



**Maryland Commission on Climate Change  
Adaptation and Resiliency Working Group  
2024 Work Plan Draft 11.29.23**

**PURPOSE**

The Adaptation and Resiliency Working Group (ARWG) is charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for reducing Maryland's climate change vulnerability, and providing state and local governments with tools to plan for and adapt to climate impacts such as extreme weather and sea level rise. At the same time the state moves forward with actions that are reducing greenhouse gasses, increasing energy efficiency, and improving air quality, we must also adequately adapt or climate impacts will remain a concern into the future.

The ARWG builds its annual work plan around the identified priority recommendations, ongoing activities and identified adaptation needs from members and partners to help move the needle forward on adaptation across Maryland throughout the year.

**2024 PRIORITIES FOR ARWG ACTION**

1. *Next Generation Adaptation Plan (NextGen) Progress:* The Adaptation and Resiliency Working Group (ARWG) along with state, local and non-governmental partners will continue to work on editorially polishing NextGen focusing on formatting the plan to present clear and trackable milestones that will help meet overarching targets for adaptation and resilience.
2. *Saltwater Intrusion Plan 2024 Update:* The ARWG agencies who are members of the state agency saltwater intrusion team (DNR, MDE, MDP, MDA, MIA) will continue to convene meetings of subject matter experts, disseminate information, and support projects that facilitate continued implementation of Maryland's Plan to Adapt to Saltwater Intrusion and Salinization. The ARWG will receive periodic updates from the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) regarding this effort and will provide guidance to MDP and other state agencies on how to increase or expedite plan implementation. The plan is proposed to be updated every 5 years, thus in 2024 a new update will be compiled.
3. *Interagency Funding Task Force:* The ARWG continues to recognize the need to prepare Maryland and its communities to take advantage of upcoming funding opportunities that expand beyond federal money and promote the use of natural infrastructure to build resilience to climate impacts. The ARWG will form an

Interagency Funding Task Force to support the implementation of priorities identified in the Next Generation Adaptation Plan. This task force will specifically be working to secure funding related to adaptation and resilience goals and will avoid the duplication of efforts happening in similarly relevant groups.

4. *Local Level Capacity Building:* ARWG agencies will build on the efforts made in 2023 to identify additional needs and strategies for building the capacity of underserved communities and local governments. The initial phase of the effort, completed in the first half of 2023, included a collection of resources, efforts, partners, and deliverables available now or underway that support the capacity of underserved communities and local governments. In 2024, the sub-team will take the information collected, and move into evaluation and of the effectiveness of existing efforts, how to minimize application and management burdens, identification of non-traditional funding sources (including public health), opportunities within existing capacity building initiatives, and training and skill needs identification. The evaluation and final deliverable will include input from communities and the private sector, feedback from local governments and underserved communities, and coordination with existing efforts, including those underway in support of the NextGen Adaptation Plan release and identified strategies. The local level capacity building effort will share regular progress updates with the ARWG, and deliver a summary report to the working group by the end of the year.
5. *Environmental Justice, Climate Justice & Public Health:* Like other working groups and the Commission, ARWG will work to ensure that an environmental justice lens is used in all its programming and initiatives. ARWG will look to the expertise and collaboration with the commission's Climate Justice Steering Committee to advise and ensure underserved communities are given the assistance needed to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change. ARWG recommended in the 2023 MCCC Annual report that state agencies incorporate Next Generation Adaptation Plan Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion priorities and milestones into their annual reports on greenhouse gas reduction and the impacts of climate change.
6. *Local-Community Liaisons:* State agencies that are represented in the ARWG should prioritize funding to support the hiring of people with cultural competency to act as local-community liaisons that serve to communicate and discuss climate change impacts in low-income communities. The ARWG will support conversation around this priority and work to align agency efforts.
7. *Building Resilience in Local Level Comprehensive Plans:* Using the NextGen Adaptation Plan as a guide, the general assembly should mandate that resiliency

measures be integrated as an element into local-level comprehensive plans. The ARWG will identify data to support implementing this requirement.

## **ONGOING WORK FOR 2024**

- A. *Healthy Soils Initiative*: In January 2022, the MDA Soil Health Advisory Committee approved recommendations to advance practice adoption through Maryland's Healthy Soils Program. The program recognizes that improving soil health increases on-farm climate resilience, and will promote conservation cover on marginal areas, such as fields impacted from saltwater intrusion. In FY23, MDA piloted 2 new initiatives through its Healthy Soils Program to improve health and yield of soils, and increase soil carbon sequestration. Cover Crop Plus expands on Maryland farmer's adoption of cover crops to promote a 3-year commitment to cover crops with a soil health focus for increasing diversity and a living root, combined with conservation tillage to minimize soil disturbance. Interest in the program is growing. Second, the Healthy Soils Competitive Fund provided \$650,000 in grants to support 16 soil health and agroforestry projects during its first year.
- B. *Targeted Resilience Area Initiative*: This pilot project seeks to build capacity to compete for natural infrastructure resilience funds. Launched in 2021, the initiative has identified two communities for the creation of Comprehensive Water Quality and Climate Resilience Project Portfolios that function at a landscape-scale, are developed in partnership with local governments and vulnerable, underserved communities, and create a pipeline of nature-based resilience projects ready for funding through traditional funding and new federal opportunities. In 2022, the City of Hagerstown and the lower Pocomoke River region, including Pocomoke City, were selected as pilot geographies. This effort is included as a climate milestone in Maryland's Phase III WIP. In 2023, the Chesapeake and Coastal Service worked with a contractor and subcontractors to engage with the two chosen pilot geographies and progress an analysis of potential restoration and conservation projects. This analysis included the estimation of the co-benefits of each potential project, and will culminate in the design of one final recommended project for each geography chosen. Upon the completion of the project in late 2023, the Chesapeake and Coastal Service will continue engagement with the communities chosen into 2024 to build upon the results and work towards fundable options for the projects identified.
- C. *Integrating Climate Change into the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan* - The ARWG and partners will continue to work with government agencies, nonprofits and other interested and impacted parties implementing the WIP to advance practices that

generate resilience co-benefits. A particular area of emphasis will be aligning the draft Next Generation Adaptation Plan and WIP priorities.

- D. *Maryland Port Administration (MPA)* has an active climate adaptation and resilience strategy for building resilience and adaptation into all capital projects. Using BRIC grant funding, MPA is currently updating the 2010 Climate Vulnerability Assessment to further inform decision making. In addition, MPA is working to develop an agency-wide sustainability plan that incorporates climate change, environmental justice, and resiliency strategies.
- E. *Collaborative research and application.* The ARWG in collaboration with the STWG, University partners and others will continue to collaborate on research priorities and application opportunities, including but not limited to, expansion of sea level rise utilization guidance and adaptation, pooled monitoring initiative restoration research, blue carbon and ghost forests.

## **ARWG Meeting Schedule for 2024**

All meetings will be run hybrid with both in-person and virtual attendees. Meetings will run from 2:00 - 4:00pm with individual meeting details provided ahead to the ARWG contacts list. Please email Ryland Taylor, [ryland.taylor@maryland.gov](mailto:ryland.taylor@maryland.gov) to be added to the ARWG email contacts list.

- February 28
- May 29
- August 28
- November 20