



Fish Passage Workgroup Meeting - March 2026

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

10:00 - 11:10 EST

[Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.](#)

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

Actions

1. If you or anyone you know is interested in the open co-chair position, please reach out to Nick Staten or Ray Li (ray_li@fws.gov ; 410-573-4522)
2. If you are interested in The American Rivers Dam Removal project, please reach out to jthomas@americanrivers.org or cgriffith-butler@americanrivers.org .

Minutes

I. Logistics, Introductions and Roll Call

Decisions [required]:

1. n/a

Actions [required]:

1. n/a

II. Workgroup Announcements and Updates

- 2025 accomplishments (Ray Li)
- New GIT Chairs Introduction (Kevin Schabow, Becky Gwynn, Chris Guy)
- [2025 Agreement](#) (Kevin Schabow, Becky Gwynn, Chris Guy)
- Update on Bay Program Governance and Structure (Kevin Schabow, Becky Gwynn, Chris Guy)
- Fish Passage Workgroup Co-chair advertisement (Chris Guy, Ray Li)
- American Rivers "Building Momentum for Dam Removal in the Chesapeake" Project Update

Decisions [required]:

2. n/a

Actions [required]:

2. n/a

Discussion Notes [optional]:

- Kevin Shabow introduced himself as one of the co-chairs of the new thriving habitat fisheries and wildlife goal team.
 - Kevin explained that the Chesapeake Bay Program goals have consolidated, and that Fish Passage now sits under the new Thriving Habitat, Fisheries, and Wildlife goal team.
 - He also explained that with the dissolution of the management board, there is new discussion about what a goal team is- who is on it, what do they do?
- Starting December 2025, the group has 18 months to revise their management strategy. More to come on that.
- **Ray Li:** We had a couple of people who participated in the Habitat GIT, what is their future moving into this new structure?
 - Kevin Schabow: We would envision two co-chairs, myself and Becky, and then every signatory gets to have somebody at the table who can provide consensus when a vote has to happen. There will also absolutely be other people invited who can and should participate and provide feedback. Other people can join as at-large members.

Partner Updates**Decisions [required]:**

3. n/a

Actions [required]:

3. n/a

Discussion Notes [optional]:

- **Ray Li:** Since 2014, we have restored a total of 3,268 miles. Our original goal in 2014 was to restore 1000 miles in this same period- we accomplished more than three fold. Congratulations to all of you for this great work and exceeding these goals.
- **Ray Li:** Our new restoration goal is 150 miles every two years. We felt comfortable bumping it up because we felt like there would be more opportunity throughout the watershed as we shift focus to consider head water resources and things like freshwater mussels.
- **Ray Li:** We are looking for someone to fill the co-chair role, which is an important position because it helps support the work in the field and keeps us on track to meeting our goal. Please let me know if you or anyone you know is potentially interested, or if you have any questions.
- **Chris Guy:** We do need people who can work on the outcome as it is now, as it moves beyond just dams, so we need people who are focused on other areas such as thermal or chemical. The chair sets the priority for the watershed, which will directly relate how funding comes down for the projects you want implemented. There is real value in this role and what it gives back to you.

