

Minutes for Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee Meeting
April 21, 2010 2:00-4:00 pm

In attendance: Peyton Robertson, Tom O'Connell, Bob Beal, Bryan King, A.C. Carpenter, Jack Travelstead, Nancy Butowski, Shannon Green, Derek Orner, Bruce Vogt, Adam Davis, Shannon Simpson

Brief Updates

June GIT/FEW Meeting: GIT Chair, Vice Chair and staff have had discussions to further flesh out exactly what outcomes and outputs we are looking for from this meeting. We will be working with Ex Comm members and appropriate staff as we move forward with planning.

CBP Fisheries Goal Team Webpage: This will be a public webpage for the Fisheries GIT where we will post a list of members, summaries of meetings including Ex Comm meetings, meeting agendas, goals, objectives and activities of the Fisheries GIT, the charter once it's finalized, and other relevant materials. This page will also eventually have an "Other Resources" section that will serve as a clearinghouse of information for members including links to decision support tools and other information.

Adobe Connect: Each Goal Team now has access to an account for Adobe Connect courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program. This program will allow us to hold Executive Committee meetings in a webinar format where participants will be connected via the web and conference call. In addition to being able to communicate over the phone, participants will be able view meeting materials online and view documents or presentations open on the leader's computer, actions and revisions in real time. Adam and Shannon will be working to incorporate this into the Executive Committee meetings.

Charter: Working on revising the draft charter based on comments received so far and some materials and thoughts that were developed by the previous Fisheries Steering Committee which assist significantly in shaping a charter better suited to the Fisheries Goal Team. The goal is to provide a new draft to Ex Comm members for review and finalization of a draft to submit to the full membership for review well before the June meeting.

Member Invitations: Prepared letters for each invitee to be sent out via mail and email this week. Peyton, Tom, and Jack will follow up with phone calls to answer any immediate questions and provide a bit more information.

Executive Order: Revisions made based on recent comments and feedback received during the review of the Goals Framework.

- Oysters: removed the term "self-sustaining", now says restore oyster habitat and populations".
- Blue crabs: the strategy describes what the interim target is, and that we will be going forward with a science-based process to update it. Will use the stock assessment coming out next year to revise the target.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Shannon S. will send the Ex Comm a copy of the most recent draft of the strategy and a copy of the letter from ASMFC containing their comments on the draft Goal Framework.
- Bob: Selling point for Capitol Hill would be – increases in Bay species can mean increases elsewhere, positive impact on other areas

Discussion

Blue crab dredge survey results

Update on next steps: CBSAC to meet May 19 at the Smithsonian Environmental Center, will take into account recreational, trawl survey data, etc. and a report delivered to managers early June, Tom Miller leading a group to do benchmark assessment – update on abundance targets/ref. points

Jack – thought there would be pressure to open up the fishery in a big way, but so far that has not happened. Thinks the Commission is going to be conservative and no changes this year.

Tom – industry has not come at the Department them hard either. The Department also plans to remain conservative, and does not plan to make any significant changes to the 2010 regulations.

Jack – VA court of appeals upheld crab dredge.....??? Fishermen asking to loosen restriction so could take what has been saved by that restriction.

Tom – commented that through a LCC license buyback for which more than 600 licenses were purchased, and follow up regulations to address remaining latent LCC licenses that the Department has reduced uncertainty regarding latent effort.getting to place where can address latent issue problem.....

ACTION ITEM: Direction to CBSAC from GIT Ex Comm

- Address abundance target in their report
- Rationalization for keeping the interim target for now, will be establishing a new target

Potential of menhaden as filter feeders to improve water quality

- Recent VIMS study on menhaden (Mark Brush and Patrick Lynch joined us): A recently published study by researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science suggests that filter feeding by Atlantic menhaden has little net effect on overall water quality in Chesapeake Bay.

Peyton provided background: States are being required to be more aggressive in meeting water quality targets through TMDL's and Watershed Implementation Plans and in addition to considering sediment and nutrient loads are also looking to species in the Bay that may play a significant role in water quality.

