

SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes



DATE & TIME: February 7, 2025 -- 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Virtual and 901 Pilottown Road, Lewes, Delaware

Call to order, Welcome, Introductions - Andrew Wozniak, Chair

Results of the Election – Dr. Andrew Wozniak, has been elected Chair and Dr. Ashley Norton has been elected Vice Chair

Announcements - Meghan Noe Fellows, Center

There have been no new hires for the Center. There was a successful search for a Deputy Director, however because of the government funding freeze, the person could not be hired.

Old Business

RFP for Hydrodynamic Model Development, Meghan Noe Fellows, Center

Bids were due January 30, 2025, however with recent federal funding freeze, project has been placed on hold until funding issues are resolved.

Update on James Farm - Bob Collins, Center

The construction work is 83% complete by budget and 90% complete by schedule. Substantial completion is expected by Mid-March. There is a water supply issue that remains to be resolved.

Update By-Laws - Christophe Tulou, provided the following summary of the Board Discussion on the role of Past Chair:

“Upon retirement as STAC Chairman, that person may serve, at their discretion, in the role of Past Chair—advising the Executive Director and the Presiding Officers of the STAC for a period of two years. In the event there is no immediate Past Chair and the two-year term of the current Past Chair expires, the position will remain vacant. “

The majority of those present (with two abstentions) voted in agreement with this decision.

A discussion about creating a Past-Vice Chair position was then held. Several people spoke in favor of creating this position including Doug Janiec who recently ended his term as Vice Chair. The majority of those present (with two abstentions) voted in favor of creating this position. A recommendation for creating this position will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for their consideration.

New Business

New Member Alison Rogerson Introduction Presentation

Alison Rogerson is an Environmental Scientist who works in the DNREC Wetland Assessment and Monitoring Program. She had been attending STAC meetings for several years and now has decided to become a member. She holds a BS in Wildlife Management with a minor in

Water Resource Management from the University of New Hampshire and an MS in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Delaware. She provided a brief history of her professional career including the wetland monitoring work that she is doing with DNREC.

The Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program is responsible for all aspects of wetland monitoring and is currently focused on the development of the State Wetland Mapping Project. These maps are used to estimate statewide wetland coverage and to investigate how and where wetlands were lost, gained or changed. As of 2017, Delaware had a total of 296,351 acres of wetlands with Sussex County having the most wetlands at 140,954 acres. Kent County had 110,472 acres and New Castle County had 44,925 acres of wetlands.

From 2007 through 2017, there was a reduction of 2,773 acres of Vegetated Non-tidal Wetlands and 238 acres Vegetated Tidal Wetlands. The Non-tidal wetlands losses were due primarily to Land Clearing and Development while the Tidal Wetlands losses were due primarily to Environmental Impacts. During the same period, there was a wetland's gain of 1,406 acres primarily due to restoration efforts.

2025 - Coast Forward Program (Possible STAC Co-sponsorship with the Center) May 1, 2025 - 10am to 7pm, Cheer Center, Georgetown – Meghan Noe Fellows provided a brief description of this program. She requested volunteers to assist her.

General Discussion Concerning the State of Federal Regulation and Funding – Center Executive Director Christophe Tulou led a general discussion on the state of federal funding availability and potential regulation changes that are being implemented by the current Trump Administration. The Center is approximately 80% dependent upon federal funding. Several approaches were discussed concerning how the Center position itself. It was generally agreed that the Center should move forward with a public relations campaign that informs the public and politicians of the benefits of the essential work performed by the Center.

Southern Delaware Coastal Resilience Project (SDCR) - Meghan Noe Fellows, Michelle Koenig and Center Staff

The Center's Mission is to preserve, protect and restore the Delaware Inland Bays and their watershed. They achieve this through science based: research, restoration, education, outreach, public policy, and advocacy.

"A healthy and resilient watershed, where diverse wildlife and habitats thrive, and all who live, work, and visit contribute to its betterment as informed stewards." Center Vision Statement. Resilience is the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption to emergencies.

Meghan then conducted an audience participation program which included four rounds of questions for both the members who attended in person and those who attended online. She indicated that participation was not mandatory and all answers would be anonymous. A typical question was "What nature based solutions can we (Center and partners) implement in the next five years?"

Meghan will review and summarize the responses provided and report back to the STAC.

Announcements

Nivette Perez stated that there will be continued online volunteer training and indicated that the times and dates are provided on the Center Website.

Ashley Norton provided a brief update on the Coastal Zone Management program activities.

Adjourn

Next Meeting:

April 11, 2025, 9:00am to 12:00pm, Hybrid - Lewes

August 1, 2025, 9:00- 12:00 noon, Virtual Only

October 24, 2025, 9:00 - 12:00 noon, Hybrid - Lewes

Attendees

STAC Members

Douglas Janiec

Ram Mohan

Ashley Norton

Alison Rogerson

Kelly Somers

Christophe Tulou

Richard Watson

Ed Whereat

Andrew Wozniak

Mollie Yacano

Regular Guests

AG Robbins

Chris Vanuga

Valerie Thompson

Jared Miller

Steve Farr

Center Staff

Meghan Noe Fellows

Bob Collins

Nivette Perez-Perez

Taylor Hoffman

Morgan Krell

Michelle Koenig

EPA

Megan Mackey