

Fish Habitat Action Team Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2019 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Participants

Gina Hunt (DNR)	Bruce Vogt (NOAA)	Mandy Bromilow (ERT)
Shadaesha Green (UMCES)	Makayla Brown (CRC)	Morgan Corey (CRC)
AK Leight (NOAA)	Erin Markin (NOAA)	Lisa Havel (ASMFC)
Kelly Maloney (USGS)	Jennifer Rapp (USGS)	Donna Bilkovic (VIMS)
Margaret McGinty (DNR)	Jennifer Greiner (USGS)	

I. Project Updates

- a. AK provided an update on Regional Fish Habitat Assessment
 - i. NOAA/USGS collaborative effort, where GIT funded project is one part
 - ii. Currently, bringing in Tetrattech contractor to compile metadata over the next year with some analysis to identify data-rich areas and make recommendations for assessment
 - iii. Reminder that regional Chesapeake Bay work fits within the context of several other assessments in the Atlantic Northeast, with which Bruce, Gina, and AK have played an active role
- b. GIT-funded project *Establishing a Shoreline Condition Threshold or Metric* scheduled to conclude research by June 30 and will present research results at June 26-27 GIT meeting
 - i. Now our role as FHAT begins in communicating results, synthesis and determining any applications to management, opportunities to highlight the research

II. Adaptive Management / Strategic Review System (SRS)

- a. 2-year process, in which we evaluate what we said we would do through the workplan, identify any obstacles to moving forward, and lessons learned
- b. Reviewing workplan for red/yellow/green analysis:
 - i. Action 1.1 – metadata gathered for STAC workshop, now building on that with contractor for assessment
 - 1. Need to revisit any MB response to STAC workshop letter and address in SRS if needed
 - ii. Action 1.2 – research now wrapping up, but need to communicate results and consider management implications of shoreline threshold
 - 1. Hope to have a plan in place by Fall of 2019 for communication (who needs to hear?) but we need the results first
 - 2. Could be challenging to communicate with Bay-wide and Tributary scales, specific to individual species – can we scale up results more broadly than in York River?
 - iii. Action 2.1 – STAC workshop done, will highlight to MB, more to come in acting on resulting recommendations

- iv. Action 3.1 – geospatial database: we may get there much later, but currently the assessment is focused on inventory and metadata analysis, less focused on mapping products
 - 1. Healthy Watersheds Workgroup is also working with Tetrattech on an assessment, with the goal to maintain 100% of identified healthy watersheds (different criteria for determining “health”) and to not lose what we have, using a geospatial focus mostly with land use data
 - a. Fish Habitat could be a part of this work, but likely does not address Action as written in workplan
 - 2. We need to better explain why yellow – encountered obstacles
 - 3. Getting there is a lofty goal, metadata could be used geospatially further down the line, but is only one part of a much larger assessment process that will take years to achieve
 - 4. Could leverage ACFHP maps (fish habitat like SAV, wetlands), currently no plans to develop a geospatial database for the assessment
 - 5. Suggest shifting from “build a database” to “synthesize” for more flexibility
 - 6. Consider hosting a webinar on Great Lakes assessment Gary Whelan
- v. Action 4.1 – conversations about this action but no extensive surveys done yet, Erin and AK are working on this now connecting with local governments, may take a while/ never fully finished
 - 1. Helen Spinelli from local government recently retired (looking for replacement), hosted a workshop bringing science to local planners
 - a. The response was that planners wanted more tools/assessments, but they were not specific about exactly what kind of info would be helpful – hopefully AK/Erin can fill this gap
- vi. Action 4.2 – communications plan will be our focus after SRS, we will highlight progress made on the plan
- vii. Action 5.1 – other assessments covered, we have been more involved than expected, no timeline to be “complete”
- c. Narrative Analysis
 - i. After red/yellow/green analysis, what lessons have we learned?
 - 1. We have made progress and done good work with this outcome, but lack any quantitative, clear, measurable metrics to monitor progress – e.g. protect X amount of spawning habitat area for priority species
 - 2. In contrast to Healthy Watersheds goal to “maintain” healthy area, ours does not have any set path
 - 3. This could lead to added confusion for USGS, and having a metric or suite of metrics could be helpful for focusing efforts
 - 4. Many possible end points, run the risk of choosing representative species that do not really represent the full range of Chesapeake fish habitat, but a suite of metrics might be valuable

5. With land use and shorelines, we have little authority to influence regulations to maintain protections
 - a. However, Chesapeake Bay Program as a whole could influence landuse to reduce stressors, we have opportunity through this larger partnership structure and leadership
 - ii. We are making progress, but again, no way to graph our trajectory of progress
 - iii. Additions to upcoming science, finances, policy that influence next 2 years:
 1. Shorelines policy developments for promoting living shorelines as a preferred method
 2. USGS refocusing through Bay Plan and listing fish habitat as a priority, investing in fish habitat assessment, this is a big deal!
 3. NCBO ongoing research on forage and fish habitat
 4. ACFHP consider using new tools to submit proposals for funding
 - iv. More focus on communications, specifically economic impacts of fisheries at a local scale – something Gina is involved with on WIP Engagement Action Team, looking at # anglers licensed by state and local level, approach using ASA Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing report
 1. Donna will share VIMS economic valuation contacts / Scott Knoche
 - v. Consider our Management Board ask
 1. We may not have one, and that's ok, but it is good to consider since we only have opportunity every 2 years
 2. Previously, big ask to consider fish habitat in WIPs, other workgroups followed suit, led to WIP factsheets and WEAT
 3. Our membership for FHAT is strong
- III. Communications Plan
- a. Made several additions to draft outline
 - b. **Action: continue working on development of communications strategy**
- IV. FY2019 GIT Funding Opportunity
- a. Shorelines communication website, to address workplan Action 4.2
 - i. Project funding will hire contractor to assemble the website content only, CBP will do the website development
- V. Member Updates
- a. Jennifer Rapp joined for the call, and is currently collaborating with Kelly Maloney at USGS on aquatic habitat and fisheries issues, looking at Baywide status and trends, as well as smaller scale focal studies, also familiar with USGS Water Science Center studies to inform permitting
 - b. Donna Bilkovic asked to advise on a shoreline project using woody debris in urban setting, seen as an impediment to yellow perch passage, recommended restoration practitioners and permitting agencies need to work together
 - i. Consider BMP benefits to fish habitat included in WIPs
 - ii. We need to be strategic about communications with messaging targeted to specific audiences, be cautious about what we promote for restoration and realistic with expectations for what benefits restoration can provide