

INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN

Advisory Committee

for the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan

September 8, 2017 Conference Call

Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introduction and Agenda Review

Kristin Rowles welcomed the Advisory Committee (AC) members and thanked them for their participation on the conference call. Members participating on the call were identified by a roll call; a list of participants is provided at the end of this meeting summary. Next, Kristin reviewed the agenda and objectives for the conference call and provided some ground rules for the teleconference to support a productive discussion. Screen sharing was used during the call so that participants could view slides and documents during the discussion. For those that did not access the screen sharing portal, slides and documents were provided to the committee in advance.

ICPRB Progress Report

Carlton Haywood (ICPRB) thanked members for attending the meeting and their continued support of the planning process. He reported on discussion from the August 29 ICPRB Commission meeting:

- The Commissioners expressed appreciation to the AC for their dedication and support in developing the Comprehensive Plan;
- Commissioners appointed an ad hoc committee to become more engaged in final development of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Commissioners suggested the following as guiding principles for the comprehensive plan:
 - Provide a snapshot of basin conditions and overview of concerns
 - Be prescriptive of ICPRB role and identify roles of other entities

Carlton also reported that ICPRB is partnering with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- Baltimore District to document federal agency goals and programs they will undertake.

Discussion of Draft Plan Section

Heidi Moltz (ICPRB) provided the AC a review of the Comprehensive Plan layout and particular discussion of the challenge area sections. She pointed out that some background information on the challenge areas will be provided in earlier sections of the document, such as Section 5 in the current plan outline. Section 6 will include discussion of the challenges as well as the recommendations suggested to address each challenge.

Heidi then discussed the recommendations in the *Ensure Sustainable Water Use and Supplies* challenge area including:

- Reporting on basin-wide uses, projected demands and consumptive demand;
- Conducting additional studies on uses that fall below reporting thresholds;
- Developing an inventory of roles, responsibilities and areas of authority and discussion of current program effectiveness.

Heidi noted that the roles and responsibilities and milestones sections of the draft water use and supplies sections are currently focused on ICPRB activities. Feedback is needed to develop text relating to other organizations in these sections. Heidi invited AC members to submit comments, key words, and/or draft text from their organizations (or organizational type – e.g. state gov't, local gov't, NGO) by September 29, 2017.

Kristin asked the AC members if the draft plan material matched their expectations and what they thought about the recommendations included for this challenge area. Discussion was as follows:

- An AC member reported that the Commissioners last week suggested the need for more “white space” and inclusion of more photos. The Commissioners encouraged keeping highly technical data in an appendix to make the Plan more “reader-friendly.” A number of AC members offered similar comments including that the Plan should be “interactive” and not a document that “sits on a shelf.” A member suggested AC members would likely be willing to provide more photos to be used in the Plan.
- Several AC members suggested that the graphic illustrating recommendation development be modified to represent a more cyclical process in order to reflect adaptive management as a part of the approach and future cycles of planning that account for lessons learned.
- An AC member suggested also adding discussion of metrics for plan goals.
- An AC member commented that, while the Plan may not be “prescriptive,” it should seek to provide meaningful recommendations to government entities and jurisdictions.
- An AC member offered that the recommendations in this challenge area were the three that got the most support in the AC discussion and priority exercise at the last meeting. He noted that the AC recommendations that received less support may still warrant inclusion in the plan. He suggested the addition of another recommendation that encompasses these recommendations. It might be stated as follows: “Pursue a range of complementary actions that would contribute to a more sustainable and resilient water supply, such as...”
- Several AC members offered support for the “report card” approach regarding the current water resources in the Basin and suggested that it could serve as an “anchor” or starting point for future management decisions and evaluation.
 - Carlton and Heidi (ICPRB) acknowledged the importance of the historical context and reported that it will be discussed in Section 5.8 as background for the current status of the watershed.
- An AC member asked what criteria could be used to perform the evaluations proposed in Recommendation 3?

- Heidi discussed existing language in the draft, including convening a workshop of relevant stakeholders, but requested specific feedback and suggestions from AC members on other metrics or ways to improve the evaluations.
- Committee members were positive regarding their influence on the draft section.
- ICPRB will actively solicit photos or other media from AC members and others to include in the Plan (include information on photographer, location, date and what the photo is illustrating).

Kristin reminded the group that they would be reviewing additional draft sections on *Water Quality* and *Ecological Health* prior to the November 8 AC meeting.

Discussion of Ecological Health Challenge Area

Claire Buchanan (ICPRB) reviewed background information and draft recommendations for the *Ecological Health* challenge area (slides provided to AC members in pre-meeting materials). Claire discussed various metrics of ecological health, major threats identified by the AC and others, tools used to measure and monitor the status of ecological health, management opportunities, and draft recommendations.

Discussion on the presentation was as follows:

- An AC member commented that this was a good effort to get a handle on an extraordinarily complex issue. There was specific discussion regarding the Potomac River estuary as the second most important striped bass spawning habitat on the US east coast and the potential impact of coal ash disposal on that habitat.
 - Claire and Carlton both offered that the Comprehensive Plan will have room to discuss specific ecological issues and concerns.
 - The draft recommendation “Designate Potomac estuary as critical fish habitat (e.g., Atlantic Sturgeon)” was modified.
- An AC member commented that the discussion of “ecosystem services” should be enhanced.

Kristin then asked AC members to begin using a polling website to provide some input for discussion of the recommendations in this challenge area. First, she asked AC members to respond to a poll that asked members to select four priorities among the draft Ecological Health recommendations presented by Claire. Results from the polling were shared with members in real-time via screen sharing. Kristin informed the group that a follow-up poll/survey will be sent to all AC members that will include any additional recommendations that arise during discussion. Recommendations identified from the real-time poll conducted as part of the conference call included (in order of priority):

1. Share data and analysis results across jurisdictions
2. Encourage use of comparable sampling analysis methods
3. Coordinate across jurisdictions to protect ecological value
4. Compile biological monitoring data in basin-wide databases and maps

5. Define water quality and quantity protections that improve ecological value
6. Develop tools to identify habitats and waters with high ecological value.

Discussion on the poll results was as follows:

- An AC member commented that the inability to choose more than four recommendations out of the lengthy list was too limiting and suggested grouping some of the very specific recommendations to capture additional detail.
- Claire Buchanan (ICPRB) offered that, since data sharing is cross-cutting across many areas, perhaps removing this recommendation from list would allow for more detailed prioritization of other recommendations

Next, Kristin asked the AC members to respond to an open-ended poll asking for suggestions for additional recommendations for this challenge area. Responses included the following:

- Add a section detailing successfulness to date (“report card”)
- Use broader categories to capture multiple recommendations
- Identify causes of negatively impacted benthic macroinvertebrate communities to Stressor identification section
- Identify causes of harmful algal blooms
- Consider being more specific about actual metrics and tools to be used in assessing ecological health
- Support and coordinate programs to identify, protect, conserve, restore, enhance and connect natural areas, especially along waterways, to Ecosystem Resilience section.

In closing discussion of the challenge area, an AC member suggested particular emphasis on the synthesis section of the Plan to demonstrate how Challenge Areas overlap. This discussion is particularly relevant to the Ecological Health Challenge Area because, as noted in the Challenge Area list document: “Improved ecological health is expected to be an outcome of the strategies that address the challenges in other categories. Water resources challenges of interstate or basin-wide significance related to ecological health not covered in other sections will be discussed in this section of the plan.”

Meeting Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Kristin reported that the follow-up Ecological Health survey reflecting today’s discussion will be sent out shortly after the meeting. She said that AC members have until September 29th to submit comments to ICPRB on the *Sustainable Water Use and Supplies* draft section.

Kristin thanked the AC for their commitment and contributions to a productive meeting and reminded members that presentations and the meeting summary will be provided soon after the meeting. The next AC meeting will be held at 10am on November 8, 2017 at ICPRB in Rockville, MD. The meeting was adjourned.

September 8, 2017 Advisory Committee Conference Call Participation

Members:

Hedrick Belin
Willem Brakel
Tolessa Deksissa
Tom Devilbiss
Marty Gary
Nancy Hausrath
Sara Jordan
Mishelle Noble
John Odenkirk
Mark Peterson
Donald Schwartz
Mark Symborski

Other:

Carlton Haywood (ICPRB)
Heidi Moltz (ICPRB)
Jim Palmer (ICPRB)
Claire Buchanan (ICPRB)
Carol Cain (USACE)
Joey Kliener (VA DEQ)
Kristin Rowles (facilitator)
Mark Masters (facilitator)