

**Wetland Workgroup September Meeting Minutes**  
**September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**CBPO Conference Room 305**

**Purposes:**

- 1) Open discussion of barriers to progress and ways to achieve wetlands outcome, intended to inform updates to management strategy and workplan.
- 2) Workgroup approval of the wetlands BMP expert panel report.

**Welcome and Introductions** (*Sherry Witt, Facilitator / Pam Mason, Chair*)

**Bold – in person;** Unbolded – on phone

<b>Pam Mason (VIMS)</b>	<b>Kevin DuBois (DoD)</b>	<b>Seth Keller (USACE)</b>	<b>Sherry Witt</b>
<b>Carin Bisland (CBP)</b>	<b>Bill Jenkins (EPA)</b>	<b>Jennifer Greiner (USFWS)</b>	<b>Megan Ossmann (CRC)</b>
<b>Leah Franzluebbbers (CCC @ FWS)</b>	<b>Kristin Saunders (CBP)</b>	<b>Amy Jacobs (TNC)</b>	<b>Rich Mason (USFWS)</b>
<b>Jeremy Hanson (VT @ CBP)</b>	<b>Neely Law (Center for Watershed Protection)</b>	Alicia Berlin (Patuxent Wildlife Research Center)	Alana Hartman (WV DEP)
Alison Rogerson (DNREC)	Melissa Yearick (USC)	Jeff Harntraft (PA DEP)	Dave Goerman (PA DEP)
Chris Spaur (USACE)	Mark Hoffman (CB Commission)	Brittany Haywood (DNREC)	Greg Podniesinski (PA DCNR)

**Action Items:**

- Reach out to Megan with landowner contacts who have gone through a restoration project, or organizations in your state that are involved with private land restoration ([ossmann.megan@epa.gov](mailto:ossmann.megan@epa.gov))
- PA DEP to provide formal write-up of issues with BMP expert panel report and provide to Pam and Carin
- Come back to next meeting with ideas for someone to lead the Leadership and Commitment subgroup

**Parking Lot Items (for future discussion):**

- More focus on DoD land and state land
- What happens if we don't meet the 2025 Goals and Outcomes?
- Dividing tidal/non-tidal and urban/rural

## **-Barrier to adaptive management regarding incorporation of science and research**

### **Overview and Background**

Pam: There is a lot of work before us, we need to buckle down. This is an open conversation, please contribute.

Sherry: Administrative remarks and goals of meeting

- Review of adaptive management cycle
- Meeting purpose: open discussion to inform update of WWG Management Strategy and Work Plan
- Objectives: open discussion of barriers to progress and ways to achieve our goal, use Mentimeter to capture group ideas and opinions
- write ideas for future agenda topics on index cards – will share at end of meeting
- Review wetlands outcome on slide and posters on wall - why do our actions need to point to this?

Carin: CBP is guided by Watershed Agreement (2014) – 10 goals, 31 outcomes

- this outcome fits under the Habitat goal under HGIT – 9 signatories agreed to this
- number of acres negotiated with partnership and public → 85,000

Rich Mason: are there bullets describing the definitions? – in MS and BMP guidelines

- Carin/Jennifer: federal tracking definitions adopted at PSC level in 2005 – this is what partnership uses -not every organization reports in this way

### **Discussion**

Sherry: what you contribute today will be in the updated Management Strategy - how can we be successful in meeting outcome?

- Sherry: simply being aligned under the same mission statement is a benefit
- Kevin D.: huge problem with mowed wetlands (tidal) – can you have a TMDL to restore mowed wetlands (enhancement?)– bring attention to this (policy, regulatory, etc.)
  - Jennifer – partnership offers a platform for raising issues like this and turning them into messages that can get the attention of leaders – BP has funding they make available to GITs to overcome barriers in WP (example: Wetlands Work website)
- Amy – holding accountable the commitment from state and federal partners
  - Carin – WIPs help with this, though wetlands and forest buffers are still behind
  - Amy – if PA is going to agree, they should have a plan for each organization to have a certain amount of acres
  - Pam agrees – need to empower and facilitate NGOs and state partners and help them achieve goals
- Kristin – we can capitalize on the fear of flooding, SLR, and wave attenuation, as well as recreational users who rely on wetland habitat (open space, ducks hunters, birders, fishermen)
  - Jennifer – co-benefits!
- Phone: suggestion to people that they put money on nontidal rather than tidal because of SLR
  - Carin: wetlands and forest buffers tend to be a catch-all to make the numbers work in the WIPs
  - Dave: PA DEP wasn't involved in the WIP

- Kevin: is there an opportunity for DoD to help convert ag lands to wetlands? Particularly DoD owned lands that are leased to farmers – would love to talk to someone on how to go about dealing with this (*added to parking lot list*)
  - Kristin – added we should also think about already conserved land and adding in requirements for buffers in lease language – suggested step-down exercise for conversion of wetlands
- Sherry: What is our current progress?
  - 11% of 85,000 acres, haven't started tracking 150,000 acres
- Alicia: based off recreation comment – how much are we translating message or goals to the local birding communities and Ducks Unlimited? Seems like a logical choice to involve DU more

### **What Keeps Us from Getting Wetland Acres in the Ground? (*Mentimeter Exercise*)**

**Question: What limits our ability to get wetland acres in the ground?** (as a workgroup, or a partnership)

Kevin: what happens if we get to 2025 and we don't reach goal?

- Carin: no regulation, no rule about anything happening
- Renegotiated into new agreement? PSC has talked about this
- Kevin: this should be added to list of what affects our success – not understanding the consequence of not meeting our goals (*added to parking lot list*)

**RESULTS** (*see word cloud on PowerPoint*): funding, money, political will, partner participation, engagement, time, willing landowners, partner commitment, mixed messages, policy and regulations, developers, manpower, landowner permission, resources, disorganized, system to track, compelling need, communication, co-benefit credits, public perception, technical assistance

**MAJOR THEMES:** funding and money, resources and staffing (management/tracking/tech assistance), partnership and political will, landowner acceptance, communication and messaging, permitting and enforcement, prioritization

Kristin: if we got 100 million dollars, what would we put it towards to make the most impact? Where does the funding really need to go?

- Rich: incentivize private landowners – their land is their livelihood
- Kevin: put demonstration projects in communities- people are afraid of the unknown – increase visibility of projects, which will increase social acceptance of restoration
- Kevin: farmers take pride in growing crops even if money is not the issue- part of the challenge is to convince farmers that wetlands are a crop and they can take pride in it

Carin: is there a difference between tidal and nontidal and rural/urban ag lands? To better incentivize people from each (*added to parking lot list*)

Pam: estimates that majority of % increase is nontidal – tidal wetlands are disappearing before our eyes, we are losing sight of this

**Question: What keeps YOU from getting wetland acres in the ground?**

**RESULTS:** funding, staff, interested landowners, affordable tech for tidal, perception of flooding, outreach capacity, time

**Comparison to existing barriers** (see PowerPoint slide):

Climate change

Funding

Inaccurate and incomplete reporting

Landowner willingness

Understanding the importance of restoration among decision makers

Technical understanding among restoration practitioners

Climate change didn't show up this time – trying to look at it as an opportunity

Carin: focusing on wetlands flooding as an opportunity

- Kevin: Wetland Watch started focusing on flooding and it's been much more effective

Bill: would love to see program move towards ecosystem crediting rather than just WQ

- Pam: falls under political will – need a driver
- Kristin: Partnership can lay groundwork in this and support, but can't change regulations around ES

Amy: where does commitment fit?