Mark Brush provided a very brief summary of the recent paper published by VIMS on menhaden and their affect on nitrogen levels.

Goals of project: 1) estimate how many menhaden in the Bay, set up models but not enough data to constrain an estimate just to the Bay. 2) diet. 3) wild caught fish – are they only eating phytoplankton and zooplankton and at what age? Filtration rates?

Grazing rates are in line with other studies when viewed in conjunction with numbers, not seeing any real reduction in nitrogen. Unless in blooms, or thick areas, menhaden just not having a real effect.

Five fold increase in menhaden could make a dent, unsure, but then could cause a major increase in nitrogen through increase in elimination.

Worked with York River _____, blooms down there not as bad as other places in the Bay, so not study not fully representative of the entire Bay.

Jack – adult menhaden eat zooplankton, have heard the theory that if remove menhaden then have more zooplankton to eat phytoplankton.

Mark – not eating just zooplankton, has not seen a top down control of zooplankton on phytoplankton, would have to study
Don't know where menhaden are or how many

Jack – Are water quality managers pushing this?

Peyton – push back on fisheries managers from water quality managers, water quality managers saying fisheries managers are complaining about sediment and nutrient loads from upstream but not recognizing the organisms in the Bay that might have a significant impact on water quality

Even doubling or tripling of menhaden does not affect water quality.

Mark and Patrick offered future assistance if anything GIT would like to see they would be happy to run the model for it

Tom – what does a “small” change in phytoplankton levels mean with regards to water quality, what would be have to do on land, and associated cost, for a similiar small change in nitrogen level?

- Upcoming CBP Principle Staff Committee meeting will discuss the issue of menhaden as a means of improving water quality

ACTION ITEM: Peyton will get the Principle Staff Committee agenda and info on how this issue shows up on the agenda.

ASMFC Meeting – I suggest summarizing the ASMFC mgt issues discussed but not included in the meeting notes comments regarding agency positions. My concern is that these meeting notes become publicly available, and an agency is criticized for taking a position prior to Board meeting. The purpose of these discussions was to review issues, exchange perspectives, and see where there is agreement and disagreement, and where there is disagreement how we can move forward together.

- Striped Bass Management Board Action Item to approve/disapprove a draft addendum to go out for public review to include options for increasing the coastal commercial striped bass quota. Agencies exchanged their perspectives on this management issue. Any preliminary viewpoints from Bay jurisdictions and NOAA?

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- Jack – proposed addendum to increase quota in coastal area, vote is for board to consider the addendum and send out for public comment. Question of are striped bass on precipice of decline, commercial folks see as allocation issue. Will be a close vote. Options are 1) increase quota 2) allow states to increase quota but only if decrease recreational harvest to allow for commercial increase. VA will vote in favor, Jack will be outvoted by other two VA reps.

Tom – top priority for MD coastal commercial fishermen and but just put bounds on recreational fishermen, issue of increase one while other reduced. Tidal Fishery Advisory don't support it. All around bad timing, Tom not sure how VA will vote on this.

A.C – supports the addendum, at the last ASMFC meeting he seconded the motion to get it this far.

Why are rec. fishers supporting this? Federal agencies supported it last ASMFC meeting, NOAA voted yes. Issue for northern states.

There will not likely be a vote on passage before August.

Peyton – are there info or science needs between now and August?

Bob – ASMFC Technical Committee ran analyses, not sure if additional science info can help with biomass

Striped Bass Board will give 20, 30, and 50% increase options???????

A.C. – coastal component really small of commercial fishing, higher for recreational fishers

North Carolina pushing hard for this addendum but past couple years have not even been able to catch their quota, they hope this is just a couple year anomaly

Byan – striped bass is fine in DC, not sure how will vote, they fish a bit differently up there

Jack – hopes he is not in a position to break a tie!

- The state management agencies discussed their plans to How do Bay jurisdictions plan to proceed with river herring management – ASMFC requires jurisdictions to develop an approved sustainable fishery management plan by 1/1/12 or their fisheries will be closed?

