Public Comments

Climate Resiliency Management Strategy

Climate Change Workgroup Meeting

May 4, 2015

Great goals! They appear very thought out. It is about time others take notice of their environment.

Source: Paco Rodriguez

Lots of scientific information used to analyze the bay and propose plans and programs for the restoration of the Bay, my only concern is that some of the reports used to assess the issues of climate change on the Chesapeake Bay are dated as far back as 2010. Shouldn't we be using more current information?

Source: Bonnie

I urge you to include climate change in the new Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

The Chesapeake Bay is particularly sensitive to the impacts from climate change. Water temperatures have increased by 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the 1960s. In the last century, Bay water levels have risen by more than a foot. About a dozen islands have vanished. Others have been evacuated. Thousands of acres of shoreline marshes have been eroded away. The Chesapeake Bay is already degraded by development and agriculture, but the growing effects of climate change are making Chesapeake Bay restoration even more daunting.

Considering the increasing role of climate impacts in the health of the Chesapeake Bay, we need to include the term climate change in the new Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Climate impacts are considerably more complex than is implied by the terms “sea level rise, rising temperatures, and increased precipitation”. Climate change encompasses a wide range of stressors that will increasingly determine the fate of our aquatic eco-systems. Protecting the Chesapeake Bay from climate impacts for the long term will be a huge challenge for natural resource policy makers and conservation managers alike. In order to meet this challenge, we need to be prepared.

We need:
extensive adaptation research; implementation of adaptation strategies; and dedicated leadership at the Chesapeake Bay Program to integrate climate concerns into the agency’s work. These goals need to be explicitly articulated in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. appreciate your leadership in ensuring that the term climate change gets incorporated into the new Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Even more important, we are counting on you to include explicit climate change-related goals in the new Agreement. Without goals, there is no accountability and no measure of progress, which we cannot afford when it comes to the challenge of protecting our waterways from climate impacts

Source: Miss Jacqueline Adamson

The management strategy to implement the climate resiliency goal is currently being developed by a number of talented technical and scientific experts. We applaud this effort, and believe that the strategy has come a long way from its initial draft. The draft is strong on many fronts, including gap analysis, the emphasis on stakeholder education and involvement.

We have a few recommendations for you to consider:

The drafters of the strategy aimed to write it in a manner accessible to the well-educated public. But greater clarification in a few areas is still needed, including in the section on baseline.

Climate change complicates baseline considerations, and a brief, yet accessible, exploration of the significance of baseline for climate adaptation work would be desirable.

In addition, while the management strategy commits to the 'climate smart' framework as an approach to implementing the strategy, several of the steps lack specificity. We understand that the workgroup will also develop workplans for implementing the climate management strategy, which will include more detail. As written now, however, it is difficult to discern what commitments are being made. We recommend that the management strategy include a few numerical goals and targets.

For example, under Step 1, could the management strategy spell out the approximate number of opportunities for assessing efforts and lessons learned, at least three or at least five annually? As another example, we'd like to mention Step 4, which could use greater articulation of which type of decision-makers are being referred to here, and in which ways would decision-makers be informed on the tools, resources, data, etc.

Source: 57 different individuals sent this same comment. (Sierra Club)

1. At some point (probably as part of developing the biennial workplans), the strategies that overlap with or inform other strategies should have their respective specific management, monitoring, and assessment approach implementation tasks cross-referenced, as appropriate. This will help cooperative and collaborative efforts across strategy implementation teams. This might be worth calling out in each strategy under the Biennial Workplan sections.

2. Monitoring is important, as are measures for protection and restoration. But we also need to examine policies and regulations that exist that "put us in a box" for decision-making that may require new species (reflective of transition over time) to be considered and introduced that hopefully will not become invasive.

Source: Maryland State Water Quality Advisory Committee (SWQAC)

1. We Support Using the "Climate Smart Conservation Cycle" as a Framework for Adaptation Work. The "Climate-Smart Conservation Cycle," developed by an expert group empanelled by the National Wildlife Federation, features seven steps in an iterative process informed by monitoring and assessment at each step of the cycle. We strongly support use of the Climate-Smart Conservation Cycle as the centerpiece and framework for climate adaptation work in the Chesapeake Bay.

2. We Support Including Climate Change Considerations into other Management Strategies. Integration of climate change adaptation into all the management strategies is a pressing issue that needs to be realized as soon as possible. We strongly support the role of the climate resiliency work group in working closely with other Goal Implementation Teams and work groups on the inclusion of climate change considerations into their management strategies. The management strategy should provide more detail on how exactly this collaboration will take place.

