

## Wetland Workgroup October Meeting Minutes

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

CBPO Conference Room 305

### Purpose:

- 1) Have a robust conversation about current efforts, gaps, and new actions related to the factors identified in the September 2019 meeting.

### Welcome and Introductions (*Sherry Witt, Facilitator / Pam Mason, Chair*)

**Bold – in person;** Unbolded – on phone

Pam Mason (VIMS)	Jennifer Greiner (USFWS)	<b>Megan Ossmann (CRC)</b>	<b>Sherry Witt</b>
Kevin DuBois (DoD)	Greg Noe (USGS)	<b>Carin Bisland (CBP)</b>	Danielle Algazi (EPA)
Michelle Henicheck (VA DEQ)	<b>Kristin Saunders (CBP)</b>	Mark Biddle (DE DNR)	Randy Owen (VA Marine Resources Commission)
Greg Barranco (CBP)	Neely Law (CWP)	<b>Denise Clearwater (MDE)</b>	Alana Hartman (WV DEP)
<b>Emily Farr (NOAA)</b>	Melissa Yearick (USC)	Jeff Hartranft (PA DEP)	<b>Joe Berg (Biohabitats)</b>
Greg Podniesinski (PA DCNR)	Mark Hoffman (CB Commission)		

### Action Items:

- Megan will identify locations of documents and provide links to completed reports, projects, and expert panels - add a page on the Wetlands Bay Program site
- Megan will follow up with work group members to refine suggested action items
- Kevin will send Megan materials used for Chesapeake Bay Commander's Conference
- List of future presentations for WG:
  - Scott Phillips, USGS science directions
  - Randy Owen, upland conversions
  - Jeff Sweeney, data and modeling
  - Michelle Henicheck, WetCat
  - Danielle Algazi, Wetland Program Development grants
- Megan, Pam, and Jennifer will work on workplan and management strategy updates and will send to the workgroup for review on 10/28

## Welcome and Opening Comments

Pam: Thank you for committing your time to our conversations about reaching our goals

Sep 2019 meeting - tackled factors that are influencing our ability to achieve our goal

Taking a deeper dive into picking the factors apart to identify actions that can help move us forward

Update on BMP expert panel

- Carin: took PAs comments to people at the Bay Program
- Haven't closed the loop- meeting with PADEP on November 1st to dig into what they are asking and come to a resolution

## A Second Look: What Keeps Us from Getting Wetland Acres in the Ground?

Sherry: Today's agenda

- How to achieve goals by having as much robust conversation as possible about current efforts, gaps, and new actions following the progress of our last meeting
- Review actions that have been identified in the past to see if they still apply
- Opportunity to start with a clean slate with ideas for new actions
- Discussion informs Logic and Action (L&A) table
- Focused on the next two-year cycle, but know that this ultimately points towards 2025 goal
- Are actions achievable, realistic? Keep that in mind during discussion

Denise: what is the starting date that we are using?

- 2010 is being used as the baseline for which progress is measured

Sherry: review four ways to approach our goals that the group identified

- We came up with factors that influence our success
  - Communication with landowners, decision-makers, and practitioners
  - Leadership and commitment
  - Funding and incentives
  - Data and reporting
- What are our goals when looking at these factors?

## Our Steps to Achieving Our Goals

### ***Review of actions that were marked as "completed"***

Kevin: where can we find the documents that relate to these actions?

- Jennifer: report from OpinionWorks is available
- Carin: GIT funded projects are available under Chesapeake Progress

Suggestion that we need a "wetlands reference library" to house these documents

*Action: Identify locations of documents and provide links to completed reports, projects, and expert panels - add a page on the Wetlands Bay Program site*

Greg Noe: items under 3.2 are both ongoing research, part of USGS multi-year work plan through 2025

- there are initial efforts and products but it is really ongoing research

- Pam: do we want to keep these in workplan? What is the role of the WWG- just to say we support the effort?
- Greg: USGS is very much in favor identifying and supporting science

*Action: follow up with Greg to update this action for new cycle of workplan*

Greg: at some point it would be very useful for someone from USGS to present what is in the work plan and get feedback from WWG on other priorities

- Pam - we have that on our radar

*Action: follow up with Scott Phillips about USGS presentation to the WWG*

Jennifer: Item 2.2 has taken form of wetlands work website, put the weblink

Item 5.1 (STAC workshop report) is available but is where is STAC outputs live

Sherry: will the actions we take off “live” somewhere so we have a record?

