**Fish Passage Workgroup Meeting Agenda**

**Wednesday, August 19, 2020**

**Conference Line:** [+1 202-991-0477](tel:+1%20202-991-0477,,83462350# )   **Access Code:** 834 623 50#

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mary Andrews | Julianna Greenberg | Alan Weaver | Sandra Davis |
| Julie Devers | Chris Guy | Alexander Haro | Bill Jenkins |
| Jim Thompson | Julie Lueke | Steve Minkkinen | Lisa Moss |
| Matt Ogburn | Serena McClain | Albert Spells | Jessie Thomas-Blate |

**Welcome and Introductions:** Mary Andrews, NOAA

* Changes to the Fish Passage outcome
  + Previous outcome:
    - Restore historical fish migratory routes by opening 1,000 additional stream miles by 2025, with restoration success indicated by the presence of river herring, American shad, Hickory shad, Brook Trout and/or American eel.
  + Updated outcome:
    - By 2025, restore historical fish migratory routes at a rate of opening 132 miles every two years, with restoration success indicated by the presence of alewife, blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad, American eel and brook trout, to be monitored in accordance with available agency resources and collaboratively developed methods.
* Future Discussion on Invasive species management at dams
  + Please let Mary and Julianna know if you are interested in joining for this sub-group meeting
* Technical assistance from USFWS
  + Julie Devers for MD, Lisa Moss for VA, Tom Kehler for PA
* Possible new stimulus funding from USFWS with a fast turnaround time. Looking for shovel ready projects
  + Any new projects you want to add to the list of possible projects, let your USFWS rep know (see above)
* Web page updates
  + Less interest in wordsmithing more interest in substantial comments
  + Send any comments to Mary and Julianna

**State Fish Passage Coordinator Updates**:

**Sheila Eyler (FWS) and Jessie Thomas-Blate** – PA Dam Removals and Culvert Projects

* Sheila Eyler (FWS) updates
  + Fish lifts only operated for 4 days in the lower Susquehanna in 2020.  A delayed start due to staffing concerns with COVID-19 and influx of northern snakehead passage once they opened that the agencies decided to stop all passage.
  + Agencies have already decided to have no volitional passage at Conowingo Dam in 2021, implementing trap and transport of shad and herring to the extent that Exelon is able to do so.  Fish passage operations at the upstream dams has not yet been decided for 2021.
  + All invasive species (northern snakehead, blue catfish, possibly flathead catfish) will be removed from the Conowingo Fish Lifts in 2021.
  + Fish passage operation decisions for all facilities for 2022 and beyond have not been agreed-upon by the SRAFRC agencies yet.  There are implications for FERC license conditions at 5 projects if there is any attempt to remove invasive species passage or modify fish passage operations in 2022 and beyond.  High level staff from the regulatory agencies of the basin are meeting frequently to come to some resolution on this issue.  The next meeting is September 14.
* Jessie Thomas-Blate updates
  + Third dam removal on Chiques Creek in Lancaster County.
    - Interest from a group concerned about legacy sediment
    - Early design work is being done
    - Potential mobilization of a lot of sediment
  + Collaborative effort – fish passage, healthy river flows, address river sediment
    - Lots of groups involved
* Ben Lorson’s position will likely be filled in the next year (estimated 7-8 months).

**Jim Thompson** – MD Dam Removals and Culvert Projects

* Field season cut short; ladders shut down
* Slow run this year
* Working on one dam removal on Cypress Branch
  + American Rivers taking the lead on this project
  + Hoping to be done by with project by next fall
* Daniels Dam – eel ladder
  + Downstream at Bloede dam there were not many eels at all
  + Upstream at Daniels Dam
    - 10 day average over 100 (August 2020)
* Franks Bentz pond
  + Examining thermal impacts for Trout
* Ft Meade dam removal that has been breached
  + Won’t count towards miles opened but will be a new project

