

APNEP's Estuarine Water Quality & Surficial Sediment Monitoring Strategy (Draft)

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Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership

Water Resources Monitoring & Assessment

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2022 Water Resources Monitoring & Assessment Review

- A-P ambient monitoring program (2000)
- APNEP indicator criteria (2006)
- EPA indicator development (2007)
- MAT objectives 2008-present

APNEP's Ecosystem Health Goals

- A region where **human communities** are sustained by a functioning ecosystem
- A region where aquatic, wetland, and upland habitats support viable populations of **native species**
- A region where **water** quantity and quality maintain ecological integrity

Figure 2: APNEP's adaptive management cycle.

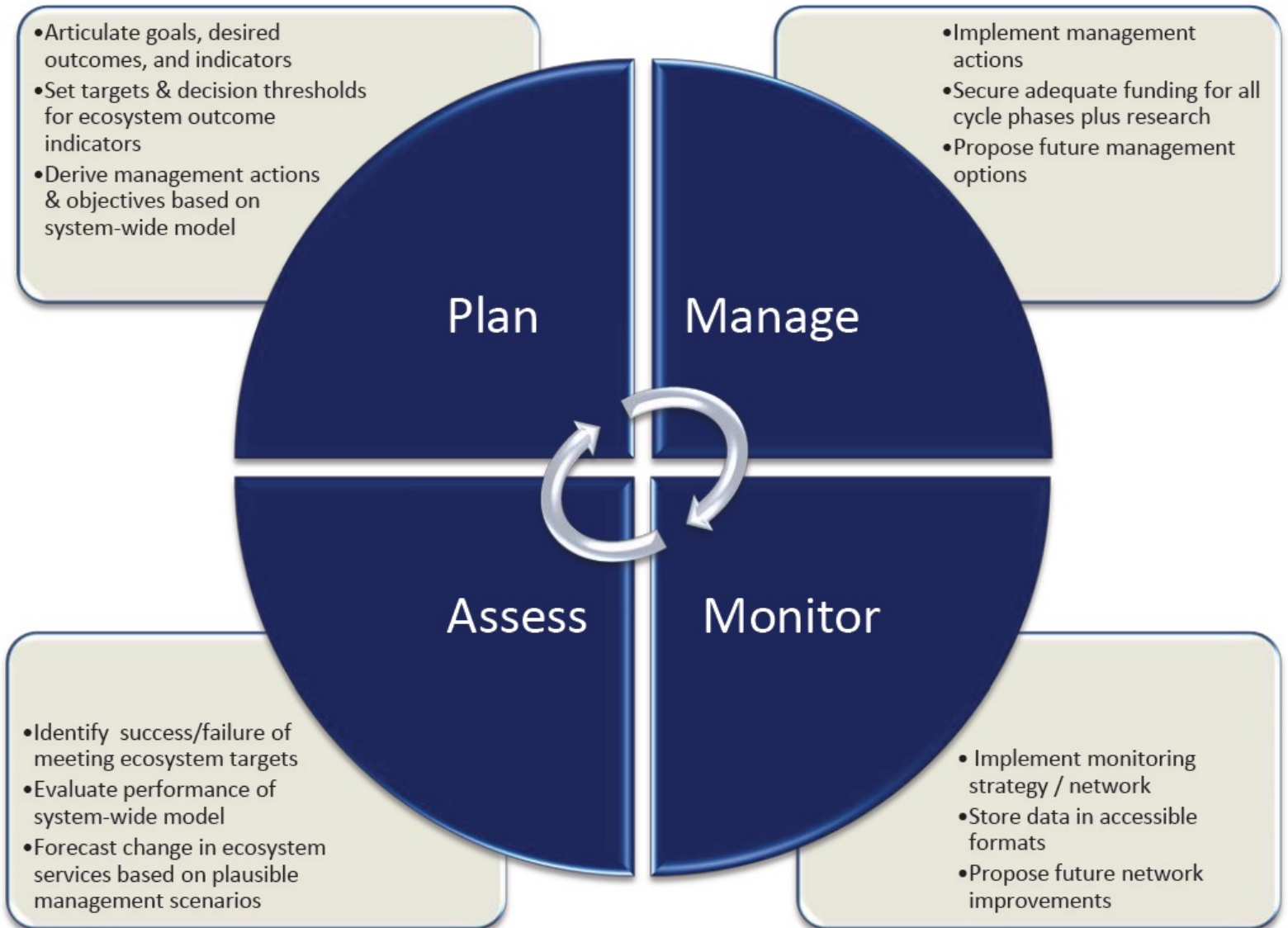


Figure 2: APNEP's adaptive management cycle.

