



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration Partnership.

Sustainable Fisheries GIT: Fish Habitat

*Bruce Vogt,
NOAA and
Sustainable Fisheries GIT Coordinator*

*Gina Hunt,
Maryland DNR and
Fish Habitat Action Team Coordinator*

Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...

Goal: *Sustainable Fisheries*

Outcome: *Fish Habitat*

Continually improve effectiveness of fish habitat conservation and restoration efforts by identifying and characterizing critical spawning, nursery and forage areas within the Bay and tributaries for important fish and shellfish, and use existing and new tools to integrate information and conduct assessments to inform restoration and conservation efforts.



Fish Habitat Definition:

Any area on which an aquatic organism depends, directly or indirectly, to carry out the life processes of the organism, including, an area for spawning, incubation, nursery, rearing, growth to maturity, food supply, or migration

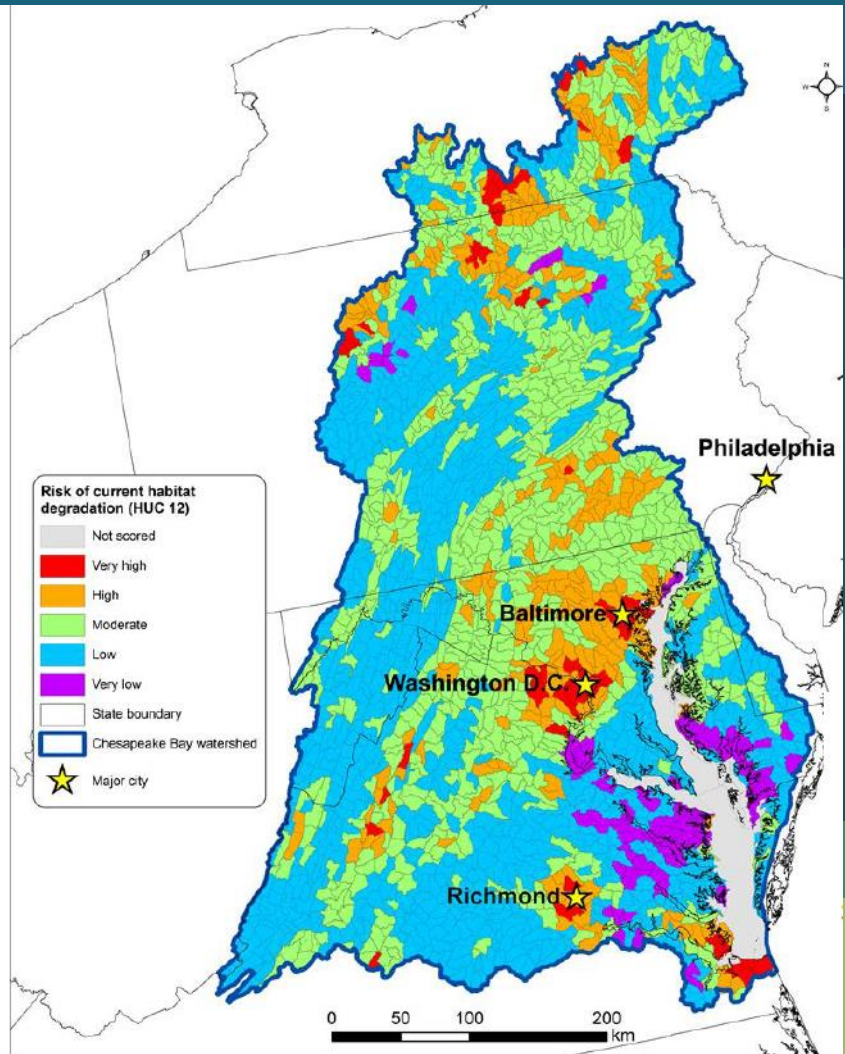
- *National Fish Habitat Action Plan*

Fish Habitat Map:

Most limiting disturbances for
Chesapeake Bay habitats:

- Urbanization (impervious surface)
- Agriculture
- Mining
- Nutrients

- *National Fish Habitat Partnership*





What We Want



We want to drive fish
habitat restoration
and conservation
efforts into local
planning.



1

Setting the Stage:

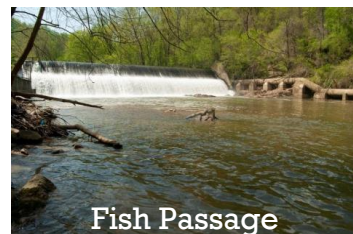
What are our assumptions?



**Fish Habitat is the center
of the universe!**



Fish Habitat





Logic Behind Our Outcome



Following the Decision Framework:

Factors

- Scientific/Technical Understanding
- Government Engagement
- Public Engagement

Current Efforts and Gaps

- Understanding of habitat stressors to habitat function
- Agency coordination
- Lack of public engagement

Management Approaches

- Use priority species to evaluate habitat function
- Communicate agency advancements in understanding
- Improve communications with partners and local community

2

Progress:

Are we doing what we said we would do?



