

Forage Fish and Habitat Stakeholder and Public Comments
July 9 – August 15, 2013

Forage Fish

CBF	“It is widely understood that the ongoing or periodic depletion of many ecologically key forage species such as shad, river herring, menhaden and bay anchovy undermines the health of the Chesapeake Bay food web. Individual species management plans cannot account for the health of the full complex of lower trophic level species, and ecosystem-based fisheries management has proven to be a long-term endeavor. Accordingly, we <u>recommend the adoption of a Forage Fish Outcome for the purpose of maintaining suitable cumulative forage potential for the predatory species</u> such as striped bass, bluefish and weakfish that support valuable commercial and recreational fisheries.”
CBC	“Include an initiative on forage fish—CBF has offered some language the GIT could start with”
EDF	Ensure that any additional outcomes are consistent with other relevant management plans
Alliance	“We believe that an additional outcome related to finfish is essential. We recommend <u>a forage fish goal</u> that would help support the survival and health of other iconic fish, like rockfish. Measures seeking to ensure healthy populations of fish highly-valued by the public represent a way to engage sports fisherman/women and tourist and the hospitality industry.”
Mason Springs Conservancy	Surprised that blue crabs and oysters are the only species with listed outcomes. There are other critters out there that we need to deal with. Some are migratory, which may be a problem, but I expected to see something about menhaden and striped bass. Forage fish should also be addressed
VIMS	The Sustainable Fisheries outcomes, which address only blue crabs and oysters, fall well short of the stated goal of restoring, enhancing and protecting all fish stocks, their habitats and ecological relationships. We would suggest a focus on development of integrated fisheries ecosystem indicators and biological reference points within a multispecies context that can be applied to ecosystem-based management of fishery resources.
Jim Price – Chesapeake Ecological Foundation	Supports the following outcome proposal: <i>“By 2015 develop a strategy for assessing the forage base available for predatory species in Chesapeake Bay.”</i>

July 22 Discussion (Ex Comm+Stakeholders)

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.

Habitat

EDF	Add a habitat outcome because the current Habitat outcomes under the Habitat GIT are related to terrestrial habitat. There are fisheries-specific reasons to protect habitat: to protect spawning areas, to protect critical habitat for juveniles and to restrict the harvest mortality of fish. It's worth considering keeping habitat goals under the fisheries team
Habitat GIT	The Fish Passage outcome under the habitat goal has been updated to include other species: <i>"During the period 2011-2025, restore historical fish migratory routes by opening 1,000 additional stream miles, with restoration success indicated by the presence of Alewife, Blueback herring, American shad, Hickory shad, American eel and/or Brook Trout."</i>
CBC	Current outcomes under the Habitat GIT "fall short on the bigger picture of connecting important locations and their use by species".

July 22 Discussion (Ex Comm+Stakeholders)

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.