

## **Fish Habitat Action Team - Revisiting Group Priorities (June, 2021)**

### **Group Priorities from 2019/2020:**

- Assessment/decision support tool
  - Agreement on and consistent use of decision support tools at different spatial scales to focus on doing the most good for the most fish
  - Regional assessment with local scale case studies targeting high priority areas based on determined criteria
- Quantifying habitat
  - Models on relationship between fish and habitat
  - Emphasis on connection between ecosystem stressors and that people impact fish habitat
  - BMP selection and fisheries management incorporate fish habitat information provided by the FHAT
- Guide funding and resource allocation
  - Maximize where resources are directed and effectiveness of actions
  - Funders of conservation/restoration projects informed on prioritized areas to invest in
- Collaboration
  - Guide decision making across multiple outcomes (stream health, water quality, etc.)
  - Common collaborative approach to identify habitat needs and streamline improvement process
  - Collaborate with regional councils and partnerships
- Local government considerations
  - Localities recognize and incorporate fish habitat values in planning exercises
  - Local government recognizing important role to incorporate fish habitat in local watershed planning process

**What is the value of the FHAT and how can our Action Team be more relevant:**

- Informing management
  - Promote development of and incorporation of habitat based reference points in assessments
  - Developing products relating habitat to fish productivity-recruitment that can inform stock assessments and identify habitat objectives
- New research
  - Use habitat assessment work underway to develop indicators that can be used, reviewed each year to communicate habitat condition and inform fish management
  - Prioritize new research to identify species assemblages specific to shallow-water habitat type
- Communications for localities
  - Development of communication strategies and products that can be presented to local governments to highlight importance of fish habitat and need to implement BMPs etc.
- USGS - map of fish species occupancy in non-tidal waters could be used as a template for freshwater mussels at some point in the future.

**What are other areas of focus for the FHAT moving forward:**

- Quantifying ecosystem services from habitats of interest
  - Develop methods for monitoring fish response at fish habitat restoration projects (living shorelines, SAV restoration etc.)
  - Quantify success of Living Shoreline approaches in terms of ecosystem services (specifically provision of forage & juv. commercial fish sps.)
  - Quantifying how ecosystem services change as habitat changes to understand what restoration can address
  - Quantification of fish habitat use of key species in tidal wetlands/marshes - Climate Resiliency and Wetland Workgroups have project to quantify marsh loss and assess marsh migration - it would be helpful to also have a better sense of the fish habitat co-benefit (Julie Reichert-Nguyen)
- Habitat connections to other areas of importance
  - Hypoxia monitoring
  - Invasive species
  - Interactions with aquaculture
  - Better understanding of shifting fish communities due to the impacts of climate change. As species migrate North, does the bay have the health metrics necessary to support survival