



**Chesapeake Bay Program**  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

August 19, 2014

Dr. Kirk Havens, Chair  
CBP Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee  
645 Contees Wharf Road  
P.O. Box 28  
Edgewater, Maryland 21037

Dear Dr. Havens:

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Management Board (MB) and the Vital Habitat Goal Implementation Team (Habitat GIT) express our appreciation to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) for their workshop report entitled, "Designing Sustainable Coastal Habitats." Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations presented in the workshop report.

The MB strongly agrees with the recommendations proposed in the report and believes the most effective approach to continue the efforts from the workshop is to engage specific groups within the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership. Specific responses to the recommendations follow, as well as suggested action items associated with each recommendation.

**1. Institute a more balanced approach to Chesapeake Bay restoration by integrating water quality, habitat, and ecosystem-based species goals that support "outcome" and/or "surrogate" species.**

The MB expects this to be accomplished by the Goal Implementation Teams (GIT) working to integrate Management Strategies of related outcomes to the most practical extent possible under the recently executed (June 16) Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (2014). Specifically, we expect the following steps to be taken:

- By the end of FY 2014 (September 30, 2014), the GIT Chairs, with support from the **Enhancing Partnering, Leadership, and Management GIT (GIT 6)**, should present to the MB a plan **outlining the degree to which Management Strategies associated with various outcomes can be aggregated and integrated across Goals.**

- As Management Strategies are being developed in the coming year, the **MB will discuss** the potential efficiencies and challenges inherent in such an aggregation and integration **and provide feedback** to the GITs on this plan prior to development of detailed Management Strategies.

## **2. Expand the spatial and temporal scales used to set Bay restoration/conservation targets.**

While the MB acknowledges that pockets of this exist (i.e. observation of Chesapeake wintering ground impacts on Mid-Atlantic Flyway population of black ducks; the scope and intent of Maryland's Coastal Resiliency Master Plan), we agree that such spatial and temporal considerations need to be more explicitly reflected in the setting of meaningful milestones against which the partnership will measure progress toward outcomes. Accordingly, we will direct the **GITs to work with the Scientific, Technical Analysis and Reporting (STAR) and the Habitat Modeling team called for in recommendation #5 below, to prepare a series of ecosystem response scenarios** (i.e. "Assuming 60% of practices are in place by 2017, then we can expect [wetland/forest/stream/SAV/blue crab/oyster/shad/brook trout] to respond this way by 2025 and beyond"). Think of this as Scenario Builder "Plus"; again, it highlights the need for staff assistance devoted to supporting the habitat/species modeling needs of GITs.

## **3. Align differing and complex objectives for management of living resources using an Adaptive Management framework and decision matrix models, such as Strategic Decision Making.**

As STAC has assumed the role of Adaptive Management 'watchdog' for the partnership, the MB will look to **STAC to (1) assist the GITs in developing Management Strategies that are adaptive, balanced, and allow for application of the latest science to policy decisions and (2) communicate early and often with the MB** regarding any concerns. The MB will further rely upon the **Local Government Advisory Committee to provide suggestions regarding information needs of local planning agencies to be addressed by existing and developing landscape-level planning tools** such as those supported by Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), or by new decision support tools which may be possible through the efforts of a Habitat Modeling Team (see recommendation #5 below).

## **4. Initiate a pilot study of landscape-scale restoration approaches.**

The MB is pleased to note that this recommendation has already been acted upon in that the Nanticoke/Pocomoke/Choptank region has been selected by the Fish & Wildlife Service, as a focus area for their Designing Sustainable Landscapes pilot under the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, and by NOAA, as a priority focus area for their Habitat Blueprint. Identification of this geography for landscape-scale restoration also builds on important foundational work led by TNC's floodplain connectivity study, and incentives offered by NRCS to landowners who are willing to restore wetlands, riparian buffers and forests on marginally-productive agricultural lands on the Delmarva. To highlight these examples and encourage more of this landscape-level approach to restoration, the **MB will direct the Communications Work Group to explore development of a series of stories and visuals about a mosaic of landscape-level efforts** being championed by a variety of partners, including the Upper Susquehanna Conservation Alliance (and Upper Susquehanna Coalition), James River Association, Potomac Conservancy, and Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust. These stories should incorporate aspects of regional economics and lag times (per item #6 below).

**5. Form or develop a formal association with a Habitat Modeling group to facilitate coordination and regional model development and potential mechanisms to integrate and coordinate local to landscape-scale coastal habitat decisions.**

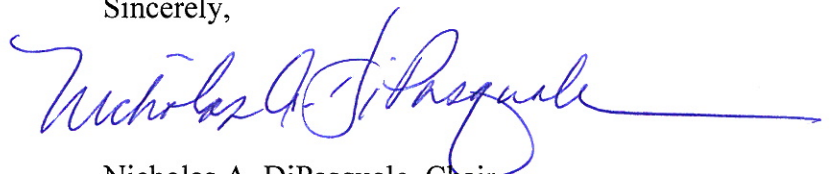
During the April STAR meeting, several GITs expressed the need for greater support in terms of modeling, monitoring and GIS needs. Such needs have been reiterated in agency communications since the *Designing Sustainable Coastal Habitats* workshop; for example, an email from the Fisheries GIT Chair Peyton Robertson to senior NOAA leaders states that the workshop, “...led to a discussion about the feasibility of coordinating oyster, SAV, and living shoreline restoration efforts to better evaluate and monitor cumulative impacts on the ecosystem and key “outcome” and/or “surrogate” species, such as waterbirds (i.e., black ducks, seaducks), blue crab, oysters, and terrapins. This will require improved data and cooperative monitoring. The Little Choptank may be a perfect area to bring this vision to fruition. However, when using data and tools to plan these restoration efforts, there is a continual need to incorporate changes in land use, climate, and sea level rise as important stressors to ecosystems that will impact restoration efforts. To showcase the success of these restoration efforts to the public, it may be necessary to quantify monetarily the value of these living resources more clearly.” In order to begin to address this persistent need, the MB hereby requests that **STAR work with the Modeling Team to frame options for providing such support in a more direct manner to the Fisheries, Habitat, and Maintain Healthy Watersheds GITs, and to have those options ready to present at the September MB meeting.**

**6. Build economic arguments and expected lag times for ecosystem recovery into public messaging about the Bay watershed.**

The MB will direct **the Communications Work Group to work with STAR to develop messages that incorporate economic values and the concept of lag times** in ways that are easily understandable.

In closing, on behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program’s MB, please extend my thanks to the workshop steering committee and participants for their time and effort in the workshop as well as STAC members for their attention to this workshop report. We believe a continued collaborative effort across partner agencies to plan and design habitat implementation plans will be the most effective in designing sustainable habitat projects in the watershed. We appreciate STAC’s continued role in improving our overall management of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

Sincerely,



Nicholas A. DiPasquale, Chair  
Management Board

cc: Management Board  
Goal Implementation Team Chairs