



Oyster Outcome Office Hours - March 2025

Friday, March 14 10:00am – 11:00am EST

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/qzx-nnbs-qqp>

Or dial: (US) +1 619-728-9166 PIN: 851 246 711#

Meeting Minutes

10:00am - 10:15am

Introduction & recap

- **Timeline:**
 - **April 10:** Outcome language draft due
 - **April 25:** Final outcome language due
 - **May 7-8:** MB reviews final outcome language
- March 25-26 Fish GIT meeting
- Final disposition from MB = March 27

10:15am - 10:35pm

Discussion on Oyster Restoration Outcome Language

- Bruce Vogt: Two pieces to this outcome - build new reefs in addition to conserve the existing reefs from previous work.
- Kevin Schabow: Two sentence outcome - based on office hours from the bay program where it was suggested to have a two step outcome. 1 sentence describes the condition you want and then the second part is SMART. We may not go that route but reflected here.
- Allison Colden: Are we assuming (given 1800 acres) that this outcome has a similar timeline (10 yrs)?
- Kevin Schabow: That is the general thinking but we are not positive (by 2035/2040)
- Gina Hunt: That is not decided, will be determined by the PSC. Other groups say xx for year or do not mention the year at all. Goal of every ten years to measure this response.
- Allison Colden: Maybe have interim goals or break it down by every year. That way it is evergreen. Do we need to change this to an annual goal or add incremental? "To achieve restoration success metrics" - you are trying to achieve right? Maybe clearer if you swap the 1st and 2nd half of the last sentence.
- Bruce Vogt: Messaging that this outcome would be on order of decade or more to complete- because of the time frame to see full effects of oyster reef. But we can make more incremental steps.
- Gina Hunt: Outputs aren't due April 10th - clarity for what the outcome is trying to accomplish but language for output is not needed now. I like the idea of incremental steps - would shy away from annual. If you make it too small you would most of the time not make it. Focus on language that is longer increment or more trend based.



- Kevin Schabow: We wanted to provide as much context as possible as to what will go into this outcome while creating language.
- Angie Sowers: Wanted to agree with Gina's comment. 3 years may be appropriate - our projects are more on that type of timeframe.
- Allison Colden: 6 year monitoring, do you think that is important to capture in part of the outcome that monitoring is part of the restoration program?
- Bruce Vogt: Depends on how specific we need to be there - right now sort of implies that we need to do monitoring but maybe not clear enough. Trying to have wording flexible enough to do revision/re-evaluation of success metrics.
- David O'Brien (in the chat): Please include a statement on monitoring to validate success.
- Kevin Schabow: Outcomes themselves should be straightforward/ easy to digest. Makes it important to have good outputs etc. Angie, you said incremental target vs a total? Are you saying it shouldn't include that?
- Laurinda Serafin(in the chat): Increments will change depending on the sites specific size and conditions
- Angie Sowers: without knowing the duration, I don't know if that is a great place to go. Restoration is only going to get harder.
- Kevin Schabow: We will want to answer the question - if we do get a time bound agreement, what should that number be? I think workgroups were thinking of a 10 year horizon.
- Angie Sowers: We can also think about resources that will be needed. Substrate? Funding? Achievable and realistic
- Chris Moore: funding issues are important. Those of us that are trying to get money from feds or state - something we can point at is helpful. We need an overarching goal - harder if we only have interims and we don't meet them.
- Andrew Button: Conserve and Restore?
- Kevin Schabow: Restore = building new reefs, Conserve = on existing reefs- protect and meet restoration metrics. Understand constraints in VA. What do people think about Baylor grounds - if it says non-harvest does that mean there can not be restoration on Baylor grounds in VA?
- Bruce Vogt: VA could not restore reefs in perpetuity - this could show that we want to restore new acres and conserve the acres that have been restored - wanted to language
- Angie: Do they not have the manpower to manage the reefs vs. they do not want to keep them as sanctuary?
- Kevin Schabow: VA doesn't legally have a sanctuary. If there are oyster reefs on Baylor Grounds. VMRC people, correct me if wrong. Annual basis VMRC can say this is
- Adam Kenyon: Nothing in the law that prevents them from being open. Not the intent. We can promote using other materials that de-incentive harvest but there is the possibility if they are not protected in perpetuity, to open areas to harvest. With "ensure protection", there is no "ensure" in these areas.
- Bruce Vogt: Do we need to change the language on restore and conserve?
- Andrew Button:



