a sample comparison study when switching to a new instrument (how many samples should be required; specifically in the instance when most/all labs switch to the same instrument). Finally, Doug Moyer (USGS) and his team sought feedback on the order of preference for total nitrogen and phosphorous that are calculated based on individual components.

Bay Oxygen Research Group (BORG) - 4-D Water Quality Interpolator - The BORG Team continues to meet in a small working group monthly to discuss 4-D Interpolator developments and troubleshoot any challenges. Weston Slaughter, PhD student at the University of Maryland with [Dr. Sujay Kaushal's lab](#), has joined the group as an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Fellow, participating in efforts to better understand and predict dissolved oxygen dynamics in the Chesapeake Bay. The next full group BORG meeting will be on [February 12, 2024](#).

Nontidal Network (NTN) Workgroup - The **Nontidal Network (NTN) Team** of the Integrated Monitoring Network Workgroup met in [December 2023](#) and Jimmy Webber (USGS) shared the updated timeline for the release of River Input Monitoring (RIM) and Nontidal Network (NTN) loads and trends. Water Year 2023 RIM loads and trends will be released in May 2024, and Water Year 2022 and 2023 NTN loads and trends will be released together in September 2024. NTN trends are usually computed every other year and released in January, but two years will be computed this year to make up for the later than usual release date. The delay is due to the USGS team's efforts being focused on the reconstruction of the historical database. Additionally at the December meeting, Susquehanna River Basin Coalition (SRBC) shared their process for sharing the loads and trends that they compute. The group then discussed how best to coordinate release of SRBC and NTN loads and trends. SRBC computes NTN loads and trends annually rather than every other year. The next NTN meeting will be on [February 21, 2024](#).

Hypoxia Collaborative Team

The **Hypoxia Collaborative Team** met on [October 5, 2023](#). The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Program Office (NCBO) team described the challenges they were having due to not having back-up sensors yet. Once the back-up sensors arrive, maintenance of the hypoxia monitoring stations will be less challenging. Marjy Friedrichs (VIMS) shared how she is using the new vertical profiler oxygen data to improve the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Forecasting System (CBEFS). The group was polled for their opinions on the next locations to place the hypoxia buoys. The next meeting will be in Spring 2024.

Criteria Assessment Protocol (CAP) Workgroup

The [September 2023](#) CAP meeting included a discussion on the dissolved oxygen (DO) criterion variances for deep channel and deep water designated uses. Qian Zhang (UMCES) shared his work showing that using the revised variances has no impact on any results of the assessment or the attainment deficit indicator in any of the locations the revision was approved. There is no impact from the revised variances on the overall attainment indicator in all assessment periods. The decision was made that Qian and Richard Tian (UMCES) would include the DO variances in the indicator assessment starting with the 2020-2022 assessment. The group also discussed confidence intervals in the assessment. The next CAP meeting will be in early March 2024.

Status and Trends Workgroup (STWG)

The [STWG met on January 29th](#) to foster cross-outcome learning and discuss STWG plans for 2024. The meeting began with a presentation on the [Forage Status and Trends Report](#), which synthesized all

research findings and projects completed since 2014 in support of the Forage Outcome. This was followed by a presentation and discussion on the ongoing conversation to develop the Oyster outcome post 2025. The meeting wrapped up with an overview of the STWG plans and objectives for 2024. The full workgroup will next convene in the spring while individual teams continue to meet to work on new indicator development projects.

Climate Resiliency Workgroup - The Climate Resiliency Workgroup's [December 2023](#) meeting focused around sharing updates on current efforts that support the Climate Resiliency Adaptation outcome, hearing about the current Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group discussions, and brainstorming initial Goal Implementation Funding (GIT) funding ideas. Vamsi Sridharan (Tetra Tech) presented on a proposed project submitted to the NOAA Effects of Sea Level Rise Funding Opportunity. The project, titled "Oyster Reefs as Nature's Breakwater: Quantifying Climate-Resilient Adaptation Performance," will address a key knowledge gap identified by the CRWG in quantifying the resilience effectiveness of nature-based solutions. The CRWG workgroup chairs provided a letter of support for this project. Nicole Carlozo (MD DNR) provided an update on the GIT-Funded project, "Partnership-Building and Identification of Collaborative Tidal Marsh Adaptation." Breck Sullivan (USGS) and Bo Williams (EPA) gave an update on the Climate Small Group Talks that are taking place as a part of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Beyond 2025 Effort. CRWG members provided suggestions on additional climate topics and areas to prioritize. The meeting wrapped up with a discussion on potential GIT funding ideas.

