

Initiating a Campaign for Land Conservation and Fisheries Health (Engaged Citizens, Informed Decisionmakers)

Proposal submitted by:

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (Fisheries GIT)

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Description of Workshop:

The Fisheries GIT proposes to hold a workshop between June and August, 2013 to investigate ways to increase habitat and fisheries interests in the land use planning process. The Fisheries GIT plans to hold this meeting in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area as a central location to achieve greater attendance from invited participants. The goal of this workshop is to work with the Habitat and Healthy Watersheds GITs to convene experts in the public planning process, land use decision makers, scientists, regional experts, ecologists, fisheries managers, active citizens, and advocacy groups to develop a communication and engagement campaign that seeks to balance conservation of natural places and healthy living resources with population growth and development pressure.

The Fisheries GIT is proposing a two day workshop to develop a communication and engagement campaign for better connecting resource management to land use decision making. This workshop will be focused with two goals in mind: 1) providing land use decision makers with the environmental and fisheries information needed to make smarter, more sustainable choices; and 2) engaging citizens and advocacy groups on the land use planning process (i.e. how and where to get involved). The outcomes of each goal will be captured in this communication and engagement campaign. Shortly following the completion of the workshop and development of the communication and engagement campaign, it will be implemented on the ground to increase stakeholder engagement in the decision making processes to improve conservation while allowing economic growth. The overall goal is to increase the level of environmental, habitat, and fisheries considerations currently underrepresented in the comprehensive planning processes.

The workshop would:

- Develop clear messages and for habitat conservation and fish sustainability applying the state-of-the-science and tools to explain environmental impacts of land use decisions

- Target audiences to better engage in conservation and fisheries sustainability messaging (media, politicians, general public, planners and resource managers);
- Identify key conservation priorities and suggest demonstration projects to improve conservation for fisheries
- Compile a user friendly communication and engagement campaign package for environmental advocacy and state, county and local planners;

Justification for Proposed Topics and Management Implications:

In the United States, coastal zones represent less than 17% of the available land area and serve as a home to over 50% of the total population. The concentration of commercial and recreational activities associated with our intense use of coastal areas is taking a toll on the fisheries benefits we can and expect to obtain from these systems. The potential for habitat and environmental squeeze from impending population growth will only increase the challenges faced for fisheries managers, planning commissions as well as public consumers.

Specifically, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to more than 17 million people, and about 150,000 new people move into the 64,000 mi² Bay watershed each year (Facts & Figures, 2012). By 2030, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is projected to grow to approximately 20 million people (USGS). Since the 1940s, metropolitan areas have been the center of growth in the watershed creating a growing intersection between land use management, habitat, and fisheries resources. The high concentration of people living within the Chesapeake Bay has led to significant changes in land use patterns, habitat degradation, and declining water quality.

Land based planning and activities are largely detached from their direct implications on Bay water and living resources such as fisheries. This poses significant challenges to sustainably managing commercial and ecologically important fish and shellfish species and their habitats, of which a great number of people are financially dependent. Within the jurisdictions managing tidal Chesapeake Bay Fisheries, there are over 9,000 licensed commercial fishermen including commercial crabbers, oystermen, finfish harvesters, guides, and charter captains. Furthermore, there are over 600,000 licensed recreational fisherman and crabbers in both tidal and non-tidal portions of the watershed (Personal Communication, VMRC, PRFC, MD DNR).

The Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (Fisheries GIT) is working toward better integrating habitat and ecosystem based considerations into fisheries management. Fisheries managers in the Chesapeake Bay are concerned that expanding population growth and urban development, paired with a lack of fisheries and habitat representation, is leading to increased nutrient levels, pollutants, and toxicant concentrations in our waterways that are causing whole scale habitat loss and the current declines in fisheries and fisheries resources. In many cases modern management frameworks effectively identify the interconnectivity of habitat, ecosystem health, and trophic interactions. However, fisheries managers are generally bound by managing the sustainability of fished resources through regulating removals rather than inputs to the system. Without the necessary controls in place to limit what goes into the system, fisheries managers are continually with faced with increased competition for resource allocations bolstered by a decreasing availability of even the most sustainably managed species.

At the Fisheries GIT biannual meetings in December, 2011 and June, 2012 the Fisheries GIT held workshops to investigate the issues surrounding land use practices and their impacts on water quality, habitats, and fisheries. These were very successful full day events with a wide range of participation

from land based organizations, environmental planners, citizen stakeholders, scientists, and fisheries managers with the goal of better understanding the connections between land based policies and the sustainability of Chesapeake Bay fisheries. The challenges illustrated at these workshops lay within the ability to assemble a team with the key members necessary to discuss and create a holistic and applicable fleet of guiding principles for planners, community members, and local officials. As a primary outcome of this meeting, the growing need for improved science based tools was highlighted. With this proposed workshop we feel the assembled team can and will effectively describing the linkages between land-use, habitats, fish health, ensuring the sustainability of our fished resources throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Detailed Description of Workshop Products:

Workshop discussions will be documented in a workshop report and submitted to the Chesapeake Bay Program and interested parties. This report will be summarized in the form of a communication and engagement campaign. It will explain how to best apply the state-of-the-science and tools for predicting environmental impacts of land use decision practices and enhancing conservation of natural and rural lands, and suggest messaging and engagement strategies to increase awareness and participation of advocacy groups, managers, and local citizens in planning decisions. The timing of the final report will be contingent upon when the workshop will take place.

Logistics:

The workshop will be invitation only, and we estimate that about 25-30 participants will attend the workshop. The workshop will be held over a two day period between June and July, 2013 in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.

Estimated Budget:

Venue: \$1,000

Catering: \$2,000

Facilitation: \$2,000 - We propose the workshop(s) would be facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiation who facilitated two of our previous Fisheries GIT meetings where land use and fisheries were discussed.

Travel for invited speakers/participants: \$5,000

Total requested from STAC: \$10,000

Literature Cited

"Facts & Figures." <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/bay101/facts>. *Chesapeake Bay Program*. Accessed: 2/19/2013.