



*Continually improve the Partnership's capacity to understand the role of forage fish populations in the Chesapeake Bay. By 2016, develop a strategy for assessing the forage fish base available as food for predatory species in the Chesapeake Bay.*

**Why is this outcome important?**

Forage species are an important link in the food web since they are prey for many valuable predator species in the Bay. Many of those predatory fish are both commercially and recreationally valuable to people. These smaller species are also “filter feeders”, filtering nutrients from the Bay’s waters as they eat. This outcome acknowledges the connections among different species in the Bay food web and strives to better understand those connections between forage fish and predators. It is a step toward multi-species, ecosystem management.

**Current Conditions:**

- Some existing fisheries-independent surveys measure certain aspects of some forage species in the Bay. More scientific information is needed to better understand forage species abundance and their ability to support predatory species.

**How was the outcome derived?****Who came up with it?**

The Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team and other stakeholders have discussed the importance of forage fish in the food web. A robust and healthy base of these fish is essential for supporting valuable commercial and recreational fisheries in the Bay. Understanding these kinds of predator-prey relationships will improve the ability to manage predator fish species because it takes into account ecosystem factors and the interconnections to forage fish species.

**What was the basis or baseline?**

2016 is an appropriate target for developing a strategy to assess the forage base as it gives adequate time for academic institutions and fisheries agencies to evaluate the data and information that currently exist and determine what information is needed in the future.

Results from the [menhaden stock assessment](#), which is set to be complete in 2015, will contribute significantly to this outcome.

**For More:**

<http://www.oceanconservationscience.org/foragefish/project/what.html>