3. The Management Strategy Should Encourage Collaboration Along the Entire Atlantic Coast. The management strategy should include a component to not only increase regional collaboration, but also collaboration with organizations up and down the Atlantic coast. This type of collaboration is important because issues such as those affecting migratory birds are best managed within a flyway approach. One example of this type of collaboration is National Wildlife Federation's work with New Jersey Audubon on assessing coastal impoundments from Massachusetts to Virginia for their ecological value, vulnerability to sea level rise and storm surge, as well as the protection they offer as a natural barrier to human communities and infrastructure. Partnerships like this should be encouraged beyond the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Source: Choose Clean Water Coalition

1. While Local Engagement is alluded to in the strategy we still believe there can be more focus on this. Don't just focus on coastal communities. Final Strategy needs to recognize that parts of the watershed will require different approaches.

2. Natural System Factors should include subsidence of land that is compounding the issue in some areas like Hampton Roads.

3. Human System Factors: The final strategy needs to consider decision-makers views on the science/reality of climate impacts.

4. We still believe that establishing Adaptation Outcome Priorities will be challenging but vital to the partnership's efforts working with landowners and localities. Final Strategy should discuss how to incentivize private landowner actions.

5. Adaptation needs to recognize that there are regulatory barriers to addressing climate impacts. Some of those are perceived or real barriers (like lack of specific legal authority). VA DCR could not incorporate into Stormwater BMPs an allowance for future climate changes in the Virginia stormwater regulations, because the agency did not have specific authority to do so. This is a big issue that needs acknowledging and addressing. There is uncertainty over local government authority to address climate, sea level rise, and recurring flooding. The Bay Program should support efforts to clarify local authority.

6. We still think that a list of preferred BMPs that will address both Climate impacts and Stormwater runoff would greatly help localities AND be efficient and innovative in addressing multiple Bay watershed concerns. This should include the promotion of living shorelines as an alternative to hardening shores.

Source: CBP Citizens Advisory Committee

1. If local government participation is needed to achieve an Outcome, Management Strategies must (a) make it clear that local participation is needed, (b) clearly describe local governments' role in achieving the Outcome, and (c) explain how local governments can get the tools and resources they need to assist with implementation. While many of the Management Strategies strive to do this, more work is needed to clearly address local governments' role.

2. When possible and when local governments have a defined role in achieving the Outcome, Management Strategies should include information about the COST AND BENEFITS to local government. Without this information, local governments may be reluctant to become engaged because of the concern it will cost more in time and money to implement than are available.

3. Local governments need a better understanding of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, including distinction between voluntary and mandatory components. Some local governments have expressed concern that this effort may lead to greater regulatory control. A Partnership-endorsed and supported strategy for communicating with local governments is critical.

4. To help those outside the Chesapeake Bay Program better understand the organizational infrastructure, all Management Strategies should identify Team Lead, Workgroup Lead, and Opportunities for Cross-Goal Team Collaboration as presented in the Wetland Management Strategy under Participating Partners.

Source: Members, Local Government Advisory Committee

All Strategies:

- Integrate Shared Elements of Strategies and Apply a More Holistic Approach

Climate Resiliency:

1) Support the Partnership's efforts to quantify impacts of climate change on Bay restoration efforts – both on water quality and the Bay watershed's living resources, as well as on the effectiveness of various management controls.

2) Recommend that the Partnership evaluate water quality improvement strategies in a holistic, multimedia manner so that any potential trade-offs between load reduction to achieve water quality goals and the generation of greenhouse gases are identified and weighted appropriately.

3) Recommend that the strategies identify how climate change and its water quality implications (i.e., changes to water quality standards and/or BMP efficiencies) will be reflected in changes to the Bay TMDL and permit requirements (i.e., how will Adaptive Management actually be utilized to make necessary adjustments).

4) P. 39: Edit description of the NASA handout to~~: A report for Federal Agencies in the Washington, DC Metro Area~~ Downscaled climate information for the Metro Washington area.

Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

We encourage the Chesapeake Bay Partnership to recognize that many of the draft strategies have important local components. Further development of these strategies should support existing local programs.

Source: Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection

1) The # 1 "Action" item is establish baselines for moving ahead, but the only activities planned are monitoring, modeling and assessment [research is mentioned a couple of times with no specifics]. Establishing a baseline, whether it be in dissolved oxygen levels to set TMDL goals or global CO2 concentrations to set international emissions policy, require detailed understanding of past conditions, including variability, not limited to instrumental records. This section could be improved by adding information of USGS studies in understanding past drought and temperature extremes or rates of SL rise. USGS can contribute this material.

2) Second, the single entry under the USGS Programs on page C9 gives the following: USGS/US DOI: Land Subsidence and Relative Sea-Level Rise in the Southern Chesapeake Bay Region (2013) – Land subsidence has been shown to be a good indicator of sea-level rise. Not only is this ambiguous at best and incorrect at worst in the sense that subsidence is not a "good indicator of sea level", but there is no mention of a host of other USGS projects addressing the topic and these should be included.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey