

DeSSAV Workgroup: Priorities and Goals

Updated January, 2024



The Delaware Statewide Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (DeSSAV) Workgroup consists of over 40 members from state and federal agencies, non-profits, and educational institutions. DeSSAV has established key priorities and goals to guide collaborative efforts in restoring and monitoring submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) habitats across the state. These priorities serve as a foundation for strategic planning, resource allocation, and grant applications. The goals have been developed through interactive member discussions and organized into five primary categories: **Permitting, Outreach, Mapping, Establishment/Restoration, and Monitoring.** These priorities are subject to change based-on workgroup input and are to be updated periodically. For more about the workgroup visit delawaresav.org.

1. Permitting

Challenges:

- Regulations needed to protect existing beds.
- Streamlined permitting of implementation projects.

Priorities:

- 1.1. Maintain an updated reference list of Delaware state laws regarding SAV protection and permitting.
- 1.2. Collaborate with state agencies to streamline the approval process for scientific equipment deployment for habitat suitability monitoring.
- 1.3. Collaborate with state agencies to streamline the approval process for planting/seeding of SAV in subaqueous lands.

2. Outreach

Challenges:

- Public engagement on SAV knowledge is lacking.
- Coordinated efforts amongst practitioners is needed.

Priorities:

- 2.1. Establish a website to serve as a central hub for information, updates, and resources.
- 2.2. Identify key audiences for research coordination, including agencies, non-profits, and academic institutions.
- 2.3. Engagement with general public audiences to educate on SAV.

3. Mapping

Challenges:

- No consistent way to collect/portray SAV data.
- Unknown SAV locations and potential future habitats.

Priorities:

- 3.1. Develop standardized metadata protocols for all SAV mapping initiatives.
- 3.2. Implement surveys to assess current SAV locations and inform future conservation efforts.
- 3.3. Integrate mapping data with ongoing monitoring efforts for a comprehensive understanding of SAV trends.
- 3.4. Defining land use for general SAV restoration.
- 3.5. Expand mapping efforts to include key habitat parameters and make datasets publicly available.
- 3.6. Use mapping to support restoration planning, donor bed identification, habitat trend evaluations, and bottom-type assessments.
- 3.7. Standardized data collection methodologies across projects to ensure consistency.

4. Establishment/Restoration

Challenges:

- Limited knowledge on habitat suitability and key terminology.
- Challenges in restoring a habitat mosaic that includes SAV, shellfish, and wetlands.
- Lack of sources (seeds, adult plants).

Priorities:

- 4.1. Finalize and review a comprehensive list of SAV terms for consistency in documentation and communication.
- 4.2. Defining habitat criteria for each species within Delaware.
- 4.3. Monitoring habitat for suitable restoration areas.
- 4.4. Conduct a literature review to define criteria for site selection and species prioritization, including shellfish-aquaculture, wetlands, and living shorelines interactions.
- 4.5. Access to native seed stock for restoration.
- 4.6. Conducting genetic analyses.
- 4.7. Utilize mapping data to support restoration efforts by identifying suitable habitats, evaluating site-specific conditions, and predicting SAV survival potential.
- 4.8. Address challenges such as poor water quality, development pressures, and stakeholder conflicts in restoration planning.

5. Monitoring

Challenges:

- What data should be collected to have consistent sharable SAV, habitat, ecosystem monitoring across the state.
- No long-term monitoring sites to use as sentinel sites.

Priorities:

- 5.1. Knowledge on SAV species ID.
- 5.2. Conduct regular surveys and assessments.
- 5.3. Establish a long-term monitoring program and define necessary data parameters.
- 5.4. Monitoring deployment regulations (permitting).
- 5.5. Establish habitat monitoring within beds (shellfish, fish, acoustics, etc.).
- 5.6. Leverage SAV mapping data to inform monitoring efforts and detect habitat changes over time.

Conclusion

These priorities and goals provide a roadmap for the DeSSAV Workgroup's efforts in promoting SAV conservation and restoration. By addressing key challenges in permitting, outreach, mapping, restoration, and monitoring, the workgroup aims to foster collaboration and support funding opportunities to advance SAV initiatives in Delaware. These goals will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect ongoing progress and emerging needs.

Recommended citation: DeSSAV Workgroup. (2024). *DeSSAV Workgroup: Priorities and Goals*. Delaware Statewide Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (DeSSAV) Workgroup.