

Oyster Outcome Justification

Outcome: Restore native oyster habitat and populations in 20 tributaries out of 35 to 40 candidate tributaries by 2025.

Current Condition:

- Zero tributaries with fully restored oyster populations; several tributaries with successful living oyster reef habitat.

Supporting Details

1. Why is this outcome important?

Restored oyster populations and habitats would provide the Chesapeake Bay with improved water quality, additional habitat for fish species, and reestablish an iconic species to the region.

2. Generally, how was the outcome derived?

The basis of this outcome was derived by negotiations with NOAA, USACE, and states in the region. USACE's Native Oyster Restoration Master Plan and MD DNR's Oyster Sanctuary Plan also provided the foundation of this outcome.

3. Which partners (state, federal agencies, goal teams, committees) were involved in creating this outcome?

The Fish GIT, USACE, and local state agencies such as VMRC and MD DNR were all involved in creating this outcome.

4. Which partners (state, federal agencies, other GITs) need to be involved to achieve the outcome?

The Fish GIT, USACE, and local state agencies such as VMRC, MD DNR, and PRFC are all required to participate for this outcome to be achieved. Additionally, the Habitat, Health Watersheds, and Water Quality GITs' participation would be useful in enhancing the projects to achieve this outcome.

5. What are major factors influencing ability to achieve outcome?

Several factors influence the ability of this outcome to be achieved including low population of oysters due to commercial fishing, poaching, pollution, and disease, reduced habitat area, poor water quality, varying restoration strategies pursued by Maryland and Virginia, limited shell availability, and budget constraints.

6. What is the basis for the target?

USACE's Native Oyster Restoration Master Plan, MD DNR's Oyster Sanctuary Plan, and VA's Blue Ribbon Panel Report all provided the basis for the goal's target. These entities provide the basis for tributary based approach to oyster restoration. Success metrics have been formulated to evaluate the success of oyster reef restoration (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/17932/oyster_restoration_success_metrics_final.pdf).

7. What management strategies will ensure the outcome is met?

Collaboration among partners is key. The Interagency Workgroups in both MD and VA established by the sustainable fisheries GIT will serve as the chief coordinating mechanism for achieving the goal.

8. What data will be used to measure progress?

Tributary based restoration plans that serve as blueprints for each tributary include monitoring plans to measure progress towards the success metrics (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/17932/oyster_restoration_success_metrics_final.pdf) to evaluate the success of oyster restoration.

More Information: