

Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 20, 2020 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Participants

Marty Gary	Morgan Corey	Adam Kenyon	Bruce Vogt
Lynn Fegley	Sean Corson	Mandy Bromilow	Emily Trentecoste
Mike Bednarski	Mary Fabrizio		

➤ **GIT funding call for ideas**

- *Background:* GIT funding was established in 2014 to help meet Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) outcomes and goals. The competitive process involves prioritizing project ideas with GIT chairs, pitching ideas to CBP partners, and finalizing RFPs for those selected and approved by the CBP Director. Each year Fish GIT has had 1-3 successful projects funded. To review past projects, see [Chesapeake Bay Trust's page for GIT funding](#).
- Current criteria include a push for cross-outcome benefits across GITs. There may also be a surplus source of funding from past years available to address single-outcome science needs (e.g. blue crab CBSAC list).
- Science needs already named for the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) team process are one source for project ideas that we will consult during this process.
 - **Action: Morgan will share STAR list in meeting materials**
- Currently, we are at the beginning of this process and will continue to gather and refine project ideas over the next months.
- Aim to connect proposed projects with ongoing research (e.g. telemetry array).
- Fish GIT should also consider how best to leverage existing long-term datasets to address management needs, perhaps through a workshop. Given budgetary challenges, now is a good time to reevaluate how to best use existing resources.
 - For example, using IBI survey data, SAV and fish surveys
 - Connect biological data to physical environmental and WG datasets to report on relationships.
 - Similar approach based on existing data with forage indicators.

➤ **Striped Bass Nursery Habitat Assessment project moving forward**

- A GIT-funded project from last year is now getting underway, focused on extent of suitable habitat for juvenile striped bass and implications for recruitment.
 - The project will focus on young-of-year age 0-4 fish.

- The project team at VIMS will look at habitat needs for juveniles captured in the upper reaches of tributaries, and examine relative abundances of ages 1-4 captured throughout Bay, combining fisheries catch data from MDNR and VIMS with a hydrodynamic model developed by Anchor QEA.
- Researchers will then apply the model to striped bass habitat suitability indices for different life stages. Expected results will help to target prime habitat areas for conservation and restoration.
- *Questions:*
- Looking at degraded habitats that formerly served as juvenile habitat to target areas, will the approach help managers link back to causes for habitat degradation to inform actions?
 - In identifying persistence of habitats, can look back and target areas that were once highly productive in time series, and based on habitat suitability model identify potential environmental factors associated with decline (e.g. changing temperature, etc.)
 - Will work with steering committee to discuss as a group
 - Representation from agencies including MDNR, VMRC, ASMFC, NOAA, PRFC
- In Potomac, historical spawning areas documented in atlas from late 70s; can this project provide information to understand habitat characteristics of historic areas?
 - There is a separate project looking at persistence of spawning/juvenile habitats in VA, could use that approach in Potomac River
- Steering committee will ensure this work compliments ongoing projects, including fish habitat assessment.
- **Telemetry update: EPA innovation grant proposal**
 - NOAA has been working with partners to establish a Chesapeake Bay mainstem telemetry array at 3 gate locations: Bay Bridge, Cedar Point, and Bay mouth. MDNR will maintain the Bay Bridge gate if receiver equipment is provided. SERC will support the MATOS database. UMCES Dave Secor's lab will own and maintain the Cedar Point gate.
 - Emily Trentecoste (EPA) submitted a proposal to purchase needed telemetry receivers for the Bay Bridge gate through an EPA internal grant competition among regional offices. The grant emphasizes collaboration with states and partners on innovative ideas, including advanced monitoring technology.
 - Aim to use this array to link fish data to physical habitat WQ data
 - May to June expect a response to EPA grant proposal

- Telemetry needs were expressed as important to the Ex Comm for management. This is turning into a strong partnership to develop the array. Initial plans were to transfer ownership of Navy receivers. The receivers that could be purchased with the EPA grant are able to answer more research questions by combining with environmental data, working along with hypoxia monitoring project.
- **Invasive Catfish Management Strategy**
 - Following the [January Invasive Catfish workshop](#), Mandy drafted a management strategy following CBP format and completed an extensive review of the strategy with workgroup members. There are a few big picture questions remaining for Ex Comm feedback.
 - **Action:** Mandy and Bruce will reach out to make sure the strategy reflects Ex Comm management jurisdictions input.
 - Overview of feedback and remaining questions to address:
 - Revised outcome language similar to other CBP outcomes – focus on the outcome wording in review
 - Document provides detailed background on the current status of issue
 - Should we develop a workplan outlining actions for catfish?
 - Logic and action plan CBP format, tasks specific groups with roles in achieving actions for accountability
 - Would a workplan be worthwhile to management jurisdictions?
 - Both pros and cons to following CBP process
 - Table summarizing different stakeholder interests – managers should review the average size limit ranges based on workshop
 - Primary focus is on blue catfish – are flatheads adequately considered?
 - Monitoring/assessment tracking progress / adaptive management section – how should we evaluate effectiveness?
 - Management approaches – What steps can we take?
 - Improve public awareness through marketing campaigns – ecological impacts, increase market demand and consumption, more participation in recreational fishery and guide services
 - Remove processing barriers from USDA inspection requirements
 - Develop indicators of status and ecological risk of invasion – ecosystem models can demonstrate tradeoffs in different harvest scenarios, ecological impacts by predation
 - Develop tributary specific management plans – each jurisdiction responsible for fishery management plans, differences between tributaries and populations that need to be considered, plans should reflect local fishery interests

- Management Strategy document reflects workshop participants views and current status of what we have heard on this issue.
 - Having a workplan and management strategy puts invasive catfish more formally under the CBP structure to highlight as a major issue. Reporting out in adaptive management process has tradeoffs, bringing more attention to the issue in a Baywide context while also requiring more commitment to carry forward.
 - Mandy is presenting to the Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species meeting next week, and will focus on the overall issue more than management, highlighting that we are working to finalize a management strategy.
 - The management strategy is expected to be ready for final acceptance at the May 18 Ex Comm meeting.
- **Summer GIT meeting consider delaying until Fall (September) 2020**
- Given COVID-19, we are weighing options to delay the summer meeting or pull together a virtual meeting.
 - Members agreed to follow a wait and see approach, and decide by July/August on how to move forward depending on states guidance.
 - There is a strong preference for an in-person meeting!
 - With blue crabs advisory report, if any management response is needed there is far more value to discussing in person.
 - The meeting agenda will focus on blue crab annual survey results, a forage and fish habitat theme including Chesapeake Bay assessment, habitat suitability, indicators, and State of the Ecosystem report.
- **COVID-19 Seafood Market Disruptions and Stimulus**
- See resources from [NOAA Fisheries](#) on CARES Act and stimulus bills related to seafood marketing challenges.
 - What options are available to support oyster aquaculture? \$300M in CARES Act for commercial industry, some portion flows to mid-Atlantic states.
 - How are markets going to be impacted going forward? Restaurants are a major link in the seafood market chain, and we are unsure how dining landscape will change post COVID-19. We are hearing concerns from nonprofits, watermen, for aquaculture industry.
 - Consider restoration and conservation actions like 2008 Recovery Act stimulus framework, and keep NCBO informed on priorities.
- **Member Updates**
- MDNR is working to finalize winter dredge survey results, not yet released. Results will be discussed among jurisdictional leadership and CBSAC.
 - VDGIF filled Bob Greenlee's position