

Appendix 1 - Workshop Summaries

This resource is a summary of the topics discussed at the Fall 2018 WIP workshops. The purpose of this appendix is to provide agencies with more information about topics discussed.

Overview

The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology facilitated six regional meetings across the state of Maryland to engage a diverse group of stakeholders in conversations about Phase III of the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), commonly discussed as the Bay Cleanup. These meetings were held in November and December of 2018.

In response to feedback from previous meetings held, the format of these meetings was adapted to better suit the needs of constituents. The first portion of the workshop consisted of state agency presentations with question and answer sessions, followed by a second portion of county breakout groups. The questions below have been separated by sections of the meeting as well as general themes.

Presentation Question and Answers

Cross-Sector Cooperation and Partnerships

It is clear to stakeholders that improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay is a collaborative effort. While this notion is widely accepted, there is uncertainty as to how to most productively and efficiently form these partnerships in the absence of adequate funding, information, and clarity of goals.

Water Quality Trading

Water quality trading is a potential source for collaboration between sectors to reach WIP goals. Concerns about nutrient trading center on incentives, crediting, and viable markets. There are concerns that trading of credits will allow for the ability of polluters to pay off the pollution. Additional concerns were voiced around social justice issues — that areas with historically high impacts will not be supported with funding and resources.

Private Property and Private Businesses

A prominent concern for constituents is figuring out how to engage private landowners to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their private land. Similarly, how can cross-sector partnership and cooperation help incentivize the involvement of private businesses for funding Bay restoration efforts?

Education

Every region expressed a desire for more available WIP education. Target demographics for this education include school children, HOAs, developers, and elected officials. There are opportunities for varying sectors to partner with schools and county offices to provide this education.

Technical Assistance

A continuing hindrance to cleanup efforts is the lack of technical assistance. Every region in the state cited funding, time and staffing as factors that are holding sectors back from reaching maximum reductions.

It is important to note that in addition to an increase in funding, there is a need to streamline current processes to obtain funding. Similarly, there need not be just an increase in staffing, but an increase in competent, engaged, and long-term staffing.

BMPs and Credits

Constituents have many questions about the classification of BMPs and where credits go. For many emerging practices, like solar, the Conowingo Dam and aquaculture, there is confusion over how they will fit into the structure of the WIP. There is especially a concern with how practices will be credited once water quality trading has a viable market.

Elaboration on Data

Many questions concerned the data presented by the state agencies. These questions show where data presented can be clarified or explained.

Future Planning

Constituents are concerned with the future. Counties are trying to figure out what goals are realistic and attainable. Further concern about goals that are constantly changing can impact planning and resource allocation at local levels.

Aligning for Growth

A major concern includes changes in population size and development. While most areas are concerned about a future increase in development, some regions are facing a reduction in population size. With development comes an increase in impervious surfaces, emissions, and waste.

Climate Change

Climate change was very frequently on the minds of constituents. Generally, stakeholders want to know how climate change will affect the ability of counties to reach their WIP targets. Participants expressed concerns that incorporating climate change into the Bay model will make targets more difficult to achieve communication about changes in goals and targets should be related as soon as possible.

Beyond 2025

As was rightfully noted, 2025 is just another milestone. How can stakeholders plan for beyond 2025? There is no finish line. Constituents are interested in how to orient their communities for the long-term goals of water quality.

County Breakouts

Each region had an opportunity to network and address eight questions within their individual counties. The feedback from these sessions has been condensed into five main focal points with sub-themes in each.

Reaction to Information Presented

Phrasing and Timing of Data

The data can be highly technical which leads to confusion. Additionally, there was a strong demand for information to be disseminated prior to meetings in the future so stakeholders have the ability to carefully consider what is being presented before attending.

Attainability

Each region has a general concern with how realistic the projections are. Multiple counties suggested they may be unattainable. It was also noted that variables such as climate change, shifting policies, and growth will impact each region's ability to reach their goal.

Opportunities for Collaboration and State Assistance

Active Creation of Partnerships

In every county, there were suggestions of partnerships that had varied pairings of NGOs, the state, counties, municipalities, private entities, and schools. One strong example of partnerships was between ShoreRivers, Queen Anne's County government, and the Queen Anne's County Soil Conservation District. It was also suggested that the project "Envision the Choptank" be used as a model for collaboration across jurisdictions and sectors.

Peer-to-Peer Information Sharing

Information sharing about successful projects, navigating various permitting processes, and finding common needs will help create opportunities for collaboration. It was suggested to create a website, have meetings and share resources to facilitate these connections.

Private Property

Private property was one of the most frequent topics discussed at every meeting. Private landowners are a potential source of reductions. Stakeholders need to develop new strategies to engage with property owners. It is also important to approach agricultural landowners who lease land to farm operators to increase conservation practices on agricultural lands.

Opportunities to find Cost-Share

Potential partners for cost-sharing included NGOs, local governments, state agencies and circuit riders. Tools for cost-share included Forest Conservation Funds, Critical Area Funds, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Bay Restoration Fund, and MACS. Opportunities to increase cost-share included public tax benefits, incentives, utility fees, and fee-in-lieu funds.

Recommendations and Barriers

Technical Assistance

Allocate resources for a group of regional experts to expand technical assistance:

Every county in the state reported needing more funding, staffing, and time. If only one concern could be conveyed fully, it would be the need for technical assistance. Offices are overwhelmed with paperwork and lack the tools needed to catch up and get ahead. Technical assistance is needed to ensure that the cleanup efforts reach its full potential.

Streamlining Permitting

Reduce paperwork and time to approval for state permits:

Permitting is a large source of frustration for constituents. It was suggested that permits be streamlined in any ways possible. This may include reducing how much is needed, clarifying what permitting is required for maintenance, reducing multi-level permits, and bundling permits.

Availability of Information

Produce a single Maryland Bay Portal to guide access to information:

There is a strong desire to have information available as early as possible, as clearly as possible, and in one easy to locate format. There were many ideas about creating databases holding various information, such as qualified contractors, shared needs, WIP information, and feedback on practices that are successful. Having an online tool will help facilitate connections and partnerships that will allow the state to reach its water quality goals.

Maintenance

Reconfigure funding tools to prioritize maintenance:

Maintenance is a concern because BMPs that have been implemented may stop providing benefits without maintenance. Currently, there is a lack of funding for maintenance and a concern over verification of BMPs. This issue is exacerbated by defunct HOAs and absent developers who have installed practices, like stormwater ponds, and are now not maintaining them. This causes an issue for reaching target goals and also for reporting purposes.

Options for WIP Communication in the future

The consensus is that the more communication the better. Stakeholders appreciate regional meetings and opportunities. It would also be beneficial for combined meetings with Phase 1 and Phase 2 counties. Stakeholders were interested in forming their own regional connections and conduct meetings without state facilitation. There is a desire for meetings, or at least comparisons, with other mid-Atlantic states.