

**Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee  
Meeting Summary**

July 18th, 2016 from 1:00pm-3:00pm

Materials: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/24111/>

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**Call Participants:**

Adam Wright	Dave Blazer	Nancy Butowski
Bill Goldsborough	Emilie Franke	Peyton Robertson
Billy Rice	Kara Skipper	Rob O'Reilly
Bruce Vogt	Marty Gary	

**Decisional**

➤ **Blue Crab Management Topics**

- Billy Rice submitted a [letter](#) to the full Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (SFGIT) recommending a Baywide minimum size limit of 5.25 inches carapace length for male blue crabs. Billy provided background on his recommendation including personal experience in the fishery, benefits for conservation, and an economic perspective on the benefits of a larger minimum size limit.
- Jurisdictions discussed the feasibility and required jurisdictional procedures to consider this change.
  - Current minimum size limits are 5 inches in Virginia, 5.25 inches in the Potomac, and 5 inches (Apr-mid July) to 5.25 inches (mid-July – mid-Dec) in Maryland.
- **Discussion:**
  - Legislative action is necessary to change the hard crab size limit in Virginia. Rob requested additional information from the Ex Comm and jurisdictions to present to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) crab advisory committee for their discussion.
  - Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) would need to provide information to its Tidal Fish Advisory Commission (TFAC) as well. Dave requested an analysis of the predicted ecological and economic effects of transitioning to a 5.25 inch catch limit.
- **Actions:**
  - SFGIT staff will assemble and summarize available information (including AC Carpenter's past proposal and related discussions on increasing the harvest size to 5.5 inches) on proposed size limit change and develop proposed timeline for next steps.
  - Emilie will contact the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) to develop an analysis on potential impacts (population, harvest, others).
- The Potomac River Fishery Commission (PRFC) ([link to PRFC letter here](#)) and Maryland's TFAC ([link to letter here](#)) have submitted letters to the SFGIT expressing their interest in maintaining the current management framework and not moving forward with the [evaluation of the allocation management framework](#) or the exploration of the development of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) model.
- **Discussion:**
  - The TFAC and PRFC letters outline several reasons why the exploration of a TAC and jurisdictional would not be beneficial for the management of the blue crab fishery.
  - Rob expressed concerns that VMRC would not have the capacity to enforce a TAC.
    - He also noted that this effort could instead be more focused on accounting for harvest instead of the focus on allocation. Regarding outreach on accountability, VMRC will be meeting with Watermen's Associations in the near-term to provide training and information on mandatory reporting.

- Marty expressed concern about the development of a TAC and allocation system and the possible effects on reporting behavior by crabbers due to concern about future allocation.
- Consensus among jurisdictions based on initial feedback is that the current management system is functioning well at this time. Concerns include time used for on this topic, enforcement capacity and effectiveness, and changes impacts on reporting behavior.
- This rationale and information, including correspondence from the need for better harvest accounting jurisdictional advisory committees, should be cohesively summarized if the Ex Comm decides to change direction from the actions currently outlined in the 2016-17 workplan.
- **Action:**
  - SFGIT staff will compile these discussions and written comments regarding the evaluation of an allocation framework and the 2016-17 workplan. The SFGIT will further consider written comments and discuss the question of modifying the 2016-17 in the next few months. SFGIT staff will reach out to the full GIT for additional feedback and consult the Chesapeake Bay Program to determine the process for changing the workplan if necessary.

#### ➤ **Shad and River Herring**

- Bill Goldsborough provided a brief summary of the Shad and River Herring Ocean Bycatch issue that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) will address in [October](#). Bill drafted a [position statement](#) on behalf of the SFGIT to issue support for MAFMC to add shad and river herring as stocks in the fishery for Atlantic mackerel to provide full accountability and biologically based catch limits for the severely depleted stocks.
- Peyton acknowledged potential conflicts of interest for Ex Comm members related to a position statement on this issue since Ex Comm members or their organizations are represented on MAFMC.
- **Discussion:**
  - MAFMC will be producing additional information on the topic including a white paper, which should be available by August 2016.
  - Members expressed some concern about conflicts of interest in providing a position statement due to Ex Comm members/organizations representation on MAFMC. Bill G. emphasized that the Ex Comm could at least discuss this issue from a Chesapeake Bay perspective.
  - Rob cited that in the 2013 MAFMC meeting where this issue was originally raised, this was a very polarizing issue.
- **Actions:**
  - Bruce will reach out to the Shad indicator Workgroup for Chesapeake Bay-related data if necessary.
  - The Ex Comm will revisit this topic on the September conference call after MAFMC completes the white paper. The Ex Comm will not take a position on the issue at this time.

#### ➤ **Takeaways from June Full Sustainable Fisheries GIT Meeting**

- Kara provided a quick overview of the [takeaways from the June 2016 meeting](#). The overview included a comparison of MAMFC's list of unmanaged forage with important forage species in the Chesapeake Bay from the 2014 STAC Forage workshop, the development of the oyster restoration indicator, workplan progress by SFGIT workgroups, the GIT funding process, a proposed oyster meeting to share information among management jurisdictions, and other pertinent topics.
- **Discussion:**

- Rob stated that MAFMC is still discussing their unmanaged forage amendment and determining which species to include. There is concern over including chub mackerel and other species.
- PRFC will be hosting an Oyster Management meeting in August which will start outlining oyster management in the Potomac River for the future.
- Ex Comm members support the proposed fall oyster discussion among the jurisdictions.
- **Actions:**
  - The SFGIT will share information and raise MAFMC's awareness of the SFGIT's forage work in the Chesapeake Bay, including the STAC workshop, Forage Workshop list of species, indicator analyses and current research. Peyton will consider attending the August 8<sup>th</sup> MAFMC meeting to share this information with the Council.
  - Bruce will present the Oyster restoration indicator at the next Ex Comm conference call.
  - Bruce will send out the one-pager for the fall jurisdictional oyster discussion to the Ex Comm. Amy Freitag will follow up with Ex Comm members to further develop the agenda.

#### ➤ **GIT Funding**

- Kara discussed the process by which we solicited GIT funded project ideas and selected our top three priorities. [Top three proposals for the SFGIT](#) were as follows: 1) Shell/habitat loss rates in oyster restoration and fishery management, 2) Blue crab stock assessment (select terms of reference), and 3) Evaluation of the forage-habitat relationship in the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Discussion:**
  - Peyton and Bruce suggested that we consider including restoration efforts in selected tributaries to refine the methodology and expected deliverables for the oyster proposal.
  - Ex Comm approved of the priority order of the selected proposals.
- **Action:**
  - Include Oyster interagency workgroups in development and/or review of statement of work.

#### ➤ **Updates, Membership and Logistical Items**

- **Cownose Rays**
  - The Ex Comm discussed the recent media attention on cownose ray tournaments and discussions in the jurisdictions that followed the Cownose Ray Workshop.
  - **Discussion:**
    - PRFC would like Bob Fisher (VIMS) to speak to the commission (likely in December) about cownose rays.
    - Rob brought the information from the workshop to VMRC several months ago, however the Commission decided to take no action. MD DNR does not have direct regulatory authority to address cownose rays.
    - Bill G. recommended that the SFGIT contact the VA Seafood Products Board to recommend that the "Save the Bay, Eat a Ray" should no longer be used based on data from the workshop.
    - Peyton recommended that jurisdictions continue to look into the regulation necessary to have tournaments require registration, in order to establish a baseline for how many rays are being removed by this practice.
    - Marty suggested that the team focus some of our efforts on ensuring that the data from the Cownose Ray Workshop is communicated to stakeholders throughout the Bay Watershed.
- **Federal Catfish Regulations**

- New regulations for catfish inspection are currently being decided in the House.
  - **Discussion:**
    - Team members want to keep track of the federal catfish regulations. Ex Comm stated that is a big concern.
  - **Sustainable Fisheries Membership Change Request**
    - Thomas Murray (VIMS) is retiring and has requested Bob Fisher, commercial fisheries specialist at VIMS to become a GIT member as his replacement.
    - **Decision:**
      - Ex Comm approved of this membership change.
  - **August Ex Comm Call**
    - The August Ex Comm conference call will be cancelled. The Ex Comm will reconvene for the September 26<sup>th</sup> conference call.
    - Kara will send updates and information as needed to keep Ex Comm members informed of GIT proceedings.
- **Diversity Questionnaire**
- Ex Comm members were asked to complete the brief (<2 minutes) diversity questionnaire to help establish a baseline demographic profile of individuals engaged on a regular basis in the Chesapeake Bay Program organization <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WHBSG9L>