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Tom – his staff has been asked to push for harvest moratorium, but can't see how they can do that and allow a bycatch fishery continue so looking into ways to reduce bycatch. Thinks most states are going to allow a moratorium, but not sure what the technical committee will accept as a sustainable catch plan

A.C. has requested allowing bycatch

Jack – on same page as Tom but no plan to submit a plan to ASMFC in favor of anything. Engaging VIMS to determine what is sustainable, what plan will create a sustainable fishery

Bob – technical committee will be reviewing the proposals this summer

Tom – VA not going to submit a plan

A.C. – plan to declare a moratorium but allow a 1 pound gillnet but will ????? to reduce bycatch. Before have used bycatch to judge status of the stock. Can't say that this is sustainable but.....

What about recreational fishing?

A.C. – closed the herring fishery, but had folks wanting to buy and cut herring to catch striped bass & menhaden???

- Atlantic menhaden – new stock assessment and peer review report available on 4/20/10 – probably too soon to review, however, ASMFC will be in a position to determine if a management change is needed, and if so, initiate an addendum. Agencies exchanged their Any preliminary viewpoints. from Bay jurisdictions and NOAA?

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New report is on ASMFC website?

Jack – This is another no win situation. Expect to see a lot of recreational fishermen. Expect to see concern in the stock assessment.

Bob – fishing mortality has gone up, close to threshold, folks will latch onto increasing trend, board member has said they see yellow light blinking for menhaden. So far no suggestion for an addendum.

Jack – any suggestions for research?

Bob – not sure yet.

Tom – stakeholders in MD working hard behind the scenes on menhaden, has been elevated in MD

Jack – issue has been elevated in VA by recreational sector.

Tom and Jack both on board if new science is needed to improve the reference points.

Jack hearing that Atlantic herring restricted and may need to catch menhaden for lobster fishing

Coast wide quota?

- The management agencies discussed the need to improved catch and effort estimates for the sStriped bass intercept fishery in VA and NC. –improved catch and effort estimates. Additional funding needed for MRFSS/MRIP. This is a significant fishery that ASMFC Technical Committee recommended be monitored in May 2009. ACCSP has provided some funds for a pilot program, but more is needed..

Tom – Secretary committed to look at pre spawn fishery and better estimate of this fishery. MD may be able to provide funding for this. Pilot program will be implemented next year by ?????? Technical Committee expressed need to get a handle on this. Under a lot of pressure on this in MD.

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Jack – Money is definitely an issue for looking into this.

The Exec Committee also discussed the following Bay management issues:

Blue catfish: Discussed the ecosystem impacts of significant increase of blue catfish in the Potomac.

Jack – are a problem in James R. and have spread to all VA rivers. In VA are under the jurisdiction of their fresh water agency. Suggested a staff person

A.C. – are in the Patuxent and Susquehanna, every major trib of the Chesapeake Bay. Not aware of any control measures.

Tom – not enough market for these fish.

A.C. – some of them may exceed the FDA contaminant levels

Tom – get a staff person to put together an issue paper/white paper. Jack agreed to distributed a VIMS report produced last fall that identified

Jack – VIMS last fall produced a paper identifying some concerns and management options. what we might need to determine a solution

Peyton – definite need to look into its proliferation and spread and potential ecosystem impacts

A.C. – did not track as single species until 2003, been in Bay for 15 years or so.

Are blue catfish working against restoration of blue crabs?

GIT staff will collect info for a white paper and obtain a copy of the VIMS paper Jack mentioned.

Clams: Maryland asked to briefly discuss Discussion the on status and management of clams. This is also a significant filter feeder whose population has significantly decreased. Discussed developing a management plan, as well as research and monitoring.

Tom – expand daily time limits for razor clams to meet bait requests from VA, need management plan

A.C. – no razor clam fishery anymore in Potomac

Other

Note: Steve Bowman reappointed commissioner again.

Next Executive Committee Meeting Thursday, May 20, 10:00 – 12:00 pm