

Chesapeake Bay New Agreement: Discussion of Stakeholder Comments on the Fisheries Outcomes

Sustainable Fisheries GIT - Executive Committee Meeting

July 22, 2013 - 1:00-3:00 pm

****Stakeholder comment text specific to fisheries outcomes can be found in accompanying document: *Stakeholder comments draft language fisheries.pdf***

Discussion Participants

Peyton Robertson (Chair)	NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
Tom O'Connell (Vice-Chair)	MD DNR
Marty Gary (Executive Committee)	PRFC
Bob Beal (Executive Committee)	ASMFC
Jack Travelstead (Executive Committee)	VMRC
Jack Frye (Member)	CBC
Susan Conner (Member)	USACE Norfolk District
Trent Zivkovich (Member)	CCA
Bill Goldsborough (Member)	CBF
Joe Grist (CBSAC)	VMRC
Jim Price	Chesapeake Bay Ecological Foundation

Summary

Outcome	Discussion	Resolution?
Blue Crab Allocation	GIT members/stakeholders indicated the need for a blue crab management outcome for a Baywide allocation framework for total catch and/or effort, and harvest accountability. CBC drafted outcome language addressing improved harvest accountability and <u>evaluating</u> a baywide allocation framework.	Yes – Consensus achieved to use CBC's draft language with minor word choice changes
Oyster	Ex Comm members agreed that a reduction from the EO goal of 20 tributaries is appropriate, but Virginia still questions whether the financial means will be available to meet a reduced goal of 10 tributaries. GIT members/stakeholders advocate for a minimum of 10 tributaries, and suggested adding language to explicitly state that the intent of restoration is for the ecological benefits of oyster reefs.	Yes (on the concept of using a tributary-based approach – There appears to be general agreement to set the outcome at 10 tributaries with a provisional action to compile background information, assumptions, and justifications based on restoration experience to date in Harris Creek and the Great Wicomico. This background should include any future funding commitments (NOAA, USACE, etc.) Members also agreed to state the intent of the restoration is for ecological benefit.

Outcome	Discussion	Resolution?
Forage Fish	Multiple GIT members/stakeholders recommend adding a forage fish outcome, and emphasize the importance of forage fish to the ecosystem. Jurisdictions currently do not support this outcome because many forage fish species like menhaden are already managed and studied by ASMFC. There was lengthy discussion on the scope of a forage fish outcome, and what role a forage fish outcome would play in addition to the existing ASMFC framework.	No – There is a wide range of opinions on this topic, and the Fisheries GIT and stakeholders will continue to discuss possible outcomes.
Habitat	While stakeholders and jurisdictions acknowledge the importance of habitat to the health of fisheries, the content and language of this potential outcome is still unclear and there is no agreement.	No – The Fisheries GIT will continue to work with stakeholders and the Habitat GIT to discuss how to address fisheries and habitat connection in the New Agreement.

Detailed Discussion Notes

Blue Crabs: Addition of a Management Outcome

Many GIT members and stakeholders expressed the need for an outcome related to a future allocation framework and improved harvest accountability in the fishery. CBC's draft language for this outcome was the center of this discussion. The jurisdictions proposed changing the word "predictability" to "stability", to better represent the allocation outcome. Jurisdictions do not support having the specific mention of "catch-shares" in the outcome, instead favoring the proposed language to "evaluate the establishment of a Baywide allocation-based management framework." Ex Comm members agreed to the addition of "recreational crabbers" to acknowledge the significant role of recreational crabbing, and to ensure all stakeholders are included in these management processes. After discussion, all three blue crab management jurisdictions (MD, VA, PRFC) came to consensus to add a new blue crab management outcome using CBC's proposed language with a few minor changes:

Improve our ability to manage for a stable and productive crab population and fishery by working with the industry, recreational crabbers, and other stakeholders to improve commercial and recreational harvest accountability and evaluate the establishment of a Baywide allocation-based management framework with annual levels set by the jurisdictions that will provide ~~predictability~~ stability for crabbing businesses and accountability of the harvest for each jurisdiction.

Oyster Outcome

Discussion focused on setting the number of tributaries to be restored by 2025. Ex Comm members agreed that the number of tributaries should be reduced from the 20 tributaries set by the Executive Order. Stakeholders expressed support for restoration in at least 10 tributaries, and advocated for no reduction below 10. Virginia explained that an outcome of 10 tributaries (5 each in VA and MD) by 2025 can be supported by science, but the financial resources to complete the restoration work are not yet fully accounted for. Virginia agreed to consider an outcome of 10 tributaries if there was a reference document to provide background, assumptions, and justifications based on oyster restoration experience to date in Harris Creek and the Great Wicomico. This background should include any future funding commitments (NOAA, USACE, etc.) It was acknowledged that this outcome is not the end point of oyster restoration, but rather reflects a reasonable expectation of what can be accomplished by 2025.

In addition to the number of tributaries, GIT members and stakeholders also suggested that the oyster outcome state that the intent of oyster restoration is to restore the ecological benefits of oyster reefs, in contrast to restoring them for commercial use, for example. Ex Comm members agreed to add this language to the outcome. Overall, members agreed to the following outcome:

[Restore native oyster habitat and population in 10 tributaries by 2025 to enhance the ecological benefits oyster reefs provide. \(re-work the language word/choice for this part\)](#)

Forage Fish Outcome

Multiple GIT members and stakeholders suggested adding a forage fish outcome to address the depleted populations of these species. They point out that focusing on forage fish will support multiple species in the Bay that rely on the forage base for survival. Although jurisdictions acknowledge the importance of forage fish in the ecosystem, Maryland, Virginia, and PRFC are currently not in support of adding any forage fish outcome. There was discussion that adding a separate forage fish outcome is unnecessary because many forage fish species like menhaden are already managed and studied by ASMFC. Any forage fish statement would need to include a broad complex of species, and not focus on any one species. There was suggestion of an outcome committing to support science and better understanding of forage species in the Bay.

The Fisheries GIT and stakeholders have agreed to continue discussion on a forage fish outcome to determine if consensus can be reached on outcome language. While there is agreement on the importance of forage fish, there is still debate on inclusion of specific forage fish language in the Bay Agreement. The following ideas for content of the outcome were proposed by GIT members and stakeholders, but there is no consensus:

- Maintaining suitable cumulative forage potential for the predatory species such as striped bass, bluefish, and weakfish that support valuable commercial and recreational fisheries.
- By 2015 develop a strategy for ensuring sufficient forage base for predatory species in Chesapeake Bay.
- Ensure adequate knowledge and understanding to support a sufficient forage base.

Habitat Outcome

Multiple GIT members and stakeholders support a habitat outcome under fisheries, but the exact content and language for this potential outcome is still unclear. There was discussion on the

limitations of the Fisheries GIT in implementing a habitat outcome. There was discussion of the fish passage outcome under the Habitat GIT, and whether this outcome would support the health of fisheries. The Fisheries GIT will work with the Habitat GIT and stakeholders to discuss the connection between habitat and fisheries in the New Agreement.