

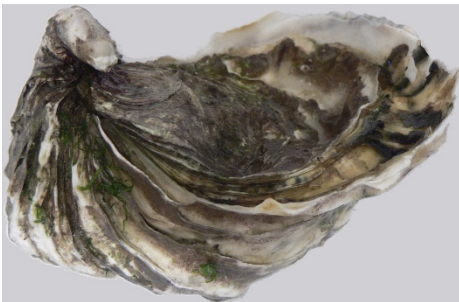
# Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management

## What is ecosystem-based fisheries management?

EBFM is an integrated approach to management that considers an entire ecosystem, including humans. It seeks to maintain healthy ecosystem function that is productive and resilient. Instead of focusing on a single species or sector, it shifts attention to connections within the ecosystem, cumulative impacts that might be stressing that system, and balances multiple objectives that the system is supposed to serve. EBFM is inherently interdisciplinary and place-based.

## What are the first steps for the Chesapeake?

Figuring how to implement ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Chesapeake is an enormous task that involves balancing watershed concerns with on-the water observations, multiple policy jurisdictions, urban development while balancing rural needs. It's too much to think about at once. Therefore, we've chosen to take a first step focused on a particular topic in a particular place: oysters in the Rappahannock and Choptank Rivers.



## Why are we doing this?

Oysters serve many roles in the ecosystem, including wild harvest, aquaculture focus, restoration, and wild sanctuary. How can we think of them acting together as 'the oysters of the Bay' and how do we conceptualize all these moving parts? How do we recognize the different pieces of the complex while figuring out how they work together to produce our Bay's ecosystem? If we want healthy outcomes for all oysters, what should we be paying attention to?

The rivers of focus incorporate all types of oysters within their geographic boundaries and therefore provide a test case for ecosystem-based thinking.

## How are we doing this?

Ecosystem-based management looks very different in the variety of contexts in which it's been adopted, but there are a few shared processes between these contexts. Our process will capture some of those elements. We will start with a survey of stakeholders for what they want to prioritize in EBFM and which indicators address capture the full suite of social-ecological dynamics at work. A network and policy analysis will identify key communications pathways and legal openings for the introduction of EBFM. In the end, these along with a tool to help make the information useful, will be part of a roadmap package to help implement EBFM more broadly – in more places and addressing more species – in the future.



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