- Kevin Schabow: partnered with VMRC to do restoration on Baylor grounds - want to leave door open for that. Also open to looking at success metrics. Do not want to be too restrictive.
- Angie Sowers: Difference between harvest v non-harvest areas is the three dimensional structure. One suggestion would be to restore and conserve the three dimensional structure. Physical nature of these reefs that differentiates ecosystem side vs. fishery side. I think success metrics and 3D structure can go hand in hand.
- Allison Colden: considering discussion on conserve - restore additional 1800 and do another number for conserve?
- Kevin Schabow: conservation will have to be defined - it is not right now. Conservation to me is conservation in perpetuity. May not be a legal framework in VA, but want to leave the door open because they could change down the road.
- Gina Hunt: Idk if separating restore and conserve is necessary as long as “and” really does mean “and”. Cannot just conserve good habitat and say you’re done.
- Kevin Schabow: The conserved part could come out. Last time we allowed pre-met reefs in VA and some in MD. In VA they do not have mechanisms to legally protect pre-met reefs. The idea is to allow for the conservation of existing reefs in the future. New oysters? No. New protected reefs? Yes. In the world of conservation, that counts. We don’t have to include but allow for that.
- Bruce Vogt: x
- Gina Hunt: Are we in agreement to keep the door open for conserving?
- Allison Colden: In the past, we had reefs that already met oyster restoration metrics. Preference would be to restore and conserve (or restore and protect). But that would include using the same method as before.
- Kevin Schabow: Lets look at 1800 acres and fed investment over next four years and look at acreage goals. In absence of fed support how will states and partners could meet that.
- Gina Hunt: We could put a finer point to it in the output. Only a certain percent of 1800s are not new reefs. Maybe clarification in outputs?
- Chris Judy (in the chat): I’d suggest the teasing out of a particular % of the 1,800 being NOT being pre-met is part of the metrics to be developed. The 1,800 is the goal. It's focused and simple.
- Laurinda Serafin(in the chat): Maybe it's tied to BMPs
- Gina Hunt (in the chat): Right
- Andrew Button: I like keeping language in there. Allows flexibility. Nuance of it can be worked out at the group level. Keep this simple, best interest to achieving a goal.

10:35am - 10:55am Discussion on Sustainable Oyster Fishery Outcome Language

- Recognition from both jurisdictions that both fisheries are going strong - but fishery not reflected in the bay program
 - Opportunity to engage the fishery and get more oysters in the water for a sustainable fishery
- Clearest to have two different outcomes



- Andie Sowers: Other fisheries have two outcomes? This opens the box- aren't we supposed to be consolidating?
- Bruce Vogt: The only other fishery is blue crab and they do have a fishery based outcome - no other discussion of other fisheries. More focused on fisheries that are managed here in the bay by the jurisdictions.
- Ward Slacum: Any consideration in that discussion that aquaculture would be included/play a role? In MD that is a growing industry - seems relevant to this abundance outcome.
- Kevin Schabow: It could be included - could look different in the jurisdictions. Not imagining the same as the blue crab outcome - more flexible among jurisdictions. There have been talks about aquaculture in this (different ways of aquaculture too). All things are on the table
- Gina Hunt: Line to me is where is the CBP influence on aquaculture? I don't think that the bay program would affect aquaculture. Ecological benefits of having oysters in the water. Just a metric - bay program would not affect aquaculture leases etc. Any new outcomes - question is "is there a role here" most times it is a metric. To be an outcome I think you need to have some role in that. This oyster fishery outcome is one of 4 new outcomes requested - not all will be approved. You can't just put everything in here - it has to be something we can influence.
- Ward: Where is the influence from the bay program in having a sustainable harvest of oysters?
- Angie Sowers (in the chat): Would 'sustainable' be defined by State fishery management plans? State or Commonwealth
- Kevin Schabow: I am not sure if I have an answer. We are trying to figure it out. I have heard from people in the VA industry that they are interested in this - potential for marketing and want efforts reflected in the bay program. Have not heard that specifically for the aquaculture industry.
- Ward: That is something that would eventually occur. Aquaculture is ... I know VA has different management and goals, at least in MD there are 3 distinct pillars to improve the bay.
- Kevin Schabow: absolutely we are interested in how this fits into BMP
- Olivia Caretti (in the chat): Something to consider regarding the BMP related to the oyster restoration gal language - the Expert Panel does NOT recommend that simply designating an area for conservation status (no restoration, just closing to harvest) should be eligible as a BMP practice.
- Allison Colden: Agree with Ward that aquaculture should be a sustainable harvest. National level - role in aquaculture. Nexus there. Agree that if there is a way to at least acknowledge that it would go a long way.
- Bruce Vogt: Maintain habitat quality. Maybe this doesn't have to be everywhere - could be certain areas where different sustainability harvesting is applied. Some areas can be managed differently from others.
- Angie Sowers: Is sustainable default to state or commonwealth management plans? And how would this be measured?



- Kevin Schabow: Metrics and monitoring would be something that would be an output. Recognize that over the next five years would have to be done. This is complex so we need to get it right but also an exploratory outcome. Clear on what we want to do and if we aren't there we need a clear offer up of here is what we are doing/
- Olivia Carretti: Something to consider regarding the BMP related to the oyster restoration gal language - the Expert Panel does NOT recommend that simply designating an area for conservation status (no restoration, just closing to harvest) should be eligible as a BMP practice.
- Kevin Schabow: Thanks cause it needs to be additive. Need to offset. What would the fishery do differently to get more oysters?
- Bruce: Reminder - Fish GIT meeting March 25-26. When I said place based - conservation around eastern bay. May be things already happening there that