

**Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes**

February 27, 2017 from 1:00pm-3:00pm

Materials: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/24784/>

Participants

Bob Beal	Bruce Vogt	Chris Moore	Dave Blazer	Emilie Franke
Kara Skipper	Karl Blankenship	Marty Gary	Nancy Butowski	Peyton Robertson
Rob O'Reilly	Sean Corson	Susan Conner		

Strategy Review System Meeting Report

- The Chesapeake Bay Program and their partners met on February 8-9th to review the strategy review system, which is a biennial review of progress on the 31 CBP outcomes. This February meeting discussed how to incorporate social science, policy, science, and fiscal considerations into management strategies and ongoing workplan actions.
- Discussion:
 - CBP partners met to discuss science, policy, and fiscal implications that will impact outcomes under the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Partners noted the increased need to emphasize the story and success of our efforts, evaluate economic and recreational value of restoration and conservation, ensure that efforts are managed adaptively, and anticipate changes in funding and support.
 - The SRS process will allow the full CBP to get a handle on what's occurring in all facets of the Partnership, provide an opportunity to revise our workplans, and to adaptively manage as we work to achieve our outcomes.
 - The SRS process starts soon: the Fish Habitat outcome will be reviewed in May; blue crab, oyster restoration, and forage will be reviewed in August.

Fish Habitat Meeting and STAC Workshop Proposal

- The Fish Habitat Action Team met on Feb 16th to assess their performance on the 2016-2017 workplan, prepare for the May SRS presentation to the Management Board, and direct future actions.
- The Fish Habitat Action Team developed a 2-day workshop proposal for the 2017 Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) workshop proposal process. Proposals are currently being reviewed by STAC and are anticipated to be selected at the March 14th STAC quarterly meeting.
Discussion:
 - The STAC Workshop aims to utilize experts and existing data to evaluate factors influencing representative species of 5 habitat types in the mainstem, tidal, and non-tidal Chesapeake Bay. Experts will develop criteria to qualify the significance of the factors influencing habitat function, and analyze mitigation techniques. This is intended to help those who conduct habitat restoration to understand impacts on fish species and use this information to improve restoration and conservation efforts.

Forage Action Team Meeting

- The Forage Action Team met for their quarterly meeting to learn about the ongoing UMCES study which investigates factors influencing forage population trends and discuss Maryland's striped bass indicator development. Forage members also discussed a proposed forage strategy to guide future actions.

- Discussion:
 - Emilie presented the proposed forage strategy which will address the Forage Outcome commitment to develop a forage strategy. This strategy would show how to utilize our existing reports and research to advance decision-making and management. Forage team feedback suggested that we restructure the strategy in a more cyclical style to indicate the adaptive management process that will occur as we increase our understanding of forage in the Chesapeake Bay.
 - Rob recommended using ASMFC information, MAFMC guidelines, ChesMMAP, NEMMAP, and Sarah Gaichas' work to inform the strategy.
 - **Action:** Emilie will review the MAFMC guidance documents for strategy development.

Invasive Catfish Task Force – 2017 Science Workshop

- The Invasive Catfish Task Force met on Feb 15th to discuss recent research and analyses on blue catfish diet, population monitoring/dynamics, movement, and flathead population dynamics.
- The Task Force agreed that a workshop on that state of the science for invasive catfish would be timely for this year. The workshop was originally requested by the Ex Comm.
- Discussion:
 - Ex Comm members suggested having the workshop in late summer/fall to allow researchers more time to complete/compile analyses.
 - Members discussed how to incorporate public comment into workshop while still maintaining a focus on informing workshop participants on recent findings
 - Public opinion could be incorporated into panels or provided via representatives at the workshop.
 - Important to emphasize the science focus of the workshop, but still incorporate public participation.
- **Action:** Bruce and Emilie will continue to gather input from scientists and will start initial planning for an invasive catfish workshop that will focus on compiling and disseminating research.

