



Fish Passage Workgroup Meeting Notes - October 2026

Thursday, October 15, 2026
10:00 am - 12:30 pm EST

Purpose: The October 2026 Fish Passage workgroup meeting will provide members with the group's 2026 accomplishments, updates on the management strategy, and begin to discuss the framework for the FPWG Workplan.

Meeting Materials: Available on the [Meeting Webpage](#).

Agenda

I. Logistics, Introductions and Roll Call (10:00 – 10:30)

Time will be given for each member to introduce themselves.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Ray Li (USFWS, FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: N/A

II. Partner Updates (10:30 – 11:30)

Hear updates from the Fish Passage Workgroup from each member's jurisdiction/organization. What are your 2026 accomplishments? What projects have been completed and which are ongoing? What challenges are partners experiencing?

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Ray Li (USFWS, FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: N/A

III. **DC** - Christopher Adriance, DC Department of Energy and Environment (7 mins)

IV. **DE** - Edna Stetzar, DE Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (7 mins)

V. **MD** - Jim Thompson, MD Department of Natural Resources (7 mins)

VI. **NY** - Ian Blackburn, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (7 mins)

VII. **PA** - Dave Dippold, PA Fish and Boat Commission (7 mins)

VIII. **VA** - Alan Weaver, VA Department of Wildlife Resources (7 mins)

IX. **WV** - Rachel Harrison, WV Division of Natural Resources (7 mins)

X. **Workgroup Members** (14 mins)

Discussion Notes:

- **DC:** No updates

- **DE:** Internal DE Fish Passage Workgroup meets quarterly, next meeting in November. Conducted culvert assessment training with Alex Videl (USFWS) for five people using the NAACC protocol.
 - Alex will likely try to run the training again if there is enough interest.
- **MD:**
 - Worked on eDNA samples on snakeheads to determine occurrence of fish above and below dams to demonstrate that fish ladders are passing autonomous fish.
 - Worked with FWS on dam removal to benefit endangered Chesapeake logperch, also took eDNA to understand fish presence.
 - Worked with FWS and USGS on Eaton Mill Eel Ladder (Deer Creek), which was its first full year in operation. Initiated the Eel Ladder in April, and changed the substrate. The ladder passed 265 eels through the ladder. Electrical and plumbing issues likely exist.
 - American Rivers has continued its feasibility study on Daniel's Dam on the Patapsco (upstream of former Bloede, Simkims, and Union Dams). Hoping to get DNR study results back and move forward with next steps.
 - Pre-feasibility study with FISHBIO at Conowingo Dam to help improve the passage of target fish (shad and herring) and eliminate the passage of invasive species (snake head, blue catfish, flathead catfish).
 - MD Dam Safety to coordinate with property owners and make an internal priority list to remove dams (legislative tools and/or coordination with property owners).
 - Beginning January 1st, 2027, all non-federal dam owners in Maryland will be required to annually register their dams with MDE. The annual fees are \$200 for low hazard dams, \$500 for significant hazard dams, and \$1000 for high hazard dams.
 - Initiated by Maryland Dam Safety
 - Fees deposited into a private dam repair fund. Staff at DNR hopes funds can be used to remove no-longer functioning dams or construct fish passage devices or eel ladders where applicable.
- **NY:** No State Rep.
 - American Rivers in NY: Potential new project starting on the Susquehanna River in Binghamton at Rock Bottom Dam (plus 2 unnamed dams). Some reconnaissance work to begin in the coming months if it is possible to remove the dams and what is involved in that endeavor. If any partners are interested in that, please let Jessie Thomas-Blate know and she can connect you with the project manager.
- **PA:** Most 2026 work has occurred in the Ohio and Delaware Basins. One small farm dam has been removed in Lancaster, PA and other projects are likely to be planned.
 - York Haven Nature-like Fishway completed at York Haven Hydroelectric Dam
 - Recommended Read: Karl Blankenship Dam Removal article in Chesapeake Bay Journal
 - https://www.bayjournal.com/news/fisheries/dams-give-way-to-better-habitat-in-chesapeake-bay-region/article_0fb3ee84-03ef-40d9-a33e-78c00acdaf75.html
 - 6-8 Culvert Replacement projects in the Bay Watershed
 - Dip in dam removals in PA could be attributed to confusion/discrepancy of what qualifies as restoration targets (legislative parties emphasizing "pre-Colonial conditions), conversations continue to happen.

