

Fish Habitat Strategy Review System Follow-Up - June 7, 2017

Main Points

Membership

- Active membership in Fish Habitat Action Team (FHAT) has decreased (No active participants in WV, NY, D.C.)
- FHAT would benefit from members involved in WIPs, land use planning, shoreline permitting

Management Board Actions

- Management Board members should:
 - Review Fish Habitat Action participation list, find out where their jurisdiction can be more active
 - Work with WIP leads to include fish habitat in WIPs and identify contacts to assist with pilot project
 - Promote FHAT communications materials to their agency

Fish Habitat Action Team Actions

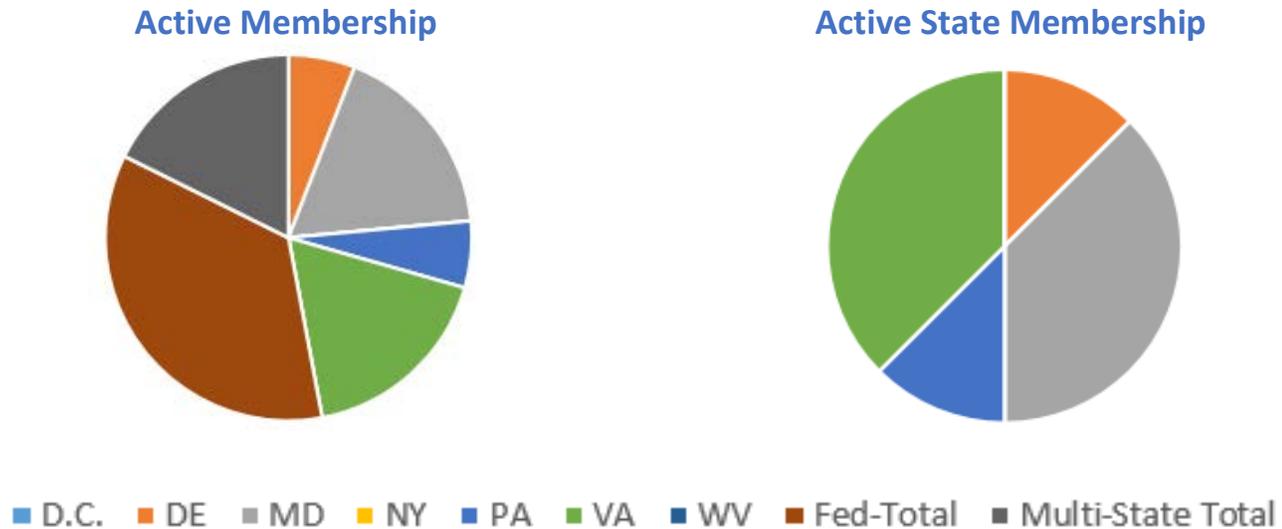
- FHAT can communicate and encourage fish habitat conservation and restoration through the WIP process by:
 - Utilizing the GIT-funded TetraTech project which estimated BMP impact on Fish Habitat to develop a habitat specific lists which prioritize BMPs that have positive corollary impacts on fish habitat
 - Developing communications products to educate and encourage action in counties and localities related to the impacts of these stressors
 - Working directly with localities in the 23 watersheds (identified in the Cross-GIT mapping project to have multiple outcome benefits) to create a process to include fish habitat considerations in their WIPs

I. Who is an active participant on the Fish Habitat Action Team?

Active members are defined as members who have participated in at least one call/meeting since June 2016. We have 17 active members and 17 interested parties. Interested parties receive team emails, but have not participated in a meeting in the past year. There are 17 members on the Fish Habitat Action Team (including team staff). Without team staff, there are only 12 active team members. The following members are on the Fish Habitat Action Team:

Fish Habitat Action Team Member	Organization
Bruce Vogt (Fed-based in MD) <i>GIT Coordinator</i>	NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
Donna Bilkovic (VA)	Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Edna Stetzar (DE)	DE Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Emilie Franke (Fed-based in MD)	ERT/NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
Geoffrey Smith (PA)	PA Fish and Boat Commission
Gina Hunt (MD) <i>Chair</i>	MD Department of Natural Resources
Kara Skipper (MS-based in MD) <i>Staffer</i>	Chesapeake Research Consortium
Jennifer Greiner (Fed-based in MD) <i>Coordinator</i>	Fish and Wildlife Service
Julie Devers (Fed-based in MD)	Fish and Wildlife Service
Lisa Havel (Multi-state-based in VA)	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Margaret McGinty (MD)	MD Department of Natural Resources
Mary Fabrizio (VA)	Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Matthew Ogburn (Fed-based in MD)	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
Paige Hobaugh (MS-based in MD) <i>Staffer</i>	Chesapeake Research Consortium
Peter Tango (Fed-based in MD)	U.S. Geological Survey
Rachael Maulorico (VA)	VA Marine Resources Commission
Tom Ihde (MD)	Morgan State University Estuarine Research Center

Jurisdictions represented in the total membership include MD, DE, VA, WV, and PA.



