**Habitat Goal Implementation Team Spring 2016 Meeting**

**May 3-4, 2016**

**Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute**

**Front Royal, Virginia**

Participants

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Present** |  |
| Christine Conn, MD DNR (Chair) | Seth Coffman, TU |
| David Whitehurst, VA DGIF (Vice Chair) | Mary Gattis, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay |
| Jennifer Greiner, USFWS (Coordinator) | Mark Hepner, Timmons Group |
| Kyle Runion, CRC (Staff) | Tom Akre, SCBI |
| Gary Costanzo, VA DGIF | Cathy Haffner, PA Game Commission |
| Erin McLaughlin, MD DNR | Brooke Landry, MD DNR |
| Chris Burkett, VA DGIF | Diana Day, PA FBC |
| Cathy Haffner, PA Game Commission | Jeff Allenby, Chesapeake Conservancy |
| Kristin Saunders, UMCES | Steve Fuller, NALCC |
| Dave Grunzel, FWS | Carl Blankenship, Bay Journal |
| Tom Ihde, NOAA | Karen Terwilliger, Terwilliger Inc. |
| Steve Faulkner, USGS | Anthony Gonzon, DE DNREC |
| Scott Phillips, USGS | Zack Robbinson, University of Montana |
| Mike Slattery, USFWS | Emma Roach, OMB |
| Matt Kowlaski, CBF VA | Gary Costanzo, VA DGIF |
| Braden Keplinger, WV DGIF | Bill Harvey, MD DNR |
| David Thorne, WV DNR | Tom Dombrowski, Prince William County |
| Zoe Johnson, NOAA | Kristin Saacke Blunke, Headwaters LLC |
| Jake Reilly, NFWF | Alan Weaver, VA DGIF |
|  |  |
| **Remote** |  |
| Ann Timm, USDA FS | Lisa Holst, NY Dept. of Env. Conservation |
| Denise Clearwater, MDE | Serena McClain, American Rivers |
| Emilie Franke, ERT | Marian Norris, NPS |
| Howard Weinberg, UMCES | Rebecca Golden, MD DNR |
| Mark Biddle, DE DNR | Alicia Berlin, USGS |
| Kieran O’Malley, WV | Rachel Felver, Alliance for the CB |
| Mary Andrews, NOAA | Scott Scarfone, TU |
| Steve Strano, NRCS | Julie Devers, FWS |
| Lisa Moss, FWS | Nancy Butowski, MD DNR |
| Zachary Smith, ICPRB | Ann Jennings, CBC VA |
| Carol Petrow, EPA |  |

**Action and Decision Items**

**Near Term (May/June):**

* **Action:** Workgroup Chairs and Habitat GIT members should provide feedback to Zoe Johnson by May 26th on:
  + needs for specific climate research and data needs (WG Chairs)
  + workgroups willing to participate in a STAR project to analyze monitoring and modeling needs with respect to climate change (WG Chairs)
  + reviewing [goal attainment vector/risk](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/23815/6_shifting_backdrop_climate_context.pdf) (slide 19) (all interested HGIT members)
* **Action**: Breakout session discussion to be shared with the Sustainable Fisheries GIT by Whitehurst on June 2-3 and GIT coordinators/chairs by Saunders (May 31 GIT Chairs Meeting).
* **Action:** A leader for the Brook Trout Action Team will be solicited (interest from Steve Faulkner and Zak Robinson).
* **Action:** Greiner will follow up with Scott Scarfone (TU, Upper Gunpowder) regarding possible funding/support for a brook trout coordinator for the region.
* **Action:** Whitehurst will initiate request for NALCC and Appalachian LCC webinars for the GIT.
* **Action:** The NALCC is looking for participants for a workshop this June regarding aquatic connectivity and riparian restoration. Interested members are encouraged to contact Steve Fuller ([sfuller71@comcast.net](mailto:sfuller71@comcast.net)) for more information.
* **Action:** GIT Funding criteria are being proposed to the Management Board on 5/19, and HGIT leaders will share with the membership as soon as possible so they can start thinking about proposals.

