

**Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes**

February 23rd, 2015 from 1:00pm-3:00pm

Materials: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/S=0/calendar/event/22468/>

Call Participants: Peyton Robertson, Tom O'Connell, Rob O'Reilly, Marty Gary, Bryan King, Bob Beal, Joe Grist, Susan Conner, Lynn Fegley, Nancy Butowski, Jim Price, Karl Blankenship, Bruce Vogt, Andrew Turner, Emilie Franke

Decisional

➤ **NCBO/VA Sea Grant Post Doc Project – Amy Freitag (VIMS) (1:05-1:30pm)**

- Handout: *Oyster-Dominated Placed-Based Work Plan; EBFM one-pager*
- Amy Freitag (VIMS) described her project plans for her two-year NCBO/VA Sea Grant post doc position. She is focusing on oysters in the context of ecosystem-based management.
- The outcomes of her project include a suite of coupled natural-social ecosystem indicators, application of these indicators to the Choptank and Rappahannock (tentative) Rivers, and an accompanying decision support tool.
- She is currently developing a survey that will be circulated to stakeholders to get local perspective on what indicators should be used and their feasibility.
- Amy will be looking for feedback on what features of decision-support tools would be useful to managers. For example, map-based/spatial tools.
- Discussion:
 - Peyton asked for background on how tributaries were selected for the project. Amy explained that the project needs tributaries with all four aspects of oysters (wild harvest, aquaculture, sanctuaries, and restoration) and with available data.
 - Tom O. asked for more specifics about the survey and suggested that when the survey is sent, the purpose of the survey should be clearly communicated to stakeholders.
 - Andrew T. indicated that he could provide stakeholder contacts that are distributors in the market that could provide a good perspective on the fishery.
 - Ex Comm members suggested that Amy should coordinate her project with other ongoing oyster projects in the selected tributaries.
 - Ex Comm members discussed existing tools including MD DNR's aquaculture/permitting tool and a TNC tool in development for ecosystem services evaluation.

Actions: Ex Comm members will contact Amy with suggestions of stakeholder involvement, and existing spatial tools. Amy will share a draft set of indicators with the Ex Comm in April.

➤ **Winter Dredge Survey Data Visualization (1:30-1:50pm)**

- Handout: *WDS Visualization; CBSAC Timeline*
- Glenn Davis (MDDNR) has put together maps that visualize the abundance of crabs caught at each WDS station in the Bay for specific years.
- Andrew Turner explained how these initial maps were developed and review additional ways the data could be visualized, including overlaying environmental conditions (temperature, salinity, etc.) with the abundance data.

- Discussion:
 - Andrew confirmed that these maps are just a snapshot in time.
 - Rob O. discussed the importance of knowing what percentage of juveniles are relatively mature (51-60mm) vs those that are smaller in a given year. This may help explain recruitment during that year
 - Joe explained that WDS data has been visualized on maps before, and Lynn identified a paper from CBL that looked at WDS data overlaid with salinity regimes.
 - Lynn pointed out that there are many variables that could be overlaid with WDS data, but need to narrow that list down and determine if there a baseline scenario to compare to.
 - Peyton pointed out that maps like these would help tell the story of blue crabs regarding their life history and spatial movement around the Bay.
 - Tom O. expressed concerns that these maps may not have direct management application and therefore we should carefully consider this before allocating resources toward them.
 - Peyton suggested that these maps could help identify critical habitat areas that should be protected for crabs.
 - Rob O. emphasized the need to pay attention to juvenile abundance and how this could inform management about the following year.
 - Joe suggested that CBSAC should discuss these maps and recommend how this spatial information can be used. Ex Comm members agreed with this action.

