

CCMP Implementation Committee

Meeting Agenda & Notes



DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE
INLAND BAYS
Research. Educate. Restore.

DATE & TIME: 24 Apr 2023, 9:30 - 11:30 AM

LOCATION: Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88952025965?pwd=WU5TUWJ4cmRyNCs2K3JLQWk5ZFd4UT09>

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Call to order, welcome

II. Meeting agenda review

III. 2021 State of the Inland Bays Report - Andrew McGowan, CIB

- Thank you to Dr. Marianne Walch, the lead author of the report and all contributors.
- Land Use Change: Overall, Agriculture is the leading land use In Sussex County, but we have seen a major increase in land development. Tidal wetlands are one of most critical habitats in the watershed and while the total acreage has been stable, it has been degrading in recent years.
- Indian River Inlet Flushing: Since the Inlet was stabilized in the 1930's, it had been getting deeper which effectively flushes more nutrients out of the Watershed.
- Point Sources: All 13 major point sources have been eliminated except for the Lewes Wastewater Treatment Facility and Allen Harim Plant remain the only small point sources. There has been major success in septic conversions.
- TMDL: The nitrogen loads in all three bays remain at unhealthy limits exceeding the TMDL goals. Phosphorus loads are closer to meeting the goals as the Little Assawoman bay remained less than TMDL while the Rehoboth Bay trends close to the TMDL, and Indian River exceeds.
- Overall Water Quality: The Center introduced a new water quality index included in the report which assigns a public friendly grade. This index is currently a cumulative grade of "D" for the watershed. The status overall is Poor to Fair with No Trend. Andrew highlighted that water quality should be looked at on a case by case basis to get an accurate picture.
- Wildlife: Eagles and ospreys continue to recover in population size. The next Eagle survey will be conducted in 2023 for Delaware. The Center recently led an Osprey survey that counted over 200 nests in the watershed. There is a large variation of Blue Crab populations which is normal, however there has been an above average survival rate of juveniles in recent years. Some of this variation in marine species is affected by water quality parameters such as DO levels. Fish abundance is also affected by offshore patterns like storms. In contrast to other species, Mummichog populations have seen a slight decline trend over the last 9 years. Since the 1980's there have been virtually no acreage of bay grasses with only 11 acres recently mapped. In comparison there are thousands of acres in the MD coastal bays watershed.
- Human health risks: Status is Fair with no significant trend.
- Sea Level Rise: Rising temperatures, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and precipitation have been increasing annually since the early 1900's. We will see an increase of tidal flooding and overall higher water.
- Agriculture: Growing seasons continue to increase which can lead to more invasive species and nutrient runoff.
- Overall, we have seen progress in some areas like some marine fisheries species, Eagles and Ospreys, and point sources gone, conversion of septic systems.

- Continuing challenges: nonpoint source solution, land use change, salt marsh degradation and overall loss, baygrasses, climate change.

Discussion:

- Current land use trends are a major contributor to the decline of the health of the Inland Bays Watershed. We need to at least maintain, but strive to improve reforestation efforts and buffers. We need to work with developers to agree on property rights and increasing tree canopy.
- Hanz noted that Sussex County has disagreed with the Center on stormwater management plans and regulations. Non-point source pollution enforcement is falling short by the state. Meadow buffers are a missed opportunity. Storm water regulations may make it harder to regulate and maintain buffers and tax-ditches. Hanz noted that the county wants changes to stormwater regulations as they are unbalanced to Sussex County compared to the rest of the state because of different development trends.
 - o Stephen Williams mentioned reaching out to Elaine Webb from DNREC to discuss this topic.
 - o Michelle mentioned "Smart Growth" was almost immediately taken out of the CCMP because of controversy. Sussex County is a lands right county which makes it hard to tie together these issues.
 - o Functional difference is a political answer to a non-science problem, says Hanz.
 - Hanz believes this is the wrong answer for land use issues. Keeping property in an unbothered state would maintain drainage and buffers and that we need to move the needle with grass buffers and meadows.
 - o Bryan Jones mentioned that overall, landuse and education are two large factors that need to be forced on. To teach the public about nutrient management on commercial and residential levels is an important next step. There needs to be equal responsibility between commercial/Ag and residential; why would one be held with a higher standard? HOA's and residential owners need to be addressed more directly regarding nutrient management. There is a lot of funding which needs to be utilized for education and outreach first.
 - o Hanz discussed that Sussex County has a regulatory hierarchy on septic systems. Tier 2 is planning while Tier 1 is applicable. Septic's are applied as reactionary. The county gets all the blame, but there is a significant private wastewater provider presence that needs to be addressed such as Artesian.

IV. FY24 CIB Work Plan - Michelle Schmidt, CIB

Current

- Submerged Gravel Wetland at Georgetown airport site.
 - o CWQIG and NPD 319 grants won.
 - o BIL funds or CSs are pending.
 - o Plans need to be finalized; more of a stormwater project.
- Sunset Park living Shoreline- Dagsworthy street in Dewey.
 - o Conceptualized in Dewey Beach stormwater assessment plan.
 - o BIL funding for planning. Applying for CWQIG and NPS 319 grants for implementation, supplemented by BIL funding.
 - o Construction likely will start in fall of 2024.
- Land conservation exploratory work group
 - o Similar to DLPC with a focus on land acquisition and will work with the Sussex County Land Trust.

- o Land conversation is noted as an important goal. The Center possibly becoming more responsible for land conservation which entails owning, managing, and even holding easements.
- o Delaware Clean Water Trust Is doing similar work.
 - County currently has one of these projects. Hanz noted you need the ability to repay.
 - County holds 3,000ac of continuous land.
- o Current programs don't offer enough money for acquisition, so the major question is how the CIB can fill in those gaps.

FY24

- Inland Bays Ag Program (need new name?)
 - o Purpose: many restoration goals within the CCMP and Strategic Plan rely on better engagement of Ag landowners.
 - o Currently, DCA is working with poultry producers in the state which is very similar to this and would be great to connect with.
- Monitoring the Response of Nekton to Novel Salt Marsh Restoration Techniques
 - o Drain excess water on the salt marsh surface and facilitate natural hydrology.
 - o Working with USFWS, who plans to conduct at least two projects in the inland Bays.
- Coastal Mash Resilience Planning
 - o Pending funding approval
 - o ID areas for restoration areas with most utility for projects.
- Glade Road Ag Fields- Proposed Reforestation
 - o Cape Henlopen State Park
 - o Reforest/maximize buffer.
 - o Need to pull together various funding.
 - o Tentative date: March 2024
- Equity Plan: EPA wants to see draft before the deadline in June. Need to focus on projects in underserved communities.

V. Partner Updates

- o Aaron Givens: Cost share assistance for knocking down old chicken houses which includes reallocating litter.
- o Bryan Jones: last funding year for cover crop program.
 - o Black duck initiative focus and other waterfowl. Impoundments, water quality. Should be a growing program with interest.

VI. Adjourn