



COG WATER RESOURCES PROGRAM UPDATES CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM (CBP) (AS OF 5/19/17)

Summary of key CBP activities that COG staff are monitoring or actively involved in that have critical impacts or potential implications for COG’s members & the RWQM Work Program.

| Bay TMDL – Overall Program & Midpoint Assessment (MPA) Activities | COG Contact |
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| <p><u>Chesapeake Bay Program Funding - FY 2017 and FY 2018</u> Federal funding for the remainder of FY2017 continued to fully fund the Chesapeake Bay Program at \$73 million – the same amount that had originally been approved. Based on initial 2017 recommendations, the Administration’s FY 2018 budget may likely propose significant cuts to the program – as well as to several other federal programs that also support the CBP’s efforts (e.g., EPA, NOAA, USDA, Dept. of Interior, etc.). Specifics are not known yet; although the Administration’s FY 2018 budget proposal is expected to be issued the week of May 22nd.</p> <p>There has been considerable feedback and formal input about the proposed budget cuts for EPA as well as for the CBP - from various watershed groups, regional program partnerships, and coalitions of congressional representatives. The CBP Partnership is also actively working to convey the importance of the Bay Program and its benefits; in fact, the upcoming Executive Council meeting on June 8th is expected to focus exclusively on addressing these funding matters.</p> <p>COG staff is monitoring those developments and will be advising the CBPC and Chair on potential COG actions/input over the coming months.</p> | <p>Tanya Spano (202) 962-3776 tspano@mwkog.org</p> |
| <p><u>LGAC Support for the Chesapeake Bay Program</u> On April 4th, the CBP’s Local Government Advisory Council (LGAC) wrote a letter of support to the Chesapeake Executive Council in favor of the Chesapeake Bay Program’s continued funding. To see a copy of the letter click here.</p> | <p>Heidi Bonnaffon (202) 962-3216 hbonnaffon@mwkog.org</p> |
| <p><u>Current Schedule</u> The Bay Program Partnership’s schedule for the Midpoint Assessment (MPA) was endorsed by the Principal Staff Committee. Details regarding the current MPA schedule are presented in a COG graphic that outlines the overall MPA schedule as well as noting key milestones and decision points where COG member input on technical and policy matters will need to be provided over the next few years. Key decisions include the use of the updated Phase 6 modeling tools, allocation of the ‘new’ Conowingo Dam/Susquehanna Watershed loads, and the development of the Phase III Planning Targets which leads to the development of the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs).</p> <p>This MPA process includes a stakeholder review and analysis of all the model outputs and results part of a ‘Fatal Flaw Review’ (June through August 2017). That review would attempt to identify <u>substantive</u> (i.e., fatal) flaws in any of suite of the modeling tools’ assumptions, calibrations, or outputs that would appear to have major impacts on overall Bay Partnership plans and decisions. COG staff will be holding a Water Resources Technical Committee (WRTC) work session (late June/early July) with the support of NVRC staff, to present the results of staff analysis and identify any issues</p> | <p>Tanya Spano (202) 962-3776 tspano@mwkog.org</p> <p>Karl Berger (202) 962-3350 kberger@mwkog.org</p> <p>Heidi Bonnaffon (202) 962-3216 hbonnaffon@mwkog.org</p> |

to bring to the attention of the CBPC. **This summer will be a critical timeframe for COG staff to work with our members to review this information and potentially provide formal comments regarding the accuracy of this key data.**

Key Deadlines

- Final decisions regarding allocation of Conowingo Dam/Susquehanna Watershed loads – Late October 2017
- Draft Phase III WIP Planning Targets issued – October 31, 2017
- Final Phase III WIP Planning Targets issued – March 2018
- Draft Phase III WIPs issued – February 2019
- Final Phase III WIPs issued – April 2019

Note: This schedule allows a one (1) year interval from the issuance of the Final Planning Targets to issuance of the Final WIPs.

Watershed and Water Quality Models– Activities and Issues

COG Contact

Watershed and Water Quality Models

In conjunction with NVRC staff, COG staff continues to track the development of the Bay Program’s updated suite of models, including the Phase 6 Watershed Model. As output from the final versions of these models is being produced, COG staff will work with members to provide input into the “Fatal Flaw” review, ahead of use of the models in major decisions in the MPA process and development of the Phase III WIPs.

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Bay Modeling Navigation Guide

At the last WRTC meeting (4/21/17), COG staff introduced a “Navigation Guide” that staff produced to assist members in analyzing output from the Bay Program’s updated suite of models, including the Phase 6 Watershed Model. One tool in particular - the Chesapeake Assessment and Scenario Tool (CAST), will provide a relatively simple way of accessing output from Bay Program model scenarios and doing local planning. COG staff will develop analytical skills in running CAST and work with the members to share this knowledge and potentially produce regional modeling scenarios.

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Climate Change

COG staff continue to monitor the Bay Program’s efforts to address climate change efforts – both quantitatively by evaluating modeling results as well as qualitatively by assessing which stormwater BMP practices appear most vulnerable or robust under potential future climate conditions. **A presentation on the Bay Program’s climate impacts and planning efforts is planned for the July 28th CBPC meeting.**

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Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Storm Risk Management Study

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is serving as the non-federal sponsor for an Army Corps of Engineers Coast Storm Risk Management Study which will investigate flood risks in the vicinity of the region’s tidal areas, and identify potential solutions to protect the vulnerable infrastructure assets upon which the region relies. The effort would build on existing studies.

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COG is working with the Corps and with potential partners to identify cost-share funding for the study. The \$3 million study requires 50% cost-share (\$1.5 million) over

the next three years. The study will provide a comprehensive coastal flood risk assessment that will provide more detailed analysis than previous efforts.

COG staff will also be working to ensure that the climate inputs in the proposed USACE Coastal Flooding Risk Study are comparable with those being used by the Bay Program as well as other formal studies.

Bay and Potomac Report Cards

Bay Scores

In a [report](#) issued this month, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's (UMCES) annual report card gave the Chesapeake Bay a grade of "C" for 2016. The grade is based on an overall score of 54 out of 100, which combines individual scores for several factors, including pollutant levels, measurements of water quality indicators and abundance of natural resources. **The score of 54 is the highest score UMCES has calculated since 2002 and one of the highest it has recorded in the 30-year history of its report card.**

In its 2016 [report](#), issued in January, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) gave the Bay an overall score of 34 out of 100, which is the **highest score in the 18-year history of that scorecard.** CBF's score is based on a somewhat similar mix of indicators to those used by UMCES

Potomac Scores

UMCES's 2016 report card gave the tidal Potomac estuary an overall score of 43 out of 100 for 2016. Scores for the Potomac estuary have consistently been lower than those for the Bay as-a-whole; but, like the overall Bay score, **the Potomac's 2016 score is its highest in recent years.**

CBF's report card does not grade the Bay's tidal tributaries. Another environmental group, the Potomac Conservancy, does issue annual grades for the health of the river as-a-whole (not just the tidal estuary) based on 22 indicators in five categories. In its [2016 report](#), issued a year ago, the Conservancy gave the **Potomac a grade of B-, the highest grade it has awarded in the 9-year history of its report card.** Its 2017 report should be issued soon.

COG Staff Analysis

Although all of these reports are based on water quality monitoring data and other available data about the watershed, the various scores and grades represent different interpretations of that data and differing viewpoints about the importance of the various indicators. **There is a scientific consensus that the health of Bay waters, including the tidal Potomac, is slowly improving due to restoration efforts. The need for continued long-term water quality monitoring has also been identified by everyone as a critical element of the EPA/CBP and related federal budget discussions.**

Under its Regional Water Quality Management work program, COG continues to focus on water quality trends in the Potomac. Through a contract with Virginia Tech's Occoquan Watershed Monitoring Laboratory, COG staff keeps tabs on the quality of the Potomac's waters as they enter the top of the estuary at Chain Bridge; and works with staff from Maryland DNR and other monitoring agencies to track water quality in the Potomac estuary. In future updates to COG's Potomac Water Quality Fact Sheet, staff plans to report on emerging Bay Program analysis that links water quality trends at Chain Bridge with water quality trends in the estuary. These efforts will continue to examine COG's investments in water quality monitoring, and make recommendations about water quality monitoring that provides the greatest benefits for the region.

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| Outreach – CBP Focused | COG Contact |
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| <p><u>Chair Sze Recognized Benefits of Local Water Quality Efforts in Bay Context</u> Chair Sze was featured in an April COG interview about water quality in local streams and how those efforts relate to the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. Chair Sze focused on one local tributary’s restoration in Falls Church in this clip which goes hand-in-hand with his Washington Post “Local Opinion” piece. To view: https://www.mwcog.org/newsroom/2017/04/20/daniel-sze-everyone-wins-when-we-work-together-for-clean-water/</p> | <p>Heidi Bonnaffon (202) 962-3216 hbonnaffon@mwcog.org</p> |
| <p>Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week - Week of June 4th As outlined in the CBP’s adopted Outreach Plan, COG staff continue to coordinate with COG members and partner with other organizations to highlight Chesapeake Bay Awareness week – and to link these efforts to local water quality efforts and improvements.</p> <p>On June 10th, the Alliance for the Chesapeake will be holding a Back to the Bay celebration at Mason Neck State Park in Lorton, VA. For details: http://www.vcnva.org/chesapeake-bay-awareness-week/</p> <p>Maryland Public Television also has a Bay Week the end of April. To watch April 2017 features, visit: http://bayweek.mpt.org/watchonline/</p> <p>Please let COG staff member Heidi Bonnaffon know of any events you are planning for Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week 2017. For a listing of planned events visit http://www.vcnva.org/chesapeake-bay-awareness-week/</p> | <p>Heidi Bonnaffon (202) 962-3216 hbonnaffon@mwcog.org</p> |

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