

## 2018-2020 Fisheries GIT Executive Committee Decisions

October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Joint ExComm/CBSAC meeting

- **Adapting updated biological reference points for blue crab management**
    - **Background:** The Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) convened in October 2020, voting to adopt new biological reference points for blue crab management. This is based on a stock assessment update conducted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (2017). This assessment update used the same framework as 2011's benchmark assessment but added data from 2016 and 2017. CBSAC and Fisheries GIT Executive Committee members voted unanimously to approve the updated reference points, citing that they are following the best available science. These new numbers are slightly less conservative than 2011's assessment but still show that the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- | Stock Assessment | (millions) |           | female exploitation rate (Age U+) |           |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
|                  | Target     | Threshold | Target                            | Threshold |
| 2011             | 215        | 70        | 25.5%                             | 34%       |
| 2017             | 196        | 72        | 28%                               | 37%       |
- **Recommendation:** A vote to adopt biological reference points in response to the 2017 stock assessment update results.
  - **Vote Outcome:** Approved (Unanimously)
  - **Follow up actions:** CBSAC will continue to conduct annual stock assessment updates to ensure that the management framework is appropriate

March 23, 2020 Executive Committee meeting

- **Approve Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River as 11th tributary for oyster restoration**
  - **Background:** At the January 2020 GIT winter meeting, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) announced that \$1.5 million would be used for oyster restoration in Eastern Branch of Elizabeth River. The funding allows for full construction of 19.5 acres at the level of 100% Currently Restorable Oyster Habitat (CROH). The methodology for setting restoration targets based on CROH is consistent with the previous 10 tributaries selected.
  - The VA Interagency Oyster Team was supportive of restoration in the Eastern Branch of Elizabeth River, as the project has dedicated resources and will be accomplished without slowing down progress to restore the other 5 tributaries selected in VA. The group received no negative feedback, and remains focused on achieving the outcome by 2025 while celebrating progress in going beyond the 10 tributaries.
  - **Recommendation:** endorse the selection of Eastern Branch of Elizabeth River for oyster restoration as the 11th tributary in support of the 2014 Agreement oyster outcome, by recommendation of VMRC and workgroup partners.
  - **Vote Outcome:** approved
  - **Actions:** selection included in the updated 2020-2021 Oyster Logic & Action Plan and Management Strategy, approved by Management Board in March 2020

June 26-27, 2019 Meeting at UMCES Horn Point Lab Oyster Hatchery

- **Endorse 2019 Advisory Report and 2017 stock assessment update for blue crab**

- **Background:** The blue crab winter dredge survey and subsequent annual Advisory Report are a means for regularly checking in on the status of the Chesapeake Bay blue crab stock by providing abundance estimates relative to the long-term time series. Based on results of the stock assessment update, which included new abundance data through 2017 and was peer-reviewed by CBSAC, the current management framework is successful.
  - **Recommendation:** 1) Endorse the 2019 Advisory Report reviewed by CBSAC and 2) Support the stock assessment update, and task CBSAC with formalizing a process for regular updates.
  - **Vote Outcome:** approved
  - **Follow-up Actions:** Ex Comm and CBSAC will meet to consider peer-review for the update, and to develop a regular process for future updates
- **Endorse Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) new membership**
    - **Background:** From the CBSAC Charter “If a member is unable to participate in meetings and offer timely comments and contributions... CBSAC Chair and Coordinator are responsible for identifying gaps in membership and working with the Fisheries GIT Executive Committee to add and replace members as needed.”
      - Rob O’Reilly (VMRC) will step down and nominates Alexa Kretsch as VMRC representative. Alexa is a fisheries management specialist and coordinates the VMRC Crab Management Advisory Committee.

- Lynn Fegley (MD DNR) will step down and nominates DNR representative Genine McClair. Genine is a program director managing MD DNR's blue crab program.
    - Glenn Davis (MD DNR) will remain as Chairman for a second term.
  - **Recommendation:** Endorse all membership changes for CBSAC.
  - **Vote Outcome:** approved changes
  - **Follow-up Actions:** CBSAC will continue discussing membership as needed
- **Approve selection of Manokin River in Maryland as 10<sup>th</sup> tributary forrestoration**
  - **Background:** Manokin River was selected as the 10<sup>th</sup> of 10 tributaries to restore oyster habitat and populations by 2025, under the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement. The Maryland oyster workgroup is currently developing a tributary workplan, and is considering whether construction can begin over summer 2019.
  - **Recommendation:** Endorse the selection of Manokin River for large-scale oyster restoration in support of the 2014 Agreement oyster outcome, by recommendation of Maryland DNR.
  - **Vote Outcome:** approved
  - **Follow-up Actions:** MD Workgroup will continue with blueprint planning
- **Endorse the addition of oyster restoration as an interim BMP in the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs)**
  - **Background:** Based on Best Management Practices (BMP) Expert Panel recommendation, oyster restoration credits will be considered as one of the approved methods for state jurisdictions to achieve Phase III WIPs (August 2019). Aquaculture BMPs have been approved and included in WIPs. Restoration is under consideration for denitrification and assimilation as an interim BMP, and public oyster fishery BMPs will be considered in the future.
  - **Recommendation:** To facilitate the addition of estimates as interim BMPs, serving as placeholder for more extensive estimation, the Fisheries GIT recommends formal endorsement of the BMP Expert Panel plan.
  - **Vote Outcome:** approved
  - **Follow-up Actions:** Fisheries GIT will work with the Expert Panel, Water Quality GIT and Modeling Team to include oyster restoration as interim BMPs in Phase III WIPs

December 17-18, 2018 Meeting at the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, VA

- **Endorse selection of St. Marys River in Maryland as a restoration tributary**
  - **Background:** St. Marys River was selected as the 9th of 10 tributaries to restore oyster habitat and populations by 2025, under the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement. The Maryland oyster workgroup is currently developing a tributary blueprint for the St. Marys.
  - **Recommendation:** Endorse the selection of St. Marys River for largescale oyster restoration in support of the 2014 Bay Watershed Agreement oyster outcome.
  - **Vote Outcome:** Approved
  - **Follow up Actions:** Complete blueprint approval process and begin construction in St. Marys River, aiming for late 2019.
- **Endorse interim methods for success metric monitoring in selected tributaries**

- **Background:** With increasing costs required to monitor each tributary under the 2014 Agreement, research by Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) was commissioned to develop more cost-effective monitoring solutions. The new methods have been presented to Maryland working group and are being used at their discretion to evaluate restoration success metrics beginning in fall 2018.
  - **Recommendation:** Support the Maryland Workgroup's decision to apply the new monitoring methods in 2018. Request that the Maryland workgroup further evaluate the new methods post 2018 monitoring season for ability to address the success metrics and reduce costs before applying over the long term.
  - **Vote Outcome:** Approved
  - **Follow up actions:** Continue discussions on how to standardize monitoring across Maryland and Virginia tributaries.
- **Determine next steps and better define the role of the Invasive Catfish Task Force**
    - **Background:** The Invasive Catfish Task Force (ICTF) recently released a report outlining the state of scientific research on invasive catfish and updated recommended actions. With the release of these reports the ICTF is seeking guidance on their current role. The ICTF sent a letter to the Fish GIT executive committee requesting guidance and suggesting a baywide management plan for invasive catfish could help to define a specific management goal that considers various stakeholder interests. In the absence of a bay wide management plan, the ICTF can continue to play a coordination and information exchange role.
    - **Recommendation:** Executive Committee members agree to refine the need for and, if necessary, the role of ICTF.
    - **Vote Outcome:** Approved
      - Maintain ICTF under condition of developing clear objectives
    - **Follow up actions:** ICTF will meet to prioritize objectives.
      - Formalize the process for blue crab stock assessment updates
    - **Background:** Jurisdictional representatives met with Maryland DNR staff developing the stock assessment update to review progress and discuss the need for a full benchmark stock assessment. Based on results of the stock assessment update and success of the current management framework, it was suggested a benchmark stock assessment is not needed at this time. The updated stock assessment report is being completed and will be reviewed by CBSAC. There was a suggestion that decision rules be drafted as a tool to enhance the current management framework.
    - **Recommendation:**
      - Agree that a benchmark stock assessment is not needed at this time.
      - Agree to develop a process for future stock assessment updates and drafting decision rules, in consultation with the Fish GIT.
    - **Vote Outcome:** Approved
    - **Follow up actions:** A finalized report on 2017 update results will be reviewed by CBSAC.

