



STEWARDSHIP OUTCOME

MARCH 2024 QUARTERLY PROGRESS MEETING

Stewardship Goal: *Increase the number and diversity of individual stewards and local governments that actively support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities that achieve healthy local streams, rivers and a vibrant Chesapeake Bay.*

Stewardship Outcome: **Increase the number and diversity of trained and mobilized stewards with the knowledge and skills needed to enhance the health of their local watersheds.**

LOOKING BACK: LEARNING FROM THE LAST TWO YEARS

Celebrate Our Accomplishments & Best Practices

1. Since your last QPM, what key successes would you like to highlight to the Management Board?

Attention and achievement for the Stewardship Workgroup in recent years has focused on ongoing and increasing emphasis on utilizing social science and developing and providing tools that can be used to integrate social science best practices throughout CBP to support many Outcomes.

- **Behavioral Science** – significant investment in building and sharing tools and practices to improve approaches to stewardship in multiple content areas –
 - **Residential Stewardship Data Collection:** In 2017, the Chesapeake Bay Program conducted its first comprehensive survey of people’s actions and attitudes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The survey was developed and conducted by OpinionWorks, LLC. The data was collected through mobile and landline phone interviews with 5,212 randomly selected watershed residents between March and June 2017. In the summer and fall of 2023, OpinionWorks administered an updated version of the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Index survey. This time, the data was collected online and through mobile and landline phone interviews with 6,561 randomly selected watershed residents. The survey includes questions on residential stewardship behaviors, volunteerism, civic engagement and perceptions and attitudes. The data are instrumental in understanding what behaviors residents are adopting, and the propensity of residents to take future action. Both are critical when developing programs and policies designed to increase residential stewardship.
 - **Chesapeake Behavior Change:** Chesapeake Behavior Change website (www.chesapeakebehaviorchange.org) was updated to include the new 2023 data. This new data will enable users to access the most current data to inform development of behavior change campaigns.
 - **Enhancing Chesapeake Bay Partnership Activities by Integrating Social Science:** This report presents results of an initial investigation into the state of social science integration within the Chesapeake Bay Partnership (CBP). The purpose of the study, which was requested by the Stewardship Workgroup, was to identify opportunities where the practice of social science could be enhanced to advance goals and adaptively manage ongoing CBP efforts. This document summarizes recommendations for advancing social science integration, or the use of knowledge from multiple social science disciplines to develop or adapt methods, to address the Watershed Agreement goals. The recommendations cover ideas for prioritizing interdisciplinary research, supporting social science application, and strategically applying social science within and across institutions.

- **Building Professional Community** – This was a main focus of our work over the past two years, since a fully operational Workgroup had not been in place while baseline products such as the Stewardship Survey/ Indicator and Chesapeake Behavior Change website were being newly developed. In the last two years, co-chair roles changed as outgoing co-chairs shifted to focusing their attention on the indicator and website and new co-chairs helped to develop a new action plan. Quarterly Workgroup meetings were used as a means for regular gathering to build relationships, exchange partner updates, develop shared understanding of practices to promote and consider scaling up (through featured examples of successful programs and discussion), and to explore solutions to challenges. This extended process was used to re-energize and expand the Workgroup membership and create a foundation for a functioning, effective network that would be well-suited to future collective action. With renewed sense of professional community, the intent was to encourage buy-in of members to increase participation in implementation.
- **Network Building** – Rallying Workgroup membership is one part of establishing means for making progress toward the outcome, yet an additional, important part is engaging help from the larger network beyond the Bay Program partners. With GIT-funding support, the Workgroup has begun a process to identify and corral (connect) the wide array of stewardship providers working across the Bay watershed. The Network Mapping and Analysis project is creating a visualization tool, now dubbed “**Chesapeake Steward Map,**” to depict the members of the network and their connections to each other, to serve as a resource to reveal hubs, gaps, assets, and opportunities for strategic connections. The map is intended to be used for matchmaking among partners, providers, audiences and others wanting to share knowledge and resources to increase stewardship efforts. This effort will deepen collaborative partnerships, increase connections, and build the capacity of other stakeholders through facilitation of strategic connections for knowledge and resource sharing. This will support the Stewardship professional community as well as other content areas within CBP that could benefit from increased stewardship participation and can help our audiences find assistance with their own stewardship needs and efforts.

