

CAC Members Present: John Dawes, Andrew Der, Bill Dickinson, Matt Ehrhart (CAC Vice Chair), Bill Fink, Dale Gardener, Verna Harrison, Paula Jasinski (CAC Chair), Chris Karakul, Julie Lawson, Bill Matuszeski, Jorge Ribas, Charlie Stek, Kendall Tyree, and CAC Staff Jessica Blackburn and Adam Bray

Speakers/Guests Present: Emily Trentacoste (EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office), Carly Dean (Chesapeake Conservancy), Doug Beegle (Penn State University), Kate Fritz (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay), Jim Edward (EPA), Jude Harrington (Army Corps of Engineers), Katie Hetherington Cunfer, Branden Diehl (Foundation for PA Watersheds), Dennis Johnson (Juniata College)

Meeting presentations and materials are located at:

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/citizens_advisory_committee_quarterly_meeting_september_20171

Thursday, September 7, 2017

The CAC Chair, Paula Jasinski, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM, followed by introductions. Paula introduced the themes and topics of the meeting: to learn ideas and successful approaches to protecting local water quality while supporting agricultural lands, and to decide how and with whom CAC will share their findings.

Paula announced members who have resigned recently or terms expired and the vacancies CAC currently has to fill: Mark Bey (DC), Paul Bruder and Jennifer Reed-Harry (PA), Christy Everett (VA), Victor Ukpolo and Nikki Tinsley (MD).

Water Monitoring Trends and Storylines of Central PA

Dr. Emily Trentacoste, Biologist, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program

Emily Trentacoste described the concept of “storylines” as case studies that synthesize scientific data (trends, drivers and explanations) from USGS and EPA to show management implications as they relate to Phase III WIP development. To demonstrate the concept, she focused on the Raystown Branch watershed of the Juniata River where nitrogen pollution has been decreasing in recent years but still has room for improvement. Using the storyline data in Bedford and Blair counties, Emily led the group in exploring where efforts for management practices should focus and which practices should be employed. In areas where there is an increase in animals and nitrogen from manure, the management practices that will make the most difference include cover crops, forest buffers and barnyard control. In areas of increasing development, stormwater practices will be most important. Additionally, it is necessary to consider groundwater nitrogen sources that can be decades old.

Discussion: Pennsylvania members questioned the recent trend upward in Bedford County citing differences with what they know to be happening on the ground. CAC encouraged the Bay Program to make more connections between this data and health/recreation to show citizens why it matters. It was also suggested to use words and phrases in common language that property owners will understand. The group discussed the importance of this tool and wanted to know how others can use this data for their own localities. Emily indicated that the Bay Program intends to research usability of the tool.

Precision Conservation in the Susquehanna River Watershed

Carly Dean, Biologist, Project Manager, Chesapeake Conservancy

Carly described the Chesapeake Conservancy's "[Envision The Susquehanna](#)" initiative. Precision conservation uses advanced GIS and remote sensing to identify priorities for conservation and restoration, like restoring riparian buffers. Out of 43,000 identified restoration areas, they prioritize projects with the biggest restoration impact and local organization partnerships. CAC members were directed to <https://restorationreports.com>, a website that allows local landowners to gain access to data about their properties.

Discussion: CAC Members inquired about the Conservancy's coordination with USDA and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services and learned from Carly that they are already in conversation. Members commented that messaging is important for landowner buy-in. Focusing messaging on local streams, recreation and fishing will be more effective than about the Bay. Carly relayed that the Conservancy is working to improve monitoring, tracking results, and integration with other programs.

Panel Discussion

Emily Trentacoste and Carly Dean

How will the Conservancy be able to keep the data up-to-date for landowners? They are currently talking about how to make the data "live" so it updates automatically. Where would you concentrate efforts within the Susquehanna to get the biggest impact? The Conservancy is working with PA DEP to look at which practices in which counties would make the biggest difference in reduction and how much it would cost. What are landowners' reaction to having their property ranked highly for restoration potential? The ranking system in only used internally.

CAC members reiterated the importance for communicating the fishing, swimming, drinking water and health implications to citizens about these efforts. They expressed concern about using old data when creating the water quality storylines and trends. Jim Edward explained that they are working off the latest Ag Census data. It is only updated every two years and it lags by a year because monitoring data comes in from the states. He said they are getting 2016 monitoring data soon and hopes the process will speed up in the future.

Agriculture and Nutrient Management

Dr. Douglas Beegle, Professor of Agronomy, Penn State

Link to Doug Beegle's video: <https://youtu.be/pnNOLkQBquw>

Doug's presentation focused on agriculture, nutrient management, and how systemic economic issues drive many of the nutrient problems. He explained that after WWII farming became specialized and the production of livestock, crops and fertilizer was separated geographically. Because the manure from livestock in the Bay watershed is not fertilizing crops in the Midwest, there is a manure disposal problem and a nutrient imbalance. Doug explained how the Bay is paying the economic cost of the extra manure (which has been estimated to be ~\$900 million/year).

Doug offered that to make real positive change in the Bay, the agricultural system has to change. Instead of policies that pressure farmers to implement BMPs to help the environment, there needs to be an economic incentive to do so. Right now there is a conflict between economic production and environmental protection, but in order for food to be produced in a way that causes less pollution, the price for environmentally friendly food must increase. He also recommended we stop requiring farmers to provide nutrient management plans but

to instead focus on reports of what they do versus what they “plan” to do. This will give an accurate picture of the practices on the ground.

