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Communications Update

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Chesapeake Bay – Stakeholders Gather to Kick-off Planning Process

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. On November 7, 2016, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District (USACE NAB) and Norfolk District (NAO), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), USACE Institute for Water Resources (IWR), and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) hosted, moderated and facilitated a Stakeholder Workshop with more than 60 participants to kick off the Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Water Resources and Restoration planning process. This process will develop a coordinated, comprehensive master plan within the Corps mission areas for restoring, preserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Identify Chesapeake Bay water resources and restoration needs USACE and others could address; discuss and prioritize actions USACE and others should undertake that will contribute the most to Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts;
2. Coordinate the Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Water Resources and Restoration Plan (CBCP) with the actions of the Chesapeake Bay Program; Consider and avoid duplication of any ongoing or planned actions of other federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations;
3. Review planned geospatial analyses and identify additional sources of information or references (datasets, reports, plans), especially geospatial datasets, to incorporate into CBCP's geospatial analyses that will be used to inform the study.

NAB and NAO provided an overview of this two-year study, with the clarification that the CBCP is a watershed assessment which will result in a single, integrated restoration plan to be shared with the public and provided to Congress in the form of a Report. It will not include specific recommendations for construction, but instead will include information outlining projects that are planned or could be noted as opportunities for implementation. It was emphasized during the workshop's introductory comments that the CBCP aims to build upon the networks, efforts and programs that are already in place in the region, such as the Chesapeake Bay Program. The presenters also pointed out that while the CBCP is inclusive of water quality needs and opportunities, the focus of this study is more broadly focused on ecological restoration. The importance of input from stakeholders was reiterated in terms of the need to avoid

duplication of efforts, to make maximum use of existing information, and to identify as complete a picture as possible of the problems, needs and opportunities related to ecological restoration and/or conservation, flood risk management, water supply, navigation, and military installations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The workshop included three Breakout Sessions through which participants could share information and ideas on specific topics, including 1) Climate change; 2) Ecosystem restoration (including water quality Best Management Plans (BMPs), land conservation, water supply - ecological and consumptive use, restoration actions (Watershed Implementation Plans, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Strategies, Biennial Workplans); 3) Riverine and coastal flood risk management; 4) Regional Sediment Management and shoreline erosion/stabilization actions (including navigation and beneficial use of dredged material); 5) Public access to, and educational/stewardship opportunities for, USACE projects; and 6) Policy needs and implementation barriers.

The Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Water Resources and Restoration Plan is a roadmap for the implementation of projects in the future.

Breakout Session 1 was focused on identifying existing or planned actions in the watershed, as well as existing sources of information and geospatial data relevant to restoration actions. Session 2 focused on identifying additional actions the USACE should take, identifying gaps related to restoration actions, and identifying which organization is best placed to address them. Maps of actions were developed by each breakout group and were added to over the course of the day as groups moved through each breakout session. Session 3 focused on initial prioritization discussions highlighting gaps and opportunities of most interest to participants, including possible actions by USACE and other agencies or organizations. A list of priority activities was developed for each topic area, and all stakeholders were then given the opportunity to 'vote' for their top ten priority areas across all topic areas.

Stakeholders requested further input from USACE regarding the agency's approach to the prioritization of activities as the CBCP is further developed, and it was noted that additional stakeholders representing a wider range of geographic regions within the watershed should be further engaged in upcoming workshops or webinars as well. NAB emphasized that there will be many future opportunities for stakeholder input, including upcoming webinars focused on planning horizons and future without project conditions; problems, needs, and opportunities, draft results and recommendations as well as geospatial analysis that will be carried out through upcoming CBCP efforts.

This stakeholder workshop was the first of multiple opportunities for stakeholder input and review as the CBCP is developed over the next two years. Moving forward, stakeholders can check the project website periodically for interim study products and updates.

Learn More
For more information, visit IWR www.iwr.usace.army.mil

Link to project website: http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Chesapeake-Bay-Comprehensive-Plan/

Organizations who participated in the workshop: USACE including the Baltimore and Norfolk Districts, North Atlantic Division, and Institute for Water Resources were present, as well as participants representing the District of Columbia Department of the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, Chesapeake Bay Commission, Coastal States Organization, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

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