Evaluate Our Progress

2. Are we, as a partnership, making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve this outcome? Would you define our outlook as on course, off course, uncertain, or completed? Upon what basis are you forecasting this outlook?

The overall outlook is uncertain, given the complexity of measuring and addressing progress. This work is by nature an ongoing, unending effort. The rate of progress in terms of increasing the number and diversity of trained and mobilized stewards is currently much too slow on a regional scale. We need to enlist meaningful participation of a large portion of the population in stewardship efforts to achieve significant improvement in water quality and other environmental conditions. The approach has been to measure progress toward the ultimate vision of involving 100% of the watershed residents. This situation can be looked at in various ways:

- Using the indicator as a guide to measure progress, this outcome is currently uncertain. The indicator was established in 2021 using the 2017 stewardship behavior data as a baseline. The indicator was to measure current and potential future progress and to be used to inform effective engagement programs. While we have the next installment of the data (from the 2023 survey) in hand to measure progress since 2017, we are currently in the process of analyzing the data and thus the progress is uncertain. It is expected that the stewardship indicator will be finalized in spring/summer 2024. There is not a numeric target set for this Outcome, as it calls for only an **increase** in the number and diversity of stewards. Because the indicator is really still in development, we can't just yet characterize progress or the effectiveness of the indicator as a means for measurement and analysis. The survey is planned to recur on a 5-year cycle. We may in the future need to consider establishing more time-bound, realistic milestones for participation by percentage of the population.
- For the Workgroup's part, this slow pace is due, in large part, to not having enough staff (or paid partners) with time fully dedicated to this work. In addition, Stewardship Workgroup members in comparison to agency staff serving other workgroups, typically work on a voluntary basis rather than serving as a designated

representative for a Bay Agreement signatory agency. Many of the Stewardship participants represent non-government organizations, and they participate as an add-on to their work, often unpaid. This means that their ability to contribute to joint efforts is limited and they aren't compelled, as signatories are, to implement actions toward the commitment. We have not yet fully activated engagement with the large network of on-the-ground stewardship groups, but activating these groups collectively under some shared priorities is a strategy to move the needle more rapidly. This can begin once the network building tool (Chesapeake Steward Map) is complete and in use, potentially in the last half of 2024.

- Meanwhile, individual partners who are providing stewardship programs more directly might report that they are making progress, but we have neither captured that data nor determined how to build on their work as a larger, regional, collective effort. We need to identify and implement effective ways to scale up or replicate the programs that are more successful on a smaller scale, and implement smart strategies to amplify results across the watershed.

3. How would you summarize your recent progress toward achieving your outcome (since your last QPM)? Would you characterize this progress as an increase, decrease, no change, or completed?

Significant progress has been made recently on several activities including collecting 2023 stewardship behavior data and finalizing the partnership social science assessment. Both of these accomplishments have increased our ability to understand the state of residential stewardship as well as opportunities to incorporate social science more purposefully within the partnership structure and function.

Characterizing progress toward the Stewardship Outcome is complicated, and change takes a long time. A summary of “no change” is therefore potentially most accurate, though there are achievements that contribute to progress continually. Along with the Workgroup's efforts, there are many partners working across the watershed to increase and support stewardship in innumerable ways, and they are making a difference, from building awareness to installing projects in communities to facilitating active support for practices and decisions that benefit environmental health. Progress toward the Stewardship Outcome takes a combination of these myriad programs and actions of individuals and groups across the watershed, along with collective action of the partners through the CBP and its Outcome groups, including but not limited to the Stewardship Workgroup.

Measuring this progress is a challenge, one that has been tackled quantitatively only regarding one aspect: stewardship actions taken by **individuals**, using the baseline indicator established in 2021 with data from the 2017 Stewardship Index survey. This comprehensive survey of stewardship actions and attitudes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed was administered for a second time in 2022 to collect data toward the indicator, and that data is being used to update a progress metric [assessment of change since 2017 is to be determined upon completion of the analysis, expected in spring/summer of 2024]. Following tenets of social science, individual action is a first step on the “ladder of engagement,” which leads to more complex, collective community actions. Resources are needed to prioritize programmatic efforts and build desired behaviors toward more community-scale actions for greatest impact.

