

Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2019 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Participants

Sean Corson	Rob O'Reilly	Mandy Bromilow	Nancy Butowski
Lynn Fegley	Bob Beal	Tom O'Connell	Marty Gary
Morgan Corey	Kimberly Koelsch		

➤ Invasive Catfish Workgroup call August 27 and plans for Fall meeting

- Background:
 - Interest in invasive catfish issue expressed at June GIT meeting
 - Currently working to strengthen the Invasive Catfish Workgroup by reviewing and expanding membership to include new contacts from seafood processing industry, commercial and recreational fishers, Sea Grant, scientists, and management agency representatives
- August 27 Workgroup call to introduce new members, discuss general objectives and what members hope to get from the Workgroup. Draft objectives include:
 - Evaluate the ecological and economic impacts of invasive catfishes
 - Educate the public and raise awareness
 - Develop and implement strategic actions to mitigate spread and impacts
- Will establish a steering committee for guidance in planning more intensive in-person fall meeting to reach consensus on goals; aim to develop clear goals for removing biomass and begin to address barriers limiting removal

➤ Partnership Opportunity with USGS to Co-Design Invasive Catfish (and other priority species) Research to Inform Management

- Background:
 - Tom O'Connell reached out to NCBO to discuss USGS priorities and opportunities to support invasive catfish work in the Chesapeake Bay
- USGS Ecosystem Sciences national [Invasive Species Program](#) provides funding each year, roughly half goes to Great Lakes Asian carp with little funding coming to mid-Atlantic area
 - Invasive issues challenging management needs in Chesapeake should be elevated
 - Tremendous opportunity if interest from management community for greater investment of USGS funding to address needs, could expand beyond blue catfish (BCF)
- Chesapeake Bay Science Program leading 5-year science plan development process, Leetown Science Center plays an important role in that plan

- Can we articulate Chesapeake Bay issues to better address needs?
 - USGS interest to apply more resources to invasive species
 - Opportunity to demonstrate value of multiple state and federal agencies working together to address these issues with Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) coordination and USGS science
- Discussion:
- Great Lakes funding going toward both ecological science research and mitigation efforts working with state partners, would work closely with states in Chesapeake
- Unlike other invasive species where there is desire to control and eradicate, with invasive catfish there is also effort to capitalize on market by harvesting – interest in enhancing both sustainable fishery and population control issues?
 - If we can articulate clear goals then we can use complimentary resources to address issues
 - Balance interests if management needs relate to goal of reducing population but maintaining trophy fishery
 - Use USGS Science Centers network as a resource
 - VA trophy fishery has concerns over stunted growth of larger fish, interest in removing only certain size segments of population
 - Variability among states with approach
 - Aim to thin out population and also support valuable trophy fishery
- USGS can add to the conversation addressing remaining research needs
 - Still gaps in diet studies, what are catfish eating spatially and temporally
 - Movement forecasting, distribution, expansion, where populations exist, biomass and abundance estimates
 - Andrea Ostreff (USGS) will join Workgroup, next steps to begin identifying key research needs, goals and objectives first, iterative discussion between Workgroup and Ex Comm to determine priorities
 - Workgroup call is first step for determining objectives, more detailed needs will be defined at fall meeting
- Concern over this particular invasive species, unsure of the exact impacts
 - We know population continues to explode, but still unsure how much BCF are consuming key species (shad, herring, blue crab, striped bass, sturgeon)
 - No downside to bringing in more people to help those efforts
 - Catfish threaten ability to realize full investments of improved water quality
- USGS relying on Ex Comm and Workgroup to define priorities
 - If the interest is there, we collectively have a great opportunity to bring forward resources to better understand magnitude of impacts
 - Important to have USGS involved, catfish continues to be an urgent issue
- Using Workgroup and collaborative GIT structure to accomplish is good fit
 - CBP is a good place to capture attention of elected officials, opportunity to amplify funding through EPA GIT funding, use Workgroup to articulate states management interests and match research to meet those

- Discuss at GIT meeting before final decisions made

➤ **Forage Action Team update**

- Held in-person meeting August 21 to review 2-year workplan actions, most actions addressed, general agreement to improve next workplan goals and timelines, received good input from team
- Presented next steps for forage indicator development, discussed 2 approaches:
 - Top down (consumption by predators) and bottom up (environ factors)
 - Consensus to start focusing on environmental and habitat thresholds
 - Example: shoreline threshold condition study
 - Agreement to start looking at consumption profiles for species that are data-rich, example: croaker in mainstem with long-term benthic monitoring data; lack of data for many areas
 - Focus on developing forage indicators where we have data and results
 - Indicator is something you use in absence of stock assessment, general sense of how things are going, somewhere between monitoring program and stock assessment
- Forage Action Team members presented updates on research
 - Just starting to learn basics about forage; we have made good progress, still a challenge to address research needs and provide an indicator for decision-support to management
 - Connect with Ex Comm at next GIT meeting to make sure what we are developing is something managers can use to inform challenges faced

