



Wetlands

*Pamela Mason,
CCRM/VIMS
WWG Co-chair*



Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...



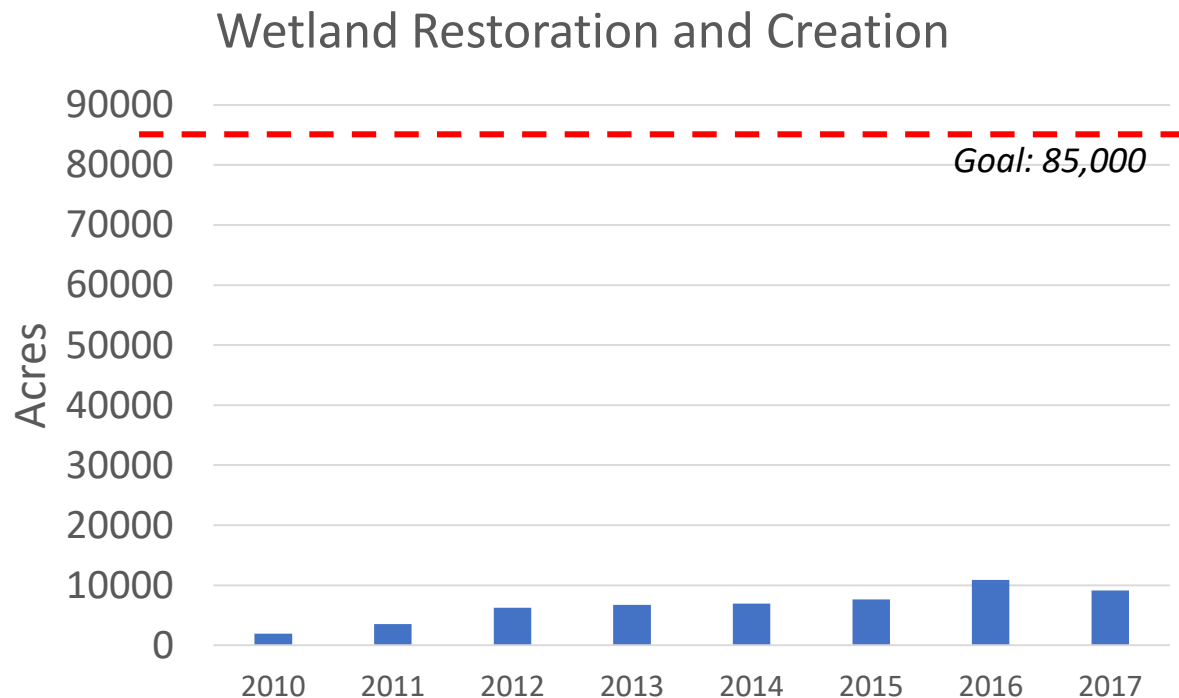
Goal: Vital Habitats (*WETLANDS*)

Outcome:

Continually increase the capacity of wetlands to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Create or reestablish 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhance function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands by 2025. These activities may occur in any land use (including urban), but primarily occur in agricultural or natural landscapes.



What is our Expected and Actual Progress?



- Lack confidence-Accounting for TMDL not wetland areal extent
- No Tidal Wetlands included (looking at shoreline management data)
- Almost no Enhancement due to issues with NEIEN



Successes and Challenges

- Good engagement from WWG members
- Increased interest in wetlands goal work
- Improved communications and cross GIT/ WG engagement
- Wetland Benefits fact sheets



Supporting Wetlands in the Virginia Commonwealth



There are over a thousand miles of wetlands in Virginia, impacting everything from wildlife and recreation to climate resilience and tourism. Wetlands come in various forms and are found on government land, residential property, farms and other areas along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. **The following programs and initiatives all benefit from wetland protection, restoration and enhancement in Virginia.**



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wetlands protect and enhance outdoor recreation venues and agricultural properties while spurring green jobs.

Virginia Outdoors Plan 2018: Outdoor recreationists spend more than \$8 billion within the state annually, and most of the popular forms of outdoor recreation are dependent on the health, vitality and productivity of resource lands and waters, including wetlands.

Virginia Scenic River Program: The goal of VA's scenic river system is to preserve and protect its natural beauty and to assure its use and enjoyment for its scenic, recreational, geological, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural or other asset.

Fisheries Management: Wetlands help VMBC



PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Wetlands play a critical role in reducing the impact of extreme weather such as coastal storms and flooding.

Virginia Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program: Wetlands reduce the impacts of coastal storms and flooding on natural and built infrastructure. The Virginia CZM Program supports the use of natural and nature-based features (e.g., wetlands) through a range of initiatives, including promoting the use of living shorelines, protecting beaches and dunes, and using dredged material as a resource for building coastal resilience.

Safety and Floodplains: Floodplains and other wetlands have a proven capacity for reducing the impacts of coastal storms and flood










Successes and Challenges

- Concerns over data accuracy
- Concerns regarding perverse consequences of wetland BMPs as incentives for projects other than wetlands
- Need continued focus on communications efforts



On the Horizon

- Potential effects of COVID on Federal, State and NGO budgets decreasing funding 
- FEMA policies on Natural and Nature Based Features 
- State policies on wetlands and buffers (Virginia new living shorelines law and climate inclusion in CBPA and VDOT policy) 
- Use co-benefits (flood, habitats, open space, ecotourism) as restoration/ enhancement incentives 
- Climate impacts on non-tidal and tidal wetlands  
- Research on climate impacts 



Based on what we learned, we plan to ...

- Commit to increased communications via formal presentations (2 per meeting)
- Shared meetings and cross-sector engagement: Fish habitat WG, Climate Resilience WG, Buffers. Working on Black Duck engagement
- Pursue collaborative STAC workshop on BMP accounting and perverse incentives