- Carin: looking into how we’re archiving past L&A tables
- These should be building blocks under the factors
- Kevin: if these are eventually going to fall off the list, don’t add links, we need a library that is separate, continuous, and complete
- Kristin: take the pieces of these actions that are not completed and put into the next two-year workplan

Sherry: basic questions we will ask for each category

*-What is getting in the way of addressing these barriers?*

*-What is the current situation in addressing these barriers?*

*-What do we need to do to address these barriers?*

*-Do incomplete actions still apply?*

## COMMUNICATION

### Landowners

Emily Farr: volunteered to be “thought leader” under communication

- worked with Kevin on approach to communication
  - Who is working on these actions?
  - What is our role as a workgroup?
  - Initial brainstorm on actions, audience, messages, and partners that are working on similar actions
- Example: Living shorelines social marketing study that has just been done by the Fisheries GIT - do we have an opportunity to work with them?
  - Bruce wants to build on this study
- tidal and non-tidal differences, may need a bigger conversation

Emily: these are the gaps we see, is anyone else talking about these

Kevin: we need an inclusive group of stakeholders talking about the issues

Carin: the action of this workgroup is that we can commit to working with other WGs

- small group of outreach people looking at how to bundle together outcomes for landowners, governments, etc.

Kristin: what we're hearing across many of the smaller WGs is that people need to be more intentional in making connections instead of waiting for it to happen

- write a specific intention in the work plan to collaborate with other WGs

Kevin: communication should be two ways - other groups working on wetland restoration should reach out to us- why hasn't this happened?

- Carin - focus of each group has been on meeting outcomes, so groups are spending all their time working on their own projects
- all groups in Healthy Watersheds cohort recognized that they should be working more closely together and now being more intentional about making this happen
- Kristin: the more specificity about audience, the better
- Kevin: Looking for input on everyone from the workgroup
- Sherry: we can translate this into actions, as well as add ideas for new actions
- Kevin: once we have a list, we can prioritize it to choose what is feasible

*Menti: What gets in the way of communicating with landowners?*

Denise: contractors will steer landowners away from restoration so they can build hardened structures (in tidal areas)

**Menti responses:** general lack of trust in government, getting landowners to come to websites, FB pages, and or Twitter to learn about wetlands, bureaucratic inflexibility, understand and being clear about co-benefits that matter to people, enough people to spread the word, many different types of landowners, trust, environmental literacy, manpower, resources

***Incomplete actions:***

- 1) Implement select solutions from TNC/DU stakeholder report - where does this reside?
  - Mark Biddle- guesses that it resides with DU
  - Put report in library
  - *Action: Mark tracks down report*
  - *Action: Follow up with Amy about this*
- 2) Identify/create "Wetland Outreach coordinators"
  - We have contact names in Wetlands Work website
  - Pam: Amy spearheaded a proposal to fund/create positions - *follow up with Amy*
  - Jennifer: We have people going door to door on eastern shore to talk to landowners
  - Pam: she and Amy talked about having a person on WWG or works within a unit to make sure we have consistent collaboration with this process
  - Jennifer: First two actions are both in ongoing category - have not established formal wetland coordinators in each state
  - Jennifer: use trusted sources of network service providers - second bullet can dovetail into that
  - Carin: NFWF has put more people on the ground for technical assistance
  - Carin: what does success look like for these? What is the second step? If we get wetland outreach coordinators, how do we measure success?

- Pam: Count contacts? Keep track of workshops, door to door conversations? Would they put together proposals?
- Pam: we need a list of everyone in the network, because a lot of it is ad-hoc - this is a gap
- We need to put together a list because even if the person changes then at least we have the agency
- *Action: an inventory of coordinators*

### 3) Develop an inventory of wetland programs and disseminate to key practitioners

- we need to complete number 2 first
- Kristin: are you thinking of non-traditional practitioners? Land trust alliance, communicating water quality benefits with conservation easements
- Megan: are we considering Wetlands Work website as an inventory? Working with web and comm team to market the site better
  - Carin: this item may be complete, because the site is the way to disseminate information to landowners and practitioners
  - Emily: is Wetlands Work website accurate and complete?
  - Jennifer: great tool, but not sure if it's getting optimal use
  - Carin: What do we need to do to make sure it is successful?
  - Kevin can't get access to website
  - Pam: WW only covers part of the story because it focuses on agricultural non-tidal land

These three items are yellow- ongoing, still need work

Denise: urban lands - if there is a local government sponsor in any way, they will get more credits by calling something a stream restoration

