

Inland Bays CCMP Committee

Monday, October 21, 2024

Quick recap

Michelle, Frank, and the team discussed the progress of various projects, including the CCMP implementation, the habitat management plan, and the annual reporting to EPA. They also reviewed the status of ongoing projects, the need for better tracking and public-facing updates, and the potential for a wider report. Additionally, they shared updates on the appointment of a new Water Division Director for EPA Region 3, the transition of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and the drafting of regulations for the phosphorus bill.

Next steps

- Michelle to send out the current version of the habitat management plan to the team for review.
- Michelle to incorporate habitat plan objectives and actions into the CCMP tracker.
- Michelle to process and analyze the 2022 land use land cover data for the Inland Bays.
- Bryan to send out an official announcement about Beth Johnson taking over the CREP coordinator position.

CCMP Meetings, Updates, and Changes

In the meeting, Michelle announced that the CCMP meetings would now be shortened to an hour, starting from the next meeting. She also mentioned that the meeting would be the last for fiscal year 24, and that she would discuss the submitted national estuary program reporting. She also shared updates about the CCMP implementation tracker and the habitat plan. Additionally, she informed the team that Anna had moved on to a new position and that they were hiring for a deputy director, and that the position of watershed coordinator, previously held by Bryanna, would not be rehired at this time.

Agricultural Easements and Reporting Success

Michelle discussed the annual reporting to EPA on projects and programs that implement the Ccmp. She highlighted the success of agricultural easements in the watershed, with 7 easements totaling 231 acres and 3.3 million dollars of State funding. She also mentioned two land acquisition projects and a restoration project with Stockly Center. The cover crop program saw an increase of over 2,000 acres from the previous year. Michelle expressed interest in a potential wider report similar to the one from the previous year. She thanked everyone who helped with the NEPORT reporting.

CCMP Implementation Progress and Tracker

Michelle discussed the progress of their CCMP implementation, highlighting that they are about 50% through the plan with 43 actions not yet started. She mentioned that they have been working on a tracker in Monday.com to monitor ongoing and paused projects. Michelle also noted that they have completed six actions so far. She expressed her intention to share the tracker with the team and requested feedback on the status of certain actions. She emphasized that it's only been three years since they started the Ccmp, and they still have a long way to go.

Michelle discussed the progress of various projects, highlighting that some, like wetland restoration, were yet to be initiated. She noted that the team had made significant progress in objective 2 of the developed lands section and was doing well with healthy bay ecosystem actions. Michelle also mentioned that some projects, like the comprehensive public water access inventory and water use map, might become obsolete. She expressed a need to review these projects and possibly update them. Kelly suggested the possibility of sharing project progress online, which Michelle agreed to consider. Michelle also mentioned that the team's website had been updated and they were working on incorporating progress updates for all projects.

Habitat Management Plan Update

Michelle updated the team on the management plan, which was approved by the board and is currently undergoing EPA's review process. She mentioned that the plan will be completed by the end of the year and will include objectives, actions, and milestones. Michelle also shared that the 2022 land use land cover data is available and she has started processing it for the inland bays. She is working on presenting the data in a more holistic way, without ruining the trend data they've been building over the years. Frank requested a link to the 1st map website with the data, which Michelle agreed to provide.

Partner Updates

Megan announced that Michelle Price Fay has been appointed as the permanent Water Division Director for EPA Region 3. Ben shared that the Chesapeake Bay implementation program has received a \$1 million grant for smaller scale homeowner BMPs, including conservation landscaping and pollinator meadows. He also mentioned the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is transitioning to the Sussex Conservation District, with Beth Johnson taking the lead. Bryan added that they are incentivizing oyster aquaculture in the bays, with a small pilot program showing good interest. Michelle mentioned a potential pivot from cover crops to aquaculture, and Bryan confirmed there are around 10 producers involved. Aaron announced that they are drafting regulations for the phosphorus bill and aiming to have them in place by the end of the year.