II. What additional organizations would be beneficial to have on our team?

Based on our current focus on shoreline hardening and impervious surface impacts on fish habitat and the need for communication with local planners, it would be advantageous to have the following organizations included on our team:

- Watershed Implementation Plan Leads (i.e. MDE)
- Virginia Marine Resources Commission (Shoreline Permitting)
- Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Maryland Department of Planning
- National Coastal Zone Management Staff
- County and Local Planning Staff
- Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Team Member(s)
- Local Government Advisory Committee Member(s)
- Citizen Advisory Committee Member(s)

III. Why are we requesting the management board to “Incorporate fish habitat into the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans?”

Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) were developed to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay by creating a road map and accountability framework that Bay jurisdictions can use to achieve nutrient and sediment reductions. These plans not only incorporate the latest data on estimated sediment and nutrient loads from different source sectors, but also establish a method of communicating and guiding counties/localities in environmental restoration and conservation efforts.

The Fish Habitat Outcome aims to inform fish habitat conservation and restoration efforts. However, there is currently no method to educate and inform fish habitat to partners and stakeholders. WIPs on the other hand, have established an effective and efficient means of reaching counties and localities in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. While there are other methods to reach localities and counties outside of the WIP, it would not prove to be as efficient and broad. Without the WIP process, counties and localities would have to sift through information from multiple sources when making a BMP decision.

Integrating fish habitat considerations into WIPs demonstrates adherence to the EPA’s Interim Expectations for the Phase III Watershed Implementation plans, which states that the “EPA also encourages state and local jurisdictions to consider the corollary benefits of BMPs that are targeted for implementation. Corollary benefits are those that not only result in water quality improvements but could address other 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes.”

An added benefit of the suggested process to integrate fish habitat considerations into the WIP is to help local communities see tangible value in BMP implementation. Increased and healthier fish populations resulting from improved habitat may increase public support and understanding of WIPs.

IV. What actions can members of the Management Board (at the table) take to fulfill this request?

We recommend that Management Board members:

1. Review the participation list provided and create an expectation that the agencies in their jurisdiction will join/continue active membership in the Fish Habitat Action Team.
2. Work with the WIP lead in your jurisdiction on a commitment to include fish habitat information in the WIP communication plan. Fish Habitat Action Team members can meet with the lead agency staff to discuss materials and approach.
3. Help identify local contacts in your jurisdiction for the watersheds identified in the communication pilot project described in question V.
4. Promote future Fish Habitat Action Team communications projects to their agencies and stakeholders.
 - a. Communication materials described in question V.
 - b. Fish Habitat webinars
 - c. 2018 Fish Habitat Workshop Report

V. What kind of information are we suggesting is provided through the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans?

Communication Materials.

1. *Estimation of BMP Impact on Chesapeake Bay Program Management Strategies Matrix*- This matrix can be used by local government to assess the impact BMPs will have on CBP's management strategies, including fish habitat. This matrix is intended to show the co-benefits and relative impact on additional goals that are important to the locality from nutrient and sediment load reduction BMPs.
2. *BMP Impact List Best Suited for Specific Habitat Conditions*- Fish habitat considerations vary geographically across the Bay Watershed and for each of our partner jurisdictions. In order to refine the suite of BMPs that benefit fish habitat, the Fish Habitat Action Team will develop a list of Best Management Practices (BMPs) best suited for four habitat conditions identified in the Fish Habitat Management Strategy:
 - a) Tidal Saltwater nearshore
 - b) Tidal Saltwater subtidal
 - c) Non-tidal cold upstream waters
 - d) Non-tidal warm water

These lists would be provided to localities/counties to guide their BMP selection process in a manner that incorporates corollary fish habitat benefits into local site-specific restoration and conservation projects. Individual jurisdictions could select fish habitat BMPs from the document list that best represents habitat conditions in their locality/county.

3. *Impervious Surface and Hardened Shoreline Stressors*- To guide our progress moving forward, the Fish Habitat Action Team has identified two priority stressors to fish habitat: 1) percent impervious surface in a watershed, and 2) percent hardened shoreline. Both stressors have resulted in negative impacts on fish habitat, fish abundance and biodiversity. The Fish Habitat team will develop documents that educate and encourage action in counties and localities related to the impacts of these stressors. In addition to providing increased fish habitat value, impervious surface and hardened shoreline improvements can offer numerous co-benefits to other outcomes under the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement such as blue crab, oyster, forage, wetlands, water quality, citizen stewardship, protected lands, climate, healthy watersheds, and SAV.

Pilot Project. The HUC12 watersheds identified at the May 11th Management Board Meeting are areas having the greatest potential of providing multiple outcome benefits. These watersheds will be the focus of a fish habitat communication pilot project. The project will be to directly contact localities in each identified watershed to work on a process to integrate fish habitat considerations into their planning and BMP selection process.