

# **Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee**

## **Meeting Minutes**

June 22, 2020 1:00 - 3:00pm

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### **➤ Review and Endorse Annual Blue Crab Advisory Report**

- Glenn Davis (MDNR, CBSAC Chair) presented the results of the 2020 Winter Dredge Survey and an overview of the 2020 Blue Crab Advisory Report recommendations.
  - Adult female crab abundance decreased to 141 million, which is still above the threshold of 70 million. Recruitment was also reduced, with juvenile abundance estimated at 185 million. Overwintering mortality was the lowest ever observed. The exploitation rate decreased to 17% in 2019. The population is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Naturally variability in the population is likely responsible for the fluctuations in abundance.
  - MDNR conducted a stock assessment model update using data through 2019. The abundance and exploitation estimates were similar to those of previous model runs, suggesting that the management framework is still appropriate. MDNR will conduct these model updates annually and include the results in the Blue Crab Advisory Report.
  - CBSAC's management advice again emphasized improved estimates of commercial and recreational harvest. CBSAC also recommended developing a population simulation model for management strategy evaluation and a modeling effort to quantify environmental impacts on recruitment variability and productivity.
- The Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) is recommending that the jurisdictions accept the new reference points generated by the 2017 stock assessment update.
  - CBSAC will write a formal letter of recommendation to the Executive Committee and will invite members to the Fall CBSAC meeting to discuss and vote on the recommendation.
  - There was some discussion about the updated reference points being seen as less conservative, but there was general agreement that the reference points are simply an output of the data modeled. Less conservative reference points would indicate that the stock is doing better than it was previously.
- Decision: The 2020 Blue Crab Advisory Report was unanimously approved by the Executive Committee.
- The 2020 Advisory Report will be posted to the SFGIT website, and will be followed by a press release from the Bay Program on June 30.

➤ **Review and Approve Invasive Catfish Management Strategy**

- Mandy incorporated comments and edits from management jurisdictions from VA to PA to finalize the Invasive Catfish Management Strategy.
- Mandy gave a high-level overview of the feedback received and how it was addressed in the final document. Revisions included some language changes to the invasive catfish outcome and management approaches, additions and edits to the current/previous efforts and biological/ecological information, and removal of the workplan.
- The jurisdictions will have a final opportunity to review the management strategy and provide comments/edits before final approval by July 2.
- The final, approved Invasive Catfish Management Strategy will be posted to the SFGIT website and the Bay Program will likely coordinate a press release once the jurisdictions' advisory committees approve of the document. Advisory committee meetings will conclude by end of August.
- Mandy also introduced a management approach matrix to track the invasive catfish efforts and priorities of each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions were asked to complete the matrix and return it to Mandy by July 13.
  - Jurisdictions also need to identify clear management objectives. These should probably be established before releasing the strategy document to the public.
- Mandy will coordinate a virtual meeting with the Invasive Catfish Workgroup to discuss the role of the group moving forward and next steps. The completed jurisdiction matrices will inform this discussion; therefore, the meeting will likely take place in August.

➤ **Update on GIT funding project ideas and ranking**

- The SFGIT has put forward a total of 4 projects for GIT funding, 1 for some excess GIT funds from previous years and 3 for the FY20 opportunity.
  - The project put forward for the excess GIT funds would develop a spatially-explicit population simulation model that can be used to evaluate stock assessment model performance under various hypotheses. This modeling effort would lay the foundation for a management strategy evaluation to ensure the best framework is used to manage the blue crab population.
  - A forage indicator project was put forward for FY20 funds, which would use environmental drivers as indicators to assess the status of the forage base. This project would directly support the Forage Action Team's efforts to develop a suite of forage indicators.
  - An oyster project was also put forward for FY20 funds, which would expand site-specific denitrification monitoring and analysis in support of restoration best management practices (BMPs) by developing protocols to estimate nutrient removal by oysters.
  - The final project put forward for FY20 funds was focused on identifying and quantifying environmental factors that affect blue

crab productivity. This project would provide a better understanding of population dynamics, particularly the stock-recruitment relationship, to improve the stock assessment model.

➤ **Fish GIT Summer Meeting**

- The biannual summer Fish GIT meeting has been postponed to September due to COVID-19. The meeting will be virtual and planning is in progress. The theme of this year's "summer" meeting will be fish-habitat connections.