

**Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes**

September 22, 2017 from 1:00pm-3:00pm

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/sustainable_fisheries_git_executive_committee_conference_call_and_sturgeon

Participants

Allison Colden	Andrew Button	Ann Jennings	Brian Hopper
Capt. Robert Newberry	Christopher Davis	Dave Blazer	Denise Lovelady
Diane Pavek	Jacob Holtz	Julie Crocker	Kara Skipper
Katherine Wares	Luke Lyon	Lynn Fegley	Lynn Lankshear
Margot Cumming	Marty Gary	Monica Schenneman	Nancy Butowski
Pamela D'Angelo	Rob O'Reilly	Sara Coleman	Sheila Colwell

Presentation

➤ **Critical Habitat Designation for Atlantic Sturgeon**

- Presentation:
 - Julie Crocker, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Greater Atlantic Region Protected Resources provided a presentation on the recently finalized critical habitat designation for Atlantic Sturgeon; focusing on the purpose, process, and implications of the final rule. For more details, find the presentation [here](#).
- Description:
 - NOAA recently published the final rule, which designated critical habitat for Atlantic Sturgeon Distinct Population Segments (DPS) in the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay, Carolina and South Atlantic. For the Chesapeake Bay, this includes the Potomac River, Rappahannock River, York River System including Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers, James River, and the Nanticoke River/Marshyhope Creek. Maps of the critical habitat designation can be found starting at [slide 18](#).
 - Critical habitat was determined using a stepwise approach, based on the statutory and regulatory requirements: including the geographical area occupied by each DPS at the time of Endangered Species Act listing, the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the DPSs, and other factors.
 - The designation gives NOAA an opportunity to highlight important habitat for an endangered species and to ensure that federal activity does not negatively impact critical habitat, which is described as habitat essential for the species recovery.
- Discussion:
 - Critical habitat is not a refuge or preserve. Activities are not prohibited within critical habitat.
 - Federal agency actions may need to be modified if the action would destroy or adversely modify the critical habitat.
 - Oyster restoration activities under federal agencies in these areas would need an ESA section 7 consultation for approval.
 - NMFS does not anticipate any new restrictions on fishing activity, wild oyster harvest, ongoing oyster restoration activities, or boating activities.
 - Aquaculture activities are already subject to section 7 consultation, and NMFS will work with United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in their agreements.

- There is no ban on dredging; however federal dredging activity will need a section 7 consultation.
- To minimize or avoid delays, contact NMFS early in project planning and provide frequent updates on projects.
- **Actions:**
 - If you have questions regarding the critical habitat for Atlantic Sturgeon email Julie Crocker, Julie.crocker@noaa.gov or Kara Skipper, kara.skipper@noaa.gov.
 -

➤ **Strategy Review System**

- Description:
 - The Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (Fish GIT) presented progress, challenges, and requests for the Oyster, Forage, and Blue Crab Outcomes at the August 10 meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Program's [Management Board](#). The meeting is part of the Strategy Review System, a biennial review of Outcomes under the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.
 - Sean, Bruce and Kara reviewed the Blue Crab, Oyster and Forage Outcomes, focusing on the requests to the Management Board to advance progress to the outcomes.
- Discussion:
 - *Fish Habitat*
 - We are working with a small group to develop materials for WIP leads. These materials will provide guidance and suggested prioritization of Best Management Practices that positively impact fish habitat
 - We will conduct a workshop in Spring 2018 to further assess stressors to fish habitat and develop deliverables aimed at informing local officials and communities about the value of fish habitat and how to protect/restore fish habitat
 - *Blue Crab*
 - We will work with the Finance and Budget Workgroup to develop a financing strategy for future blue crab stock assessments
 - We will send out an email to the full GIT to confirm completion of an allocation-based fishery management outcome evaluation, present a finalized summary to the Management Board
 - *Oysters*
 - We will work with the Finance and Budget Workgroup to develop a financing strategy for future oyster restoration efforts including monitoring
 - We successfully competed for GIT funding to develop a cost-effective oyster restoration monitoring plan. The RFP for this study is currently being developed and will go online in October.
 - *Forage*
 - We successfully competed for GIT funding to develop a threshold for shorelines impact on forage species. The RFP for this study is currently being developed, and will go online in October.
 - A small team is developing communication materials to encourage the consideration of forage species in Watershed Implementation Plans and materials to communicate with the community on a local level

- The Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team will work with our team members and the Budget and Finance workgroup to develop a shallow water monitoring strategy

➤ **Catfish Symposium**

- Kara reviewed the draft agenda for the upcoming November 6-7 Invasive Catfish Symposium.
- Description:
 - The Invasive Catfish Task Force, which is a workgroup under the Sustainable Fisheries GIT will host a Catfish Symposium at the VCU Rice Rivers Center on November 6-7th.
 - Attendees will discuss the state of the science and status of the catfish fishery. Topics will include population dynamics, movement and habitat use, diet, and harvest. Space is limited.
- Discussion:
 - Ex Comm members were interested in discussing the USDA rule and found this to be a good opportunity to hear how the new inspection standards are affecting the different sectors of the catfish fishery.
 - Members noted that the current suggested stakeholder panel does not include a member from the Wild American Catfish Coalition, and advised that we reach out to them.
 - Reach out to CCA as well
 - Ex Comm members asked if there is additional information that senators would require to make an exception for the wild harvest in the Chesapeake Bay
- **Actions:**
 - Marty will email landings data to Sara Coleman. Sara will work with Marty and Rob to ensure that the landings data is accurate.
 - Marty will send contact information for Margaret Henderson (Wild American Catfish Coalition) to Sara
 - Bruce and Sara will inquire with the Invasive Catfish Task Force and Margaret Henderson about data needs for the senators

➤ **GIT Funding for FY17**

- Kara reviewed the GIT Funding proposals that successfully competed for FY17 funding.
- Description:
 - We received funding for two studies:
 - Development of a long-term, cost effective oyster restoration success metrics monitoring plan
 - Development of a Shoreline Condition threshold for forage species
- Discussion:
 - Next steps include:
 - Fish GIT staff are providing additional information to the Chesapeake Bay Trust to develop an RFP
 - RFPs are expected to go live for bidders in October, bids will be due in November, selection of winning bidders in December, projects commence in January 2018

➤ **Ex Comm Member Updates**

- Mike Bednarski was approved as a Sustainable Fisheries GIT member
- A decision on Cobia was delayed until September 28 in Charleston
 - We're expecting a date closer to 2018 when ASMFC will have complementary management
 - Most states are supportive of shifting full management to the ASMFC

- Maryland has submitted a proposal to open its historical commercial fishery for black drum in the Chesapeake Bay.
 - 10 fish per vessel per day; no more than 500 lbs. per day
 - VMRC will have their shad bycatch proposal; the previous proposal from 2006 is sun setting
-

Informational

➤ **Confirm upcoming Ex Comm meeting dates**

Monday, October 23, 1pm-3pm – Conference Call

Monday, November 20, 1pm-3pm – Conference Call

Monday-Tuesday, December 18-19 – Sustainable Fisheries GIT Meeting