- Joe Berg: came to the meeting to identify opportunity that hasn't been flagged - MDE considers wetlands as structural practices (stormwater wetlands), which have a lower crediting
- no strong driver for the private sector to fund this
- if we were to take wetlands out of the structural category and put it into a runoff reduction category like stream restoration, it would have bigger drivers for restoration
- Pam: it sounds like there are issues we need to work on clarifying policy - remember that goal for WWG is voluntary restoration, not regulatory mitigation compensation

Denise: needs to be a recognition that there is a working wetland concept

- Pam: these decisions are made by WQGIT, don't want to get off track
- Kristin: this falls into the category of perverse incentives - crediting decisions done by other parts of the program create negative incentives for wetlands outcome – *Action: create a subset of work going forward to identify what those are*
- this falls into data and reporting, leadership and commitment
- Carin: we need to consider all benefits of wetlands, not just water quality

- Denise: tidal wetlands are being reported as a shoreline BMP
- Joe: has there been an uptick in living shorelines projects and are we capturing that? Significant credit incentive
- Kevin: anecdotally, Norfolk has been doing lots of living shoreline projects
- Carin: data and reporting: are living shorelines being counted as a wetland? When tallying up acreage we can include this as well as agricultural BMPs
- Randy: sit down with Pam about compliance program - tracking conversions, he has those numbers (upland conversions as well)

*Action item: Follow up with Randy on having this conversation and giving a presentation to the group*

Carin: contact Jeff Sweeny to see if he can come in a future meeting (action item)

### Communication with decision-makers:

Incomplete action is in every workplan

Is there anything legislatively going on right now that we should be aware of?

- Pam: Federal Living Shorelines Act is something to be mindful of
  - Reported 9/25
  - House Bill 3115

Mark Hoffman: as a group, try to see if there are legislative things that we should be aware of and work with the Commission to check in

Carin: this is an ongoing action - periodically go through and see what's on the radar and let Mark know

Sherry: create a standing agenda item at the beginning of every workgroup meeting - be more mindful of having this conversation

Kristin - figure out what time of year is best to talk about this (in advance of legislative sessions)

Mark: work on identifying roadblocks and impediments to outcomes - are there legal obstacles to identify

Paper from William and Mary about policy recommendations to improve implementation of living shorelines - send to Mark Hoffman

Climate resiliency plan

Mark: can put us in contact with VA lead

Kristin: Senate Bill 2591 - Chesapeake WILD- allow for investments in resiliency in vulnerable areas for species of wildlife - wetlands and forested areas

### Communication with practitioners:

Continue to have presentations to WWG (action item)

### LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

Menti: What gets in the way?

Courage and conviction, poor technical understanding of how/where to restore wetlands, funding, leadership has to ask for input, landowners reluctant to talk with regulators even when doing voluntary restoration as they are worried about being regulated, competition with other BMPs, finding the right

hook to get attention, adopting a new way of doing business, fear of innovation, de-emphasize focus on counting lbs reduced and increase emphasis on improved resources

Carin: another instance of a perverse incentive - where the TMDL focus on water quality causes wetlands to become a lower level issue

Kevin - focus should be on value instead of cost - other state documents that complement the TMDL

- need to put together a fact sheet - concept of co-benefits requires that we maximize the value of dollars that we spend - value goes way beyond water quality
- if you achieve state climate or wildlife action plan, you still get credit for progress

Denise- you only get credit for water quality - we need to find a way to credit the outcome of improved habitat - needs to be part of TMDL

Kristin: efforts to quantify the benefits of climate and habitat - until we have these values, how do we accelerate forest buffers and wetlands? These two categories are lacking

- how do we brand wetlands and forest buffers as an important solution?

Carin: this will help with other state plans - will identifying this help with 2 year milestones for WIPs?

Pam: these actions occur within jurisdictions, which don't necessarily share co-benefits

Pam: state wetland development plans for EPA, where voluntary restoration is one of the four core categories - this links to grant funds

Danielle: is the contact for this - headed to every state this fall to go over the wetland program plans

Emily: NOAA has been working with TNC on a project quantifying fish production value for salt marsh wetlands - we should be aware if other agencies have done similar work in these smaller subsets of wetlands

Sherry: what about leadership?

- Kristin: Amy is missing from conversation
- Pam: Amy's perspective is to make sure that people that can make decisions about how money is spent in a state are committed to wetland restoration and enhancement and they then provide leadership to the rest of the state and this group
- Ann Jennings called together people that are linked to ensuring that certain goals are achieved in VA - came up in conversation to make sure that leadership communicates to the people that do the work

Carin: funding and leadership and commitment are tightly connected

Joe: leadership is a web, not a strata

Pam: we need to find a champion for wetlands

Carin: this is a good point - forest buffers are doing well in PA because state secretary has pushed for it - where is the champion for wetlands at that level?

*Action: identify champion for wetlands*

*Action: Follow up with Amy about her ideas for leadership and commitment*

Pam: can we have the champion for forest buffers tell her story?

Carin: there may be slides related to that in FB MB presentation

Incomplete actions for leadership and commitment:

- all actions already fall under other categories
- get more credit through expert panel - not sure what first bullet means

Joe: point he made before in that stormwater wetlands are not credited in the best way

Pam: having a conversation with WQGIT people to resolve some of these issues - under leadership and commitment

Denise: can we reinterpret to include habitat benefits?

Carin: no, because TMDL only address N, P, and sediment - we can't change crediting method

Kevin: trying to convince DoD leadership that solving multiple issues with one project is a good use of tax-payer money

- strong push for engaging in projects that meet multiple goals
- Carin agrees - expand co-benefits fact sheet to address leadership (action)

Kevin: just had a Chesapeake Bay Commanders conference for their leadership - major focus was co-benefits - presented 12 case studies for success stories throughout watershed

Carin: action - developing information for Principal Staff Committee to show them that there is more than the TMDL - lean on this discussion about targeting multiple programs and co-benefits

*Action: Kevin sends us materials used for commander's conference*

## FUNDING AND INCENTIVES

Carin: a barrier is that we are using funding sources that would fund other things too - so we are competing with other practices for the same money

Joe: if wetlands were properly credited and incentivized, you could mobilize public and private funding

- Pam: hopefully new expert panel will address that

Mark Hoffman: is this an internal policy thing? (about MDE)

Denise: funding can be fragmented and specific

Danielle: there are pots of money that are not being integrated

Carin: crediting is also fragmented, with specific BMPs for everything even though the systems are connected

Kristin: can't solve this problem in the workgroup, but is there an action that the WG can do? Request a workshop, pull together a meeting? To explore ways that a systems approach could be looked at to get to the funding and incentives issue

- Carin: can do this through the STAC workshops - *action: develop proposal for STAC workshop for how to pull a systems approach together*
- Call for STAC proposals in Dec/Jan time frame
- Kristin: are there other groups that we can connect to? Fish habitat, fish passage, riparian, etc.
- Greg Noe is member of STAC - happy to work with us to get this going

Sherry: Do we need to go anywhere with mitigation banking?

Pam: partner mitigation with voluntary restoration?

Michelle Henicheck - VA mitigation banking is good, don't mess with it

Revisit this idea

Pam: back to the idea of a complete inventory/database of funding - Wetlands Work does not include all partners (such as NFWF)



Kristin: do we have a nexus with the land conservation side of things? Potential for packaging already conserved lands with restoration to make the money go further

- suggests a conversation with land conservation workgroup
- Carin: their outcome describes conservation of wetlands

### **DATA AND REPORTING:**

Denise: new action item- overhaul the standard reporting form to make sure it includes rehabilitation

Pam: NIEIN feeds info on voluntary restoration (only agriculture) – we don't need to streamline it, we need to modify it

Jennifer: the jurisdictions resented having to enter things in two different places - requested that NIEIN be the place we collect data, so some of the information that we as a WG are interested in got lost

We need to have a conversation about modifying/overhauling standard reporting

Denise: thinking of older form which gave more useful information

- Carin: the willingness to fill in the form is the issue, not the form itself

Emily: if data is already being collected then what is the mechanism to getting it?

Michelle: addressing current action item - we use WetCat to identify areas where restoration can benefit water quality and habitat already

*Action: follow up with Michelle to get more information on this and update this action item, as well as having her give a presentation to the group*

Denise: confirm the accuracy of information reported - this is difficult

Carin: what is the wetlands verification program?

- Denise: based on what NRCS does

Sherry: is mapping of tidal wetlands being done?

- Pam: some work in VA, not sure if it's been done bay wide
- Greg: less mapping at USGS, more creating predictive tools
- Emily: NOAA has some tidal mapping efforts

Emily: there has been conversation about dividing urban vs rural and tidal vs nontidal – should we create sub-goals in these categories under our goals?

Kristin: part of land use strategic plan is to look at FEMA

Pam: NOAA resiliency project – co-benefits

Sherry: clean up existing list and see if anyone has any additional ideas

### **The Way Forward**

Follow up with thought-leaders for meeting in two weeks to further discuss these action items and what being a thought-leader entails- it would be ideal to have two people on each group

Kristin: nominates Kevin for leadership and commitment, to be a champion

Ask for volunteers for additional thought-leaders when we send out meeting minutes

Reconvene in early December

### **Adjourn**