



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Fish GIT Final Outcome Language Office Hours - April 2025

Monday, April 7, 2025

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Virtual Conference Info

<https://umces.webex.com/umces/j.php?MTID=m2197f54f30bb1d3edf97b522a3db042c>

Meeting number: 2862 389 0246

Password: riGEhwhJ664

Join by phone

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll

Access code: 286 238 90246

Meeting Minutes

Action Item: Christina to send forage output language to Allison Colden & Chris Moore

Introduction (Bruce Vogt, NOAA):

- *Plan for today is to go through the outcome language that was edited from the FishGIT meeting on March 26th.*
- *Management Board final disposition of outcomes on March 27th (decisional meeting on whether to keep/drop/modify outcomes) - further discussion on tidal/nontidal fish habitat and on novel outcomes on April 10th*
- *Fish GIT final outcome dispositions:*
 - *Blue Crab Management: REMOVE*
 - *Blue Crab Sustainability: UPDATE*
 - *Forage: RECLASSIFY*
 - *Output under Fish Habitat*
 - *Fish Habitat: UPDATE*
 - *Oyster Restoration: UPDATE*
 - *Sustainable Oyster Fishery: NOVEL OUTCOME*
- *Beyond 2025 Timeline:*
 - *April 10: MB meeting to finalize decisions on outcome disposition & discuss structure*
 - *April 16: Draft outcome language due to FishGIT Executive Committee*
 - *April 25th: Final outcome language due to MB*

- *May 7-8: MB retreat to review final outcome language*
- *Suggested information to develop for final outcome language submission:*
 - *Proposed draft outcome language*
 - *Context for updated outcome draft language*
 - *Existing Watershed Agreement outcome language*
 - *Draft outputs or activities that could be SMART (consider output implementation time horizon, consider when new metrics/targets may be ready)*
 - *Challenges in developing outcome language that MB can help overcome (Optional)*
 - *Links or attachments / documentation / methodology (Optional)*

Oyster Restoration

- Good feedback during the FishGIT breakout session on March 26th
 - Kevin and Stephanie took this feedback and restructured it based on new format for outcomes
 - Overarching statement with SMART objectives underneath (almost outputs)
 - This format may be the adopted approach
- Draft outcome language:
 - Restore or conserve at least 1800 acres of additional oyster reef habitat, managed as non-harvest reefs, concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas
 - Maintain reefs established under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement to achieve restoration success metrics
- Debate on whether to include harvest/non-harvest
- During the FishGIT meeting we didn't do a lot of wordsmithing so we had to go back after the meeting to revise it and show it to you all today.

Discussion:

Olivia Carretti: I think this looks good. Suggestion to specify "new oyster reef habitat" or "an additional 1800 acres". May not be clear to those outside of this group.

Kevin Schabow: So in addition to what was done for the 10 x 25 goal?

Olivia Carretti: Yes

Bruce Vogt: So first bullet- at least 1800 additional acres of oyster reef habitat

Kevin Schabow: Or start second bullet with "In addition, maintain" - either way

Angie Sowers: I second Olivia's suggestion. I like the inclusion of the manage as non-harvest reefs - that covers my interest in seeing some sort of nod to maintaining that kind of habitat. Looks really good.

Chris Judy: Recommend not adding "in addition to" in the beginning of the sentence - I like a verb as the start of the sentence, keep restore and conserve. Suggest having "1800 acres of additional oyster reef habitat"

Sustainable Oyster Fishery

- We do not know yet if this one is going to move forward - we will find out this week at the MB meeting on April 10th.
- Flipped how outcome was worded before - outcome language presented is from a suggestion from Lynn Fegley.
- Landed on a simple statement with focus on water quality during the FishGIT meeting.

Discussion:

Allison Colden: We submitted some formal comments on this last week based on some of the notes you all had from the FishGIT meeting. Great that aquaculture is included here. Wonder if we can reference habitat in here in addition to water quality? Shell budget with habitat should be incorporated here because important aspect relative to sustainability over time of oyster fishery & recognize work done to quantify habitat value of aquaculture. Based on goals/outcomes/notes from FishGIT breakout group - Oyster fishery BMP - spat on shell replenishment in relation to MD oyster fishery (only applies to one watershed state) & significant holes in implementation framework for oyster fishery BMP. Due to holes, CBF is not comfortable with the use of BMP in this outcome.