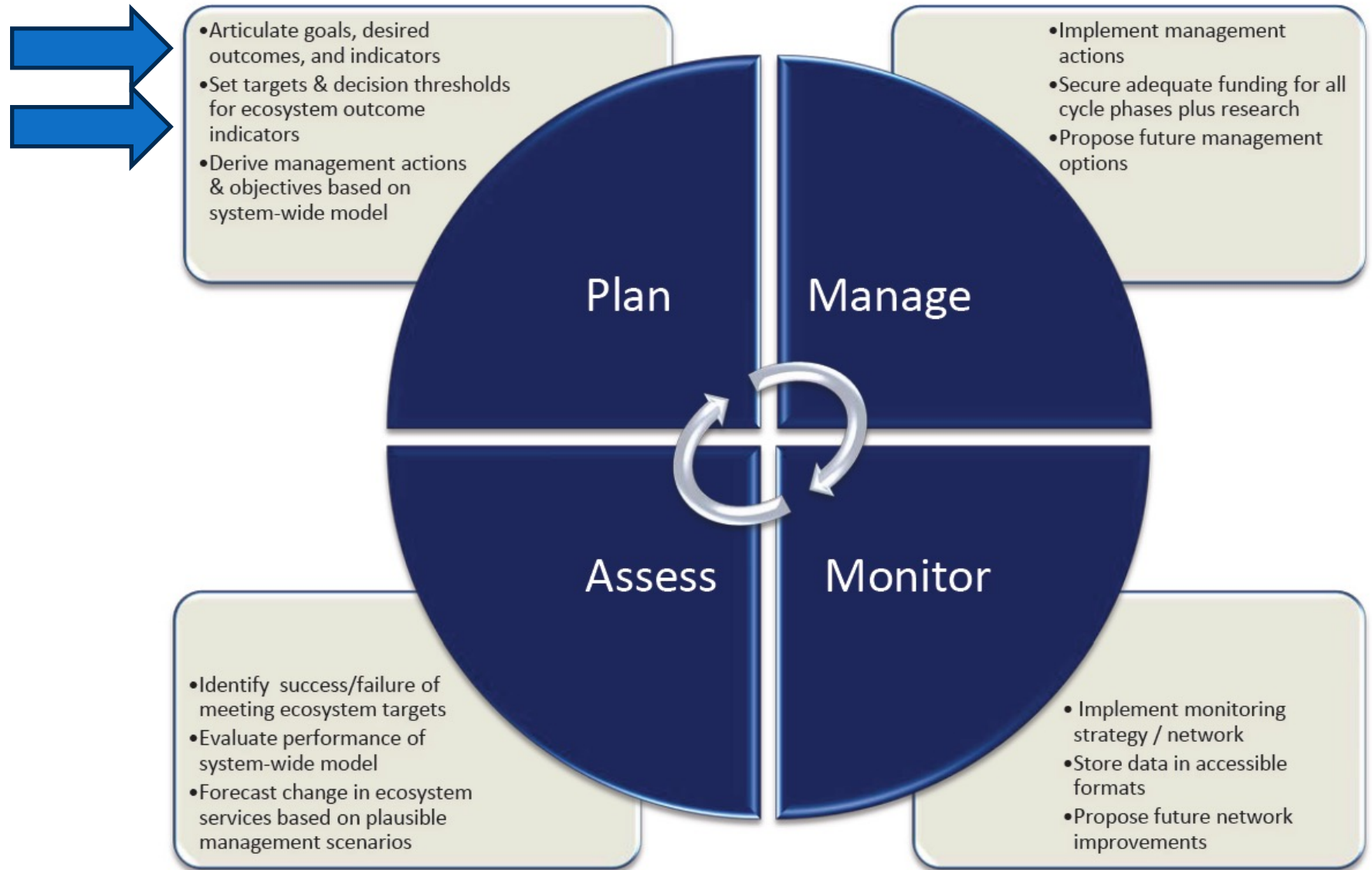
