



**Chesapeake Bay Program**  
A Watershed Partnership

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

## ADOPTION STATEMENT

# Fisheries Ecosystem Management

In recognition of the complex interactions among aquatic species, water quality, and habitats in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, and the importance of fish from both an economic and ecological perspective, the Chesapeake Bay Program has set a path toward implementing ecosystem-based management. Concurrently, there has been a nationwide endeavor to incorporate ecosystem principles into fisheries management. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Chesapeake Bay Office has successfully led a collaborative effort to develop a document, entitled *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay (FEP)*, which provides valuable guidance for ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Bay and coastal region. The FEP is an umbrella document that contains information on the structure and function of the ecosystem in which fishing activities occur. It is designed to increase awareness of how management decisions can affect the ecosystem, and to facilitate the incorporation of ecosystem principles into Chesapeake Bay fisheries management. The FEP defines a fisheries ecosystem as "the complex interactive community of organisms (including humans) and their shared environment (including habitats and ecological processes) that contributes to, influences, or determines the fishing industry." Although not a tactical plan, the FEP provides strategic advice on critical features and processes of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystems vital to effective management of its fishery resources. In setting forth these concepts, the FEP provides a framework for expanding single-species management and makes recommendations on incremental steps toward ecosystem-based fisheries management. Inter-jurisdictional collaboration through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is essential to implementation of the FEP recommendations. Effective ecosystem-based fisheries management requires responsible actions that complement jurisdictional tributary strategies, to ensure sustainable human benefits without risking adverse changes in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The following ecosystem-based principles, goals, and policies, as included within the FEP, should be incorporated into Chesapeake Bay Program fishery management plans and practices:

- ❖ Manage fisheries so they minimize or eliminate adverse impacts on the ecosystem;
- ❖ Maintain the ecological relationships among harvested species and both the species upon which they depend and those that depend upon them;
- ❖ Develop compatible management actions across estuarine regions and jurisdictions to achieve shared objectives;
- ❖ Apply the precautionary approach when ecosystem knowledge is incomplete or uncertain. Precautionary management requires prudent foresight, adoption of measures that avoid undesirable or unacceptable outcomes, and incorporation of uncertainty into assessments and management; and
- ❖ Ensure that human needs and concerns are considered within the context of ecosystem dynamics.

Consistent with this ecosystem-based approach to management, we will give first priority to the development of ecosystem-based fishery management plans for oysters, striped bass, blue crabs, *Alosa* species, and Atlantic menhaden.

Through ecosystem-based fishery management plans (EBFMPs), we will:

- ❖ Develop a cooperative framework linking fisheries, habitat and water quality management;
- ❖ Develop policies and programs to restore and protect finfish and shellfish habitats including the management of land-based activities that adversely affect water quality and aquatic habitats;
- ❖ Develop fishery management strategies and actions that take into account ecological processes and external influences; and
- ❖ Identify monitoring, analysis, and modeling activities to support EBFMPs and locate sources of funding to implement these efforts to the extent practicable.

In addition, we agree to collaborate through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to implement ecosystem-based approaches in regional fisheries management.

Continuing on our path toward ecosystem-based management, we hereby adopt an ecosystem-based approach to develop new or revised Chesapeake Bay Program Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), using *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay (FEP)* as guidance.

November 29, 2005

CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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