**Alan Weaver** – VA Dam Removals and Culvert Projects

* Just completed pool and weir fishway on Chandlers Mill Dam during dam reconstruction
  + This fishway is the main spillway for the dam
  + Long fishway with a shallow slope
  + Many species have been recorded, including Gizzard Shad, American Eels, etc
  + Received $50,000 through FWS
* Ceased eDNA operations – FWS could not continue fieldwork because of Covid-19
* Sampled Walkers dam fishway (electronic fish counter and trapping for species composition)
  + Blueback Herring and Alewife documented
* Bosher’s vertical slot fishway on James river
  + Very bad shad numbers during boat electrofishing below dam and throughout James fall zone – do not expect many American Shad from video review
* Working on removal of Rapidan Mill dam
  + Center for Natural capital and Rapidan Mill Institute purchased dam
  + eDNA evidence of herring (SERC)
  + Design/planning phase did not receive NOAA funds from the last very competitive funding opportunity round
  + Owners and partners want to remove the dam, but do not have funding for design
* Ashland Mill Dam
  + Potential to get mitigation credits for removal (a private company has submitted a prospectus to the VA Interagency Review Team and that is being evaluated)
* Culverts
* Potential project as USFWS, Flower Dew Hundred site
  + Not funded by NOAA
  + FWS using this project as leverage to try and get VDOT to adopt AOP design in maintenance and replacement of culverts
  + Part of 2016 Chesapeake Bay Trust Culvert Assessment project
  + Use this study and future assessments to establish a community of practice to get a series of on-the-ground projects
* Hampton roads bridge tunnel is adding a lane
  + Mitigation money from VDOT for
  + VDWR and FWS working together
  + Trying to do more assessments in the James watershed
  + Working over the next year to ID a good crossing project in the James to benefit herring
* Piney River RFP recently put out
* Tributary of James – Four Mile creek
  + Alewife and Blueback herring
  + Upstream of the breach
  + Found target species above Griggs Dam that failed over 15 years ago (considered fully open so miles counted)
* Albert Spells
  + Culvert remediation on Madison River – opened 3 miles
  + Piney River
  + Bolton Branch
    - Demonstration projects selected to work with VDOT to encourage them to accept AOP design
    - Should both be done by FY2021
* Matt Ogburn
  + Patapsco River in MD
    - eDNA results from 2019 that have not yet been released
    - River herring at base of Daniels Dam but not upstream of the dam
    - 2020 results have not be analyzed yet
  + Project on ecology of the Rappahannock
    - River herring and shad are the endpoints being used
    - Potential to leverage this project to collect before and after data on Rapidan project
      * Mary -NOAA reviewed this proposal and wanted more assessment data
* Julie Devers
  + Three culvert replacements that have funding
    - South Branch Bear Creek – still in design phase, hopefully replaced this fall
      * Outside of Chesapeake Bay Watershed
    - Wolf Den Run – on MD DNR property
      * Replaced next week (Week of August 24, 2020)
    - Sam Spring run – design phase
      * Adjacent to Frostburg property on private property
      * Demonstration project – riparian restoration
      * TU working on this project
  + Working with Lisa Moss on eDNA project
    - Looking and upstream and downstream of road stream crossings to see if they can assess if a culvert is passable using eDNA
    - Hoping to do a full 8 weeks in 2021, got new funding

**Update on Maryland Culvert Guidance Document:** Julie Devers, USFWS

* Timeline from May 2018 to Winter 2019 for the CBPO Git funded project on Culvert Assessment guidance document for MD
* Looked at current MD guidance and guidance from other states
* Still need to learn about cost of culvert replacement projects in MD
* Currently working to develop the new guidance
* Next steps:
  + Stakeholder meeting
  + Drafting guidance document
  + Final Guidance document
  + Outreach to state highway admin and counties who administer funding
    - Applied for funding from NFWF but did not receive it
* Guidance
  + Come up with a consensus for ideal conditions around aquatic organism crossing and delve into new guidance for new and replacement road stream crossings
    - Not going to get in to retrofitting and repairs
  + Best management practices vs prescriptive practices
* Timeline
  + Currently working to update database
    - Lit reviews
    - Present info to stakeholder group
    - Hoping to be done by end of September
    - Anyone from this group who is interested can be a part of the stakeholder group
  + By end of November
    - Draft RSC standards out for review
    - Meet with stakeholders again
    - Finalize standards
  + By Mid Feb
    - Meet with stakeholders again and review comments on case study
    - Finalize standards
    - Finalize case study
    - Start official documentation
  + By end of March
    - Meet with stakeholders to discuss comments on draft “Maryland stream crossing design guidance: A Fish-Friendly Design Handbook”
    - Webinar presentation of results
    - Finalize guidance

Questions:

* Mary Andrews: Want to clarify that this will be used and adapted to other states across the Chesapeake
* Julie Devers: Anyone who is interested in sitting in on the meetings is welcome to join and give input

**Update on Maryland Dam Removal Mitigation Calculator:** Mary Andrews, NOAA

* Wanted to develop a calculator to establish a standard for awarding mitigation credits for dam removals after receiving mitigation credits for Bloede Dam
  + Intended to be an incentive (“carrot approach”) to generate more dam removal projects
* USACE wanted dam removal credits to be tied to stream mitigation calculator
* In the process of negotiating best metrics
  + Have not developed consensus about how to move forward
* Does not include culverts at this time
* Metrics being evaluated right now:
  + Upstream functional network from fish passage prioritization tool
  + Dam ranking from the fish passage prioritization tool
  + Priority species multipliers
  + Length of impoundment
* Have a draft calculator, working on putting together a few examples to test out how it works
  + Once the group comes to some sort of consensus, present to Fish Passage workgroup to get input
  + No date set yet
* Jim Thompson – Could be a really good tool to get projects started
  + Could give landowners a financial incentive to remove dams
  + Similar to wetland creation credits
* Questions:
  + Alan Weaver – If this becomes established in MD, how do we get it established in other states/different ACE regions?
    - Mary – no current way to do that through the Corps process. Each district works completely on their own. Part of why the Baltimore district insisted on using their stream mitigation calculator was because it has already gone through a larger public approval process for the stream calculator.
    - I see consensus being an issue between districts. Could be 2+ years from having calculators established in various districts
  + Julie Devers – Have any other ACE districts done this yet?
    - Mary Andrews – None that I know of have formally been established yet
    - Serena McClain – I’m aware of one in Ohio that’s being worked on but has not been finalized

**Fish Passage Discussion: How do we generate more projects in the Chesapeake?**

* Main obstacles to generating projects, other than dam owner willingness, in the Chesapeake?
* Are partners considering leading culvert projects in addition to dam removals?
* What can the workgroup do to assist in generating more projects?

Discussion:

Survey Results

* Impediments to development of new project
  + Dam Owner willingness
  + Funding at all levels of project development
* Respondents from federal agencies wanted to spend more time as a workgroup focusing on culverts
* Respondents from state agencies were split and did not want to work on culverts at the expense of dam removals
* Respondents from NGOs think the current allocation of time spent in the workgroup is working well.
* Hold more workshops or smaller meetings to discuss topics of interest to subsets of the larger workgroup

Discussion:

Culverts -

* Alan Weaver– When there’s a good culvert project, we want to be involved but we are worried pursuing culverts will take up a large chunk of time. They are also often performed by state highway administrations and require us to work with them.
  + Albert Spells– Culvert projects require us to be creative. We need to start looking outside of our particular agency. Start working with groups like CMI. Doesn’t necessarily have to take a person away from dams. Not a question of either or – we should prioritize work as it comes up
* Mary Andrews –NOAA has not provided any funding for culverts and is more interested in dam removals. Part of the reason why we’re having this discussion is because I want to put a little pressure on other agencies to consider taking over chairing or co-chairing.
* Jim Thompson – Most of the culverts in MD are owned by state agencies which helps us get around private ownership issues. A lot of low hanging fruit of dam removals have already been addressed
* Sandra Davis – FWS is really interested in culverts right now and that’s not likely to change. I like the idea of having more workshops on specific issues. The things I find really helpful in other workgroups are the broader topics like joining stakeholder groups.
  + Mary Andrews – I agree, but I think the subjects we need to tackle need to be handled workgroup wide. Always hesitant to bring topics to the group that might not be relevant workgroup wide. Also working to identify sub-topics can be addressed at a sub-group level

Identifying dam removal projects/getting new projects going –

* Mary Andrews – Representatives from MD have been so focused on Bloede that we haven’t looked at other things. Dam owner willingness and funding are still major obstacles
* Jim Thompson- I think that fresh education materials, links to new studies and websites and case studies could all improve dam owner willingness. This seems like something the Bay Program should be able to provide.
  + Julianna Greenberg – Those sound like a good start to a GIT funding project, but the Bay Program likely would not have the resources in their budget to fund that work as is.
  + Alan Weaver– We’ve been relying on the internet and webpages for so long. Are printed pamphlets still effective? I would be willing to help develop content for a pamphlet if they’re helpful.
  + Mary Andrews– I will go back to the Bay Program and look for some resources for this.
  + Serena McClain – I think outreach materials are useful, but we need to shift towards having conversations. The biggest thing that we’ve found that makes a difference is developing individual relationships.
    - Mary – I agree, it’s just not a priority for funders when you have a backlog of projects. Going to be an even bigger problem as we move through the projects and the backlog gets longer. We need to develop some sort of campaign. We need more funding for fish passage projects. Some sort of federal program on dam removals where we all have access to a pot and we share that funding to prioritize projects. I want to work with the Workgroup and pursuing this more and solving this challenge.

**Wrap up/Action Items**

* Keep an eye out for interesting smaller group discussions occurring over the next few months! Join as you’re able/willing.
* Albert Spells is retiring.
* Ben Lorson has been promoted out of his role as Fish Passage Coordinator.

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