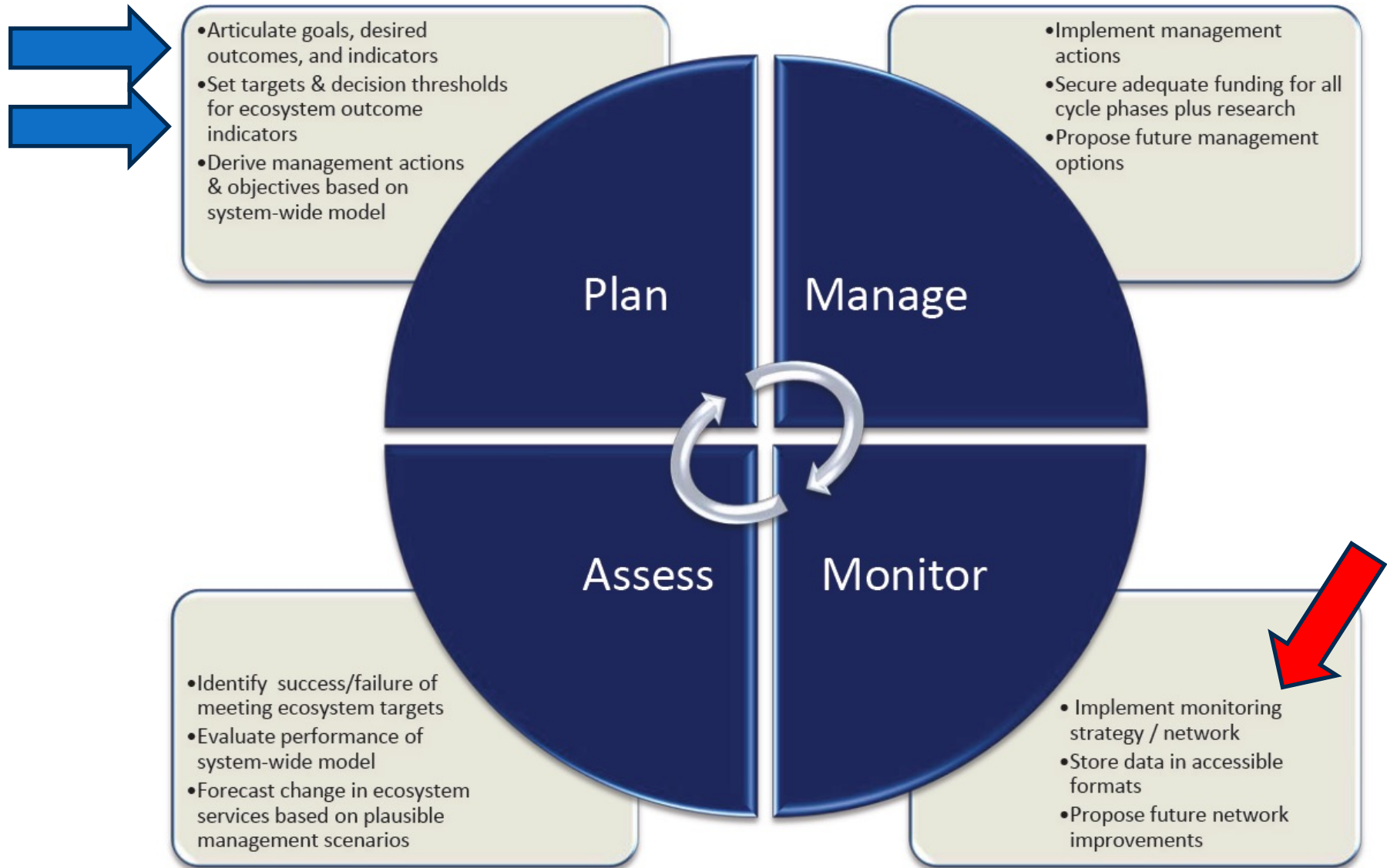