Discussion: CAC members asked how subsidies come into play. Doug said that some public funding helps farmers make changes but it is not enough. In relation to the manure nutrient imbalance, Doug said that the important thing is to balance inputs and outputs and that there is no one answer for all of this.

The CAC meeting recessed at 2:00 PM for site visits to Wason and Huntingdon Farms.

Friday, September 8, 2017

Working Breakfast and Business Meeting: The CAC Chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Paula welcomed Kate Fritz, the new director of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Kate gave her background and highlighted some things the Alliance is currently focusing on: the Taste of the Chesapeake; the Watershed Forum; diversity, inclusion and equity goals; and the PA Alliance office moving to Lancaster.

Members discussed the Goodlatte Amendment that passed in the U.S House of Representatives the night before. The amendment would relieve states from any penalties for not meeting the Bay TMDL.

With no discussion of the February 2017 Meeting Minutes, Charlie Stek motioned for approval and Matt Ehrhart seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as submitted.

CAC members agreed to have the next meeting in Washington, DC (Nov 29th-30th, 2017) and discussed some challenges for meeting space, lodging, how to keep costs down and potential topics.

CAC discussed the 2018 meeting dates and locations. The group agreed for the following: February 22-23rd in Maryland; May 23-24th in Lancaster, PA to coincide with the Choose Clean Water Coalition annual conference; Sept 5-6th in Virginia; and November 29-30 in the DC Metro Area.

Paula gave an update on the elimination of federal funding for the Bay Journal due to a shift in EPA priorities. The publication is transparent, non-political and is read by all types of citizens. She asked the Committee if they want to send a letter in support of reinstating the funding. Charlie motioned that CAC write a letter to the Executive Council asking the governors to reach out to the EPA in favor of the Bay Journal. John seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition.

CAC discussed possible suggestions for new members. Jess will send an email to members for suggestions on individuals and areas that are missing representation. Lastly, Paula updated CAC on her presentation to the Executive Council.

PA Department of Environmental Protection Updates

Katie Hetherington Cunfer, Executive Director for External Affairs, PA DEP

Katie updated CAC on the progress that has been made in Pennsylvania to reduce nutrient loads, the work that is still left to do and some of the challenges that lay ahead. Of the remaining reductions for PA, agriculture will likely be responsible for more than 80%. They are moving forward with their six-element restoration strategy that combines a mix of technical and financial assistance, technology, expanded data gathering, improved program coordination, and only when necessary, stronger enforcement and compliance measures. She briefed the group on the progress of the Agricultural Inspection Initiative.

Katie addressed DEP's funding and assured the CAC that unliquidated obligations (ULOs) from EPA funds are accounted for even if they are not yet spent. Turning to Phase III WIP development, Katie shared the development plan and schedule. 240 attended their first stakeholder listening session. The listening sessions scheduled for the future will have a local focus and Katie invited CAC to be involved in these.

Discussion: Pennsylvania CAC members commented that DEP's inspections found that farmers in PA are much more compliant than what many people had expected and that the majority of farmers without a plan were doing BMPs but the plans were not in writing.

CAC discussed PA's funding and how DEP has lost 40% of their funding over the last 15 years. Members raised issues with the inefficiencies of PA's legislature and discussed the rumors of unspent money being detrimental for PA receiving more funding. John brought up abandoned mine lands and said that they should be a higher priority because funding streams already exist to clean them up. Katie said that there are a lot of competing priorities with funding but that they are trying to focus toxic mine sites as redevelopment projects instead of environmental and provided "Brownfields to Playfields" as an example.

Chesapeake Bay Program Updates

Jim Edward, Director, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP)

Jim Edward updated CAC on the Chesapeake Bay Program's Midpoint Assessment. He told CAC that we are making progress and we are seeing tangible results from our collaborative efforts to improve the water quality of the Bay and local waters. Efforts are underway to help state and local jurisdictions see where positive trends are taking place and where things are degrading. During 2013-2015 assessment period, ~37% of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries met water quality standards. Long-term trends in total nitrogen loads show that conditions are improving in the majority of monitoring stations, including the five largest rivers. Phosphorus load trends indicate improving conditions in some areas and degrading conditions in others.

Jim went through the opportunities and challenges that each state is facing moving forward and the top 4 Phase III WIP Expectations: 1) Programmatic and numeric implementation commitments for 2018-2025, 2) strategies for engagement of local, regional and federal partners in implementation, 3) account for changed conditions: climate change, Conowingo Dam infill, growth, 4) develop and implement local planning goals below the state-major basin scales. He recommended that CAC and LGAC be involved in the Phase III Local Planning Goals in the spring of 2018.

CAC Discussion and Final Thoughts

Members discussed the unknown status of the Environmental Education Directive and the desire to see it go to the Executive Council this year. With Charlie's suggestion, CAC came to consensus to write a letter asking for a new educational directive that adds some additional elements including workforce development.

Charlie suggested that CAC urge the PSC to make the Farm Bill a high priority for the governors and to work on a coordinated strategy for Bay-focused funding of agricultural conservation practices. The group agreed to relay this recommendation to the letter to the PSC.

Jorge recommended and CAC agreed to send a future letter to the new Virginia governor after the November gubernatorial election.

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.