- Dams in PA have been removed through the restoration waiver. If the project results in the stabilization of sediment, it wouldn't qualify as restoration.
 - Ex: If a dam has to be removed, but there is no funding/appetite to keep the sediment to be kept in place through stabilization or stream habitat structure, those projects are getting harder to authorize.
 - Sediment release via dam removals is a bay issue—there may be ways to reduce sediment travel.
 - With the definition of restoration as “pre-Colonial conditions,” if there are no funds to remove everything and cannot stabilize it because that doesn't qualify, then PA is stuck in a hard place to get projects done.
- **VA:** Please see [VA Update Document](#) on the Meeting Webpage.
 - Discussion: Rob Vincent (MIT) Program suggested to aid in counting fish instead of manually via watching video: <https://news.mit.edu/2026/augmenting-citizen-science-computer-vision-fish-monitoring-0325>.
 - Alan Weaver is hoping to set up a camera at Walker's Dam in lieu of trapping
- **WV:** Upcoming projects
 - Warm Springs #7 hasn't started the construction phase yet
 - North South Mill Creek Site #4 project aims at raising embankments and increasing stability of the auxiliary spillway but has hit issue with access and landowner issues
- Workgroup Members Updates:
 - **Jessie Thomas-Blate (American Rivers):**
 - PA, MD, and VA communities have been developing priority lists for dam removal using prioritization tools. This is for a collaborative action to reach out to dam owners and identify dams.
 - VA has finalized its list and is starting to develop a dam removal strategy covering advancing/building dam removals across the state.
 - Jessie is working with two other dam removal specialists from American Rivers to help identify dams and technical assistance.
 - PA has been finalizing the list of active and prospective dam removal projects.
 - MD is just starting a team and had an earlier meeting in the summer, and is trying to get American Rivers' suggestion for a priority list into an app that is being developed by the people managing the National Aquatic Barriers Inventory.
 - Interested members are invited to join or reach out for more information.
 - American Rivers has a new online community for the Dam Removal Network. It will allow users to connect with professionals across the field, exchanging valuable insights, sharing best practices, and tackling key dam removal challenges together. It includes discussion forums, resource libraries, and more. [Home - American Rivers](#)
 - **Jonathan Watson (NOAA):**
 - Dam removal for Winter's Run (2 dams, MD): owned by Aberdeen Proving Grounds, has moved to design phase with Princeton Hydro after meeting in February. Would like to see such projects provide fish passage instead of just minimum removal for maintenance requirements.

- Highlighted 2021 diadromous fish paper, showing production potential for shad, river herring, and migratory eel. Figure 5 shows the lower Susquehanna River with some of the highest production potential.
 - <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.734213/full>
- Room for growth in increasing connectivity through basin via engagement through FERC hydropower relicensing process: Conowingo waiting on license (delayed) with commitment to projects and studies, Holtwood and Safe Harbor (next two upstream) dams are waiting on relicenses, York Haven (fourth upstream) nature-like fish passage project will evaluate fish passage (next spring, will work with USGS and other organizations). Challenge of low fish abundance and public support.
- Have been working with state agencies and monitoring to see where invasive species are to address fish passage.
- **Tristan Mohs (USGS MD-DE-DC Water Science Center):**
 - Looking at Winter Run Dams with eDNA, also armored channels and buried channels, to determine what barriers mean for different types of species (invasive, non-native, and native) and how these barriers affect different types of species (what keeps invasives in check?)
 - Goal to have this data available for prioritization efforts.
 - While this is limited to MD currently, the hope is to expand outward to other states.
- **Alex Vidal (USFWS):**
 - ShoreRivers has funds for fish passage work in the Upper Choptank River and USFWS has helped take eDNA at those sites. Call for interest in sharing eDNA results amongst the workgroup.
- **Jim Earley (USFWS FHWA Culvert AOP Program):**
 - FHWA is anticipating announcing awards by the end of this month.
- Point of interest: Coordinate sharing of eDNA results throughout the workgroup.
- **Action Item: Chairs will send out a spreadsheet for 2026 Accomplishments for members to fill out in mid-December to be filled out and returned in mid/late January.**

XI. Workgroup Membership

Description of membership types and nomination procedures for the workgroup

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Ray Li (FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: Please see meeting slides for additional information.

Discussion Notes:

- Continue consensus voting among all workgroup members
- Membership, hope to get updated list within the next 1-2 weeks to WG
- Signatory members: 9 signatory voting members (1 federal voting member, 1 CBC member, 7 states)
- 6 At-Large members (experts in field and significant stake in target, balanced perspective geographically and organizationally, with lots of NGOs and DOTs)
 - At-Large members will be selected by Ray and Shannon from submitted nominations
 - **Action Item: Once membership list is complete, chairs will send membership list to workgroup members for review**
- Voting Members (9 signatories and 6 at-large) will be voted in by GT

- Voting members are expected to participate in all workgroup meetings and workgroup planning
- General Member/Non-Voting member (has a consensus vote when Voting Members can't reach consensus)
- Interested parties do not have consensus vote

XII. Management Strategy Review

(11:30-11:45)

A brief overview of comments made in the management strategy and how these topics may inform work plan development going forward.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Shannon Boyle (FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: Please see meeting slides for additional information.

Discussion Notes:

- Please see slides for timeline and structure information.
- Workplans last for three years and is a shorter more frequently updated plan
 - Interest in being as specific as possible, but not overdescribing our work—what can your organization achieve and commit to?
- Workplan structure: “Resources needed” is a good place to insert information about what is needed by jurisdictions/groups to implement these goals.
- MS Comments:
 - Invasive species: Discussion of frequent occurrence but WG hasn't directly addressed in the past—maybe there are opportunities or guidance to improve integration of invasive species into projects. How are states/jurisdictions each addressing this issue?
 - Road-stream crossings: Addressed in management approach—could we expand preexisting guidance to other jurisdictions or can we further describe what barriers exist?
 - Suggested link: [BUILT TO LAST: Resilient Road-Stream Crossings for People, Fish, and Wildlife — Environmental Polic...](#)
 - Permitting: Sharing state approaches that may be valuable information for improvements.
 - Socioeconomic benefits: Becoming a more prevalent topic/interest for communities—how are these measured and are we doing so in similar ways? Are there better ways to communicate these benefits to communities?
 - Outreach and local participation: Included aquatic connectivity teams and removal teams—what does outreach look like and how can this workgroup support this?
 - Consideration of Tribal Involvement and incorporate Native American rights and decisions

XIII. Collaborative Workplan Brainstorm

(11:45-12:25)

Conduct whiteboard exercise soliciting workgroup member input on what are the most important topics and concerns to consider moving into workplan development.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Ray Li (USFWS, FPWG Co-Chair) and Shannon Boyle (FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: Brainstorm session <https://canva.link/fish-passage-workgroup-workplan-brainstorming>

Discussion Notes:

- **Action Item: Leadership will follow up with the workgroup with synthesis of ideas from brainstorm**
- Next steps: WG Chairs will synthesis input and reshare with members for review (looking for gaps, clarification, etc)
- Workplan draft:
 - May have to have shorter interim meeting
 - Draft workplan template with chairs, coordinator, and staffer, picking the top 3-4 ideas (members will have a large input, ex. three votes for top three ideas)
 - Will happen over 6-8 month timespan
- Goal of March 2027 WG meeting to present rough draft of workplan
- Workgroup Member comment: Perhaps you could also identify items that you think would be better handled by the state communities of practice

XIV. Wrap-Up and Adjourn (12:25 - 12:30)

Recap the decisions and actions captured from the day's discussions and deliberations.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Lead: Shannon Boyle (FPWG Co-Chair)

Materials: N/A

Next Meeting:

Fish Passage Workgroup Meeting - March 2027, Date TBD

Attendees:

Ray Li (USFWS), Shannon Boyle (Co-Chair, Unaffiliated), Julie Devers (USDA-NRCS MD), David Dippold (PFBC), Jessie Thomas-Blate (American Rivers), Jim Thompson (MD DNR Fish Passage), Joseph Love (MDNR), Jeffrey Lerner (EPA), Mary Andrews (Anne Arundel County Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration), Lisa Moss (FWS VA FWCO), Rachel Harrison (WVDNR), Sarah Brzezinski (EPA CBPO), David Bates (Maryland SHA), Jim Earley (USFWS FHWA Culvert AOP Program), Edna Stetzar (DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife), Alan Weaver (VA DWR) Alexander Vidal (USFWS), Jonathan Watson (NOAA Fisheries), Tristan Mohs (USGS MD-DE-DC Water Science Center), Rebecca Chojnacki (MDOT), Christopher Adriance (DOEE), Nita Settina (CER), Chris Guy (USFWS), Kami Lentzsch (CRC), Aleya Loughran-Pierce (CRC)