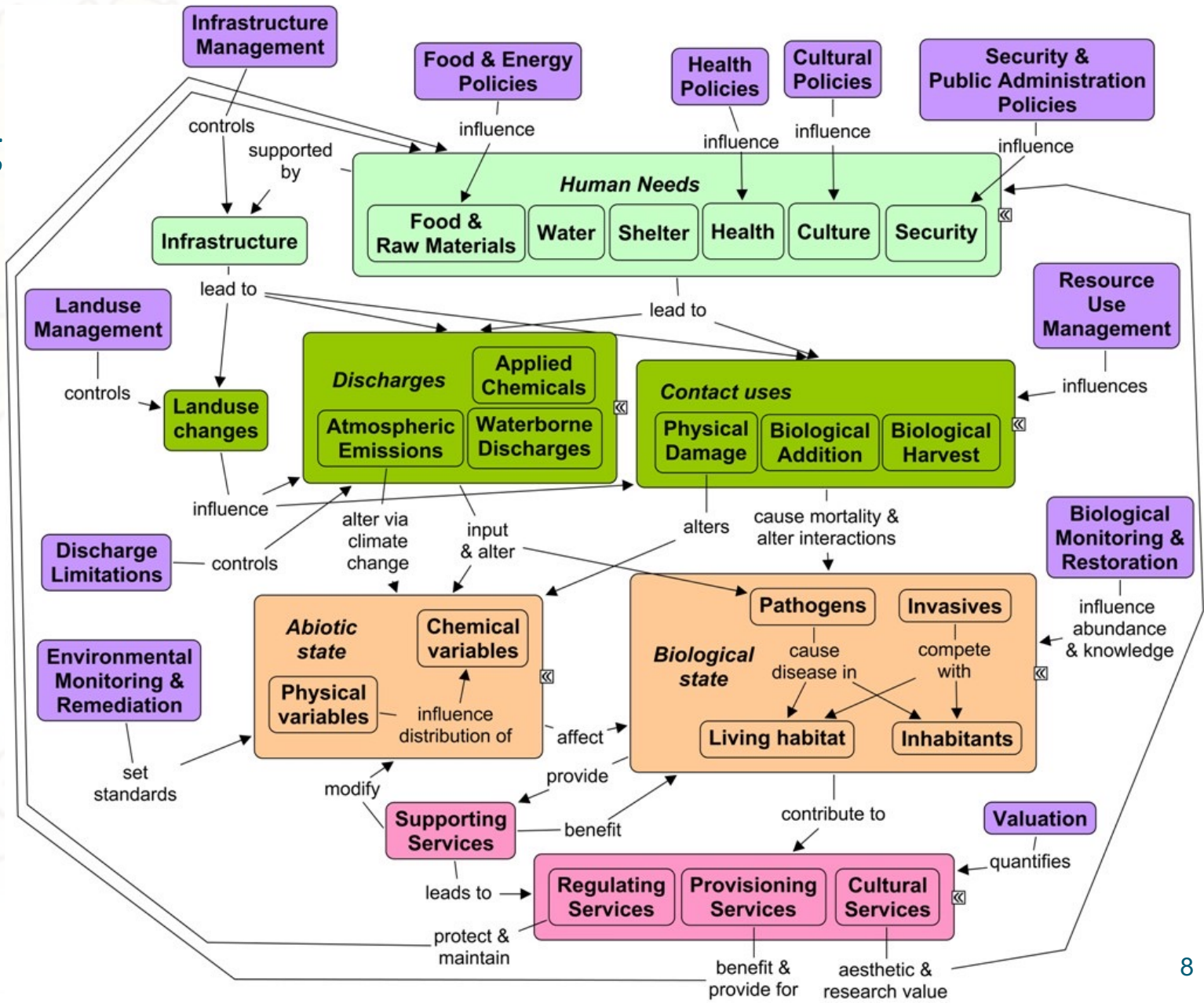
Figure 2: APNEP's adaptive management cycle.



