

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (GIT) Meeting

Port Isobel – Tangier Island, Virginia

December 6th-8th, 2012

Meeting Report

Facilitated by Stephanie Kavanaugh (NOAA)

Background:

On December 6-8, 2012 the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (Fisheries GIT) of the Chesapeake Bay Program met in Port Isobel of Tangier Island, Virginia for its 6th biannual meeting.

The Fisheries GIT is composed of the state fisheries managers from around the Bay and chaired by the director of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. The Sustainable Fisheries GIT draws together a diverse group of managers and scientists to improve management and recovery of oysters, blue crab, menhaden, striped bass, and alosines. It focuses on advancing ecosystem-based fisheries management by using science to make informed fishery management decisions that cross state boundaries. Through this approach, the Fisheries GIT is focused on ecosystem-based fisheries management to encourage sustainable Chesapeake Bay fish populations that support viable recreational and commercial fisheries and provides for natural ecosystem function.

Meeting Objectives:

There were 2 primary objectives for the two-day meeting:

1. Meet with local watermen to hear their perspectives on Chesapeake Bay issues, collaborate for a better future, and learn how the Fisheries GIT can better represent them as an important stakeholder group.
2. Share the most recent science on blue crab abundance and male conservation thresholds, invasive catfish research and management, impacts on forage fish biology from varying land use practices, as well as oyster restoration, aquaculture, and ecosystem services.

Day 1: Stakeholder Listening Session

Watermen in Attendance: Curtis Johns, Mark Kitching, Gibby Dean, Dan Dise, William Parks, Andy Parks, James “Ooker” Eskridge, Brian Corbin, and Buddy Evans

While on Tangier Island, we set aside time to visit on site and talk with stakeholders including community leaders, commercial fishermen, and charter captains. The group met at Fisherman’s Corner Restaurant on Tangier Island to talk about what the Fisheries GIT does and who the team is, as well as to discuss some of the issues the stakeholders—including full-time watermen from Smith Island, Hoopers Island, Lower Hoopers Island, Tangier Island, and Crisfield—deal with every day. In addition, the group talked about the challenges they face, the changes they are seeing to the environment, and how these changes are affecting the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources.

These watermen and their communities are thought to be a “dying breed.” In Maryland, 63% of all commercial fishermen are over the age of 50, and 1/3 of those are over 60 years old. Stakeholders, like

the ones we interviewed, feel efforts should be made to promote an interest for young people to enter the industry. Island communities are remote and thus have limited employment opportunities available, making the sustainability and profitability of local fisheries of highest importance. Furthermore, because of the remote location, these stakeholders are potentially overly dependent on distributors who drive market prices.

As Maryland and Virginia share the Chesapeake Bay they also share similar issues. The Fisheries GIT should make an effort to better link opportunities in all jurisdictions to support and promote sustainable and locally harvested seafood. Jurisdictions should investigate options to ensuring packing and processing houses are required to maintain a very high percentage of Chesapeake Bay product labeled as “Chesapeake Bay seafood.” At the same time, managers ask that watermen and their respective organizations take a more unified approach to address land use effects on fisheries resources. Managers and the Fisheries GIT agreed to provide the necessary science and information to better influence and enact changes to promote sustainable land use from a fisheries perspective.

Key Outcomes:

Blue Crabs

Male Reference Points

- 1) Fisheries GIT endorses male conservation points of reference (bounds to be used as a management guide) recommended by Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC)
- 2) Fisheries GIT will follow up with CBSAC to evaluate resource needs and define a timeline for developing complete male reference points.
- 3) CBSAC should consider how Fisheries GIT and additional scientific expertise can be more involved in developing male reference points

Accountability Project Next Steps

- 1) Maryland design team is leading the effort and will evaluate how to go forward statewide
- 2) Virginia industry is moving forward on evaluating a harvest accountability system and conducting outreach to stakeholders
- 3) Keep recreational fishing accountability (Which remains a gap) on radar of Fisheries GIT for discussion
- 4) Fisheries GIT can provide collaboration and expertise exchange
 - a. Identify potential funding
 - b. Link Bay accountability efforts with lessons learned from other regions through Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)
 - c. Produce a Baywide blue crab management summary
 - d. Coordinate with Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program of ASMFC

Invasive Catfish

- 1) GIT draft a charge to the Invasive Catfish Task Force to develop an Action Plan recommending specific actions to address invasive catfish within 3 months (by March 2013) that can be implemented within the next six months. *(Action plan should seek to apply latest science findings and geospatial tools to actions and build on existing outreach and education efforts)*

Land Use

- 1) Fisheries GIT Continue to refine guiding principles working with Habitat and Healthy Watersheds GITs (*create a sense of urgency*).
- 2) Fisheries GIT work with partners (academic community, state coastal programs) to compile and synthesize available science into products that can be used by engaged citizens (recreational and commercial fishing) and planners in comprehensive planning. (*Example- Fish assemblages and food webs associated with natural and constructed shorelines*)

Oysters

Restoration

- 1) Continue to address permitting issues as a high priority to develop a permitting policy for future oyster restoration efforts Bay wide, including oyster aquaculture.
- 2) Support ecological restoration and aquaculture

Ecosystem Services

- 1) NCBO work with Fisheries GIT to identify potential partners for ecosystems services project and use those people to develop a project plan for the Little Choptank. (*Consider non-traditional partners waterman, FWS*)

Aquaculture

- 1) Fisheries GIT articulates unified vision of how aquaculture, restoration and wild fishery are linked to achieve Bay oyster restoration and economic goals (influence challenges to aquaculture expansion).

Meeting Attendees

Peyton Robertson	Bob Greenlee
Tom O'Connell	Brenda Davis
Rob O'Reilly	Branson Williams
Ellen Cosby	Mary Groves
Deidre Floyd	Jenn Aiosa
Bob Beal	Larry Jennings
Patrick Campfield	Greg Garman
Catherine Krikstan	Tom Jordan
Bruce Vogt	Matthew Kornis
Jaclyn Daly	Ed Houde
Don Baugh	Stephanie Westby
Matt Mullin	Howard Townsend
Steve Droter	Johnny Shockley
David Secor	Tolar Nolley
Nancy Butowski	Lynn Fegley (<i>teleconference</i>)
Jack Frye	Matt Fisher (<i>teleconference</i>)
Stephanie Kavanaugh	Jim Uphoff (<i>teleconference</i>)
Andrew Turner	Margaret McGinty (<i>teleconference</i>)
Adam Davis	Marcia Berman (<i>teleconference</i>)
Ron Lukens	Rona Kobell (<i>teleconference</i>)
Dennis Fleming	