The CRWG also supported the [Advancing Tidal Marsh Adaptation in the Chesapeake Workshop](#), which took place on January 19, 2024 and was attended by about 85 participants. This workshop was supported by GIT-funding and brought together regional partners from the two focus areas (Middle Peninsula, VA and Wicomico River, MD) to discuss implementation of marsh adaptation projects within these regions. Topics included barriers and challenges to implementation, learning about different types of marsh adaptation projects, and opportunities that exist for large-scale marsh adaptation in these regions. Currently, the project contractor (Skeo Inc.) is drafting a workshop report and next steps for this work are under development.

The next CRWG meeting will be [February 15](#) and will hear updates on current GIT-funded projects around the partnership that may be of interest to the workgroup, partnership feedback from workgroup members on a number of requests, including draft recommendations from the Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group, and a debrief on the GIT-funded Marsh Adaptation workshop.

Indicators Update -

In 2023, 18 outcomes with indicators were updated on [ChesapeakeProgress](#).

Since the January MB meeting, we updated the following indicators on ChesapeakeProgress:

- TMDL indicator (2021 data – Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome)
- Wetlands created and enhanced (2022 data – will inform the wetlands and black duck outcomes)

We do not anticipate any additional indicator updates to ChesapeakeProgress ahead of the March MB meeting.

Contact: Katheryn [Barnhart, barnhart.katheryn@epa.gov](mailto:barnhart.katheryn@epa.gov), and Doug Bell, bell.douglas@epa.gov.

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (GIT 1)

- *No updates this month.*

Habitat Goal Implementation Team (GIT 2)

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

- **STREAM HEALTH WORKGROUP MEETING:** The Stream Health Workgroup February Meeting will be on **Friday, 2/16 from 10:00-12:00 ET**. Additional information about this meeting can be found at [this link](#).
- **WETLANDS WORKGROUP MEETING – TIDAL:** The Wetlands Workgroup Meeting will be on **Tuesday, 2/20 from 10:00-12:00 ET**. Additional information on this meeting can be found at [this link](#).

Quarterly Progress Reviews – the Living Resources Cohort: The Brook Trout, Fish Passage, and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Workgroups are in the final stages of the most recent SRS cycle. During the December 14th Quarterly Progress Meeting ([link](#)), the Workgroup Chairs presented their Outcome’s findings and next steps to the Management Board. The SAV and Brook Trout workgroups made requests to the Management Board, and below are more details on these requests, the MB’s response, and next steps:

- **SAV Request:** *For the Management Board to endorse the necessity of establishing a Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Program and guide the CBP to take the necessary steps to do so. The purpose of this tier-3 monitoring effort would be not only monitor the impacts of climate change on the functional value of shallow water habitats throughout the Bay but also track the effectiveness of measures taken beyond 2025.*
 - **Management Board Response:** The MB supported the intention of the Habitat GIT to request a STAC Workshop on the Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Program in 2024. In the proposed workshop (if accepted by STAC), the MB recommended that the Habitat GIT further explore the scope and scale of the proposed Sentinel Program (avoiding redundancies), including determining if tidal or non-tidal monitoring will be conducted and identifying cross-GIT parameters to be monitored. This workshop will also suggest options/scenarios for funding. Additionally, the Habitat GIT will return to the MB to report out on findings of the STAC workshop. (Note: the report out would likely be at least nine months after the workshop.)
 - **SAV Next Steps:** A proposal for a STAC Workshop will be submitted in February.
- **Brook Trout Request:** *For the Management Board to direct the Bay Program to develop a cross-programmatic strategy that can be adopted by County, State, and Federal Agencies to develop agreements that promote brook trout habitat in priority counties that currently have stronghold or persistent Brook Trout patches.*
 - **Management Board Response:** The MB will identify at least one interested state who will convene the Brook Trout Workgroup co-chairs and partners in their jurisdiction (including brook trout, acid mine drainage, county and local interests) to collaborate on an approach for promoting restoration and conservation in Brook Trout strongholds or persistent Brook Trout patches. The lead jurisdiction and co-chairs will report back to the MB on the approach and any potential for replication throughout the watershed. Maryland, Pennsylvania agreed to take leadership positions for this effort.
- **NEXT STEPS:** Currently, the outcomes are working on finalizing their new 2024-2025 Workplans and updating their Management Strategies. These documents will be finalized and submitted to the SRS Team by 3/7/2024, after which the documents will be posted to the workgroup webpages.

