VITAL HABITATS GOAL

SAV Outcome

2025 PROGRESS
OFF COURSE

OUTCOME: Sustain and increase the habitat benefits of submerged aquatic vegetation (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.

PROGRESS AS 0F 2021: The SAV Outcome is off course. Following six years of expansion, over one-third of the SAV in the Chesapeake Bay was lost in 2019—2020, decreasing acreage from 108,000 to 62,000. This loss is due to degraded water clarity following two years of above-normal precipitation. Because of this decline, reaching the Bay-wide 2025 goal on time is highly unlikely. However, it is possible to attain segment-specific goals by that time.

BACKGROUND: The outcome was established by the Chesapeake Bay Program SAV Workgroup, who reviewed historic records and photographic evidence from the 1930s to present-day to establish the target of 185,000 acres. While this outcome is associated with the most current *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the SAV Workgroup has provided technical expertise and applied research findings to resource managers in the larger Bay community since 1976. Current monitoring efforts began in 1984 and formal goals to restore and protect SAV throughout the Chesapeake Bay were included in the *1987 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

The Chesapeake Bay is divided into 93 different segments and four salinity zones (Tidal Fresh, Oligohaline, Mesohaline and Polyhaline). The Chesapeake Bay Program has divided the estuary into segments to get a more accurate picture of Bay health since its founding in 1983.

BASELINE: In 1984, 38,000 acres of SAV were mapped throughout the Chesapeake Bay.

DATA SOURCE: SAV abundance is tracked through an annual aerial survey conducted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and supported by satellite data when necessary. Additionally, data is collected through ground surveys conducted by a number of agencies and individuals.