Dave: best available science does not always get implemented, reinventing the wheel within same constraints – ex: riparian forest buffers may be more effective than wetlands

- Jennifer: partnership has embraced adaptive management
- Dave: in theory, not in practice -there's more recent findings that people try to bring to the table, but it gets ignored because it would force a revision of the process, the BMPs, etc.
- Pam: PA is not engaged in wetland acreage goals
- Dave: this occurs in all jurisdictions and in BP

Brittany: disconnect between research entities and states – fits in categories of political will, technical design, and communications

- Carin: disconnect between way we use BMP panels and the workgroup level
- Jeff: this goes outside of boundaries of WG – we are not willing to work with other WGs to discuss what science is supporting
- Pam: this conversation is important, and we should not limit it, but we need to focus on our goals because we must update our workplan (*added to parking lot list*)
- Kristin: science needs have been raised after last SRS review – revealed that GITs have similar goals and need to work together, her job is to facilitate between and help groups work together
- Jennifer – STAR is a resource the GITs can use to share science

**Quadrant exercise:**

*Impact vs. Importance of Barriers*

Barriers:

- Funding and incentives
- Climate change
- Communication

- Reporting
- Staffing/resources
- Landowners
- Political will
- Permitting
- Technical design

**RESULTS** (see PowerPoint for visual): Everything is in top right quadrant (high importance, high impact) except climate change and permitting (hard for group to do anything about)

### **Discussion of Current Management Approaches:**

What original group had reported in MS

- Reporting
- Prioritization (geographic)
- Solutions to barriers to accelerating wetland restoration
- Increase technical understanding of factors that influence restoration project success
- Local engagement
- Approaches targeted to local participation

Dave: group may have indirect effect on prioritization because past BMP reports influence how states influence prioritization

- Amy: prioritization needs to be in sync with barriers in landowner engagement
- Pam: smaller scale issue, we can't change it
- Scratch prioritization from MS

Local engagement = communication

Local participation = landowners

Kristin: going back to geographic prioritization – is there a benefit to thinking about targeted engagement at the local level?

- Jennifer: on the scale of targeting, there's a lot of focus through GIT funded projects to work with trusted sources and local partners to do listening at the local level and focus on projects that offer co-benefits
- use GIS overlays, ask in future meetings if it makes sense to look at these areas

Carin: are we trying to fit new ideas into old MS, or use new thoughts as a guideline?

- Pam: we don't want to lose context of previous thinking, but we should move forward with what the group has identified as new barriers
- Jennifer: the goal is for the group to update its MS, we don't need to force anything – a way to move forward

### **Four Ways to Approach Our Goals (*Mentimeter Exercise*)**

Jennifer: back in March the group decided on four categories and people volunteered to lead these subgroups - data, funding, education and outreach, technical information transfer

Added new categories based on today's discussion- final list of ideas:

- Data reporting
- Technical information transfer
- Education and outreach
- Funding
- Staffing/resources
- Political will/commitment
- Landowners

*Sliding scale prioritization of categories* (see PowerPoint slide)

**RESULTS:** all categories have relatively same importance

Pam: what if we considered this as actions we can perform instead of barriers?

- ex. Use funding to improve staffing resources, use education and outreach to reach landowners

Consensus: Four buckets still apply and are relevant

Carin: if we group, we may lose bigger issues

- Pam: use subheadings
- Kristin – good segue into what we will tackle in next meeting – actions

Pam: different funding sources and incentives for tidal and nontidal

Amy: advocate for 5<sup>th</sup> bucket- change political will and commitment to leadership and commitment – distinct actions at each level

**Final list of ways to achieve our goals:**

- Funding and incentives
  - Subgroup: Effective staffing and resources
- Communication
  - Subgroup: Education and outreach
    - Landowners
    - Decisionmakers
    - Practitioners
- Data and reporting
- Leadership and commitment
  - Subgroup: Effective staffing and resources

People to lead/champion these groups:

- Data and reporting – Denise and Mark Biddle? Brittany needs to remind Mark that he volunteered
- Funding – budget and finance workgroup?
  - Kristin: setting up a forum to help WG devise finance strategies, learn and build relationships with finance experts to help develop a finance strategy
  - Jennifer: someone from NRCS, Chesapeake Bay Commission?
  - Kristin: don't nail it down today, but come back next time
  - Amy can assist with funding and incentives, doing this work with TNC
- Communication and outreach – Emily Farr and Kevin DuBois

- Leadership – new bucket, come back to it

**Wetlands BMP Expert Panel Report** (*Neely Law, Panel Chair; Jeremy Hanson, Panel Coord.*)

*See PowerPoint slides*

Recap the panel charge, membership and timeline

Summary of panel recommendations

Response to comments from partnership review

Seeking approval of report from WG using the consensus continuum

Kevin motioned to approve report; Rich seconded

Jeff and Dave: raised issue with how floodplain wetlands and other wetlands were delineated in previous report, which was carried over into current report

- Want to “hold” because they don’t want to perpetuate this problem into BMP
- Need a commitment to go back and revisit this issue – WWG may not be able to handle this, but bringing to attention of another WG may blindside them
- Proposal to put the report on hold until there is an effort to address how floodplains were delineated in previous report

Neely: there was a mechanism to bring this forward previously

- PA: stood aside in last expert panel, didn’t address in this panel
- This issue is affecting department’s capability to set priorities and objectives in programmatic efforts
- Doesn’t want to move forward because this is an issue that needs to be addressed, moving forward would not support their needs

Jeremy: it was a partnership decision to map and qualify wetlands in certain way, the WWG has no power in mapping or addressing how the floodplain is categorized

- Appropriate way to address this is through LUWG or Modeling WG
- Panel report should not be held back

Carin: if we don’t have an approvable report then nothing gets used in the future

Kristin: can we lay out a smaller team that can solve this problem that PA is raising, while simultaneously allowing the report to move forward?

Jeremy: Neely and Jeremy should not be involved with modeling, doesn’t want to be a “middle man”

Pam to Dave/Jeff: does your MB rep and PSC rep know about these concerns? (Response: Yes)

Neely: this issue was acknowledged by Peter Claggett

- Problem with not approving report is that it holds back 6 other jurisdictions who have not mentioned this issue
- Not approving would discount all the recommendations that this panel put forward, this report goes away
- Can we compromise and approve the report and have WG make a commitment to make a path forward to resolve this issue?

Jeremy: we can have a subgroup to work with GIS team and modeling WG to resolve this issue

Pam: brought up dissenting opinion in shoreline panel and said dissenter had to write it up

- Suggests that PA writes up issue and attach it with the report and move it forward

PA: We already provided comments

Jeremy: what can we do to get you to move up the continuum?

Carin: is there a way to move in a parallel track that keeps report moving forward but also provides assurance?

- PA: looking for a commitment to go back and redress this issue because it is driving their funding and work on the ground, and conflicting what they are recommending as a state

Jeremy: Can we capture an action item, if so, are you willing to agree to approve?

- PA: can we put on hold until there is something more concrete with timelines? Have WWG revisit? DEP will continue to recommend a hold on moving forward until we get concern addressed

Pam: email comments to her (as chair of WG) so there's a formal record outside of the report with suggestions on how the partnership can fix this issue

Carin: will want to have some volunteers from this group to help resolve this issue, is taking this seriously

Kristin/Pam: asked PA reps make their reps on other WGs aware that this issue won't need to be raised again at other meetings, that it is being handled by Pam and Carin

Other members state no issue with the report and give approval

Carin: Laurie Moore and Kristen Wolf are Habitat reps for PA DEP

**Resolution: Jeremy will move forward with report to next group, PA will send email to Pam with issues, Carin will bring up issue to Management Team**

### **The Way Forward**

Megan asks members of the group to identify landowners/NGOs that do restoration work in their state to write new content for Wetlands Work website

Group agrees to next meeting in October to continue progress with MS and WP discussion

### **Adjourn**