Lessons Learned

4. If our outlook is off course, what has been the most critical influencing factor or gap that needs to be addressed to accelerate progress?

Although we don't characterize our outlook as being off course, we do feel there are gaps that hinder progress.

The most critical gap that needs to be addressed to accelerate progress is the lack of ability to guide investments to increase stewardship among watershed residents as shown in the data collected in the 2017 and 2023 Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Index survey. There is a need for more analysis of the data and what it tells us about the willingness of residents to take action or the barriers to stewardship. Although expertise

has been retained to help with careful construction of the survey questions, new consideration is being given to further improving the survey instrument and its inclusiveness of all audiences, to get a more complete picture of watershed residents' attitudes and abilities.

Accessibility of participation in stewardship is a factor that influences our effectiveness to involve more people. We need to expand how we define stewardship to ensure that what we are promoting is available to everyone, no matter whether they live in rural, suburban or urban settings. Reliance on volunteerism is also problematic, as there are many residents who don't have the capacity to volunteer their time. We need to explore and promote innovative programs that offer funding and technical assistance to communities and groups to be able to implement stewardship actions that specifically benefit local needs – such as local field liaisons or technical assistance providers that are being considered among multiple CBP groups to support traditionally underserved community partners.

Internally, looking at the Workgroup itself, our limited capacity in terms of structure, function, staffing and member/partner involvement has prevented us from making more headway on our planned actions, and will need to be addressed going forward. The network building effort has been an important first step; and a thoughtful, strategic approach to more effective operations will be helpful. Once the new (2024-2025) action plan is in place – one that is right-sized for our capacity and current priorities – we can be more proactive about organizing committees with an active lead partner to mobilize Workgroup members to implement the identified actions.

5. Consider and reflect on the actions you intended to take during the past cycle. For actions that have not begun, or which have encountered a serious barrier, what is preventing us from taking action? Are these actions still needed?

Lack of time/capacity are the biggest barrier to taking all of the actions planned. Most of the actions are still valid goals, but we would benefit from more staff or paid partners helping as well as an improved strategy for mobilizing partners/ Workgroup members toward action.

The action plan was ambitious and a bit naive about expectations. Building the professional community among the Workgroup members is a necessarily lengthy process, in order to establish relationships, trust, and shared understanding of priorities.

6. What have we learned over the past two years that we'll need to consider in the coming two years?

- We were much too ambitious with our 2022-2023 action plan, not appreciating the effort and time required to accomplish each of the actions and to build a functioning professional community with the agency, empowerment and motivation to actively take on actions.
- We have not been as effective as we could be in mobilizing Workgroup members to implement actions or take some lead responsibilities. Now that there are stronger relationships and interest among Workgroup members, we are poised to do better with this in the next two years, and will need to develop an effective strategy or approach to achieve more.
- We have not tended to regularly reviewing the Logic & Action Plan and checking our progress or lack thereof. Attention to building the network and continuing to develop the metric and online tools has had to take precedence, given staff and Workgroup capacity limitations, and the fact that these are needed items to help us focus our work moving forward.

ASSESSING OUR EFFORTS AND GAPS

Factors

7. **Summarize here any newly identified influencing factors, and why they were added to your Management Strategy. If any factors have been deleted, are they the result of our actions, and what have we learned as a result?**

The Management Strategy review and revision is set to occur after this stage of the biennial review, so an analysis has not yet happened. We have not identified new or deleted any existing influencing factors.

