

The Nature Conservancy and Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Workshop:
Prioritizing River Herring Restoration Needs in the Chesapeake Bay
May 7-8th, 2014 in Annapolis, MD

Background (provided from workshop materials):

The Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) to develop restoration priorities to conserve river herring in key watersheds along the Atlantic Coast, with a focus on the Chesapeake Bay. NFWF's River Herring Initiative and the resulting Business Plan for River Herring Conservation describes a comprehensive 10-year strategy to guide NFWF conservation investments to achieve an increase in river herring spawning runs in key rivers along the eastern seaboard. The goal of this workshop is to gather river-system specific river herring information from key experts and stakeholders to prioritize, plan, and strategize river herring restoration needs in the Chesapeake Bay area.

Workshop Proceedings:

- The workshop was co-hosted by TNC and ACFHP at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in Annapolis, MD on May 7-8th, 2014.
- The workshop began with information on current research, monitoring, and prioritization tools primarily from projects in Maryland.
 - Presenters included presentations from Jim Uphoff (MD DNR) on impervious surface thresholds and Matt Ogburn (SERC) on acoustic monitoring efforts.
- The workshop featured break-out sessions where the participants were split up by geographic location in the watershed. Each group was responsible for identifying:
 - major threats to river herring in that area
 - key project opportunities to address these threats
 - highest priority projects and restoration strategies
- There were common themes amongst the breakout groups including concerns about land use and increasing development pressure, the importance of dam removal projects to river herring restoration success, and concerns about blue catfish predation on river herring.
- The workshop wrapped up with a full group discussion on major obstacles to river herring restoration.

Connection to Fisheries GIT:

- This workshop outcomes and the broader ACFHP/TNC initiative to develop river herring restoration priorities in the Chesapeake Bay may address Fisheries GIT priorities including land use impacts on fisheries and invasive catfish.
- Restoration initiatives targeted to river herring may have benefits to multiple fish species.

Requested Action of Fisheries GIT:

- Maintain awareness of restoration priorities identified by ACFHP/TNC and identify overlapping priorities with any planned restoration activities.