➤ **CBSAC Science Needs and Stock Assessment Update approach for October meeting**

- At June meeting when we discussed most recent stock assessment (SA) update, heard from Tom Miller and others that we need a formal review process with clear articulation of steps taken each year
- October Joint Ex Comm / CBSAC meeting to prioritize science needs and address remaining questions on how to handle SA updates
 - Compiled list of 30+ science needs from Terms of Reference, annual advisory report, and SA update
 - Asking for input prior to meeting to prioritize and rank needs
 - New blue crab science, example: ecosystem factors study from Miller, ecological reference points from Wilberg, review and discuss how to use results and apply to management framework
 - What will trigger need for benchmark? How to document in workplan?
- Discussion:
- Terms of Reference show more work is needed, would benefit from some certain needs, like exploitation rate, over others
- Joint Ex Comm / CBSAC meeting is a good idea

- Still uncertainty of the need to document specific triggers for a benchmark
 - Blue crabs are unique with Winter Dredge Survey (WDS)
 - Focus more on jurisdictional management issues and remaining questions we need to address – research prioritization!
 - Example: recreational fishery, improvements to the model
 - If model results look drastically different then talk about review
 - Formulated approach may not be beneficial, but focusing on consistent exploration and improvement would be helpful
- What would trigger change in reference points or approach?
 - How are decisions made? When to change the threshold or target values?
 - Management grounded in reality is always better than a model, important to continue implementing and improving survey, WDS demonstrates success of management to date
 - If we got into another period of lowered abundance, with variability like early 2000s, start looking more carefully at model
 - Benchmarks require new data input, and clear management need
 - One of our most important goals is stability in the fishery
 - If we start to see more variability in WDS need to investigate further deeper, need new information from research to help clarify issues in new assessment
 - Benchmark seems to follow major questions about status of the stock
 - What are the studies needed to augment what we already have with WDS?
- Some combination of WDS and additional targeted research is best path forward
 - No need to focus too much on SA update protocol
 - What steps do we need to go through to make sure target abundance is most scientifically appropriate target?
 - Whether or not prescribed SA update is exactly what we follow, more about overarching approach to stay between target and threshold
 - Could mean moving away from annual update
- Set expectations for October CBSAC meeting appropriately

➤ **NCBO fisheries funding strategy feedback**

- Each year NCBO puts out additional funding for fisheries research priorities
- Considering option of estimating bay-specific abundance for key species
 - Starting pilot with one or a few species
- Mike Wilberg and Rob Latour approached NCBO to consider abundance estimates
 - Advancements in open-source software would enable them to use existing data to differentiate stock assessments in Bay and coastwide
 - Named a few species – striped bass

- Could invite to present the idea on modeling abundance in detail
- Discussion:
- Depending on which species
 - With ChesMMAAP and NEAMAP plenty of survey data available
- Need to hear more about how states might use abundance estimates
 - ASMFC striped bass stock assessment looked at sorting out coastal from migratory stocks, if they could model Bay-specific abundance, what would we do with that?
- In past years enough funding to put together RFP for multiple projects or multi-year projects, looking at anticipated funding lower this year
 - Not enough location-specific info for EFH consultations, if we had better sense of what is happening within CB could inform decisions for fishery
 - Bay-specific assessments helpful for setting limits in Chesapeake?
 - May be too far down the line, could cause mixed messaging if results from ASMFC were different results from Bay-specific
 - Could be helpful in tandem with ASMFC for better resolution within CB
 - Extremely helpful to have Bay-specific menhaden information, would like to have conversation with Ex Comm about putting funds toward that
 - Also for species like striped bass, Atlantic croaker, spot, need better profiling of Bay
 - Could be dueling assessments, but there should be better attention paid within Bay to how stocks are performing
- **Action:** invite Mike Wilberg and Rob Latour to share more detail at next meeting

➤ **Member Updates**

- Rob is retiring! Thank you to Rob O'Reilly for his years of service as a mentor and providing invaluable support to the GIT as co-chair

Future Meeting Dates

- September 23 (2hr)
- October 15 (*tentative*) joint CBSAC meeting date
- November 25 (1hr)
- December 5-6 GIT Meeting (*tentative*) confirm dates & location GMU Potomac Science Center in Woodbridge, VA