Wastewater Supplemental Indicators Discussion with WQGIT, January 13, 2014

Purpose of Today's Discussion:

- Develop a recommendation to the Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) Management Board (MB) regarding how a new "Partnership-recognized" supplemental wastewater indicator will be reported and who will be responsible for maintaining the indicator.

- Additionally, requesting a WQGIT recommendation to the MB regarding the current supplemental wastewater indicator.

Next Steps:

- Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) recommendations to be provided to the Scientific and Technical Analysis and Reporting (STAR) Team and the MB.

- Pending MB approval, implement the recommendations.

Background:

- All CBP indicators are approved by the MB and are linked to from the Track the Progress section of CBP's website. Indicators appear on this page as a "laundry list", in alphabetical order. Linkages are also provided from the categories of indicators featured in the left hand column: Health indicators (including Bay Health, Watershed and River Health, and Factors Impacting Bay and Watershed Health) and Restoration and Protection Efforts indicators.

- CBP currently reports a supplemental wastewater indicator which is maintained by staff at the CBP Office and at EPA Region 3 on behalf of all CBP jurisdictions. This supplemental indicator is linked to from CBP's Reducing Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Pollution indicators and also directly from the Track the Progress page (near the bottom of the alphabetically-ordered "laundry list").

- The WQGIT's Wastewater Treatment Workgroup (WWTWG) has "accepted" a new supplemental wastewater indicator for use by Maryland. No other jurisdiction plans to use the indicator at this point in time, but could decide to use it in the future (refer to November 5, 2013 minutes).

- At the Jan 2, 2014 meeting of STAR's Indicators Workgroup (IWG), issues related to the wastewater supplemental indicators were discussed.

    - Since the new supplemental wastewater indicator only will be used by MD at this point in time, a proposal was discussed to provide a link from the CBP indicator pages to a MD website where this new supplemental wastewater indicator would be presented and maintained.

    - This is similar to how to how CBP dealt with the old chlorophyll *a* and clarity indicators that were replaced by the new ones that track water quality standards attainment for chlorophyll *a* and water quality standards attainment for water clarity/underwater bay grasses. Since the University of MD Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) will continue to update the old chlorophyll *a* and clarity indicators, a link is provided from the "additional information" sections of the CBP indicator webpages to the UMCES webpages where the data/charts/etc. for the old indicators are maintained:

  - "The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science reports a different chlorophyll *a* indicator which tracks data in all tidal water segments and not in relation to Chesapeake Bay water quality standards. The results of that indicator are available at http://ian.umces.edu/ecocheck/report-cards/chesapeake-bay/2012/indicators/chlorophyll_a/ and are updated annually in the Bay Report Card."

  - "The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science reports a different water clarity indicator which tracks mid-channel data in all tidal waters and not in relation to Chesapeake Bay water quality standards. The results of that indicator are available at http://ian.umces.edu/ecocheck/report-cards/chesapeake-bay/2012/indicators/water_clarity/ and are updated annually in the Bay Report Card."

- Subsequent to the IWG discussion, CBPO staff met with staff at MDE to discuss the IWG's proposal.

  - MDE staff agreed that until other jurisdictions decide to use the indicator it is appropriate for the new wastewater indicator to be presented and maintained on a MD website (they recommended BayStat). They agreed to work with BayStat staff to implement this proposal and requested CBPO staff review of the indicator prior to it becoming live on BayStat. After it becomes live, the new wastewater indicator will be presented to the WWTWG, the WQGIT and the MB.

  - MDE staff requested that a "CBP partnership approval" statement appear in association with the indicator featured on BayStat. Language related to this "approval" will be presented to the WQGIT prior to recommendation to the MB (see below).

  - MDE staff agreed to develop language for the link from the CBP indicator webpages to explain why the supplemental indicator was developed and provide context for what the public will see when they follow the link. Language related to this "linkage" will be presented to the WQGIT prior to recommendation to the MB (see below).

- Concurrent to the IWG discussion, the WWTWG was asked to make a recommendation regarding what to do with the current supplemental wastewater indicator by January 9, 2014. Two jurisdictions represented on the workgroup (MD, VA) recommend the current indicator be removed from the "Track the Progress" section of ChesapeakeBay.net; two recommend keeping it (DE, WV). On 1/13/14 the WQGIT will use this information to make a recommendation to the STAR and MB regarding what to do with the current supplemental wastewater indicator.

Proposed Recommendation:

- Provide a link from the CBP's Reducing Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Pollution indicators to a new wastewater indicator to be featured on a website managed by the State of Maryland. If the WQGIT and/or MB decide to maintain the current supplemental wastewater indicator, also provide a link from that page.

- Include the following "CBP partnership approval" statement in association with the new wastewater indicator to be featured on a website managed by the State of Maryland:

  "The Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership-approved Supplemental Wastewater Indicator is a load-based measure of annual progress toward the 2025 planning targets for wastewater treatment plants and industrial sources."

- Use the following language in association with the linkage that will be provided from the CBP indicator webpages:

  "The Supplemental Wastewater Indicator is a load-based measure of annual progress toward the 2025 planning targets for wastewater treatment plants and industrial sources. Unlike the Reducing Pollution indicators which report wastewater flows from annual discharge data, this wastewater indicator uses long-term average flows to control for annual variations in weather and hydrological conditions. Since these hydrological influences can cause load fluctuations that exceed restoration efforts in any given year, this indicator was developed as a tool for watershed managers to better understand the effects of their management decisions."