APNEP Deliverables 2023-2024

- Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) 3.0 (November 2023)
- Regional Ecosystem Assessment 2.0 (Fall 2024)
- Integrated Monitoring Framework 1.0 (December 2023)

DPSER Modeling

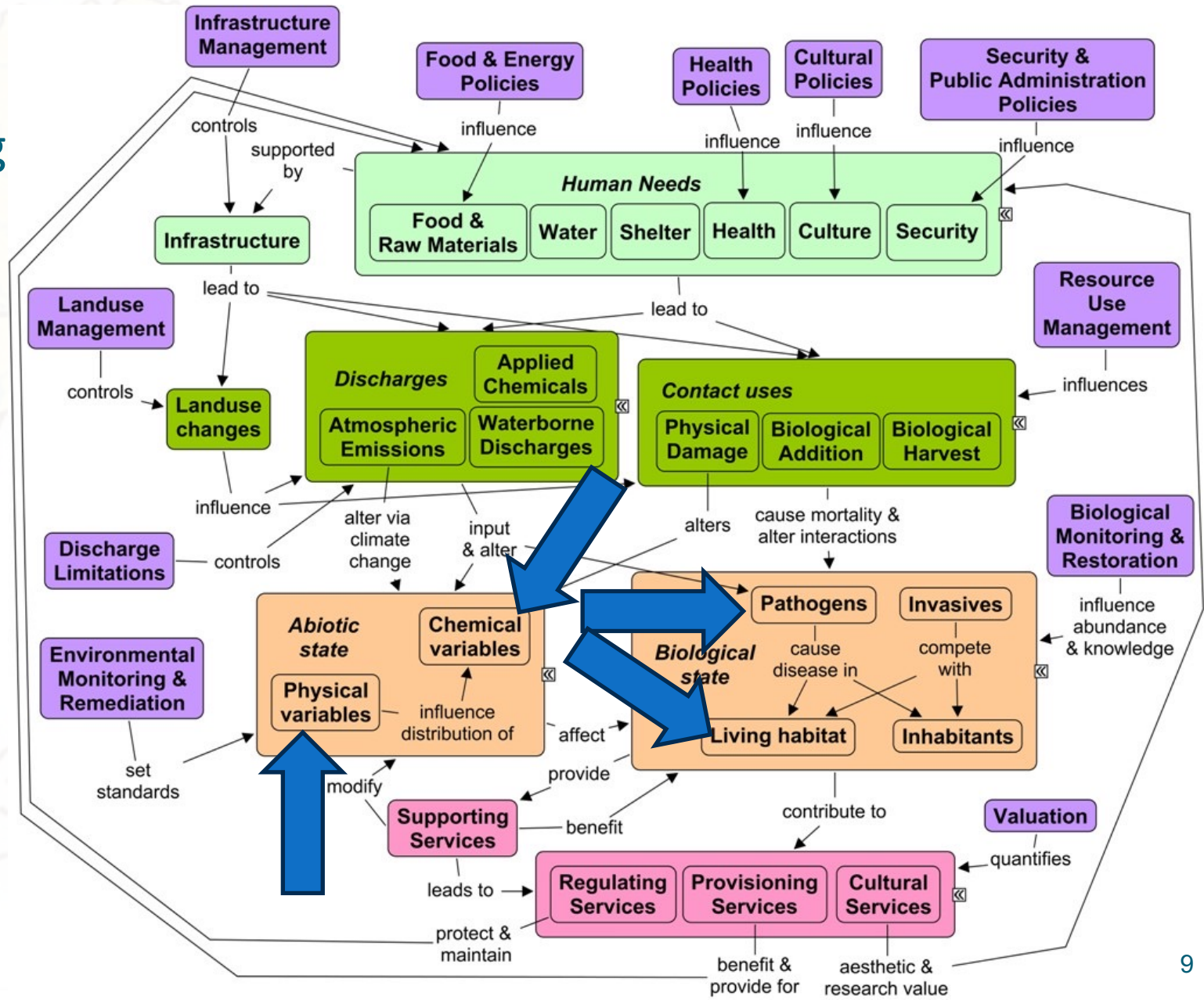


Lt. green = Drivers
 Dk. Green = Pressure
 Orange = State
 Red = Ecosystem Services
 Purple = Response