What is our progress?



Identified fish habitat threats and stressors among selected species



Synthesized results from a multiyear shoreline and land use impact study



Identifying critical spawning, nursery and overwintering areas for select species

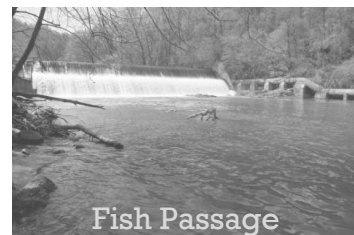


STAC funded a workshop which will identify representative species and evaluate factors influencing habitat function



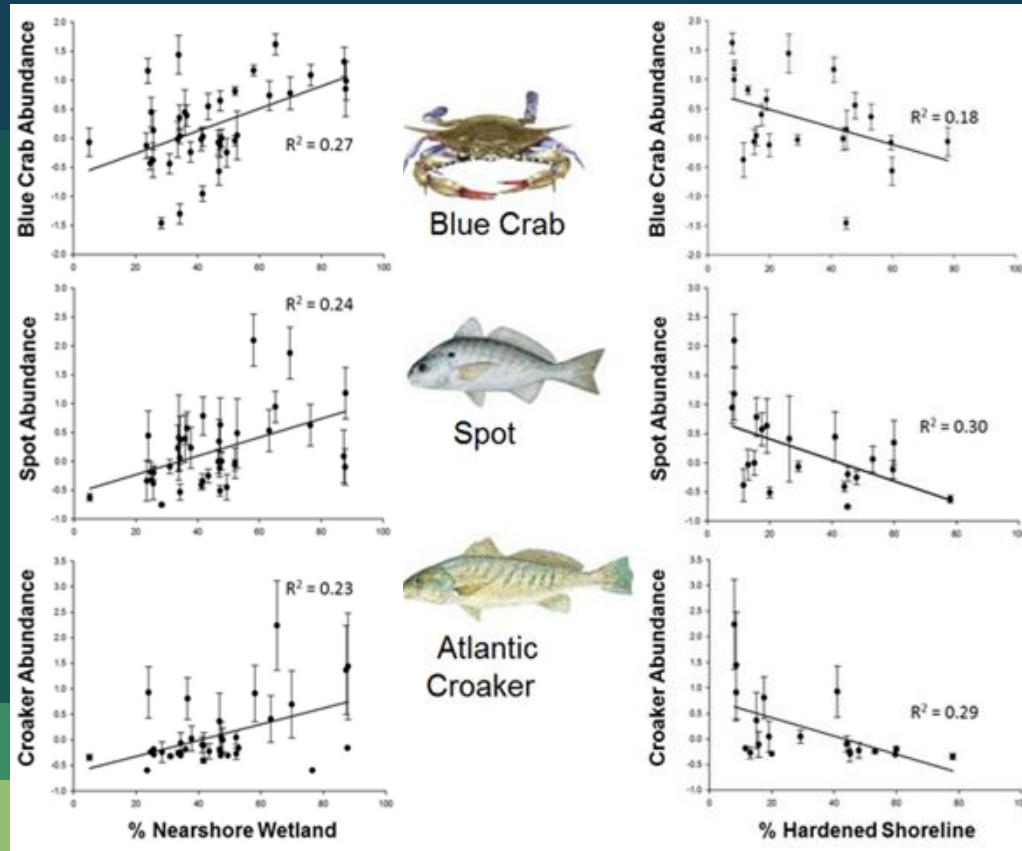
Analysis

While numerous outcomes impact fish habitat, the Fish Habitat Action Team is targeting urbanization stressors:
Shorelines and Impervious Surface



Shoreline and Land Use Impacts:

Kornis et al 2017. Figure 5.

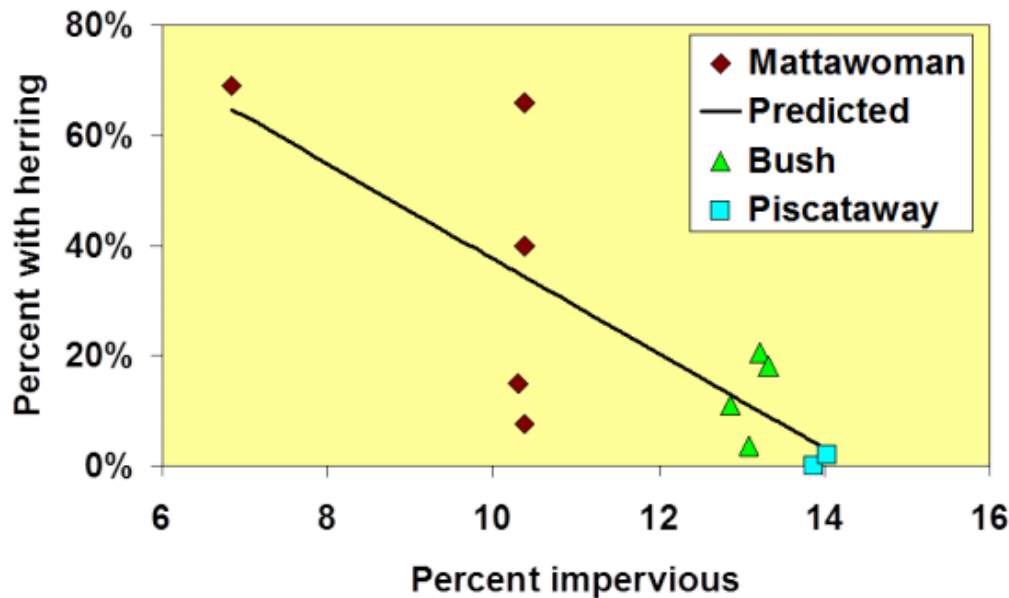


More wetland = More fish

More hardened shoreline = Less fish

Impervious Surface and Fish

Figure 2. Percent of stream samples with herring eggs or larvae versus impervious surface for three Maryland watersheds.



**More impervious
surface= less river
herring**

From CBC and MD DNR "[Land Conservation = Fish Conservation](#)" presentation

3

Challenges:

Are our actions having the expected effect?



Challenges



We lack an effective mechanism to communicate fish habitat priorities to CBP partners and the local community



We lack a defined measure of progress



We lack a direct connection between fishery managers and habitat decision makers

4

Adaptations:

How should we adapt?



**Based on what we've
learned, we plan to...**



**Conduct a workshop which will inform priority
habitat stressor information**



**Improve outreach to local communities and
counties**

- **Co-benefits in WIPs**
- **Materials and tools**



**Take meaningful actions that emphasize
communication as the end goal**



What We Want



We want to incorporate fish habitat into the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans.

- **Prioritize BMPs that improve fish habitat**
- **Use fish habitat to drive local WIP buy-in**
- **Serve as a metric of progress**

“EPA also encourages state and local jurisdictions to **consider the corollary benefits** of BMPs that are targeted for implementation. Corollary benefits are those that not only result in water quality improvements but could **address other 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes.**”

-U.S. EPA's Interim Expectations for the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans

Discussion

Photo Credits

Slide 2: Aerial Farm and River (Will Parson)

Slide 4: National Fish Habitat Vulnerability Score Map (National Fish Habitat Partnership)

Slide 5: Diversity Meeting (Darius Stanton)

Slide 7 and 11: Forest Buffers (Heather Richards)

- Oyster Restoration (Michael Eversmier)

- Healthy Watersheds (Mike Zarro)

- Climate (Lee Goodwin)

- Protected Lands (Middleton Evans)

- Impervious Surfaces (Will Parson)

- Living Shoreline (Virginia Institute of Marine Science)

- All Others found in CBP Management Strategies

Slide 10: Aerial Wetlands (Will Parson)

- Bulkhead (Encyclopedia of Puget Sound)

- Herring Spawn in Choptank (Dave Harp)

- Eelgrass (Delaware Inland Bays)

Slide 12: Wetland and Hardened Shoreline Graphs (Dr. Kornis et. al.)

Slide 13: Impervious Surface and Fish Graph (Chesapeake Bay Commission and Maryland Department of Natural Resources)

Slide 18: Mattawoman Creek Inlet (Marinas.com)

Extra Slides

Agreement Goals and Outcomes



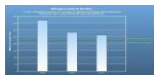
Sustainable Fisheries

- Blue Crab Abundance
- Blue Crab Management
- Oyster
- Forage Fish
- Fish Habitat



Vital Habitats Goal

- Wetlands
- Black Duck
- Stream Health
- Brook Trout
- Fish Passage
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)
- Forest Buffer
- Tree Canopy



Water Quality Goal

- 2017 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP)
- 2025 WIP
- Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring



Toxic Contaminants Goal

- Toxic Contaminants Research
- Toxic Contaminants Policy and Prevention



Healthy Watersheds Goal

- Healthy Waters



Stewardship Goal

- Citizen Stewardship
- Local Leadership
- Diversity



Land Conservation Goal

- Protected Lands
- Land Use Methods and Metrics Development
- Land Use Options Evaluation



Public Access Goal

- Public Access Site Development



Environmental Literacy Goal

- Student
- Sustainable Schools
- Environmental Literacy Planning



Climate Resiliency Goal

- Monitoring and Assessment
- Adaptation Outcome