8. **Prioritize and summarize here the factors best tackled as a Partnership (or GIT/workgroup), that have the greatest impact to achieve our outcome.**

Based on our reflection of recent work and considering where we are going in the future, some areas of focus will include:

- **Understanding our audience.** What do we still need to achieve to marshal enough stewardship to make a significant impact on the health of the watershed? What counts as stewardship and what constitutes “enough?” In order to determine this, we need to first dissect and analyze where we are currently. This starts with understanding who our audiences are, what motivates them, what they’re willing and able to do, and what they are currently doing or not that contributes or what they are not doing and why. Much of this information is collected and analyzed through the stewardship indicator survey, and we can use that to help guide our work. A helpful step over the next 1-2 years will be investing in more promotion of the data analysis that is made available on the ChesapeakeBehaviorChange website as well as supporting training for those practitioners and local leaders who can use the site to advance their outreach and stewardship efforts – to improve how the information guides the approaches to stewardship, and how it informs effective stewardship campaigns and interventions. We also need to rethink how we define what is considered effective stewardship, and reconsider how we present information in order to be more inclusive of more of our intended audiences. The survey and indicator have been focused on a target of eventually achieving 100% participation of all watershed residents in taking stewardship action, and we are now thinking that this is not an achievable goal and we need a new target.
- **Tracking and communicating a more complete picture of stewardship.** Taking stock of where we are currently can be a source of guidance to know where we still need to go. One element that can help in the future is recognizing all that is being done toward stewardship across the watershed among our partners. As a Workgroup, we should be communicating what we’re all doing, i.e., collecting information from each of the partners about their stewardship efforts, and rolling it up to an aggregated report with numbers to show how many people partners are engaging and to depict the breadth of stewardship work as a whole. Using our social science tools such as the ChesapeakeBehaviorChange website and the stewardship survey data, along with the network mapping tool, we can start to identify strengths and gaps. We can use those as priorities to promote among funders and programs, helping partners to see where more resources should be going to increase stewardship in certain areas or with different audiences; and to help pair up entities who can work collaboratively to increase stewardship. This might include, for example, helping to pair CBP Workgroups with audiences that can contribute to their outcomes through stewardship, or communities needing technical assistance or funding.
- **Enhancing interaction between the CBP Workgroups.** One intended use of the network mapping tool is to help connect the Workgroups with potential audiences and partners that could help them meet their Outcomes through increased stewardship, which would, for example, benefit efforts to increase tree canopy, or to help address landowner needs regarding wetlands, BMPs, or other conservation measures. Where we find overlapping or common needs that could be met jointly, we may find some efficiencies in developing a campaign for stewardship across the watershed that will have significant impact.

Gaps

9. For those high priority factors summarized above, what is getting in the way of addressing them or what gaps continue to exist despite the current efforts to address those factors?

The capacity issue is a problem because a lot of those who participate in the Workgroup are either deeply involved in CBP and therefore already overburdened with workload, or they are practitioners from small organizations and don't have the ability to take on CBP group roles (especially those who aren't getting paid to participate). This is a legitimate barrier to engagement.

FOCUSING ON THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Actions And Needed Support

10. Describe any scientific, environmental, fiscal, or policy-related developments that have already or may influence your work over the next two years.

- **New or increased funding sources** (Federal, some state) have become available that can support stewardship efforts, particularly on the ground efforts. The Biden Administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is presenting an almost overwhelming number of possibilities to combine infrastructure improvements with environmental needs, such as including best practices for green infrastructure in transportation or housing related projects, to address flooding and climate resiliency, and integrate recreational opportunities to benefit health. Any or all of these efforts can manifest in increased workforce opportunities as well as associated training programs. Stewardship efforts planned now should have strong ties to workforce development. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Chesapeake WILD program will provide funding for habitat conservation/ enhancement and includes engaging people, communities, education, and recreation. The Small Watershed Grants administered by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation with EPA funding also prioritize community-based efforts that benefit water quality, providing support for additional stewardship and community engagement opportunities. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program and the associated Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program (administered through NPS) provides significant grants for large urban areas that can fund parks and amenities for recreation which can increase opportunities to engage community members in stewardship activities. Thanks to recent Executive Orders, the emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice comes with provisions to focus 40% of funding on underserved communities. Several global, federal and state efforts in place or emerging are focused on planting trees as a climate solution and to address environmental justice and equity in communities, and they include programs and funding. In Maryland, the Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021 established a state goal of planting 5 million trees within the next decade, with at least 500,000 (10%) of those planted in targeted urban, underserved areas. Implementing the Act includes a number of statewide programs to administer the funding (e.g., Urban Trees Grant Program), provide technical support, and address concerns such as supply of trees, maintenance, etc., and associated job opportunities. These are just a few examples of programmatic and funding enhancements that have opened numerous avenues to engage and benefit watershed residents and increase interest and participation in caring for the local environment. In the coming two years, the Workgroup could coordinate with others in the CBP to make sure that these opportunities are well-known and that assistance is available for those wanting to apply.
- **Cross-Outcome opportunities:** Within CBP, efforts toward reaching forest, riparian buffer, tree canopy, wetlands and land conservation Outcomes are being amplified as we get closer to 2025, needing to increase progress to reach their targets. These can be connected to stewardship strategies through multiple CBP workgroups and networks. We will need to determine capacity and best approaches for working effectively across Outcomes for mutual benefits, and work with CBP partners to help provide guidance/advice on how they can incorporate appropriate stewardship efforts into their work. The network of networks, empowered by the network mapping tool, will be a key resource for mobilizing more stewardship that contributes across Outcomes.