**Mid-Term (July/August):**

* **Action:** Terwilliger will share the RSGCN sub-lists of “Chesapeake Challenge” species (the six Chesapeake watershed-only species of the common 27 species NE species).
* **Action**: Via Greiner and Reilly, the Habitat GIT will serve as a principal liaison to NFWF in integrating a range of new information and resources into the process and associated products.
* **Action**: Conn and Whitehurst will solicit a NRCS (via state soil and water District Conservationists, VA DCR, etc.) and a DOT member for the GIT.
* **Action**: Consider establishing two committees at HGIT level: Funding (Fuller) and Communication (Felver)
* **Action:** Greiner and Runion will explore use of a private group on Chesapeake Network as way for team to communicate more between meetings.
* **Action:** The HGIT should consider developing two 'cross-workgroup' proposals for 2016 GIT funding (wetlands/SAV/black duck and stream health/fish passage/brook trout).

**Longer Term (Sept/Oct):**

* Prepare for Fall HGIT meeting - November 1-2 or 2-3 in Pennsylvania? (Potential theme: Framework for implementing RCOAs in the Chesapeake)
  + **Action**: Conn will work with Hatcher Group, Felver, etc. to lead discussion on communication needs of the Bay Program and HGIT for our next meeting.
  + **Action**: NFWF’s refreshed Business Plan will be presented at the Fall 2016 Habitat GIT meeting (Reilly/Greiner)

**Minutes**

Team Vision, Christine Conn & David Whitehurst

* The GIT is at a point now where, with the Management Strategies and Biennial Workplans completed, we are ready to make a collective impact by working collaboratively towards implementation. The Chesapeake Bay Program partnership gives us the foundation and organization to align our actions to complement each other. Collective impact keys for success are a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization.
* Collaboration between states is vital for success at a landscape level regarding State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs). Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are working to advance conservation design science tools at regional levels to support conservation delivery at landscape scales. We hope to connect the Bay Program with each of the agencies represented in the watershed to make a collective impact of habitat conservation and restoration at the landscape level.

\*\*[Presentations are to be posted online](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/23815/)\*\*

State Wildlife Action Plans

Virginia, Chris Burkett

* The goal for our update was to make the Virginia SWAP plan more readable & approachable, more locally relevant, and more actionable.
  + Making the action plan locally relevant allowed this plan to have actions that can address identified issues and implement actions. The document is split into chapters for each of the planning district commissions (21 total, 15 within the Chesapeake Bay watershed). The local focus then allows the plan to be cut into smaller pieces to...
* We have identified 884 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). The single greatest challenge within this list is the loss of habitat, so the new plan focused on restoring and conserving habitat rather than specific stressors for species. Water quality and quantity have been identified as a major factor within habitat quality.
* Direct connections to CBP in Healthy Watersheds, Water Quality, Fish Passage, Wetlands, Stream Health, and Climate Resiliency
  + Identifying and conserving high quality watersheds to conserve and promote practices being used in those areas.
  + About 300 watersheds have water quality improvement plans, which provides a starting point for restoration work.
  + Virginia is using TNC’s Fish Passage Prioritization Tool to identify priority dams for removal as well as conducting culvert assessments and developing their inclusion in a decision support tool.
  + The Virginia wetlands catalog collects total wetland information and allows for data customization, providing a basis for conservation and restoration priorities.
  + A priority has been identified in conserving large patches of forest, primarily of mixed oak pine, with riparian areas and adjacent conserved lands as secondary qualifications to create an additive value of forest conservation.
  + Virginia has been working to incorporate climate change into the SWAP since 2008. The update reinforces that healthy populations in healthy habitats will have the best chance of adapting to changing climatic conditions.
* Successful implementation will depend on balancing conservation and restoration, research and monitoring, working with partners and demonstrating successes.

Maryland, Christine Conn

* Maryland has identified 610 SGCN and 59 key wildlife habitats. Conservation actions are linked to nine identified threats, and actions are prioritized using 7 different pieces of criteria.
* Chapters of interest include climate change, a summary of monitoring programs, and a performance monitoring framework.
* Geographic priorities are linked to Maryland’s Bionet, which identifies a continuum across MD land and water that have rare, diverse, and high quality habitat areas and GreenPrint, which incorporates high priority tier 1 and 2 areas and determines where we spend land conservation funds.
* Maryland state wildlife grant funding reaches over $600,000 annually and has funded projects relevant to this group such as Brook Trout modeling and monitoring, wetland inventories, and mapping the distribution of waterfowl.
* A public comment period for the Maryland SWAP closes May 8th, at which time the plan will be submitted to FWS.

