

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

**Background:** Part of our charge as the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team is to encourage sustainable management of the Chesapeake's oyster resource. Inherent in this charge is the need to understand the scientific consensus regarding the sustainability of the Bay's wild oyster fishery as currently managed, and consider the outcomes of increasing or reducing fishing pressure. Recently-published scientific analysis (Wilberg *et al.*, 2011) indicates there is a need to look closely at the state of wild oyster stocks in concert with current management regimes.

The oyster is part of a complex ecosystem, and many aspects of the oyster's life history and function remain in question. Members of the Executive Committee agree that the sustainability of the oyster is too important to leave to chance, and that sound foundations exist for making the appropriate management decisions. These foundations include long-term commercial data, research and monitoring information dating back many years with numerous activities getting underway in 2011, and a clear example of blue crab management in Chesapeake Bay which has developed consensus among the jurisdictions and a successful adaptive management style.

**Recommendations:**

As such, the Executive Committee seeks to convene a 'team' of scientists to advise on a number of complex technical issues and to develop scientific consensus statement/s describing (but not limited to):

- 1) The sustainability of the Chesapeake's wild oyster stock, and
- 2) What amount of increase or reduction in fishing mortality, if any, is needed to allow the Chesapeake's oyster population to:
  - a. Remain at current levels, and
  - b. Increase.

The team should provide an initial set of consensus points for discussion at the full Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team meeting in June, 2012. Following this meeting, the team will devise a final set of consensus points for the Fisheries GIT no later than December, 2012 in order to be approved by the states beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

**CBSAC Team Members:**

Lynn Fegley - MDNR (chair)  
Derek Orner - NMFS/NCBO  
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Chris Bonzek - VIMS  
Rom Lipcius - VIMS  
David Secor - UMCES

**Literature Cited:**

Wilberg M, Livings M, Barkman J, Morris B, and Robinson J. 2011. Overfishing, disease, habitat loss, and potential extirpation of oysters in upper Chesapeake Bay. *Mar Ecol Prog Ser.* 436:131-144.