WETLANDS WORKGROUP: The Wetlands Outcome Indicator was updated on [Chesapeake Progress](#). Between 2014 and 2022, 4,310 acres of wetlands were gained within in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and 60,666 acres of wetlands were enhanced. The press release can be found at [this link](#).

TIDAL WETLANDS PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE (PSC): The Habitat GIT will continue to support the efforts on Wetland Strategic Planning with the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). CBT created the tidal wetlands PSC, which consists of 42 members from jurisdictions with tidal wetland resources (MD, VA, DE, and DC) – as well as watershed-wide representation. *The purpose of this PSC is to work together to shape the Tidal Wetlands Strategic Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the goal is to have focused discussions that are action-oriented to move the Strategic Plan forward and stay on schedule.* To date, five PSC monthly meetings have been held. CBT contracted ERG to support the Trust and the CBP by facilitating a consensus-based strategic planning process aimed at large-scale coastal wetland restoration. ERG is gathering input from a variety of stakeholders and synthesize it into overall themes in a situation assessment report, which will incorporate a decision framework to inform wetland protection and restoration efforts and build out the tidal strategic plan. CBT also sub-awarded The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to design a large-scale tidal restoration project – *the Pocomoke Sound Climate Adaption Initiative Project*. This site met the requirements of the project partners for ecological uplift, marsh migration, coastal resiliency, habitat restoration and CBP goals and outcomes requested by EPA CBP, NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The *Pocomoke Sound Project* includes thousands of acres of publicly owned marshes (critical for juvenile fish habitat) and marsh migration corridors and the project also encapsulates three vulnerable communities in need of climate resiliency: Crisfield, MD, Pocomoke City, MD, and Saxis, VA. TNC submitted an application in November 2023 to the 2023 NOAA *Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience* Grant to request funding to ultimately construct the *Pocomoke Sound Project*.

FY2021 & FY2022 GIT FUNDING: The Chesapeake Bay Trust has facilitated the securement of contracts for the FY2022 and select FY2021 GIT Funding Proposals. Contractors were selected based on proposals received from the advertised scopes of work for the following projects. More information on the updated timelines of these Habitat GIT projects will be made available soon.

- **FY2021:** *“Understanding and Addressing the Impacts of Wetland Mowing to Facilitate Meeting the Chesapeake Bay Wetland Enhancement Goals”*; submitted on behalf of the Wetlands Outcome. (This project was funded in 2021 but did not receive bids on the SOW so it was readvertised with the 2022 projects.)
- **FY2022:** *“Mapping Non-tidal Wetlands in Areas with Outdated Wetland Maps”*; submitted on behalf of the Wetlands Outcome, with support from the LUWG.
- **FY2022:** *“Monitoring Vegetation Condition throughout the Delmarva Peninsula”*; submitted on behalf of the Black Duck Outcome, with support from the LUWG.
- **FY2022:** *“Protecting Chesapeake Bay SAV Given Changing Hydrologic Conditions: Priority SAV Area Identification and Solutions Development”*; submitted on behalf of the SAV Outcome.
- **FY2022:** *“Literature Review: Building climate resilience of stream restoration practices”*; submitted on behalf of the Stream Health Outcome.

Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (GIT 3)

The WQGIT held a meeting on January 22, 2024, and discussed the following topics:

Membership Update - The WQGIT confirmed Kevin DuBois (DoD) and Mike LaSala (LandStudies) as WQGIT At-Large members for 2024-2025. Since December, the WQGIT also confirmed Suzanne Trevena (EPA) as its new Chair, and Bryant Thomas (VA DEQ) as its new Co-Chair.

Riparian Forest Buffer Indicator and Methods - The WQGIT approved the updated Riparian Forest Buffer (RFB) indicator methods, in concurrence with the Forestry/Land Use WG approvals at their December [meeting](#).

Upcoming USGS Products for Loads and Trends - Jimmy Weber, USGS provided updates to the WQGIT on new monitoring-based information that will be released in FY24 based on USGS' new water-quality load and trend estimates through water year 2023. USGS expects to release RIM loads and trends in early summer, and NTN loads and trends by the end of the FY.

New Indicator Release for Chesapeake Progress - Gary Shenk, USGS updated the WQGIT on the new TMDL Indicator that was added to Chesapeake Progress in late January under the Clean Water Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring (WQSAM) outcome [page](#). Gary also shared a look at the corresponding online [tool](#) with which one can view more detailed breakdowns of progress towards WIP and other goals. The Chesapeake Bay Program will be holding a webinar on **Tuesday, February 6 from 12:00 – 1:00 pm** with more information on the new TMDL Indicator. For more information and to register, please visit this [link](#).

Uncertainty in the Models - Gary Shenk, USGS discussed uncertainty quantification potential in the Phase 7 model, followed by discussion of potential follow up actions. WQGIT members expressed interest in continued conversation about model evaluation, including uncertainty and sensitivity. The group of interested members will meet and discuss next steps before bringing them back to the full WQGIT for consideration.

Beyond 2025 Steering Committee and Small Group Updates - Jill Whitcomb, PA DEP, Joe Wood, CBF, and Lee McDonnell provided updates on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee including their plans for the February Small Group Symposium. Afterwards, summaries were provided on the latest steps for the Climate, Healthy Watersheds, and Shallow Water Habitats Small Groups. There was no update provided for the People Small Group. WQGIT leadership shared a list of upcoming Small Group participation opportunities with membership.

Enhancing the WQGIT's Constructive Capacity: 2024 Submersion Series - The WQGIT held their third Submersion Series [webinar](#) on January 31st from 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM. This session focused on Technical Assistance and Capacity at the Local Level. Speakers from different perspectives and sectors from across the watershed presented on the challenges, barriers, opportunities, and current actions in building and maintaining local capacity and technical assistance. We heard insights from Jennifer Fetter, Penn State Extension, Dr. KC Filippino, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, Dr. Katie Brownson, USDA Forest Service, and Beth Ginter, MPSLD, CBLP, Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council. The recording is available [here](#).

The WQGIT will hold their next meeting on Monday, February 26th, 2024 – topics to be discussed include Phase 7 modeling and Beyond 2025.

Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team (GIT 4)

The HWGIT is meeting on February 12 from 11-1. At the meeting the GIT will be discussing Beyond 2025, the healthy watersheds indicator, and the upcoming SRS process. The Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment 2.0 was released at the end of 2024. CHWA 2.0 is built on the foundation of CHWA 1.0 and the Maryland Healthy Watersheds Assessment. You can check it out here:

<https://gis.chesapeakebay.net/chwa/?page=Overall>

Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship Goal Implementation Team (GIT 5)

At the end of December 2023, the Chesapeake Research Consortium staffer, Jimmy Looper, ended his time with the Stewardship GIT (GIT 5) supporting the Stewardship, Education and Diversity Workgroups. CRC is currently in the selection process to fill the vacancy and hopes to have a new staffer on board by the end of February or early March.

Stewardship Workgroup - Work is on course for the Stewardship Network Study & Asset Mapping “Scope 9” GIT Funded Project with contractors from Local Concepts LLC. The project aims to assess and develop a visualization (a “map”) of the network of networks supporting stewardship work in the watershed, in order to use networks more effectively to strengthen collaboration and increase progress toward our shared goals and outcomes – both under the Stewardship GIT as well as those outcomes that can benefit from increased stewardship efforts (such as tree canopy, riparian buffers, etc). The team is developing the network visualization tool where stewardship providers will share their information that will be used to help show existing and facilitate new connections among the various entities working in the field. This tool will highlight strengths and gaps in partner relationships and geographic areas to inform future efforts. It will soon be tested for functionality and refined to suit needs.

The Workgroup is preparing for its biennial progress review with the Management Board in March and will be developing the new two year action plan (2024-25) during April and May.

Workgroup co-chair Michael Weyand has recently notified the team that he is changing from his job at the City of Gaithersburg to a different role with Montgomery County in the agriculture sector. He deeply regrets that he will not be able to continue with the Stewardship Workgroup in his new job. As co-chair, along with co-chair Ashley Traut (Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition), Mike was a positive advocate for stewardship efforts across the watershed and he brought a lot of energy to the team. He will be missed, but we know he will provide valuable work in the ag field. Mike’s departure provides a reminder that those who are not from a Watershed Agreement signatory who step into leadership roles with the Workgroups are essentially (and often literally) volunteering their time to the CBP and its causes. Their work is very much valued and appreciated, and we know it can be a fleeting engagement as priorities dictate. The Workgroup will be recruiting for a new co-chair early this spring.

Education Workgroup - The GIT funded project entitled, “How Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) are Advancing K-12 Student Outcomes,” referred to as “Scope 7” just wrapped up the first phase of the project. This included gathering data from school and school district personnel through surveys and focus groups to identify key areas where nonformal education organizations should be focusing to increase school district engagement. A summary document is now under review. The next step of this project includes developing a rubric/tool based on the results of the summary document and field testing it with partners across the region.

Work continues with contractor WE Strategies on the Workforce Landscape Assessment “Scope 8” GIT funded project. The contractor team and advisory committee have been meeting regularly and are currently identifying entities to help provide information on workforce needs and opportunities that can benefit Bay Program related fields. Discussions about existing workforce development programs and other topics of interest will take place throughout February.

On November 1, 2023 the Education Workgroup hosted the biennial Environmental Literacy Leadership Summit at Bowie State University, with Maryland as the host state. This event is a means for high level leadership from both environmental agencies and state education agencies to convene to discuss opportunities to work together to advance environmental literacy goals and outcomes. The two theme

topics for the event were “High Impact Environmental Actions for Sustainable Schools” and “Building Green Career Pathways.” Follow up meetings for both of these topic areas are being planned for spring 2024 to begin work towards some of the goals and ideas identified at the Summit.

The Workgroup is preparing to provide a brief update to the Management Board in March on the 2022 Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool which measures and tracks progress on the Student Outcome of the Environmental Literacy Goal.

Public Access Workgroup - The Public Access Workgroup met November 13th, 2023 to review the Strategy Review System (SRS) process for their progress presentation to the Management Board in March 2024. The workgroup is reflecting on their last two years of work and progress (they are on track to meet the Outcome target), and is considering their successes and challenges as they begin the process of looking forward and planning the next two years.

Protected Lands Workgroup (Support from Chesapeake Conservation Partnership) - The Protected Lands Workgroup successfully presented their 2022 protected lands data – first to multiple groups for vetting and feedback on the analysis to the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP), National Park Service and other Federal Agencies – and then to the Management Board in October 2023. This was the first comprehensive update to the data since 2018, due to challenges with analyzing and updating the data. The indicator shows sufficient progress to expect meeting the target for the Outcome by 2025, if the pace of land conservation stays on course.

PLWG is anticipating hosting its first kick-off meeting with their new GIS Community of Practice in early February. The group aims to coordinate on the process of gathering annual land conservation data in the future.

Diversity Workgroup - The Diversity Workgroup held its first quarterly meeting of 2024 on January 16th. The main focus of the meeting aimed to assess progress made in the past two years and set goals for the next two years toward the Outcome. The session also facilitated reflection on recent achievements in diversity-related work, with participants discussing strategies to maximize impact by 2025. A forward-looking discussion was held to explore ways to center people in Chesapeake Bay efforts beyond 2025, aligning with and contributing input into the program's ongoing planning process.

The Diversity Workgroup has been exploring the process and timing for restructuring and growing the capacity of the Steering Committee and Workgroup membership, along with redefining the roles within these groups. This restructuring effort aims to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of the workgroup as a whole. There is also an effort to broaden the group's membership to include entities currently missing that would help to round out the group's capacity to implement actions and achieve progress toward the Outcome.

The Workgroup is preparing for its biennial progress review with the Management Board in March, and will be developing the new two year action plan (2024-25) during April and May.

Enhance Partnering, Leadership and Management Goal Implementation Team (GIT 6)

Vision Statement: To provide an innovative strategic framework necessary for the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership to be the watershed restoration leader by achieving the goals and outcomes of the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement.

Mission Statement: The Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management Goal Implementation Team assists in continuously improving the operations of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership by providing guidance on governance and accountability; ensuring that adaptive management practices are in place and implemented; engaging, developing, and supporting local leaders; and advancing the efficient and transparent use of financial resources.

New Chairs on-board – GIT 6 welcomed new Chairs at the end of 2023. James Martin (VaDCR) and Lucinda Power (USEPA) have taken the co-Chair roles for the Team.

New staffer on-board – Erin Sonnenburg (CRC) joined GIT at the start of 2024. In 2021 Erin graduated from James Madison University with degrees in environmental studies and policy and administration analysis. In her last year at JMU, Erin interned with Virginia Clean Cities Coalition, a non-profit dedicated to enhancing alternative energy initiatives within the state of Virginia.

