**Chesapeake Bay Program Updates**

Much of current Chesapeake Bay Program activity is focused on the so-called “**Mid-Course Assessment**” of progress toward reaching the Bay TMDL nutrient and sediment reduction targets by 2025.

The Mid-Course Assessment will climax in 2017, when the current schedule calls for:

* Bay Program partners achieving **60 percent of the total 2010 – 2025 implementation** of water quality control measures estimated to be necessary to meet the final targets
* Development of **Phase III watershed implementation plans (WIPs)** by each of the Bay states and the District of Columbia to guide implementation of the final 40 percent of measures necessary to achieve the TMDL targets
* **Potential revisions to the tools** the Bay Program partners use to track progress, particularly the watershed model that estimates the annual loads of nutrients and sediment reaching the Bay
* **Potential revision of the TMDL** itself by EPA

**Tanya Spano** and **Karl Berger** participated in a two-day Bay Program meeting in late October to plan for the Mid-Course Assessment, as chair of the wastewater and co-chair of the landuse work groups, respectively. Much of the discussion focused on the priorities and schedule for revising the watershed model so that a new version could be used in the mid-course assessment. The attendees did not discuss policy issues such as extending the TMDL deadline, revising the allocation of load reductions among the partner jurisdiction or whether the Bay’s water quality standards may need to be revised someday through what is known as a Use Attainability Analysis (UAA).

In a related development, **COG sponsored a** **Bay TMDL watershed model workshop** in early October that focused on various tools for estimating load reductions from BMP implementation at the local level as well as on planned upgrades to the Bay Program’s watershed model. COG staff plans to work with the Water Resources Technical Committee members to provide local information and other input to the Bay Program modeling effort as well as share the strategies that members have developed to help them meet Bay Program local targets.

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**TapIt Program Update**

TapIt is a network of businesses in the COG region that agree to allow people to refill their water bottles with tap water at their establishments. With just under 375 TapIt[[1]](#footnote-1) locations in the COG region, COG would like to grow this network. Based on the CBPC’s recommendation, we will be presenting the TapIt program to the COG Board in January with a letter from the Board to Mayors and Chairs asking them to sign letters of support and help promote it to their business communities.

TapIt has several aspects that are appealing to the region, because it:

1. **Supports the COG Economy Forward initiative -** By bringing foot traffic into local businesses. Chances are, when someone goes enters to fill up their water bottle, they might also buy that cookie, sandwich, or bike trail map.
2. **Supports our local water utilities** – By promoting tap water as safe and economical. We invest and will need to invest a lot in our water infrastructure, so it makes sense to promote the use of it.
3. **Supports “trash free” initiatives** - This includes both the Trash Free Potomac initiative, but also the Anacostia trash TMDL, by reducing the potential for plastic bottle waste.

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**Potomac River Trends Updates**

USGS staff gave a technical presentation to the WRTC and the Regional Water Quality Monitoring Subcommittee on November 8th on **the water quality impacts due to Tropical Storm Lee** and **a preliminary report on Potomac River trends**.

* The Susquehanna River is the largest river flowing in the Chesapeake Bay, so the performance of the River as well as the Conowingo Dam (and other reservoirs) can have important impacts on water quality conditions in the upper Bay.
* Major findings:
  + Upstream loads are being reduced in response to BMP implementation;
  + However, sediment and phosphorous loads from the Susquehanna River are already increasing due to the loss of sediment storage capacity in the reservoirs (e.g., as the reservoirs fill, less sediment is trapped and more sediment gets scoured out during storm events).
  + Based on evaluating the last decade of data, the impact of **Tropical Storm Lee** was significant:
    - The storm represented only 0.2% of the time and 1.8% of the flow;
    - However it contributed 22% of the phosphorus and 39% of the sediment loads.
* **Potomac River long-term flow-adjusted concentration trends at the fall line** (i.e., the juncture of the free-flowing and tidal Potomac) **continue to show decreases in nitrogen, while phosphorus and sediment do not show statistically significant changes.**
* **USGS continues to work on these issues:**
  + Evaluating trends in concentration and loads, because:
    - Concentrations provide information on how BMPs have influenced instream concentrations at a given point (i.e., important information for local water-quality and standards attainment).
    - Loads are what is most critical to the overall Bay and lower reaches of the Potomac River (i.e., the basis for the Bay TMDLs).
  + Using a new, more robust methodology to evaluate trends, and piloting this activity in the Potomac River Basin (in 2013)
    - To explain how these trends should be interpreted and why trends in concentration may differ in direction compared to trends in load.
  + Working to better integrate non-tidal nutrient and sediment load and trend results into the current tidal-waters assessment methodology (e.g., **use of local monitoring data**)
* COG staff is working on a scope of work with **Virginia Tech’s Occoquan Water Monitoring Lab (OWML)** to evaluate these and other Potomac River water quality issues, efforts that would include working with the USGS and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

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1. TapIt is primarily targeting cafes and eateries to partner in providing easy access to tap water, but it also applies to grocery stores, bike shops, etc. TapIt is an organization based in New York, and first created a network of partners in DC, via work with DC Water. COG’s Community Engagement Campaign is working with TapIt to expand this program throughout the COG region. TapIt locations are on searchable web-based maps/aps, and are identified by stickers/posters in their window, similar to Zagat ratings. Here is the TapIt website: [www.tapitwater.com](http://www.tapitwater.com)  and COG’s website with the map to search for TapIt locations: [www.mwcog.org/tapit](http://www.mwcog.org/tapit) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)