

Measuring progress toward Chesapeake Bay Agreement Objectives and adaptive management

Issue: We are not on track to meeting our wetland and forest buffer outcomes. These outcomes are linked to TMDL attainment through the Watershed Implementation Plans, jeopardizing the CBPs ability to put measures in place to attain the TMDL by 2025. It is unclear if progress toward other outcomes associated with the Agreement is in a similar state.

Detailed Summary and Proposed Path Forward

Wetlands

- There are two wetlands outcomes including the restoration or creation of 85,000 acres by 2025 and enhance the function of 150,000 additional acres by 2025. Neither of these are on track. For the purpose of this discussion, we'll focus on the first outcome, but both will need to be addressed eventually.
- The Phase III WIPs call for the restoration or creation of 38,579 acres of wetlands. As a result, it is possible to put the necessary measures in place to achieve the TMDL, but still miss the wetland outcome.
- Currently only 16,130 acres have been restored or created leaving a large gap to attain the WIPs or the wetland outcome.

Path Forward

- Establish an accounting system to accurately track wetland restoration and creation progress, provide training, as appropriate, on its use, and have it used by the jurisdictions.
- Estimate how far the current progress is from the 38,579 acres needed to meet the WIP targets.
- Determine if closing the gap is feasible with current funding and personnel. If so, work through the SRS process to change the objective to match the WIP target, or as close as possible.
- Develop a communication strategy.

Forest Buffers

- The forest buffer outcome is directly linked to the phase III WIP commitments, meaning if it is not met by 2025, the measures will not be in place to meet the TMDL either.
- The forest buffer outcome calls for 900 miles to be planted each year from 2014-2025. The average annual planting rate is roughly 25% of this i.e. 225 miles. In order to catch up planting would need to be increased to 2,075 miles per year. Roughly a 10 fold increase. Therefore we are neither on track to meeting the forest buffer goal nor the TMDL.

Path Forward

- Adopt and implement the Riparian Forest Buffer Placemat SRS recommendations designed to accelerate the rate of forest buffer restoration. This process could also support acceleration of wetland restoration, creation and enhancement practices.
- Convene a representative group to estimate a realistic implementation rate by jurisdiction based on available funding and staff time.

- Evaluate the gap between the realistic rate and the objective. Identify other BMP's that the jurisdictions could use to meet the TMDL. Find the lowest cost solution in terms of funding and personnel.
- Present the cost and recommended reductions in the forest buffer outcome and increases in other BMP outcomes.
- Implement these changes through the SRS process. If this is not possible, begin developing a communication strategy.

Hidden Challenges?

- In advance of the biennial SRS review, use Chesapeake Progress, or if needed conduct a survey to determine which objectives are unlikely to be achieved.
- Prioritize those tied numerically to multiple outcomes, particularly the TMDL.
- Have GIT 6 present summarized results and general recommendations to the Management Board.