- **Ray Li:** I want to acknowledge Jim Thompson, who was the previous co-chair, if you want to talk about your experiences?
- **Jim Thompson:** I loved being in the role. I have pretty strong opinions about where I want to see things go, so it was nice to try and help shape things. I had to step down, but maybe one day I will revisit it. Definitely consider it, and if you need help I am happy to provide comments or opinions to anyone who takes the role.
- **Ray Li:** If anyone wants to talk about this more please reach out to me or Nick.
- **Jesse Thomas-Blake:** The American Rivers new project under the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a project led by Corinne Griffith Butler, to build out communities of practice particularly around dam removal throughout the Chesapeake Bay Region. We are going to be developing a subcommittee of that group focused on dam removal in Virginia specifically. We are hoping to start the same group in Maryland and Pennsylvania, so if there is any interest in participating in any of these groups please reach out to me jthomas@americanrivers.org or to Corinne cgriffith-butler@americanrivers.org
- **Edna Stetzar:** In DA most of the focus on dam removal is in the Piedmont region of the state. We have had funding cut back from the Army Corps so we have had to reduce our feasibility study of the last five dams in **Brandywine**. We are coordinating with the Delaware Dept. of transportation to update or replace culverts where they overlap with fish priorities
- **Jim Thompson:** We took out Cypress Branch dam on the upper Choptank, and we are working on another project with American Rivers, the Daniel Dam feasibility study.
- **Sandy Davis:** Jim and I are working together as part of a big partnership called the **Upper Choptank whole watershed fish passage project**, that was funded through the Watershed Act. The project is focused on landscape scale restoration efforts with the goal to improve aquatic connectivity in the upper choptank, ultimately with four on the ground aquatic projects. For our first year we selected road crossings, stream crossings, and dams to help us prioritize projects for future years.
- **Jim Thompson:** I just want to add that we used the fish passage tool and the NACC tool to prioritize which areas would have the most benefit. However, you know, we are having the same problem here we have with other areas, which is land permissions. We can have the best tools in the world but if the landowner says no we are out of luck. Hopefully though when we look at things like road crossings and culverts, which are county and state, maybe we don't need permissions for this. But anyhow, this is a good opportunity and it would be good to get on the ground.
- **Nick Staten:** You mentioned a NACC tool, what is that?
 - Jim: The North Atlantic Culvert Cooperative, [NACC](#). It is the prioritization tool for culverts.
- **Ray Li:** I wanted to come back to what Chris Guy was saying in terms of Fish Passage priorities and directing projects, for example this [Recommendation for Aquatic Organisms Passage](#) at Maryland Rd. Stream Crossings. This was funded through the Bay Program, so we have been pretty successful in getting funding to do these sorts of things.

- **Gian Dodici:** Wylie BRook drainainge is a small watershed in the upper Susquehanna, and in fall of 2024 we took out the final of eleven barriers, and this year we will be doing habitat work in this area.
- **Allen Weaver:** We have gotten American Shad and Hickory Shad as far as nine miles upstream of the Ashland Dam, as well as juvenile American Shad. We are hoping we can get out and sample again after the great rain we just had. The Rapidan dam removal is still active, they have had some changes in leadership which has impacted progress and funding, and I hope to find out more soon about how that project is moving forward.
- **Jim Thompson:** Allen, do you have any big projects on the horizon, dam removal or otherwise?
 - **Allen Weaver:** I guess Rapidan Mill dam is the biggest one, but not really other than what I mentioned.
- **Rachel Harrison:** The major project coming up is the rehab project on warm springs run in Berkeley Springs WV, the design phase is finished and it is scheduled for this year. The sponsor, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District, has hired a consultant to evaluate the structure and develop plans, with construction to start fall of this year.
- **Lisa Moss:** I don't have too much. This funding cycle we are experiencing somewhat of a decrease with the fisheries restoration and irrigation act that benefits the Pacific Northwest, they are actually getting about one third of funding this cycle, which leaves us with what I am told is \$650,000 for region 5. The good news is that instead of the funding being competitive, we will receive direct allocations to offices so we can depend on receiving a certain amount. We expect to receive this around April, or within a month. We will still be working with partners to establish financial agreements, but it is just that we will also be getting this direct amount.
- **Ray Li:** I wanted to follow up on what Lisa mentioned. I have a couple of notes about the Federal Highways Culvert Grant Program funded through BIL. There is about four years of funding left, and we will have six weeks to get applications out. There is \$784 million in the pot, for work at road stream crossings or fish passage adjacent projects. Here is the NOFO [from last year](#). This years' will likely open around April 15th and close May 30th.
- **Lisa Moss:** We can certainly help facilitate and identify projects and develop scopes.
- **Ray Li:** I will add that these don't have to be shovel ready projects, they are actually encouraging projects that need support in the design phase or other project development phases

III. Wrap-Up and Adjourn

Next Meeting: Fish Passage Workgroup Meeting - October 2026
Thursday, October 15, 2026 from 10:00am - 1:00pm

Attendees:

1. Nick Staten, CRC
2. Lori Maloney
3. Ray Li
4. Jim Thompson, DNR
5. Edna Stetzar, DA Fish and Wildlife
6. Gian Dodici, NY USFW
7. Clinton Morgeson, VA DWR
8. Sandra Davis, USFW
9. Jessie Thomas-Blake, American Rivers
10. Mary Andrews, Anne Arundel County Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration
11. Rachel Harrison, WV DNR
12. Alan Weaver, VA DWR
13. Alexander Vidal, MD Wildlife service
14. Chris Guy, USFW
15. Kevin Schabow, NOAA
16. Becky Gwynn, VA Dept of Wildlife
17. Lisa Moss, VA FWS
18. Shannon Boyle
19. Emily Young
20. Lindey Nolan