QUARTERLY PROGRESS MEETING – November, 2021
Chesapeake Bay Program

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

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Chair, SAV Workgroup

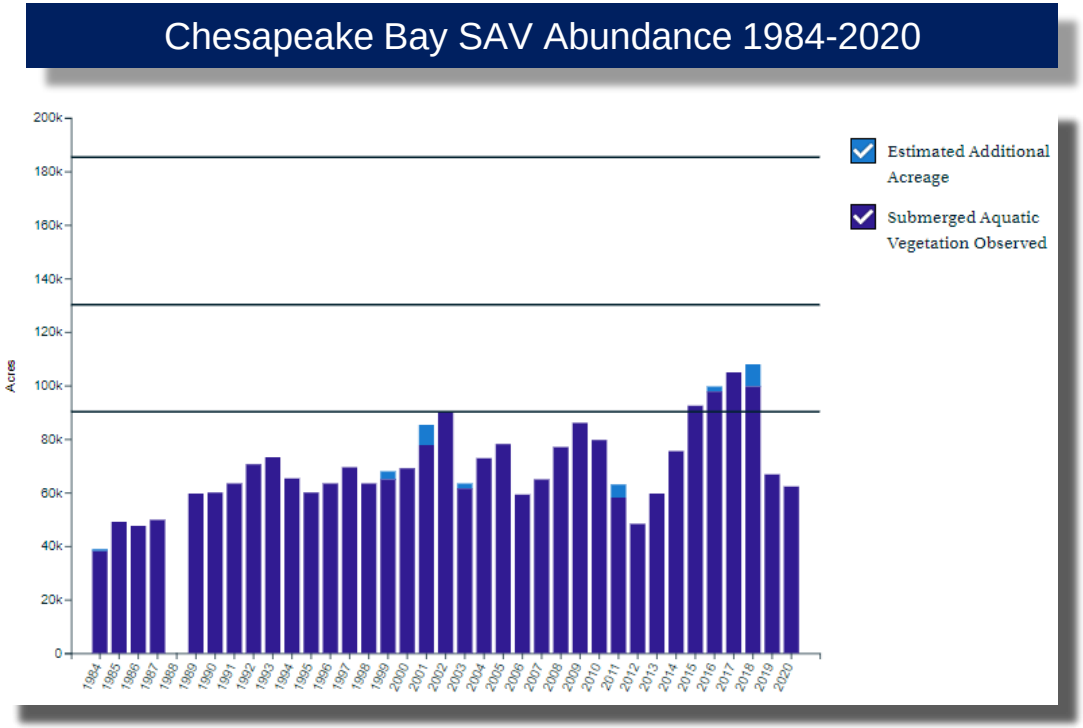
Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to…*

Goal: ***Vital Habitats***

Outcome:

Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 185,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay. Progress toward this ultimate outcome will be measured against a target of 90,000 acres by 2017 and 130,000 acres by 2025.

What is our Expected and Actual Progress?



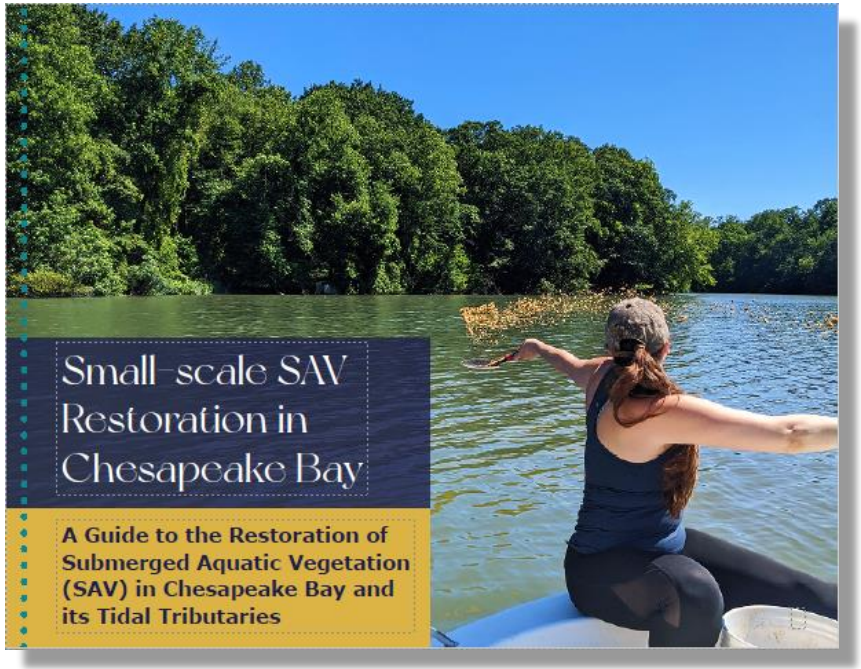
- 2017 Target (90,000 acres) *momentarily* reached!
- NOT on track to achieve 130,000 acres by 2025*
- *After six years of consistent expansion, Chesapeake Bay SAV declined dramatically in 2019 and 2020. Prior to this loss, we were on track to meet our 2025 SAV restoration target of 130,000 acres. With the loss of over a third of the Bay's SAV, reaching the Bay-wide 2025 goal on-time is **highly unlikely**. Segment-specific goal attainment is still possible and likely in some areas.