EPA-ORD-ESRP 2010



DPSER Modeling

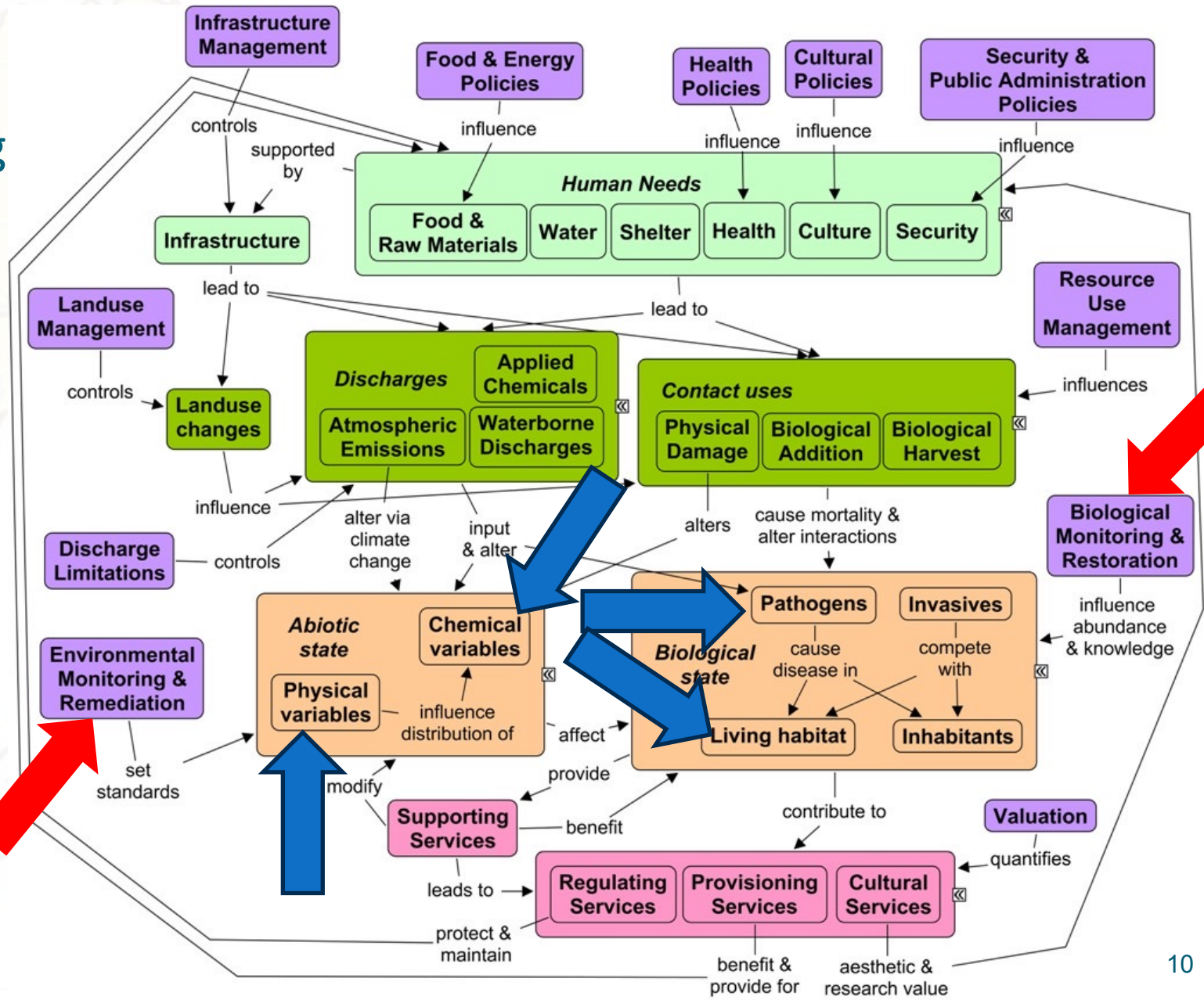


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MONITORING STRATEGY FOR THE ALBEMARLE-PAMLICO ESTUARINE SYSTEM

Estuarine Monitoring: Water and Surficial Sediments

Version 0.1
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Estuarine Water Quality Assessment Questions

- *Are estuarine water quality conditions suitable to sustain the ecosystem services...*
 - *... provided by SAV species?*
 - *... associated with recreational activities (e.g., swimming, canoeing and kayaking)?*
 - *... provided by estuarine fauna (e.g., fishing, clam and oyster harvest)?*
 - *... provided by coastal wetlands (e.g., sediment loading)?*
 - *... provided by coastal landscapes, including natural vegetation (e.g., coastal forests), wildlife (e.g., fish and bird habitat) and aesthetics (e.g., attractive viewpoints, estuarine debris)?*

Table 3. Module/Sub-Module/Indicator/Metric hierarchy addressed in this plan. (*) = metrics that were recommended for continuous long-term monitoring in APNEP's first (1989) baseline water quality monitoring plan. (^) = metrics also supporting the "Phytoplankton" indicator. (#) = metric also supporting water column clarity.

+

Module/Sub-Module	Indicator	Metrics
Aquatic/Estuarine	Water Column Pathogens	Enterococci concentration
		Shellfish closure areas
	Phytoplankton	Chlorophyll <i>a</i> concentration [#]
		Extent & frequency of algal blooms
		Cyanobacteria density
		Algal toxins
	Sediment Quality	Chemical contaminant index
		Sediment toxicity index
		Sediment moisture and organic contents
	Water Column Clarity	PAR attenuation
		Secchi depth/ transparency
		Turbidity
		CDOM
	Water Column Physical-Chemical	Water temperature*
		Salinity*
		Dissolved oxygen concentration* [^]
		Hydrogen ion concentration (pH) [^]
		Nutrients: Nitrogen (Nitrate/Nitrite+ Ammonium + DON + Particulate N), Phosphorus (Orthophosphate + OP + TP), Carbon (DIC + DOC + Particulate C) concentrations
		Relative sea level
		Underwater Soundscape
Water Column Contaminant Chemistry		SVOCs concentration
		Plastic waste concentration
		Dissolved metals concentration
	PFAS concentration	
	Pharmaceutical & personal care products (PPCPs) concentration	



Table of Contents

Preface	2
Acronyms and Abbreviations	7
1. Background	9
1.1. Purpose of Monitoring Strategy	9
1.2. Scope of Monitoring Strategy	15
1.3. Conceptual Models	18
1.3.1. Conceptual Models from Literature	19
1.3.2. APES Model Components	24
1.4. Monitoring Plan Revision	24
2. Indicators and Metrics for Estuarine Waters	26
2.1. Indicator: Water Column Pathogens	36
2.1.1. Pathogens Metric: Enterococci Concentration	36
2.1.2. Pathogens Metric: Shellfish Closure Areas	36
2.2. Indicator: Phytoplankton	37
2.2.1. Phytoplankton Metric: Chlorophyll <i>a</i> Concentration	37
2.2.2. Phytoplankton Metric: Extent and Frequency of Algal Blooms	38
2.2.3. Phytoplankton Metric: Cyanobacteria Density	38
2.2.4. Phytoplankton Metric: Algal Toxins	39
2.3. Indicator: Sediment Quality	40
2.3.1. Sediment Metric: Chemical Contaminant Index	40
2.3.2. Sediment Metric: Sediment Toxicity Index	41
2.3.3. Sediment Metric: Sediment Moisture and Organic Contents	41
2.4. Indicator: Water Column Clarity	42
2.4.1. Water-Clarity Metric: Attenuation of Photosynthetically Active Radiation (PAR)	42
2.4.2. Water-Clarity Metric: Secchi Depth/ Transparency	43
2.4.3. Water-Clarity Metric: Turbidity	43
2.4.4. Water-Clarity Metric: Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (CDOM)	44
2.5. Indicator: Water Column Physical-Chemical	45
2.5.1. Physical-Chemical Metric: Water Temperature	45
2.5.2. Physical-Chemical Metric: Salinity	46
2.5.3. Physical-Chemical Metric: Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Concentration	46

2.5.4. Physical-Chemical Metric: Hydrogen Ion (pH) Concentration	47
2.5.5. Physical-Chemical Metric: Nutrient (Nitrogen + Phosphorus + Carbon) Concentrations	48
2.5.6. Physical-Chemical Metric: Relative Sea Level	48
2.5.7. Physical-Chemical Metric: Acoustics	49
2.6. Indicator: Contaminant Chemistry	49
2.6.1. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: SVOC Concentrations	50
2.6.2. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: Plastic Waste Concentration	50
2.6.3. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: Dissolved Metals Concentration	51
2.6.4. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: PFAS Concentration	52
2.6.5. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: PPCPs Concentration	53
3. Monitoring Needs and Recommendations	54
3.1. Needs and Recommendations: Water Column Pathogens	54
3.1.1. Pathogens Metric: Enterococci Concentration	54
3.1.2. Pathogens Metric: Shellfish Closure Areas	55
3.2. Needs and Recommendations: Phytoplankton	55
3.2.1. Phytoplankton Metric: Chlorophyll <i>a</i> Concentration	55
3.2.2. Phytoplankton Metric: Extent and Frequency of Algal Blooms	55
3.2.3. Phytoplankton Metric: Cyanobacteria Density	55
3.2.4. Phytoplankton Metric: Algal Toxins	55
3.2.5. Phytoplankton Metric: Microcystin	56
3.3. Needs and Recommendations: Sediment Quality	56
3.3.1. Sediment Metric: Chemical Contaminant Index	56
3.3.2. Sediment Metric: Sediment Toxicity Index	56
3.3.3. Sediment Metric: Sediment Moisture and Organic Contents	56
3.4.1. Water-Clarity Metric: Attenuation of Photosynthetically Active Radiation (PAR)	56
3.4.2. Water-Clarity Metric: Secchi Depth	57
3.4.3. Water-Clarity Metric: Turbidity	57
3.4.4. Water-Clarity Metric: Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (CDOM)	57
3.5. Needs and Recommendations: Other Water Column Physical-Chemical	58
3.5.1. Physical-Chemical Metric: Water Temperature	58
3.5.2. Physical-Chemical Metric: Estuarine Salinity	58
3.5.3. Physical-Chemical Metric: Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Concentration	59

3.5.4. Physical-Chemical Metric: Hydrogen Ion (pH) Concentration	59
3.5.5. Physical-Chemical Metric: Nutrients (Nitrogen + Phosphorus + Carbon) Concentrations	59
3.5.6. Physical-Chemical Metric: Relative Sea Level	60
3.5.7. Physical-Chemical Metric: Acoustics	60
3.6 Needs and Recommendations: Contaminant Chemistry	60
3.6.1. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: SVOCs Concentration	60
3.6.2. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: Plastic Waste Concentration	60
3.6.3. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: Dissolved Metals Concentration	60
3.6.4. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: PFAS Concentration	61
3.6.5. Contaminant Chemistry Metric: Pharmaceutical & Personal Care Products (PPCPs) Concentration	61
4. Research Needs Related to Estuarine Waters	62
5. Database Management and Reporting	63
6. Statement of Funding and Commitment	65
Definitions	66
References Cited	68



Table 5. Summary of APNEP SAV monitoring elements. MAT = Monitoring and Assessment Team

