



Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP)
Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
December 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes
December 3-4, 2024; Virtual
[Meeting Webpage](#)

Attendance:

Members: Matt Baker (UMBC), Kathy Boomer (FFAR), Charles Bott (HRSD), John Bovay (VT), Chris Brosch (DDA), Shirley Clark (PSU), KC Filippino (HRPDC), Carl Friedrichs (VIMS), Kathy Gee (Longwood University), Ben Hayes (Bucknell University), Christine Kirchhoff (PSU), Scott Knoche (Morgan State, PEARL), Ellen Kohl (UMBC), Yusuke Kuwayama (UMBC), Erin Letavic (Herbert, Rowland, & Grubic, Inc. [HRG]), Mark Monaco (NOAA-NCCOS), Greg Noe (USGS), Efeturi Oghenekaro (DOEE), Leah Palm-Forster (UD), Joe Reustle (Hampton University), Mike Runge (USGS), Larry Sanford (UMCES), Tess Thompson (VT), Emily Trentacoste (EPA), Joe Wood (CBF), Weixing Zhu (Binghamton)

Guests: Greg Allen (EPA), Doug Austin (EPA), Marisa Baldine (CRC), Rich Batiuk (Coastwise Partners), William Benton (SevGen Solutions), Jess Blackburn (Stakeholders' AC), Karl Blankenship (Bay Journal), Donald Boesch (UMCES), Katie Brownson (USFS), Ruth Cassily (UMD), Jeremy Cox (Bay Journal), Liz Feinberg (CalVan Environmental), Tom Graupensperger (Dewberry), Kaylyn Gootman (EPA), Amy Handen (EPA), Verna Harrison (Stakeholders' AC), Ashley Hullinger (PA DEP), Caroline Kleis (EPA), Aaron Kornbluth (Akorn Environmental Consulting), Adrienne Kotula (CBC), Cecilia Lane (Chesapeake Stormwater Network), James Martin (VA Dept of Conservation and Recreation), Lee McDonnell (EPA), Kevin McLean (CBP), Bill Noftsinger (Alpha Omega Wealth Management), Charlie Paullin (Virginia Mercury), Bob Perciasepe (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions), Bailey Robertory (MD DNR), Kristin Saunders (UMCES), Jillian Seagraves (National Park Service), Melissa Sines (Colmena Consulting), Gary Shenk (USGS), Kathy Stecker (MDE), Breck Sullivan (USGS), Sean Taylor (Prince George's County), Patrick Thompson (Energy Works), Suzanne Trevena (EPA), Harry Zhang (Water Research Foundation)

Administration: Meg Cole (CRC), Tou Matthews (CRC), Denice Wardrop (CRC)

Tuesday, December 3

Call to Order, STAC Business, Announcements – Larry Sanford (STAC Chair – UMCES)

STAC Chair Larry Sanford (UMCES) called the meeting to start at 9:05AM. STAC Staff provided a brief update on STAC membership and Sanford provided a recap of the September Quarterly meeting. The September STAC Quarterly Meeting Minutes and October and November Executive Board Meeting Minutes were approved without comment. Sanford announced the STAC 2025 quarterly meeting dates, which were approved following the previous quarterly meeting. STAC Staff has already begun planning the in-person June 2025 quarterly meeting to take place at the [National Conservation Training Center](#) (NCTC) and virtual quarterly meetings will be shortened into half-days.

The Steering Committee for the FY24 Workshop “*Blueprint for Building Partnerships and Recommendations for Scaling Brook Trout Restoration in Stronghold and Persistent Patches,*” to be held in [Pennsylvania](#) and in [Maryland](#), requested a No-Cost Extension. The workshop, originally planned for

January and February 2025, will now be extended through June 2025 This adjustment was made in response to a recent directive from the Management Board (MB), which requires Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) and Workgroups to assess their outcomes in early 2025. The Brook Trout Workgroup expressed concerns about their ability to provide meaningful input on their outcomes while simultaneously planning and hosting the STAC workshop. The STAC Executive Board (EB) approved the extension request through an electronic vote, and the request was approved without comment. The meeting concluded with no further business.

- Membership Update:
 - Jason Hubbard (WVU) has stepped down from his West Virginia Gubernatorial Appointment. STAC Staff is working with West Virginia to approve a new appointee.
 - Amir Sharifi (formerly DC DOEE) has stepped down from his DC Mayoral Appointment. STAC Staff and Efeturi Oghenekaro (DC DOEE) are working with DC to approve a new appointee.
- STAC 2025 quarterly meeting Dates:
 - March 4-5, 2025; virtual
 - June 16-18, 2025; in-person at NCTC
 - September 16-17, 2025; hybrid with location TBD
 - December 2-3, 2025

DECISION: September 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes approved; October 2024 Executive Board Meeting Minutes and November 2024 Executive Board Meeting Minutes approved.

DECISION: No-Cost Extension Request from the FY24 Brook Trout Workshop approved.

October 2024 PSC Meeting and 2024 STAC Letter to the Executive Council – Larry Sanford (UMCES)
Sanford summarized the [October 2024 Principals’ Staff Committee \(PSC\) Meeting](#) held October 24, 2024. The meeting focused on the [Beyond 2025 report](#) and the PSC’s recommendations to the Executive Council (EC) at the [2024 Executive Council Meeting](#). The Beyond 2025 report was approved by the PSC, which included high-level recommendations such as a reaffirmation of the Bay Program’s commitment to the original sentiment of the 2014 Watershed Agreement, a reprioritization of the Bay Program Outcomes, and a reconsideration of the Bay Program’s governance. Additionally, the PSC approved the formation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Proposed Restructure to STAC Meetings – Gary Shenk (USGS), STAC Staff

Gary Shenk (USGS), along with STAC Staff, presented a proposed restructure to STAC meetings. Currently, STAC quarterly meetings are held twice virtually and twice in a hybrid format each year. Following feedback received at the September quarterly meeting, STAC Leadership, STAC Staff, and Shenk, met to discuss ways to improve the efficiency, attendance, and interactions at these meetings. The proposed restructure includes an annual in-person retreat in June, a hybrid meeting in September, and three virtual topical meetings in November, February, and April. The annual retreat would span two to three days, allowing members to network, learn more about the Bay Program and each other’s organizations, strategically plan STAC’s future efforts, and form ad-hoc workgroups. The hybrid meeting would be a single-day event focused on STAC business, such as workshops, while the virtual meetings

would be half-day sessions centered on topics of interest to STAC. STAC Staff requested feedback from members on the proposed restructure.

Discussion:

- Erin Letavic (HRG, Inc.): Meeting in-person is the most effective avenue for STAC, but I also understand how difficult that can be. I appreciate the thought put into this proposal and endorse the restructured schedule.
 - Wardrop: The restructure is STAC embracing adaptive management.
- Greg Noe (USGS) [chat]: I appreciate the approach of adaptive management for STAC operations. I also like trying to reorganize around our goals, and to structure how we meet around 'products' of what STAC wants to do.
- Emily Trentacoste (EPA) [chat]: At the last STAC meeting, I liked how we used interactive online platforms in breakout groups. It gave a chance for smaller groups of members to interact more directly, and the tools are helpful ways to encourage participation.
- Christine Kirchhoff (PSU): How does the targeted approach of topical meetings compare to the boarder range of discussion during quarterly meetings?
 - Wardrop: The targeted approach is a combination of formats that worked well for STAC in the past. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, STAC would structure one of the quarterly meetings as a retreat and found it effective and enriching. As the previous STAC Chair, Kathy Boomer (FFAR) introduced topical themes, which were appreciated by STAC members and expanded the committee's knowledge and interactions across the watershed.
- Trentacoste: Virtual meetings are most effective with small groups that have a purpose and agenda while in-person meetings are best for brainstorming and strategizing. I suggest building in purposeful networking and socializing time for the annual retreat, and to have the retreat be only in-person.
- Scott Knoche (Morgan State, PEARL): STAC should revisit expectations for virtual meetings and consider what kind of culture we want to build and support around virtual meetings.
- James Martin (VA Dept of Conservation and Recreation) [chat]: While the new schedule seems like it will be very effective for STAC members, it also has the potential to isolate STAC from the broader Partnership and interested stakeholders. There will be less opportunities for other groups to interact with STAC.
 - Shenk [chat]: Good point to be mindful of. All types of meetings will still be open to interested parties. It is hoped that the ad hoc workgroups will lead to a deeper cooperation between STAC members and CBP partners within those workgroups.
 - Trentacoste [chat]: We could/should build in some self-evaluation checkpoints during these changes throughout the coming year on what is working and what is not, as well as solicit feedback from the Bay Program.
- STAC Staff: STAC will continue to meet during the confirmed dates for 2025, with the restructured schedule going into effect in 2026. The June 2025 quarterly meeting will be converted into a strategic retreat and virtual meetings will be half-days.

STAC FY24 Workshop Request for Proposal (RFP) Approval and DEIJ Metric Discussion

– STAC Staff, Melissa Sines (Colmena Consulting)

STAC Staff presented the draft FY25 STAC Workshop Request for Proposals (RFP), which remains unchanged from the FY24 Round 2 Workshop RFP. The FY24 Round 2 RFP had introduced three new proposal criteria and adjusted scoring weights. However, STAC's scoring of proposals varied significantly, particularly in the Equity and Accessibility categories, highlighting differences in interpretation of the rubric criteria. STAC Staff requested feedback from STAC members to clarify and calibrate the RFP rubric, ensuring more equitable and consistent evaluations moving forward.

Discussion:

- Letavic [chat]: Comments from the scoring sheets may sometimes be more helpful than the scores themselves.
- Ellen Kohl (UMBC): We need to consider how we are asking the proposing team to explain the inclusion of equity and accessibility related to their science and proposed workshop, as well as the shift in political context around these conversations.
 - Wardrop: Rather than a focus on scoring, we can use language that encourages people to take a broader view of things.
 - Chris Brosch (DDA) [chat]: Great point. I am not confident scoring these topics with little understanding of the terminology. I lean on how I would do these things myself if I put together a proposal, which may not be contextually appropriate.
- Tess Thompson (VT): Including examples of how to increase equity or accessibility in a workshop would help proposers think about how they are organizing the workshop and how to incorporate these aspects from the initial planning stages.
- KC Filippino (HRPDC): I was asked to sponsor a synthesis proposal; there was a lot of confusion about how to marry the science and the DEIJA criteria and I didn't feel qualified to explain. I would need an education to be able to evaluate this aspect better and to also advise people.
- Mike Runge (USGS) [chat]: Our rubric isn't very detailed—it just lists scores {4, completely; 3, mostly; 2, somewhat; 1, very little; 0, not at all} that apply to all the criteria. A more detailed rubric would give specifics about what you had to do in, say, the Equity criterion to achieve a 2 or a 3, etc.
- Knoche [chat]: It seems that there is a lot of overlap between equity and accessibility. It begs the questions also, why not have categories on "inclusion" or "diversity" too? Or why these were excluded... It might be best to consider having a single DEIJA category, combining percentages from the two current categories so as to not downweight them. Also very important is Kohl's point of political winds shifting and the need to be cognizant of that...
 - Sanford: It is difficult for me to tell these two criteria apart as they are currently written, agree with Knoche to combine them into one general category. Regarding accessibility, LGAC has repeated that smaller communities and groups can have a difficult time writing proposals and don't have expertise available; figuring out a way to make this process more accessible to groups that do not traditionally submit proposals might be another way to increase accessibility.
- Yusuke Kuwayama (UMBC): The [Bay Program has strategies and task forces associated with DEIJ](#). STAC may want to have a future conversation on its priorities, objectives, principles, and values regarding DEIA.
 - STAC Staff: STAC has a diversity statement, but it does not include strategies. This can be revisited.
- John Bovay (VT): Greater specificity in RFP would be appreciated. Potentially include examples from past proposals that did a good job addressing DEIJ. I think it is important to carefully define 'historically underserved' and 'underrepresented.'

- Melissa Fagan (CRC) [chat]: I have seen groups use “office hours” where there are representatives from the funding/hosting institution available to provide advice, answer questions, etc. These are open hours on a virtual call where potential RFP respondents can attend and get some additional input and context that can help them develop their own proposals. Might be something helpful to the STAC workshop RFP process.
- STAC Staff: The [Chesapeake Bay Trust has a current RFP](#) that explains scoring in more depth

ACTION: STAC Staff and Melissa Sines (Colmena Consulting) will adjust the *Equity and Accessibility* criterion of the FY25 Workshop RFP based on feedback from STAC.

DECISION: The FY25 Workshop RFP will be electronically approved by STAC.

Panel: Veterans Letter – *Richard Batiuk (Coastwise Partners), Donald Boesch (UMCES), Bob Perciasepe (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions)*

In August 2024, veterans of the Bay Program submitted a [letter](#) responding to the ideas of the Beyond 2025 draft report and offering recommendations to accelerate the achievement of the Watershed Agreement outcomes. Among the authors and endorsers of the letter were Richard Batiuk (Coastwise Partners), Donald Boesch (UMCES), and Bob Perciasepe (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions). The letter included two novel recommendations: #3, which called for the Principals’ Staff Committee (PSC) to integrate appropriate Bay and watershed-related goals with federal, state, and local actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the amended Agreement; and #5, which urged the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership to commission a technical evaluation of options for nonpoint-source pollution reduction that could achieve at least the Phase 2I Watershed Implementation Plans outcome within another decade.

Boesch, Batiuk, and Perciasepe explained the reasoning behind these recommendations, emphasizing the critical need to address and adapt to climate change. They highlighted that a reassessment and potential revision of the Watershed Agreement presents an opportunity for the Bay Program partnership to strengthen its management strategies and take more impactful actions to mitigate and combat climate change. They requested that STAC advise the PSC to implement recommendation #3 and, over the next year, hold discussions and workshops to inform the development of Goals and Outcomes related to Climate Change. These efforts would focus on resilience, emissions reductions, and the enhancement of carbon sinks.

Discussion:

- Sanford: The [STAC Letter to the PSC](#) sent in October 2024 and the [STAC Recommendations to the EC](#) to be sent soon both highlight the need for consideration of climate change. I will bring attention to it during remarks at the EC.
- Wardrop: Perhaps we can ask the individual outcomes in their outcome assessments to consider whether there is an opportunity to address climate resilience in their revisions.
 - Boesch: Yes, but you also need high-level leadership buy-in, such as the PSC. I think part of the problem with integrating these issues is that the Bay has been seen as a water issue and climate change has been seen as an air issue.
 - Batiuk: The Bay Program is fortunate to have tools such as monitoring and models able to run scenarios.

- Breck Sullivan (USGS): A charge on addressing climate change was given by the EC two or three years ago yet there was a lack of capacity to create a coordinated effort. What advice do you have if leadership is acknowledging it as a priority, but efforts are not reflecting this?
 - Perciasepe: It is an important role of science to encourage the idea of what the opportunities are.
 - Batiuk: You must be proactive in going to leadership and talk about the need and opportunities.

MB November 2024 Retreat Outcomes – Lee McDonnell (EPA)

Lee McDonnell (EPA) shared updates on the discussions and outcomes from the [Management Board \(MB\) retreat](#) held on November 12-14, 2024. Three key decisions were made during the retreat: the Strategy Review System (SRS) will be modified for 2025; Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) will respond to the “Big Question,” which asks for their advice on how to consolidate, reduce, update, remove, replace, or add new outcomes within their Cohort/GIT; and the general [schedule](#) for executing Beyond 2025 Phase 2 was approved. Starting in early 2025, GITs and Workgroups will assess their outcomes to address the “Big Question” and present their conclusions to the MB. The MB will then determine how to update the Outcomes to align with the new/revised Watershed Agreement. By April 2025, Outcome updates will be compiled and discussed, with STAC having an opportunity to provide input. A draft list of Outcomes will be presented to the Principals’ Staff Committee (PSC) in May 2025, and later in the year, the focus will shift to governance within the Bay Program.

Additionally, the concept of priority assignments was introduced at the retreat to guarantee that materials and detailed suggestions from Phase 1 are not overlooked. One example is the habitat suitability modeling effort led by Kenny Rose (UMCES) and Mark Monaco (NOAA), which will be utilized by the Fisheries GIT.

Discussion:

- Runge: Does the MB have a mechanism of reaching agreement when a consensus is not achieved?
 - McDonnell: Consensus is desired, but the MB has a voting process for signatory members. A super majority of 7 out of 9 signatory votes is needed for approval.
- Wardrop: What will happen with the Small Group Recommendations from Phase 1? Will they be submitted to the MB as priority projects? How does the MB identify the priority projects to pursue?
 - McDonnell: The MB will have to consider what the Bay Program has the ability and capacity to pursue. Recommendations that are actionable, implementable, or achievable will likely be considered before recommendations that do not have immediate action.
 - Letavic: Who is presenting and advocating for different types of outcomes? Are they equipped to do so?
 - McDonnell: This has not yet been determined. There are several important meetings taking place before the end of 2024 and I expect more direction will come from these.

- Wardrop [chat]: My understanding is that each Outcome Briefing is facilitated by one of the signatories, GIT chairs present outcomes and answers to Big Question. MB members (STAC is a nonvoting member) are engaged in discussion and decisions.
 - Saunders [chat]: It might be really helpful for STAC to help the MB understand how to do a structured decision-making process to determine those priorities.
 - Sanford: How can STAC help in this process? Saunders suggested informing the MB on structured decision making. Another idea would be all Advisory Committees taking a holistic view of the Outcomes to look for synergies and cross-fertilization.
 - McDonnell: There is a desire from Goal Teams for coherent groupings of the Outcomes.

Wednesday, December 4

Living Resources Update – Mark Monaco (NOAA), Kenny Rose (UMCES)

Mark Monaco (NOAA) provided an update on the initial implementation activities related to the living resources recommendations from the [Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response \(CESR\)](#) report. The primary goal is to better understand the response of living marine resources to watershed management actions, with a current focus on shallow water habitats. A scientific article, titled “A Proposed Framework for Analyzing Ecosystem Restoration Actions on Living Resources: A Case Study Using the Chesapeake Bay,” was recently submitted to the journal JAWRA for peer review. This article demonstrates how to conduct statistical and ecological modeling analyses to evaluate restoration actions.

To support continued implementation efforts, Monaco suggested that a CESR Outreach Workshop would be beneficial to engage a broader audience and gather feedback on modeling approaches. Using the strategic model, the Living Resources team will identify specific areas to implement CESR management recommendations and assess their feasibility across the watershed.

Discussion:

- Wardrop: When you do the regional scale approach, are you developing a prescription for each segment to achieve a base objective for specific species in the overall bay?
 - Monaco: We focus on what areas and habitats are ripe for restoration and improving conditions for living resources rather than living resources driving restoration. We are trying to identify a suite of species to initially study with a diversity of life history strategies as a way to evaluate the model.
- Sanford: Are the living resources efforts crossing with the outcome revision efforts?
 - McDonnell: Some of the outcomes may be directly impacted by findings from the living resources team, likely influencing how we prioritize implementation.
- Boomer: The terrestrial-estuarine transition zone is not well represented in the Bay Program model or estuarine model. How is it fitting into this effort?
 - Monaco: We will be using existing data, so I do not know what we have until we look at it. That may be a gap we identify. We’ll make the best decisions we can with what is available.

Tiered Implementation to the TMDL Prospectus Document

– Denice Wardrop (CRC), Kurt Stephenson (VT)

Denice Wardrop (CRC) and Kurt Stephenson (VT) provided an update on the progress of proposing a tiered implementation approach to the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals and outcomes. This approach, recommended in the Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report, integrates insights from the three supporting documents focused on [Watershed](#), [Estuary](#), and [Living Resources](#).

In May, a subgroup of CESR authors met to define a tiered implementation approach to the Bay TMDL as follows: “A tiered approach to TMDL implementation establishes staggered timelines, with interim goals that prioritize pollutant load reductions to local (segment/habitat) regions of the Bay that can provide the greatest anticipated benefit to living resources.” A prospectus document explaining this approach and providing examples has been drafted.

Implementation would involve local habitat assessments and an analysis of the relative contribution of nutrient and sediment inputs to the main channel to set interim targets at the local scale. It was emphasized that a tiered approach does not remove accountability for meeting TMDL goals. Instead, this alternative approach to planning and analysis aims to demonstrate benefits earlier and in areas that matter most to people, such as shallow water habitats.

Discussion:

- Monaco: Timing is going to be key; testing as fast as we can in a reasonable timeframe. We should think about the probability of success of local implementation action. As we develop the modeling, we’ll be trying to understand which areas have a high probability of a successful outcome. We want the successes to be defined by a living resource endpoint so that management folks can have a better handle and know where to implement resources.
- Noe [chat]: I like the “concept to implementation” logic. So key is 1) understanding which stressors impact living resources at different locations, and 2) choosing management actions that address nitrogen/phosphorus/sediment as well as the actual stressor (the old co-benefits but targeted to actual stressors).
- Trentacoste: Emphasize the role of bringing the policy and management side in early; implementation will require co-production between the scientific and management sides. We should begin discussing the strategy for engaging the policy and management side and the channels to work through to have those conversations.
 - Stephenson: You’re right, we will have to bring managers in to discuss how to facilitate and promote important species.
 - Trentacoste: It will require a kind of culture shift in the way that we think in the Bay Program and with the TMDL. Momentum will need to build; I don’t think that it’s necessarily STAC’s role to lead that culture shift change but we play a huge role in communicating why this is being proposed.
- Kuwayama: Thinking about implementation of a tiered process opens up an opportunity to reorient the current focus towards the magnitude and distribution of human benefits. This might require a culture shift in the way things are done but it’s also an opportunity to define what those new objectives and priorities might be. There is room for more social science-driven inputs toward the decision making regarding the tiering. Tiering can also be beneficial from a political perspective – achieving these improvements in highly visible areas can generate support and enthusiasm for this work.

- Letavic: Jurisdictions and local implementers can generate the promotional projects that have already been built so that policymakers can see benefits of changes in paradigm (e.g., Millbrook Marsh in Centre County, PA). I agree with Trentacoste that Steps 1-3 run in parallel with Step 4. Those of us who developed the WIPs did not anticipate full implementation in a 5-year period; we knew the goals would take a much longer time. In Pennsylvania, the low-hanging fruit has been harvested and now we are leaning into the hard stuff. Instead of asking us to change course, study what we are doing and let the Phase 7 model tell us how we did.
 - Monaco [chat]: Implementation of various management options likely require integration of the natural and social sciences and various governance structures ranging from communities to local and regional governments.
 - Stephenson [chat]: The WIP process could be framed to prioritize what is in the WIP and what will be accomplished next.
 - Filippino [chat]: There are discussions now on how the jurisdictions will move forward with their Milestones in terms of frequency, timing, and what will be included. This could be a testing ground for some of the concepts for tiered implementation.
- Brosch: I would encourage STAC to engage the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee. They have a reason for thinking and communicating in the way that they do, and conversation would allow the committees to learn together.
 - Kohl: I agree with engaging with the Stakeholder's Advisory Committee. From an equity standpoint, we should keep in mind that they represent a small percentage of constituents.
- Shenk: Creating the model will be difficult but not impossible; it will require technical elements that have not yet been used in this way in the Chesapeake Bay. I am concerned about promoting this result and then failing to deliver.

Approval of STAC-led Social Science Workgroup Mission Statement

– *STAC Staff, Social Science Workgroup (SSWG)*

In the mid-2024, a STAC-led Social Science Workgroup (SSWG) was proposed and established. The purpose of the SSWG is to create a platform for proactively advancing the integration of social sciences into the Chesapeake Bay Program's efforts, addressing emerging needs and challenges where social science expertise can provide valuable insights, and fostering collaborations between physical and social scientists. The SSWG drafted a mission statement, which includes sections on the Standing Workgroup Overview, Charge, Membership, Operations, and Workgroup Formation and Staffing. The workgroup aims to support the Bay Program's goals by leveraging interdisciplinary expertise, with a focus on addressing socio-environmental challenges and the integration of various perspectives.

STAC Staff reviewed the mission statement document with STAC, and the committee was asked to vote on its approval. The SSWG Mission Statement was approved by STAC. The next steps for the SSWG include finalizing its membership and developing and implementing a workgroup charter to guide its activities.

Discussion:

- Trentacoste [chat]: Who will lead the workgroup from a technical standpoint?
 - STAC Staff: As a STAC-led workgroup, the SSWG chair must be a member of STAC.
- Sanford: Can the workgroup itself solicit membership?

- STAC Staff: Governing documents dictate that nominations come from the partnership. If STAC believes workgroups should have autonomy to recruit experts, the guidelines can be edited.
- Kohl: Discussions while drafting the mission statement assumed that STAC or other advisory committees could make nominations as they are a part of the partnership.

DECISION: Social Science Workgroup (SSWG) Mission Statement is approved.

Brainstorming Session: Governance and Adaptive Management for Beyond 2025

– Social Science Workgroup (SSWG)

STAC members were asked to reflect on McDonnell’s Phase 2 Beyond 2025 presentation and to consider short- and long-term actions that STAC could facilitate. The guiding questions for discussion were:

- Is an immediate response from STAC to the CBP needed? Are there questions we could provide on areas that require more thought or gaps that are not yet addressed?
- STAC Input: should and how might the SSWG evaluate organizational structure, governance, and decision-making within the partnership?

As noted by the MB, Advisory Committees, including STAC, may participate in GIT and workgroup meetings to plan responses to the “Big Question” and provide input during Outcome Review Meetings.

STAC members discussed the decision-making challenges faced by the MB during the Outcome Review process, as well as concerns raised by the GITs. STAC shares concerns about the short timeline of Phase 2 and the simultaneous changes planned across major aspects of the Bay Program. Members expressed a need to better understand decision-making tools before offering guidance to the MB and requested that decision-making tools be the theme of the March 2025 quarterly meeting.

Proposed Next Steps:

- Short-term: Generate a list of questions not yet addressed in the Phase 2 and Phase 2 Outcome Review process and identify areas with inequitable engagement or overlooked knowledge gaps.
- Long-term: Task the SSWG with evaluating the Bay Program’s governance, potentially through a technical review. Members agreed that inviting external expertise from outside STAC, the Bay Program, and/or the Chesapeake Bay watershed would be beneficial for discussions on decision-making and governance.

STAC also considered completing a review of the Outcome Revisions that the MB will propose to the PSC around April 2025. Members were encouraged to participate in MB Outcome Assessment meetings, particularly when outcomes related to their expertise are discussed.

Wrap Up and March 2025 Quarterly Meeting Reminder

The [STAC March 2025 quarterly meeting](#) will take place virtually on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 4-5, 2025.

Minutes Approved by STAC at the [March 2025 Quarterly Meeting](#)