



Chesapeake Bay Program
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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June 29, 2015

RE: STAC Behavioral Economics Report

Nicholas DiPasquale, Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109
Annapolis, MD 21403

Cc: Management Board; Foster Chesapeake Stewardship Goal Implementation Team; Local Government Advisory Committee; Citizens Advisory Committee.

Dear Mr. DiPasquale,

Please see the attached STAC workshop report entitled, “Exploring Applications of Behavioral Economics Research to Environmental Policy-making in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.” This report provides a summary of STAC’s August 27-28, 2014 workshop and includes specific recommendations identified by workshop attendees.

The purpose of this workshop was to increase the depth of participants’ knowledge regarding behavioral economics and behavioral decision-making, and to explore potential applications in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The workshop was also an opportunity to explore in an in-depth manner the potential applications in the problem areas of non-point source agricultural pollution, household/homeowner contributions to pollution, and increase the exchange of knowledge and expand collaboration among social science researchers in the region who are familiar with challenges in the use of behavioral economics. Some of the recommendations from the workshop include:

- Research human behavior before developing outreach and other engagement programs. In general, the complexity of human decision-making was perceived by workshop participants as a necessary consideration to better understanding the audience before conducting an educational/outreach campaign (i.e., “thinking before doing”), or there may be unintended consequences;
- Research on the efficacy of informing homeowners about their links to the Bay. A current strategy is the placement of signs on storm sewers to make homeowners who are thinking about dumping motor oil feel “guilty”;
- Research ways to recognize the implementation of BMPs by homeowners (such as a sign or list in the newspaper). This area is largely unexplored, and there may be opportunities;

- Develop methods that can be used to cultivate peer pressure related to stewardship in order to encourage change. One example that is gaining traction in USDA is “community conservation”, where groups of landowners are encouraged to work together to solve a water quality problem through an incentive based on a joint outcome;
- Research on how CBP can embed stewardship and water quality improvements into farmers’ social identity, including considerations of geographical location, sense of place, and ownership. Questions to pursue include: (1) at what point do people take ownership of their location and establish a sense of place, (2) how does that connection to the land impact their decisions, (3) how does social identity differ in different regions, and (4) how do dairy farmers differ from corn farmers, and at what level do they care about the water quality issues enough to change their behavior;
- Research effective visual communication techniques that encourage behavioral change among various communities. For example, a video of what happens with water movement, sediment removal, erosion, changes in terrain, and damage during a storm event might be a way to increase the visibility of problems among the general population; and
- Research how information provided to farmers can increase participation in conservation programs (see CRP example below).

We hope the Management Board, Goal Teams, and various workgroups find the workshop recommendations to be useful, and STAC looks forward to your feedback. STAC respectfully requests a written response to the workshop findings and recommendations from the CBP Management Board Chair by September 25, 2015.

Please direct any questions you may have about this report and its recommendations to Natalie Gardner, the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee Coordinator, and Dr. Charlie Abdalla, at Pennsylvania State University.

On behalf of the entire STAC, thank you again for considering these recommended next steps, and we look forward to working with you closely on this in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirk Havens", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirk Havens
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee