**Session Name:** The EEN Afternoon Show – Managing the Chesapeake bay and its Complexity: A Study in Evaluation, Adaptive Management, and Accountability

**Speaker:** Katherine Dawes, EPA

Carin Bisland, EPA

Paul Ferraro, Georgia State University

Carl Hershner, College of William and Mary

**Session Date/Time:** 6/24/2011 3:30 PM

**Notetaker:** Katelyn Cummings

**Main Themes:**

* Purpose of this session:
  + To highlight the complications in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay
  + To discuss possible solutions on how they can do better
* The Chesapeake Bay is a complex water system and fixing its problems is difficult. Many of the typical methods for finding what works is further complicated by the problems that are unique to the Chesapeake Bay.

**Detailed Notes:**

* The Chesapeake Bay
  + is the second largest estuary in the world
  + is a part of 6 different states
  + has low nutrients and low visibility
* Pollution comes from non-point sources, such as farms
* Why has there been so much auditing and evaluation attention?
  + Carin: Environmental actions take a while, but everyone wants quick and immediate results. We do not have the program in place to make improvements or collect the data needed to track progress.
  + Carl: Has a very sophisticated scientific community. Need to have a central vision and establish where resources need to be diverted. Suggests adaptive management.
  + Carin: The complexity is in the fact that you can’t take a rigorous approach. Politics is involved, and even though there are years of info, it is not always the info you need. Plus, there’s not enough money get more data.
* Carl: Complexity could be used as an excuse for failure. The challenges are the political landscape, the fact that the system is in transition, and that some of the goals are no longer attainable. Can’t afford to do experiments, have to learn while doing. The logic framework is intuitive to succeed:
  + - Define goals
    - Be rationale in what needs to be done
    - Monitor to determine if you are succeeding
* Paul: Adaptive management could be an iterative process, learn how it operates and how we can manipulate it, gaps between scientific analysis and adaptive management, never look at evidence like the medical field does, try microexperiements
* Carl: Make more explicit causal expectations, cannot send money to one region without sending to all regions
* Carin: The demand to do things quickly leaves little time, have to follow the E3 (“everyone, everything, everywhere”), have not spent enough time looking at behavioral changes
* Carl: What’s most critical is how can we be effective.
* Carin: Need both internal and external evaluations
* Paul: Some questions are difficult to answer (e.g. What affects water quality?)
  + Have to try things, look at what we can control
  + Raise questions about impact before collecting data
* What things get in the way of adaptive management?
  + Carl: It’s the inverse of stability. Most of the people at the top have not been involved very long. Have to find a more fluid model that can be adapted.
* How can evaluators communicate the realities of changing the environment?
  + Paul: Evaluators not often involved in the design. Cannot manage expectations
  + Carin: Evaluation needs to play a role at the beginning
* How do you deal with adaptive management in different environments? Collaborative verses regulatory?
  + Carin: Regulatory makes it more difficult but not impossible. People who would be the best at adaptive management have the least incentive. Jobs depend on the success of the program. Pressure from the top.
* Do you feel that you can respond to the media and tell a more complete story?
  + Carin: Trying to become more proactive and transparent
* Setting expectations? Timelines? Setting a realistic picture of things that are and are not working? What looks like failure could be seen as reasonable success?
* What are evaluations that you would like to see in resetting the discussion?
  + Carl: Need formative, not summative evaluations
  + Paul: Systematic reviews, do microexperiements, show accountability

**Websites/Programs**

[Washington Post feature](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/interactives/failingthechesapeake/)  - part of the debate about the Chesapeake Bay was started by the Washington Post articles on it