Component	Metric	Spatial Scale (Grain & Extent)	Temporal Scale (Grain & Extent)	Method	MAT Lead
Mesohaline to Polyhaline Waters: Bogue, Back, Core, Eastern Pamlico Sounds	SAV Areal Extent by Cover Class	0.3 m-resolution census of targeted sub-region in annual rotation	Bi-seasonal (May and mid-Sept. to mid-Oct.) every 3-5 years	Aerial survey via digital mapping camera, four-band color Cover class interpretation, manual	SAV
	SAV Maximum Depth Distribution	0.3 m-resolution census of targeted sub-region in annual rotation	Bi-seasonal (May and mid-Sept. to mid-Oct.) every 3-5 years	Aerial survey via digital mapping camera, four-band color Edge interpretation, manual	SAV
	SAV Species Presence	75-150 sites randomly assigned and spatially balanced, majority at targeted sub-region in annual rotation	Bi-seasonal (May and September), majority every 3-5 years, minority annually	Species identification during Braun-Blanquet survey	SAV
	SAV Relative Abundance	75-150 sites randomly assigned and spatially balanced, majority at targeted sub-region in annual rotation	Bi-seasonal (May and September), majority every 3-5 years, minority annually	Braun-Blanquet, 4 replicate quadrats per site	SAV
Oligohaline Waters: Neuse Estuary, Pamlico Estuary, Western Pamlico Sound, Albemarle Sound, Currituck Sound, Back Bay	SAV Areal Extent by Cover Class	Five roughly equal segments of total shoreline for each sub-region, majority at targeted segment per sub-region in annual rotation	Seasonal (Months TBD), majority every 5 years, minority annually	Sonar at two shore-parallel isobaths (0.75 m and 1 m) plus shore-normal sonar transect(s) past SAV maximum depth	SAV
	SAV Maximum Depth Distribution	Five roughly equal segments of total shoreline for each sub-region, majority at targeted segment per sub-region in annual rotation	Seasonal (Months TBD), majority every 5 years, minority annually	Determined from shore-normal sonar transect data	SAV
	SAV Species Presence	75-150 sites randomly selected and spatially balanced, majority at targeted segments in annual rotation	Seasonal (Months TBD), majority every 5 years, minority annually	Species identification during Braun-Blanquet survey	SAV
	SAV Relative Abundance	75-150 sites randomly selected and spatially balanced, majority at targeted segments in annual rotation	Seasonal (Months TBD), majority every 5 years, minority annually	Braun-Blanquet, 4 replicate quadrats per site, possible near-shore (< 0.5 m depth) UAV survey	SAV

2.2.8. Abiotic-Stressor Metric: Salinity

Rationale: Estuaries by definition are areas of maximum spatial and temporal variation in salinity regime. Given that salinity tolerances vary widely among SAV species, it should be of little surprise that the salinity regime is an important predictor variable in determining SAV community composition at waterscape scales⁶¹, as well as productivity and growth. Estuarine salinity is often classified into three zones: low (oligohaline), medium (mesohaline), and high (polyhaline). SAV communities within the three salinity zones can have different interannual dynamics and responses to stressors⁶², with oligohaline communities being especially sensitive to salinity changes on the order of a few parts per thousand (ppt).

There is a very good understanding of the spatial/quantitative characteristics of the salinity gradient in APES (Section 1.1). The knowledge gap is how temporal fluctuations in salinity alter this structure with respect to its influence on SAV. Stressors that influence the salinity regime include extreme freshwater inputs from droughts, tropical storms, flood control⁶³, and impervious land surfaces. Also, the introduction of salt from water treatment facilities with reverse osmosis technologies can affect local salinity. Relative sea-level rise affects the tidal prism and increases saltwater flow into the estuarine interior.

Status: While many APNEP partners monitor salinity (mesohaline and polyhaline) or conductivity (oligohaline) of estuarine waters, it remains to be determined whether the spatial and temporal resolution of their collective network is adequate to reflect shallow-water salinity in all sub-regions. Few partners monitor salinity continuously (Table 4).

Citizen Volunteering: Volunteers if provided with refractometers (approximately \$300 each) can monitor surface-water salinity, or with calibrated water quality meters or multi-parameter sondes.





3.2.8. Abiotic-Stressor Metric: Salinity

Assessment Points: Currently with limited information on SAV-salinity dynamics, it is challenging to identify assessment points for directions on monitoring sensitivity. The prospects should improve however, as we build a better understanding of species composition, distribution and relative abundance of SAV in low-salinity waters.

Needs and Recommendation: The need is to Intensify (spatially and temporally) salinity monitoring in low-salinity waters. Beginning in 2021, we recommend compiling and analyzing salinity databases to identify priority gaps, plus measurements taken during Tier-2 sampling events.



Monitoring Integration Continuum

- **Independence:** Knowledge of partners monitoring strategies
- **Cooperation:** Taking advantage of common geography, timing
- **Collaboration:** Opportunities to leverage partners' monitoring networks
- **Integration:** Working toward a common set of regional ecosystem objectives