

## Quarterly Progress Meeting: Black Duck

Step 1: Summarize your outcome.

### **Outcome:**

By 2025, restore, enhance, and preserve wetland habitats that support a wintering population of 100,000 black ducks, a species representative of the health of tidal marshes across the watershed. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.

### **Lead and Supporting Goal Implementation Teams (GITs):**

The Vital Habitats Goal Implementation Team (GIT2) leads the effort to achieve this outcome.

### **Participating Partners:**

Participating partners (*listed in MS as having helped draft document, but not participatory/on calls in last year = italics*) include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (ACJV, BDJV)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Geological Survey
- *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*
- *U.S. Department of Agriculture (NRCS)*
- State of Maryland (MD DNR)
- Commonwealth of Virginia (VA DGIF, VIMS)
- *State of Delaware (DNREC, UDEL)*
- *District of Columbia (DDOE)*
- Ducks Unlimited
- *University of Massachusetts*
- *Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (LGAC)*

*\*No PA, WV, NY participation in creation of MS or on calls.*

### **Progress:**

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) recently developed a decision support tool (DST) to estimate black duck habitat needs under current and future landscape conditions (Climate change, development, etc.) to guide habitat restoration and conservation throughout the Atlantic Flyway. This DST offers land conservation prioritization based on future landscape conditions and will offer targeted metrics of the number of hectares of habitat BDAT partners should restore or protect to meet our landscape based goals. The BDAT proposes incorporating this tool as the new outcome indicator to allow the CBP to track outcome progress more efficiently.

Step 2: Explain the logic behind your work toward an Outcome.

The attached logic table (available as an Excel spreadsheet) explains the reasoning behind our work toward an Outcome. The table indicates the status of our management actions and denotes which actions have or will play the biggest role in making progress.

Step 3: Craft a compelling narrative.

*What are our assumptions?*

(1) Are you on track to achieve your Outcome by the identified date?

- a. What is your target? What does this target represent? (e.g., the achievement we believed could be made within a particular timeframe; the achievement we believed would be necessary for an Outcome's intent to be satisfied; etc.)?

Our target is to restore, enhance, and preserve wetland habitats that support a wintering population of 100,000 black ducks by 2025. This target is based on a USFWS North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Continental breeding population goal of 640,000 black ducks. The Mid-Atlantic region is an important wintering area for American black ducks and biologists have agreed that achieving this goal will contribute significantly to the larger continental goal and facilitate the removal of black ducks from the Birds of Management Concern (BMC).

- b. What is your anticipated deadline? What is your anticipated trajectory?

Our anticipated deadline is 2025. We have no identified anticipated trajectory as work on our key actions has just begun in the last year and our monitoring and reporting metric (USFWS Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey) can no longer be supported due to inadequate funding.

- c. What actual progress has been made thus far?

Our outcome indicator is the USFWS Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey, previously done on an annual basis. A rolling three-year average of the survey results are used to track progress toward this outcome. Due to inadequate funding resources, the USFWS no longer flies the survey and it is up to each individual states to collect their own data. Gaps in the data have not allowed us to calculate 2016 -2018 population numbers. According to survey results, an average of 51,332 black ducks were observed in the Chesapeake Bay watershed states between 2013 and 2015 a number that represents 51% of the 100,000-bird goal.

- d. What could explain any existing gap(s) between your actual progress and anticipated trajectory?

Gaps between our actual progress and anticipated trajectory can be attributed to

- The indicator we use to measure outcome progress is population based, not habitat based (language used in the outcome), making it difficult to evaluate true progress.

- The model we will use to measure progress and direct our work was just finished and hasn't yet been rolled out to participating states for use yet.
- Restoration/conservation efforts at local levels are constrained by available resources (and lack a systematic monitoring and reporting system).

*Are we doing what we said we would do?*

- (2) Which of your management actions have been the most critical to your progress thus far? Why? Indicate which influencing factors these actions were meant to manage.

The management actions most critical to our progress thus far are **1.1** (Develop a decision support tool to estimate wintering black duck habitat needs under current and future landscape conditions throughout the ACJV and the Atlantic Flyway and scale it to the CBW and incorporate maps to show targets) and **1.2** (Use the decision support tool to determine best places to do restoration, enhancement, and management of key wetland or upland habitat for wintering, breeding, or migrating black ducks.). The completion of these actions provides our restoration partners with landscape energetics predictions that'll allow them to gain ground on habitat loss projections in full support of the black duck outcome.

- (3) Which of your management actions will be the most critical to your progress in the future? Why? What barriers must be removed—and how, and by whom—to allow these actions to be taken? Indicate which influencing factors these actions will be meant to manage.

Implementing the decision support tool on the local level will be the most critical to our progress in the future. This will allow the decision support tool to guide conservation work at the state and watershed level. Scaling the decision support tool down to the watershed level will be the biggest barrier that will need to be removed.

*Are our actions having the expected effect?*

- (4) What scientific, fiscal or policy-related developments or lessons learned have changed your logic or assumptions (e.g., your recommended measure of progress; the factors you believe influence your ability to succeed; or the management actions you recommend taking) about your Outcome?

With uncertainty surrounding the mid-winter survey and other factors influencing a migratory population (i.e. breeding habitat) the development of a habitat based outcome will change the logic of our outcome.

- (5) What would you recommend changing about your management approach? What new content will you include in your updated work plan?

Developing a habitat based indicator.

- (6) What opportunities exist to collaborate across GITs? Can we target conservation or restoration work to yield co-benefits that would address multiple factors or support multiple actions across outcomes?

Black duck habitat restoration yields co-benefits by improving water quality (fish habitat, SAV and Wetland outcomes), restoring and protecting wetlands which all in turn benefit other outcomes. Specific actions include prior converted wetland restoration, shoreline protection and land protection.

- a. Stream Health Workgroup
- b. Fish Habitat Workgroup
- c. SAV Workgroup
- d. Wetland Workgroup

*How should we adapt?*

(7) What is needed from the Management Board to continue or accelerate your progress? Multiple asks of the Management Board should be prioritized where possible.

Support in applying the latest science to inform new acreage based Outcome indicator

- Technical assistance with establishing a new baseline, acreage targets
- Assistance with DST outreach to decision makers
- Assistance with funding for projects in target areas
- Encouragement of strong partner coordination