

Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2018 from 1:00pm-3:00pm

Participants

Rob O'Reilly	Sean Corson	Sara Coleman	Jay Lazar
Morgan Corey	Nancy Butowski	David Bruce	Bob Beal
Marty Gary	Chris Moore	Pat Geer	

Presentation

- **Using a Satellite to Help Us Evaluate the Impacts of Oyster Restoration: A Perspective from Above**
 - Research objective is to answer the question: does oyster restoration improve water quality??
 - Important question given public interest in socioeconomic value of oyster restoration
 - Data sources:
 - Monthly turbidity averages from satellites at selected locations (2010-2016)
 - Total suspended matter (TSM) concentration as an indicator of water clarity
 - Mean oyster biomass by area from MD DNR Annual Fall Survey (2009-2016)
 - Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) coverage from VIMS aerial overflight
 - 13 Tributary study design comparing sites with different management types
 - Public, sanctuary, and sanctuary with restoration
 - Evaluated TSM annual trends over time, showing decreasing slope in Choptank, Tangier Sound, and Harris Creek with high variability
 - TSM values were significantly higher on Public sites and Non-Restored Sanctuaries than at Restored Sanctuary Management Areas; oyster biomass levels were significantly lower on Public sites and Non-Restored Sanctuaries than at Restored Sanctuary Management Areas, confirming what would be expected from restored reefs
 - There was a significant negative relationship observed between TSM and oyster biomass across all sites with weak R^2 values (explains 4% of variability) low explanatory power of the model; also a significant negative relationship between TSM and SAV coverage (explains 5% variability)
 - Location explains 51% of variation in TSM
 - Other factors that may contribute to TSM variation could include land use, flushing rate of trib, amount of point/nonpoint pollution sources
 - When comparing 13 tributaries, the lowest TSM values were observed at Harris Creek, Tred Avon River, Choptank River, Broad Creek, and Big Annessex River
 - Locations with highest TSM generally have low oyster biomass and SAV
 - Locations with low TSM have more variability in oyster biomass, and SAV is high both within and among locations
 - Overall, this research confirms the utility of satellites for observing large-scale patterns in water clarity and shows that oyster biomass and SAV trends are improving over time, particularly in Harris and Broad Creeks and parts of Tangier Sound
 - Next steps include examining additional location effects, exploring other oyster abundance datasets, and revisiting the TSM/oyster relationship when restored reefs are mature and restoration work is complete
 - Comments:
 - This project shows how we can quickly and effectively track changes in water quality related to oyster restoration, and the results are encouraging with large-scale investment in oysters

Decisional

➤ **Revisit Naval telemetry array actions**

- Currently a series of meetings are underway to develop cost estimates for maintaining a subset array of acoustic receivers
- There is interest in seeing this work continue, but the question is how much are agencies willing to spend to maintain the array?
 - Would need significant annual contributions to keep array in place
- Decision: Draft letter of support to Navy approved with minor wording changes recommended
- Action: Sean will send Fish GIT support letter to Navy, NCBO staff will continue communication with Navy and update Ex Comm members on progress

➤ **Recreational Fishing Initiative**

- NMFS Recreational Fishing Initiative hosted a saltwater summit in April to get feedback from community, resulting in the National Engagement Plan to be released in February 2019
 - Currently looking for feedback on Plan
- Recommended additions:
 - Communicate CBIBS data, Mallows Bay blue catfish outreach event, Lynnhaven River visit to highlight oyster restoration and links to fishing opportunities, delivering results from NCBO funded studies on Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder
 - Feedback on habitat assessment efforts NEFSC/MAFMC and regional Chesapeake Bay
 - Identify on-the-ground opportunities for anglers to participate directly, potentially look for a new Fish GIT member on the team to speak directly for recreational fishing sector
- Comments:
 - Potential for collaborations with CCA
 - Would like to expand in VA (Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association, VSSA)
 - MD saltwater sportfishing organization
 - Potomac groups Northern Anglers Club (Marty can contact for representatives)
 - Recommended presentation to Sportfish Advisory Commission (Nancy will send next meeting details)
 - Check ASMFC advisory panel list for active participants
- Action: Sara will continue communication with NMFS on our recommendations for the National Engagement Plan

➤ **Ex Comm approval of revised Fish Habitat Management Strategy**

- The Fish Habitat Management Strategy is being updated to reflect lessons learned and results from the final STAC workshop report
 - This outcome was new to the 2014 Agreement, so we are learning and this document is still being defined to make more realistic and relevant
- Major changes to the document include 1) a revised Key Participants list after checking in on inactive jurisdictions, 2) updating Factors Influencing Success to reflect the workplan, 3) adding a table of stressors from STAC workshop to Management Approaches, and 4) updating Current Efforts and Gaps to include research needs, management addressing water quality and ecosystem-based fisheries management, and the need to develop a communication strategy
- Decision: Ex Comm members approved the updated Fish Habitat Management Strategy
- Comments:
 - Thinking about the challenges of moving towards ecosystem-based fisheries management, how can the Fish GIT help support fishery managers in applying a more comprehensive ecosystem-level decision making? No answer to this question yet but talking about it can

help us plan for how to direct funding, NCBO field capacity, and future issues to work on e.g. quantifying how habitat impacts fish populations and habitat needs for key managed species

- **Action:** Morgan and Gina will complete revisions to the Fish Habitat Management Strategy after public input period and Management Board approval

➤ **Detailed review of December agenda**

- Day 1 focus on oyster restoration, monitoring, and science
 - The monitoring work by ORP has two parts: 1) addressing the need to move towards cheaper more cost-effective monitoring protocols, and 2) comparison of sampling methods for shell reefs versus other hard substrates (granite, concrete)
 - We are hoping to hear recommendations for a path forward to evaluate progress in restoration based on oyster metrics with standardized methods across tributaries
- Day 2 wrap up oysters, discuss 2018 summer precipitation impacts to fisheries and habitat, and learn about progress in forage, fish habitat, and blue crab outcomes
 - Interest in the summer precipitation discussion given results from oyster plantings with high mortality this year (Marty), and the need to account for these extreme episodic events in fishery management decisions
- **Action:** Sean, Bruce, Sara, Morgan will meet to discuss content of December GIT meeting agenda and continue developing clear objectives for each presentation

Informational

➤ **Confirm upcoming Ex Comm meeting dates**

- Monday, November 26, 2018

➤ **Confirm December GIT meeting dates**

- December 17-18, 2018 (Monday-Tuesday)