Pennsylvania, Cathy Haffner & Diana Day

* The vision for the Pennsylvania SWAP includes healthy, sustainable native wildlife populations, natural communities, and habitats in Pennsylvania.
  + Six goals guide the work: conserving native wildlife and habitat, basing conservation decisions on science, contributing to range-wide conservation of SGCN, strengthen Pennsylvania’s capacity to conserve native wildlife, improving cooperation between partners, and educating citizens.
* 664 species are identified as SGCN, and for many of those functional species accounts were developed.
* A Conservation Opportunity Area Tool is currently being developed and should be released in about a year.
* The Pennsylvania SWAP is closely aligned with the following Habitat outcomes: Fish Passage, Brook Trout, Wetlands, and Black Duck. SAV and Stream Health have partial alignments.

Delaware, Anthony Gonzon

* Most of Delaware’s efforts are focused in the Delaware Bay watershed, but there are over 450,000 acres of Chesapeake Bay drainage and some significant efforts are taking place in areas such as the Nanticoke River watershed.
  + A Nanticoke River Restoration Plan was developed in 2009 to restore channelized streams to a more natural channel design.
* Habitat priorities are identified in the SWAP, such as Inland Xeric Sand Forests, Atlantic White Cedar Wetlands, Freshwater Tidal Wetlands, and Freshwater SAV.
* Connections with the Habitat GIT can be found in the SWAP with the Fish Passage, SAV, Black Duck, and Stream Health outcomes. Examples of work in each of these areas can be found in the presentation.
* The next step with the SWAP is web-enabling the plan to be able to manipulate and develop actions based on specific situations. A water resources registry such as Maryland’s is of interest for development in Delaware.

New York, Lisa Holst

* New York’s recently approved action plan has been condensed to 105 pages and 479 SGCN. Alignment with the Chesapeake Bay is best shown in activities the Upper Susquehanna and downstream rivers in the watershed.
* The Upper Susquehanna Conservation Alliance is working on a grant program for riparian restoration to be implemented in the next year or so.
* The SWAP took an approach to what can be accomplished in the next 10 years by working with partners rather than identifying specific, on the ground actions.

West Virginia, Kieran O’Malley,

* The first West Virginia SWAP emphasized inventory and monitoring, while the 2015 plan focuses on conservation actions. The plan covers a 10 year span, but we intend to update the plan at the end of each year. Funding and management actions are targeted to prevent population decline to the point of endangerment.
* Over 1000 species are identified as SGCN, and 21/20 major stressors on terrestrial/aquatic populations and habitats. Conservation actions are linked to 21 different conservation focus areas throughout the state.
* The next step is to develop a plan for opportunities and partners within conservation focus areas over this summer. Outreach efforts are also in our attention.
* Conservation actions identified in the SWAP:
  + Promote practices for restoring riparian habitat and reducing sedimentation and nutrient runoff from farms, coordinating with the active land trust and farmland protection community to conserve habitat, and engage public landowners and conservation agencies.

Climate Change and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed: A Shifting Backdrop, Zoe Johnson

* The general effects of climate change are well documented and many habitats will see negative impacts.
  + Loss of habitats such as wetlands, SAV and high quality cold water resource areas, Shoreline erosion is of concern (Maryland loses about 580 acres per year to this issue), and Bay acidification can affect marine life.
  + Coastal communities will be impacts with sea level rise and the loss of cultural and economic resources.
* STAC (Science and Technical Advisory Committee) and STAR (Science and Technical Assessment and Reporting) are studying impacts and responses to climate change.
  + A recent STAC workshop has found that: the NE US has gotten warmer and wetter, with more intense precipitation, these trends will continue in the coming decades, there is a large sensitivity to emissions scenarios at mid-century, and natural variability is important, particularly for precipitation.
* The Climate Resiliency Goal in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement is very broad, which can be helpful in establishing various priorities. Outcomes include Monitoring and Assessment, and Adaptation.
  + These can fit in nearly any other outcome. Most others at least mention climate change. Key management actions are listed in the presentation.
  + The Climate Resiliency workplan has 108 performance targets, many of which are specific, on the ground actions. Others are collective actions, including data needs and a research agenda.
  + STAC has helped to define and establish critical research needs going forward in the field of climate change.
  + State signatories have included their research work in an appendix, which is a living document.
* Black Duck, Brook Trout, Wetlands, Stream Health, SAV, and others were identified as having a high qualitative factor of risk due to climate change.
* The Wetland Workgroup is participating in a facilitated workshop to develop a cross-goal climate resiliency analysis and decision-making matrix through CBP GIT funding.
* The SAV Workgroup is participating in a STAC workshop with the Blue Crab and Oyster workgroups titled “An analytical framework for aligning Chesapeake Bay Program monitoring efforts to support climate change impact and trend analyses and adaptive management.”
* A quarterly newsletter titled Chesapeake Resiliency gives a snapshot of new tools, data, and information. [Subscribe here](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/groups/group/climate_change_workgroup).
* Coastal areas are often prioritized, but there is a recognized need from inland activities. The Climate Resiliency workgroup would like to see increased participation from inland states such as New York and West Virginia. Increased participants should contact Johnson.
* **Action:** Habitat GIT members should provide feedback to Zoe Johnson on:
  + reviewing goal attainment vector/risk
  + needs for specific climate research and data needs
  + workgroups willing to participate in a STAR project to analyze monitoring and modeling needs with respect to climate change