Participating in Beyond 2025 – GIT is participating in Beyond 2025 teams to provide organizational context and prepare to be the lead team for implementing any changes to Chesapeake Bay Program partnership goals, structure and governance.

The next GIT 6 quarterly meeting will be March 20th; the meeting page can be found [here](#). Subsequent quarterly meetings are June 13th, September 18th, and December 11th.

Strategy Review System (SRS) Planning Team

The first quarterly progress meeting (QPM) was completed under the revised 2024 SRS format. Positive feedback was received from members of the Management Board and other participants in the QPM. GIT 6 is formalizing SRS Planning Team as a GIT Workgroup.

SRS Contact: Sarah Brzezinski (Coordinator), Brzezinski.Sarah@EPA.gov

Field Code Changed

Contact: Greg Allen (Coordinator), allen.greg@epa.gov; and Kristin Saunders (kisaunders@umces.edu)

Budget and Finance Workgroup - The workgroup continues to feature BIL/IRA funding programs and is inviting outcome leads that fit most closely to funding program objectives so that the program's goal teams can learn about funding opportunities that they can strategically interact with. The workgroup is also writing a proposal for a STAC workshop that will explore the state of science both natural and social in support of market-based finance approaches.

Contact: Dr. Elliott Campbell (Co-Chair) elliott.campbell@maryland.gov

Local Leadership Workgroup

The Local Leadership Workgroup (LLWG) held a [virtual quarterly meeting on November 14th, 2023](#). Meeting topics included engaging with small and underserved local governments, partnership with local government planners and how to engage local governments in the Beyond 2025 effort. The LLWG will hold its next quarterly meeting on [February 20, 2024](#) as a virtual meeting. The agenda will focus on a series of questions from the Beyond 2025 People Small Group.

Contact: Erin Sonnenburg (Staffer), Sonnenburg.erin@epa.gov or sonnenburge@chesapeake.org; Laura Cattell Noll (Coordinator), lnoll@allianceforthebay.org; Martha Narvaez (Chair) mcorrozi@udel.edu; Les Knapp (Vice Chair) les.knapp@maryland.gov

Communication Workgroup Updates

On January 17, the *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* was published.

- Read the report here: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/publications/charting-a-course-to-2025>

On January 17, the Communications Office published a press release with the updated information for the Wetlands outcome.

- Read the press release here: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/pressrelease/chesapeake-bay-program-notes-increase-in-wetlands-across-the-watershed>

On January 24, the Communications Office published the updated Bay Barometer.

- Read the press release here: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/pressrelease/chesapeake-bay-program-shares-latest-progress-on-watershed-restoration>
- Read the report: <https://d18lev1ok5leia.cloudfront.net/chesapeakebay/Bay-Barometer-2023.pdf>
- Read the blog: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/annual-report-provides-updates-on-18-watershed-agreement-outcomes>

In November of 2023, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay was selected as the recipient of a grant to provide outreach services to the partnership. On February 20, Marisa Baldine will be joining the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay as the new Outreach Specialist for the Chesapeake Bay Program.

On February 20, Bianca Martinez Penn will join the Chesapeake Research Consortium as the new Communications Staffer for the Chesapeake Bay Program's Communications Office.

Strategic Engagement Team- On January 16, the Strategic Engagement Team met with the living resources cohort. The team is identifying actions from the meeting and will follow up with the teams soon. The next quarterly SET meeting will take place on April 11.

Published blogs:

The following blogs were published in January:

- A busy bird with incredible camouflage <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/a-busy-bird-with-incredible-camouflage>
- Year in photos: The Chesapeake watershed in 2023 <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/year-in-photos-the-chesapeake-watershed-in-2023>
- My Clean Water Story: Jeff Lerner <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/my-clean-water-story-jeff-lerner>
- 10 reasons to be hopeful about the Chesapeake Bay in 2024 <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/10-reasons-to-be-hopeful-about-the-chesapeake-bay-in-2024>

- Wetlands see a small but mighty increase across the Chesapeake watershed
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/wetlands-see-a-small-but-mighty-increase-across-the-chesapeake-watershed>
- Annual report provides updates on 18 Watershed Agreement outcomes
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/annual-report-provides-updates-on-18-watershed-agreement-outcomes>
- My Clean Water Story: Marisa Baldine <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/my-clean-water-story-marisa-baldine>
- Six birding destinations in New York's portion of the Chesapeake watershed
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/six-birding-destinations-in-new-yorks-portion-of-the-chesapeake-watershed>