Bruce Vogt: So we spoke about BMP being one strategy but not the only way to improve/track improvements in water quality. There are other ways to achieve this outcome. Just one mechanism to achieve this but not the only.

Kevin Schabow: This is an exploratory outcome. Will have to word it so that we aren't on the hook for something we cannot achieve.

Chris Judy: Regarding holes in BMP - we know that. No BMP will ever be implemented until it is complete/holes are plugged. For BMP to be tracked under this outcome, it will be a complete BMP, so I do not see the concern.

Bruce Vogt: What do people think of adding habitat along with water quality. I do not think we spoke about that during our break out group.

Jay Lazar: Biomass is the primary metric we would want to explore. Want to avoid additional burden of monitoring. About improving ecosystem services through the fishery - there is habitat value of course. One of the things we wanted to do is not confuse the two outcomes too much. To me it starts to blend the two outcomes too much - we want a distinction.

Kevin Schabow: I think it is possible we could get pushback on having two separate outcomes - MB may want to merge them. This may be a mute point. Not something I want to fall on my sword about.

Ward Slacum: In my experience, when you manage an oyster fishery you are in some way managing habitat. Indifferent of whether habitat should be in there or not - I could go either way. I do like the simplicity of the statement. If you add habitat in there (unless it confuses MB) I think it is okay.

Kevin Schabow: Not saying it would confuse them/they would blend it. Would be an overarching oyster outcome with two outputs focused on restoration and fishery. If you have the same exact words in both of them then it could lead to people wanting to blend them.

Kristin Saunders: Could you bring in the people centric piece somewhere here? Benefits that accrue to people as well as the resource. In addition to habitat, how do these projects affect the communities? People centered work is a theme across all outcome discussions. I think it is worth taking a look at.

Jay Lazar: During the breakout session we spoke about how to track this around people. Example: trainings to get younger people into fishery/aquaculture (decreasing the median age of commercial community)

Kevin Schabow: This is fundamentally different from the other one. This is a way for CBP to engage aquaculture and industry to increase oyster abundance for ecosystem services - direct connection to people. Not bay-wide management, more individual engagement.

Stephanie Westby: Great point Kristin. Interest in being more inclusive. I do not know how many aquaculture entities/commercial harvesters have seen this yet. I know we have jurisdictions on the call that may have been involved in this. Worth thinking about this process and how to be inclusive.

Jay Lazar: We spoke about in breakout sessions, Ward brought that up. I recall Adam saying that this is something the community wanted. This was at the behest of the community

Kevin Schabow: This has to be done in conjunction with the community.

Adrienne Kotula: Having trouble with the simplicity of this outcome. Reference blue crab outcome "Assess and communicate" - working together to refine targets is an important part of the outcome that is not addressed in this oyster fishery outcome language here now. Need more meat on the bones.

Kevin Schabow: I like concise but there is room to add another sentence here. I am okay with that.

Andrew Button: To provide some more context - I believe the intent of this is to not change anything on the management side at all but just to give credit to aquaculture/fishery for the good things already happening. More of a counting exercise is the sense that I get. Not necessarily to make recommendations but to count all of these other oysters that exist.

Kevin Schabow: My understanding is that we want something that is at least additive. If we are counting things that are already happening - then what value does the bay program have?

Andrew Button: More in this space is happening - continuously additive as we encourage more aquaculture/sustainable harvest to happen. Not necessarily a change in trajectory. Additive but not a substantial change to how things are managed.

Bruce Vogt: We also spoke about how this could be place-based (ex: Eastern Bay). Spoke about additive piece. I thought Adam said there could be some tweaks to management that could be considered/modified to better meet those water quality improvements.

Jay Lazar: It starts with establishing a baseline over a few years from the existing data. Point is to incentivize increasing from that baseline overtime. If that is the current trajectory you are on, that is awesome. It would be great to report that out. There is value in documenting the process of that management regime and allowing jurisdictions to market their products in a sustainable way - seemed like there is significant interest.

Andrew Button: I may have oversimplified. So yeah, pick that baseline and get credit as it moves up.

Bruce Vogt: Discussion around the Monterey Bay certification process and how VA oysters did not get on that certification list. Documenting what the sustainable practices are etc. is a way to get those certifications, which is a marketing tool - tying back to people.

Angie Sowers: How do we quantify this and make it measurable? Sounds like there would be multiple metrics, is that what you all are thinking?

