

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Management Strategy Development

Stewardship Goal Local Leadership Outcome and Draft Strategy FEBRUARY 2015

Executive Summary

The long-term success of Chesapeake Bay conservation, restoration, and protection efforts depend heavily on engaged citizen stewards and the leadership of local public officials. Currently, more than 600 local conservation and watershed organizations in the Chesapeake Bay Region are educating and empowering citizens to restore and protect local streams and rivers. Building a larger, broader, and more diverse constituency of stewards is vital to achieving local environmental protection and restoration and ultimately restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement acknowledges the important role of local watersheds stewards and local government officials and commits partners to building knowledge and capacity of local stewards to achieve local and Bay restoration.

On December 3, 2014 stakeholders including local appointed and elected officials, senior local government resource managers, members of the training community and many others participated in a workshop in Laurel, MD to discuss specific efforts, gaps, and recommended actions for increasing knowledge and capacity for local officials to more successfully manage natural resources.

Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) members and other officials participating in the December 3 workshop stressed that local officials are diverse in experience, values and agendas; and that they vary in resource capacity (herein defined as expertise, time, staff and funds). Increasing knowledge about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and relating the value of healthy waters to local priorities such as land use policies, community health, economic development and tourism will be important to enticing engagement of the uncommitted. Turnover is significant among local officials in some jurisdictions. This means it will be important to create and nurture a *watershed culture of excellence* that showcases and promotes local efforts, applauds local initiatives, and provides easy access to action-oriented conservation and restoration models for local officials to adapt and replicate.

Outcomes and Baselines

This Agreement contains ten Goals for the conservation, protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The idea of “...*increasing the capacity and knowledge of local officials*...” resides under the Stewardship Goal. This Stewardship Goal statement is as follows:

“Increase the number and diversity of local citizen stewards and local governments that actively support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities that achieve healthy local streams, rivers, and a vibrant Chesapeake Bay”.

The local leadership outcome under the Stewardship Goal is as follows:

“Continually increase the knowledge and capacity of local officials on issues related to water resources and in the implementation of economic and policy incentives that will support local conservation actions.”

For the purposes of this management strategy, the term “local officials” includes elected and appointed officials and senior staff in local government. The Outcome calls for increasing local officials’ knowledge and capacity in two specific areas: (1) on issues related to water resources and (2) in the implementation of economic and policy incentives. Both are intended to support local conservation actions.

According to LGAC members and signatory representatives, the local official’s knowledge of watershed issues and capacity to implement watershed restoration and protection initiatives varies quite dramatically throughout the watershed. The outcome measure has not been developed; therefore, currently there is no identified baseline. The development of a baseline involves multiple factors: the knowledge and capacity of local officials as well as current/existing programs and models. Baselines do not need to be exclusive of each other.

- Baselines should be more oriented to current activities and management actions. Baselines are the methods for current efforts, and our planned work will increase the range of methods and make them work better.
- Measuring the knowledge and capacity of local officials is difficult. This might be accomplished by a pre-work survey to measure the knowledge and capacity of local officials. People may be asked to self-determine their own knowledge. Furthermore, public opinion polls may be a useful tool in determining baseline for knowledge and capacity.
- Continually increasing the knowledge and capacity requires us to institute a system of learning for local officials (there is a turnover every couple of years).
- Include an estimated number of educational programs, online resources, etc. Connect this back to the baseline of the range of methods for increasing knowledge and capacity.
- Assess existing training programs for local officials that have a limited level of training. Consider increasing specificity for what should be included in the training.

Jurisdictions and Agencies Participating in the Management Strategy

As local implementation is key to the success of the Bay Agreement, several stakeholder groups have expressed support for increasing knowledge and capacity at the local government level. The following signatories have agreed to participate in implementing this Outcome (pending final approval):

- State of Maryland
- Commonwealth of Virginia
- District of Columbia
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- State of Delaware
- Chesapeake Bay Commission

- Federal Agencies: US Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service

In addition to signatories listed above, many stakeholders, including interested members of the public have expressed interest via website in efforts related to development of the management strategy. At this stage of strategy development, it is not possible to determine which signatories and stakeholders will be participating in implementation of the strategy.

The December 3rd Local Leadership Workshop brought together nearly 60 local officials, senior local government program managers and many other stakeholders. Most of the workshop participants agreed to continue to support outcome development and implementation efforts.

Local Engagement

The nature of this outcome and resulting strategy is the building of knowledge and capacity of local officials; hence there is a specific, critical role for local government officials and associated local leaders. Additionally, watershed associations, non-governmental organizations, and other local groups play a critical role in reaching local officials and building this constituency for conservation action.

The management strategy includes the recommended actions identified by local officials from the local workshop held in December.

Factors Influencing Ability to Meet Goal

The watershed is vast and its geology complex.