Actions:

- **Andrew will look into developing maps for 2011-2014, breaking up juvenile abundance data by size, and separate female/male abundance.**
- **CBSAC will evaluate the maps and make a recommendation of how to move forward with this spatial data analysis.**

➤ **Management Strategy Status and Updates (1:50-2:20pm)**

- Handout: *Fish Habitat Priority Table; STAC Species Table_DRAFT; Fish_mgmt approaches*
- Staff described the status of each management strategy, focusing on the progress made on the fish habitat and forage strategies.
 - The Fish Habitat team developed a chart at their meeting on Feb 10th that outlines priority species and approaches for different habitat types. This chart applies the general management approach to more specific habitat types.
 - A list of priority forage species was produced from the STAC workshop for consideration in the strategy.
- Staff reviewed the timeline for distribution to the GIT and the opportunity for public input. Drafts will be sent to the Management Board on 3/2; sent to the full GIT on 3/12; and released for public comment on 3/16.
- Discussion:
 - Ex Comm members agreed with the way the fish habitat chart is categorized.
 - Tom O. would like the group to consider adding forage species to the Freshwater category, in addition to the tidal saltwater category.
 - Jim Price emphasized that striped bass should be the predator species of focus for the forage management strategy, and so white perch and American eel should be added to the list as important prey items for striped bass.

- Tom O. pointed out that MDDNR has been moving forward with development of striped bass indicators.
- Ex Comm members agreed that it is important to make a distinction between forage species that are managed and those that are not.

Actions: The Fish Habitat and Forage teams will finalize drafts and take into account Ex Comm comments. The Ex Comm and full GIT will receive all management strategy drafts prior to the public input period.

➤ **June 2015 full GIT Meeting (2:20-2:30pm)**

- Handout: 2015 calendar
- Ex Comm agreed to target the first week of June for the June meeting.
- Staff compiled possible agenda items:
 - CBSAC 2015 report and stock assessment update
 - CBP GIT Funding Projects discussion (forage, CBSAC, striped bass)
 - 2-year workplan development for management strategies
 - Staging for the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council meeting in early July
 - Highlight potential completion of Harris Creek restoration and possibility that Lafayette may have achieved oyster success metrics for a restored reef.
- Discussion:
 - Ex Comm members suggested the following locations for the meeting: VIMS, William and Mary, Christopher Newport University, Mariners Museum in Newport News, CBF Brock Center.

Actions: Staff will look into meeting venue availability and the Ex Comm will decide on final dates and location on the next Ex Comm call. Staff will also provide a draft meeting agenda on that call.

➤ **Ex Comm Updates**

- Executive Committee members' updates and discussion of management issues.

Informational

➤ **VA Fishery Resource Grant Program Report – Commercial Electrofishing Pilot Project**

- The final report is complete for the catfish commercial electrofishing pilot project that took place in 2014 funded by the [Virginia Fishery Resource Grant Program](#).
- The Invasive Catfish Task Force will consider this report when updating their final report and recommendations.

➤ **STAC Forage Workshop Report**

- A complete draft report is currently out for review by the Workshop Steering Committee and will be available for use in drafting the management strategy.
- Next steps will be review by all workshop participants and STAC.
- The final report should be complete by the spring.

➤ **CBP Funding for GITs**

- Projects have been selected for the three Fisheries GIT projects funded by EPA through the Chesapeake Bay Program:

- Forage indicators and nutritional profiles for Chesapeake Bay fishes – Drs. Andre Buchheister and Ed Houde (UMCES-CBL)
 - Deliverables: 1) develop a suite of forage indicators for dominant prey species in Chesapeake Bay and 2) develop a nutritional profile for five predatory fishes
- Analysis of blue crab survey data and reproductive output to assess causes of population variability – Drs. Thomas Miller and Michael Wilberg (UMCES)
 - Deliverables: 1) Analysis of the summer survey data from the VIMS trawl – survey and 2) Assess how many broods each adult female can produce over a lifetime
- Striped bass health indicator development – Rebecca Scott, Data Analyst, EcoAnalytics LLC
 - Deliverable: Use force-of-infection models to estimate the potential increase in mortality associated with mycobacterial infection

➤ **Fish Habitat Workshop**

- Bruce Vogt (NOAA) and Jennifer Greiner (USFWS), coordinators for the Fisheries and Habitat GITs, have submitted a proposal for a STAC workshop on fish habitat characterization to support the fish habitat management strategy.

➤ **Confirm upcoming meeting dates**

Ex Comm Mondays 1:00-3:00pm

- March 16th, 2015
- April 20th, 2015
- May 18th, 2015

FULL GIT Meeting

- First week of June (6/1-6/4)