- **Increased awareness of and emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ)** has and will continue to demand improved approaches to stewardship that are more effective at engaging watershed residents in appropriate, meaningful ways. This will entail a rethinking of the reliance on volunteers and volunteerism, which can be exclusive to those who have the time and the means; determining successful ways to enlist local leaders and champions at the community level as well as working with local governments; and developing programs with input from and involvement of audiences to account for their needs and preferences, and to assure that previously marginalized communities and/or communities of environmental justice concern are not deprioritized. Attention to connections with workforce development need to be included in these efforts. To this end, the Stewardship Workgroup will continue to coordinate more regularly with the Diversity WG and the Local Leadership WG.

11. Based on these developments and the learning discussed in the previous sections, summarize any new actions you are planning to address these gaps over the next two years.

- **Revising the indicator:** The survey and indicator have been focused on a target of eventually achieving 100% participation of all watershed residents in taking stewardship action, and we are now thinking that this is not an achievable goal and we need a new target. The Workgroup has begun planning for new ways to show progress within different elements of the indicator, rather than combining every factor that affects the indicator into one rolled up score. This will provide more meaningful information that can be used to guide specific approaches to address participation willingness and other stewardship elements with different audiences.
- **Improving how we portray stewardship efforts among partners:** In order to track and communicate what is happening for stewardship across the watershed among all partners, first we need to fully map the universe of groups doing the work, using the new network mapping tool. Once the tool is in place and being utilized, we will use it to build a stronger network of those stewardship providers (practitioners), and encourage them to participate in providing their information to contribute to the whole. We will need to develop a simple, standardized reporting process that is done in a way that does not place additional reporting burden on the partners. Then we need a team to analyze and summarize the responses, and we can work with the CBP communications team to help tell the success stories. Ideally, such surveys would be conducted every other year.

12. Have you identified new needs, or have previously unmet needs, that are beyond the ability of your group to meet and, therefore, you need the assistance of the Management Board to achieve?

N/A

13. What steps are you continuing, or can you take, to ensure your actions and work will be equitably distributed and focused in geographic areas and communities that have been underserved in the past?

With help from the Diversity Workgroup, we are considering how CBP stewardship and outreach efforts can be enhanced to be more equitable and to achieve greater results. The Stewardship indicator has been focusing on individual stewardship practices that occur through daily behaviors and volunteerism. While these are helpful behaviors that contribute to environmental improvement, it is only part of the picture of what needs to be done to make a significant difference. Not everyone living in the watershed has the luxury or ability to participate in stewardship as defined by the actions used in the indicator. We are looking into ways to expand what we mean by stewardship so it is more inclusive, and how it is communicated to residents and represented in our progress tracking methods. We are also working together to identify efforts needed to move up the “ladder of engagement” toward community-scale actions and community-based programs supporting sustainable living practices, and how we can track this progress, and to enlist more help from local champions to aid progress toward stewardship. Capturing these kinds of community-based efforts may be a next step for the Network Mapping project, in addition to potentially tracking whether CBP and related funding and technical assistance and other efforts are supporting those projects in the future; if not, the Network Mapping project can highlight gaps to be addressed.