Local officials, defined as elected and appointed officials and senior staff, are diverse. They differ in recognition of long-term effects of public policy and mirror the range of personal and political goals which characterize the American public. Turnover rates among elected and appointed officials are unpredictable, complicating return on investment from training. Availability of resources - defined as expertise, time, staff and funds - vary widely. Some local officials are technically sophisticated; others do not yet use email. Often environmental issues are not routinely addressed in capital planning and annual budgets.

The *good news* is some local officials are already committed Stewards of local resources and the Bay. Others will become committed if they recognize the correlation between local waters a healthy Chesapeake Bay and individualized local priorities such as economic development or tourism. The general electorate, particularly in coastal communities, is becoming more aware of rising sea levels and recurrent flooding.

The following have been identified as the key factors influencing ability to meet the goal:

- Wide disparity in level of existing knowledge and capacity among local officials
- Size, geography and (civic) complexity of the watershed. This speaks to the need for specific, regional approaches to be developed.

- Lack of political will/competing interests
- Knowledge management (defined as the ability to get the right information to the people who need it; includes ability to use communication resources and tools).
- Increased awareness of changing environmental conditions (e.g. climate change and flooding)
- Effective messaging - Ability to accurately measure and clearly communicate positive change in the watershed from a natural resource, economic, and cultural perspective
- An historical lack of focus on conservation and natural resource issues
- Local culture and societal norms relating to conservation actions.
- Lack of community support for protection and restoration activities.

Current Efforts

Multiple organizations, groups of citizens and jurisdictions are already working to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In many cases these efforts need to be enhanced, expanded and shared as models with other in the watershed. Examples include:

- Chesapeake Bay funded project to review leadership models and lessons learned across the watershed
- State by state outreach and training via municipal orgs, state sponsored training and workshops for Stormwater, Green Infrastructure, etc through existing forums e.g. (VACo, MACo)
- Training: Watershed Stewards Academy (geographically limited), Natural Resources Leadership Institutes (NRLI), Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Peer-to-peer outreach and networking: LGAC, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum, Stormwater Partners Retreat, Ag Networking Forum, Environmental Finance Workshops, Choose Clean Water and Water Resources Education Network conferences.
- Electronic applications: Citizens engaged through IM Rivers.
- Field opportunities for local officials: LGAC tours, Chesapeake Bay Foundation's "Farmers to the Bay," Allison Ferguson Foundation meaningful watershed trips.
- Local programs such as the Watershed Stewards Academy (also geographically limited)
- Certifications offered under municipal leagues and state associations (e.g. MACo, VACo)
- Local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.
- City, county and township comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.
- Websites and webinars: Chesapeake Bay Program, Chesapeake Stormwater Network.

Gaps

Information and resources are necessary to increase the number of local officials and watershed residents committed to responsible natural resource management. In reviewing current efforts, the following gaps were identified:

- Inadequate sharing of knowledge and information among jurisdictional agencies, conservation organizations and local officials.

- Minimal *outreach* to those outside the natural resources network.
- Lack of awareness about training offerings, training funds, and how to access them.
- Lack of time and funds for local officials to travel for training.
- Lack of information about financing options for local environment projects..
- No *single source of information* to enable local officials to identify and replicate action-oriented programs that have been successful in other jurisdictions.
- No baseline curriculum for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- *Success stories* and committed local Stewards visible only with the already-committed conservation community.
- Inconsistent focus on natural resource management in educational seminars, conducted by municipal and state associations, for local elected officials.
- Planning District Commissions are inconsistent in delivering environment-focused training and information.
- States are inconsistent in prioritizing and funding environment-related initiatives.

Cross Collaboration Among Management Strategies

Most management strategies rely on the involvement or support of local officials. There is broad recognition that informing and educating local officials must be a priority if we are to be successful. There is also broad recognition that local officials will be quickly overwhelmed if there is not a unified approach to informing, educating and training. Therefore, we must review other management strategies to identify knowledge gaps or factors influencing that deal with local officials' knowledge and capacity.

Collaborate with other workgroups to identify essential content and best mechanism(s) for knowledge transfer and capacity building. So far, cross collaboration opportunities have been identified with the following goal implementation teams:

- Sustainable Fisheries
- Habitat
- Water Quality
- Healthy Watersheds
- Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship
- Environmental Literacy Workgroup
- Diversity Action Team

Actions, Tools or Technical Support Needed to Empower Local Government and Others

Local leaders identified a variety of specific tools and actions needed in order to increase knowledge and capacity. These tools and actions form the basis for the management approach outline later in this strategy:

- Targeted funding to increase local officials' knowledge and capacity.
- Regionally targeted education and training opportunities.
- Program development assistance for municipal leagues and associations with program development.