L

Learn

What have we learned in the last two years?

Successes and Challenges



1. Small-scale SAV restoration protocol complete, BUT restoration successful in expansion years, less successful in years of SAV decline.

2. CB SAV Watcher Program is a successful means of crowd-sourcing SAV data and engaging the public, BUT needs more resources and staff support.

3. CBSM project showed that waterfront property owners have a mixed response to SAV, SO need to work with them accordingly.

4. To withstand climate change impacts, sustained SAV recovery will require dramatic improvements in WQ, SO need to consider more significant N,P, TSS reductions and region-specific management actions.

5. Partners are engaged in the shallow-water use conflict conversation, BUT several questions and data gaps remain.

On the Horizon

1. Climate-related increased precipitation and runoff negated six years of SAV expansion in 2019-2020.

2. Local jurisdictions must increase their efforts to reduce stormwater runoff and implement other nutrient and sediment reducing BMPs to mitigate/accommodate climate change impacts ($$$).

3. Some less-critical actions will be removed from workplan due to lack of time, staff support.

A

Adapt

How does all of this impact our work?

Based on what we learned, we plan to …

1. Advocate for climate adaptation (more N, P, TSS reductions, more research)

2. Re-evaluate use of the small-scale restoration guidance (emphasize implementation when SAV is on up-swing)

3. Collaborate with the CRWG re: Blue Carbon Market (VA has paved the way)

4. Simplify workplan (we were overly ambitious again)

Equitable and inclusive restoration …

(graphic from University of Florida)

1. SAV WG will engage the Stewardship and Diversity Workgroups

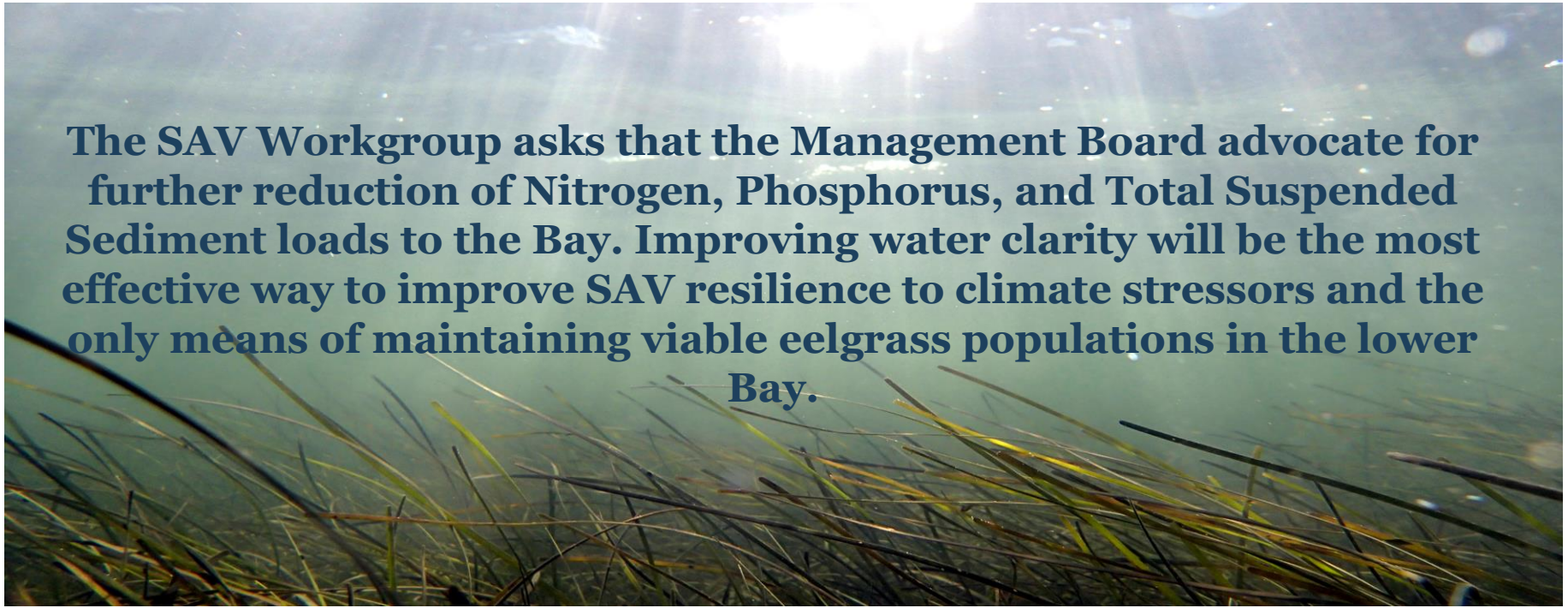
2. SAV WG will engage underrepresented people and communities in SAV research, monitoring and outreach efforts

3. SAV restoration projects in areas more traditionally used by underserved communities

Help

How can the Management Board lead the Program to adapt?

Help Needed


The SAV Workgroup asks that the Management Board advocate for further reduction of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Total Suspended Sediment loads to the Bay. Improving water clarity will be the most effective way to improve SAV resilience to climate stressors and the only means of maintaining viable eelgrass populations in the lower Bay.

Discussion