Biannual Sustainable Fisheries GIT Meeting

- The Habitat GIT and Fisheries GIT have proposed a joint meeting in May/June. Habitat GIT staff have suggested a two day meeting, the first day would be structured for each team to meet individually and the second day would bring the teams together for topics which fall under both teams.
- Discussion (Joint Meeting):
 - Rob noted that we should identify a common theme (ex. Ecosystem-based fisheries management) if we are to pursue a joint meeting.
 - Peyton suggested having both GITs discuss a future joint meeting at their spring full GIT meetings and gather suggestions from the teams to inform whether a joint GIT meeting is needed, and if so, what topics should be included at a November/December joint GIT meeting.
- Discussion (June Meeting):
 - Topics suggested for the June GIT meeting include:
 - Blue Crab
 - Recreational harvest estimates (SERC)
 - Advisory report and harvest numbers (Jurisdictions/CBSAC)
 - Oysters
 - Restoration and Replenishment
 - NOAA/USACE budget

- Legislative/Regulatory Updates
 - Opportunity to bring in congressional staffers?
 - USDA regulations on blue catfish
 - Expected changes when full enforcement takes place in September
 - Sturgeon Critical Habitat Designation implications
- Potential dates:
 - June 1st – 2nd (Thursday and Friday)
 - June 19th – 20th (Monday and Tuesday)
 - June 22nd – 23rd (Thursday and Friday)
- **Action:** Kara will send a poll to the Ex Comm to pinpoint potential June full GIT meeting dates (COMPLETE).

Principals' Staff Committee Oyster Presentation

- Bruce provided a presentation to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Principals' Staff Committee on oyster restoration progress at their meeting on March 1st.
- Discussion:
 - Presentation included a review of oyster restoration activities, ecosystem services, factors influencing, timeline, and next steps.

Cownose Rays

- Discussion:
 - Legislation was proposed in the Maryland General Assembly regarding cownose ray tournaments, and the senate modified the legislation to prohibit cownose ray tournaments until 2018 and to develop a fishery management plan which would give MD DNR regulatory authority. The bill passed the Senate and is now in the House.
 - PRFC's Finfish Advisory Committee discussed cownose rays at their last meeting and will revisit the issue at their March 20th meeting where Dr. Bob Fisher will present and discuss his cownose ray research.

March and April Ex Comm Calls

- Confirmed Monday, March 27th
- Proposed Monday, April 24th

Change in Fish GIT Chair

- Peyton will be temporarily stepping aside as Chair over the next few months. Executive Committee members supported the nomination of Sean Corson (NCBO) as Sustainable Fisheries GIT chair in Peyton's absence, citing the value of a non-jurisdictional Chair and proximity to the CBP staff. This is consistent with the Charter which only states "Chairs serve a two year term unless circumstances require an extension". There are no other specific requirements established for the chair, allowing the executive committee flexibility and discretion in nominating and establishing chairs that best meet the current needs of the GIT.

Ex Comm Updates

- Executive Committee members supported the nomination of Sean Corson (NCBO) as Sustainable Fisheries GIT chair in Peyton's absence, citing the value of a non-jurisdictional Chair and proximity to the CBP staff.

- Wave 6 Recreational numbers came in for black sea bass. An 8% reduction in harvest had previously been proposed, however harvest estimates may lead to discussion of a larger reduction.
- Results from the Winter Dredge Survey are anticipated in the third week of April.
- PRFC's Finfish Advisory Committee has continued to express concern about Mallows Bay Sanctuary designation
 - PRFC constituents are voicing mistrust and uncertainty in the changes/implications
 - PRFC has held two meetings to help address these concerns and will revisit the topic at their March 20th meeting
- NFWF had previously discussed incorporating Sustainable Fisheries GIT needs into their grant development. The Fish GIT will propose oyster restoration and living shorelines as priorities.
- Cobia fishery is already closed in federal waters.
 - VMRC hosted meeting on Feb. 27th with advisors and will hold a final public hearing on March 28th
 - Anticipates a very small harvest until next assessment or potentially later
- Fish GIT staff is designing March newsletter. Ex Comm should provide feedback after reviewing the draft newsletter at the March 27th conference call.