- Sharing best ideas for legislation and innovative funding.
- Coordinated technical assistance program that engages entities best suited to meet a community's needs, e.g. Environmental Finance Center, Center for Watershed Protection, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, etc.
- More frequent and complete communication directly to local governments and between local officials and stakeholders.
- Improved knowledge management for best practices in watershed restoration and protection (e.g., policies, finance and communication).
- Mentoring system for local officials utilizing retired local officials with institutional knowledge (long-term)
- Increased peer to peer networking and learning program.
- Formal peer exchange program to meet short-term needs, e.g. implementing tree canopy program, stormwater fee adoption, etc.
- Needs assessment for training and education prior to implementation (periodic).

Management Approach

Over the last several months, general approaches were identified as important focus areas to expand the knowledge and capacity of local officials. These approaches were developed by a group of local officials and educators. These approaches included very specific suggestions and warrant further discussion as to their feasibility and order of priority given the reality of limited resources. These specific suggestions will help determine the workplan which will be completed by the end of 2015.

The following management approach sets a framework for Chesapeake Bay Program partners to identify knowledge and capacity building resources and programs already in place and to build upon what's already working. In some instances this partnership will consider establishing new programs. Lastly, these management actions should all be considered on a state by state and region by region basis given the variety of local needs, priorities and approaches to resources management.

- Develop, enhance and expand training and leadership programs
 - Work with state, federal, and NGO partners to identify and catalogue (by state, by region) the various training and leadership programs available to local officials.
 - Develop survey or mechanism to evaluate utility and measure effectiveness of training and leadership programs.
 - Work with state, federal, NGO partners to enhance and expand training opportunities based upon geographic and regional needs through existing grant programs, outreach activities, and other mechanisms.
- Increase peer to peer networking opportunities for local officials
 - Review existing local officials peer to peer networking models (inside and beyond Chesapeake Bay watershed) and identify lessons learned and areas needing improvement.

- Work with state and NGO partners and Local Government Advisory Committee to coordinate and expand existing peer to peer forums.
- Evaluate and catalogue lessons learned and modify peer to peer networks for continual improvement.
- Improve knowledge management (including expanded availability of online resources)
 - Identify existing methods and outreach mechanisms used by states, federal agencies, NGOs to reach local officials and determine ways to enhance and improve these approaches.
 - Establish best practices for working with less engaged municipalities and local audiences
 - Periodically review approaches and identify ways to continually improve these approaches based upon needs of local officials.
- Identify and improve key knowledge and information sources
 - Identify and prioritize key information and information sources that may benefit local officials (e.g. economic benefits, cost benefits, multiple benefits of stormwater management, climate change, etc)
 - Assure that information is delivered in a way that's relevant and clear to local officials
 - Continue to improve and develop key messages (state or regionally determined) to build knowledge and capacity for local officials
- Continue cross Bay Agreement goal coordination
 - Periodically assess other Bay Agreement goals and identify information sharing or knowledge transfer needs and opportunities in order to enhance knowledge and capacity of local officials.
 - Coordinate input as part of 2year workplan for related Bay agreement goals and outcomes

Local Engagement

As stated above, this Bay Agreement outcome directly targets the knowledge and capacity of local officials. Local engagement will be ongoing. The necessary resources to achieve the above seven approaches will be requested. In addition, the specific points below will be incorporated into this effort:

- Integrate with other appropriate outcomes/management strategies to meet needs in underserved communities.
- Incentivize the underserved community to achieve greater knowledge and capacity (e.g., scholarships to the local leadership academy).

Monitoring Progress

For this outcome, there is no current baseline established. Prior to beginning this effort, success criteria will be established and metrics in place to determine progress. The following tools and resources have been identified to assist in progress monitoring.

- Utilize surveying instruments such as before and after training surveys
- Consider basic tracking using number of contacts and meetings.
- Utilize social network diagrams technique and social media for determining progress
- Implement case study approach highlighting successful models through time.
- Track the number of people going through the leadership academies as one mode of progress monitoring.
- Use the Chesapeake Stormwater Network annual survey of members to assess programming.
- Determine the different mechanisms for the different categories of local officials (e.g., elected vs. senior staff)
- Count how many exchanges happened, how many commitments made and completed
- Number of people within community, number of collaborative groups within community that became involved since the strategy completion
- Count the number of municipalities that have built-in requirements for certification or training
- Track the number of Local officials/mentors upon graduation of the program and track how many maintain their mentorship

Assessing Progress

Progress in the building of knowledge and capacity in local officials will be assessed every two years. At our December workshop, many officials agreed to participate in this initial effort to determine success and assess progress criteria, hence direct involvement with our target audience is existing. Throughout the initial assessment period, local officials will be a part of the process to determine how progress is determined including criteria, scope, scale and adaptive management techniques utilized. It is anticipated that this strategy may require 1 or more two year cycles to fully determine whether the initial effort has been successful.

Adaptively Manage

Following the first two year review period and based on the information obtained through surveys and other assessment criteria, programmatic changes will occur to maximize the effectiveness of the methods utilized for local leadership knowledge and capacity building program success.

Biennial Work Plan