# MANAGEMENT STRATEGY BLUE CRAB ABUNDANCE & MANAGEMENT

# GOAL: Sustainable Fisheries

#### OUTCOME

**Blue Crab Abundance Outcome:** Maintain a sustainable blue crab population based on the current 2012 target of 215 million adult females. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.

Blue Crab Management Outcome: Manage for a stable and productive crab fishery including working with the industry, recreational crabbers and other stakeholders to improve commercial and recreational harvest accountability. By 2018, evaluate the establishment of a Bay-wide, allocation-based management framework with annual levels set by the jurisdictions for the purpose of accounting for and adjusting harvest by each jurisdiction.

### CURRENT EFFORTS

Stock assessments and annual surveys:

- Benchmark stock assessments conducted approximately every five years.
- Winter Dredge Survey (WDS) estimates the number of blue crabs present in the Bay each year.
- CBSAC reviews the WDS results each year and assesses the status of the blue crab population relative to the biological reference points.

Harvest and Effort Data Reporting:

- Maryland, Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission require daily harvest reports.
- The jurisdictions are pursuing new electronic reporting technologies and analyses that would result in more timely, accurate and verifiable harvest data.

## GAPS

Reduce Uncertainty

- Identifying areas of uncertainty and developing strategies to address them are ongoing priorities of the management jurisdictions.
- Reducing uncertainty in all data sources will allow for the jurisdictions to consider an array of options when evaluating allocation and performance of the respective fisheries.
- Current priorities for reducing uncertainty include a better understanding of the WDS gear effectiveness and improving the accuracy of harvest reporting.
- An assessment of the economic value of the recreational and commercial sectors of the blue crab fishery and the impacts of regulatory and stock fluctuations will support better understanding the fisheries and inform the evaluation of jurisdictional allocation.

#### MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

- Planning and Implementing the Benchmark Stock Assessment— Plan for and implement the 2016 benchmark stock assessment which will address specific needs for future management, including issues specific to fishery sectors (recreational, commercial, gear-specific) and updates to the male and female reference points.
- The next benchmark stock assessment will address specified Terms of Reference (TORs) that include management guidance for both female and male crabs for holistic management of this stock.
- Evaluation of an Allocation—based Management Framework Jurisdictions will evaluate the overall benefits of a shift to a Baywide Allocation-based Management Framework as well the fundamental steps that would be needed to develop a total allowable catch (TAC) and jurisdictional allocation. This evaluation will take the following steps:
  - Calculate a Bay-wide TAC of blue crabs based on the results of the annual Bay-wide Winter Dredge Survey as well as any other surveys with improved estimates of removals.
  - Develop and explore options for allocating a percentage of the Bay-wide TAC to jurisdictions.
  - Develop and implement a Management Plan based on the reference points developed through the benchmark stock assessment, the TAC and jurisdictional allocation.
- Cross-Outcome Collaboration and Multiple Benefits—better understand the status of the forage base, climate change impacts, fish habitat, SAV and water quality on the blue crab fishery.



For the full management strategy, visit: <a href="https://www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies">www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies</a>