Jay Lazar: There are some idea on how this could work. Biomass being the primary driver with some other metrics as well. If it was approved then we would have addition details on what that may look like.

Bruce Vogt: Look like some people like the simplicity but also add some more meat within the second sentence. We will take a crack at that.

Fish Habitat

- Not too many changes made during the breakout session
 - Added “Achieve and” maintain...
- This will be a tidally focused outcome
 - Better linking water resources & water quality (CESAR report)
 - Focusing in shallow water
- Still uncertainty of where this will ultimately fall but pushing ahead with this tidal fish habitat language right now
- A lot of terms needed to be defined

Discussion:

Chris Moore: To clarify, the “achieved” language was added because people were worried that there are a lot of areas not currently meeting water quality standards.

Bruce Vogt: “habitat area” for tidal segment living resource assessment/scoring segment & suitable habitat - but do we need that at an outcome language level? Could it say “achieve and maintain suitable shallow water habitat for key species” as high level outcome and the rest becomes smart outputs.

Jim Uphoff: “Achieving and maintaining suitable shallow water habitat” depends on the depth that you pick. Shallow areas do not experience the trauma that something deeper would. If you are not careful with the definition of what shallow water is, you are almost going to make it too easy. Chronic effects vs. acute effects. Do not want to be too shallow with what you pick or else you will not get the chronic effects.

Bruce Vogt: We were thinking shoreline to 5 m

Jim Uphoff: If you go to 5m then you will definitely capture that dynamic. Chronic effects are probably not what you are expecting but the mesohaline pretty much adheres to the pattern the bay program is built around.

Bruce Vogt: The details on this will be the next phase after outcome language but I really appreciate all of your input beforehand and on key species as well.

Jim Uphoff: Yeah the depth is probably the one thing this would be most sensitive to. If you pick something deeper than 1-2m you will probably capture that dynamic - will not make it easy on you though. Far more likely you will measure what the intent is to measure.

Bruce Vogt: Forage would fall under fish habitat. We currently do not have anything written for forage because that would be at the output level. Should we craft something for forage in the anticipation that we would be asked to put forward a high-level outcome statement and then a fish habitat related statement that would be more of an output and then an output for forage.

Kevin Schabow: Not a bad idea to start doing that now

Bruce Vogt: Is there a volunteer out there that would be willing to work with Christina and I to craft a forage output language? I was thinking Allison Colden, Chris Moore, Jim Uphoff if we

could get your thoughts. We can put something together and send it to you all to see what you think.

Action Item: Christina to send forage output language to Allison Colden & Chris Moore

Jim Uphoff: I know you want a forage outcome, but if you are dealing with habitat generically I don't know why you have to have forage. Target species (if they end up being white perch and blue crabs) both serve as forage to some extent. I don't know if it is necessary unless you get to a point where you try to make the case the forage is habitat limited. I don't have a lot of enthusiasm for it.

Bruce Vogt: Main reason for including forage in here is because as we went through outcome disposition there was concern of losing forage all together. People were on board to reclassify forage under fish habitat as long as forage focus was not lost - and presented that to the MB - so we need to stick to that. Bay anchovy was suggested as possible indicator representative species tied to fish habitat work - to your point, as we pick representative species to focus on we talked about picking species that comprise of different niches & life histories.

Blue Crab Sustainability Outcome Language Discussion

- Breakout group made edits to the language during the FishGIT meeting
- Do we agree on the red language or do we need more discussion?
- FishGIT Excomm will give us input on this language - check in with them (and Ingrid Braun-Ricks) prior to submission

Kevin Schabow: This is where I hope we can break it up to have an overarching outcome (the condition we want to reach) and then here is how we want to do it (by assessing and communicating). Easier to digest.

Bruce Vogt: Yeah I think we can do that

Next Steps

- Thank you everyone for your feedback
- We will make some of the changes we heard today
- Outcome language will be presented to the Fish GIT Executive Committee for approval and then submitted to Management Board
- Noted changes for the Sustainable Oyster Fishery outcome - everything else seemed like it was on track
- Feel free to contact Bruce Vogt (bruce.vogt@noaa.gov) or Christina Garvey (christina.garvey@noaa.gov) with any questions or concerns

Meeting Materials:

Link to breakout slide deck from March 26 FishGIT meeting with edits to outcome language :

<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/files/documents/FishGIT-Meeting-Breakout-Slides-March-26-2025.pdf>