Northeast SWAP Roll Up, Karen Terwilliger,

* SWAPs have seen great growth since their inception with the 2005 baseline. The reassessment in 2015 allows us to have comprehensive overviews of species and habitat concerns for each state. Comparing and combining state plans helps with a landscape scale view of conservation needs.
* The final Northeast SWAP is anticipated to be submitted in the summer of 2016. Over the next two years, Terwilliger Consulting, Inc. will review and analyze SWAP data and expect a final report by December 2017.
  + To prepare for the revisions, a lexicon of common terminology was developed and commonly utilized for each SWAP.
    - Hierarchal system used to include user-friendly, broad categories as well as specific habitat titles.
  + The project scope includes identifying shared SGCN, key habitats, priority threats, and conservation actions.
    - To accomplish this, the short-term goal is to review and organize large volume data. The long-term goal is to use SWAP data from the 14 NE states analytically.
    - Species trends were tracked from 1999 to present to identify the most regionally imperiled and most data deficient species.
      * There are 2950 total SGCN species; 14 are listed in all 14 SWAPS (four of those not listed at all in 2005).
        + These will be sorted by species, habitat, threat, and action, and will be sortable by the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

**Action:** Terwilliger will share the RSGCN sub-list of “Chesapeake Challenge” species.

* + - Threats and actions were identified using the common lexicon and were identified at three levels with a high, medium, or low ranking. Climate change, invasives, and disease were often cited as regional threats.
      * SWAP Rollup Climate Change Synthesis will present a review of climate concerns, with highlighted risks and priority actions.
* Challenges over the next ten years include keeping SWAP partners aware of new science, conservation decision-making involving multiple threats, and opportunities to collaborate regionally.
* Fuller: RCOAs are focused on habitat needs with four major components: core opportunity areas, RSGCN and habitat opportunities, restoration opportunities, and connectivity opportunities.
* Slattery: A complementary counterpart to the TMDL can be described as a minimum wildlife habitat need to show how we can support sustainable populations for fish and wildlife species. The Appalachian LCC is a vital partner in transforming a regional scale of habitat need to a Chesapeake scale.

Break-out sessions

* Participants were asked to consider the following:
  + *What are our shared priorities (species/geographies)?*
  + *What are key resources (funding/science tools/programs) available to us?*
  + *How can we best align these to implement our shared priorities?*
  + *How can this team help implement the Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas?*
* Discussion:
  + Regional work is obviously vital and requires attention of this team; there are other partners that work on this level whom with we can collaborate with such as the Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species and Climate Science Centers.
    - Chesapeake-only species are of interest to the Habitat GIT as Bay partners will drive their future.
    - Energy infrastructure is an addition to threats that require regional level response (previously identified as climate, disease, and invasive species).
    - An endeavor for the Habitat GIT to undertake before our Fall 2016 meeting (November) is to scale RCOA information down to local levels in terms of decision filters and identify opportunities for collaboration between partners.
      * Project factors must include site size & connectivity, feasibility (landowner willingness and political), and cost.
        + Education and outreach can increase landowner willingness.
      * Working with local officials and the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) to deliver information in ways that can lead to meaningful decisions.
      * This overarching, scale-able landscape vision would be extremely helpful to have in order to be able to geographically overlay focus areas and potential projects. Keeping science and monitoring involved is necessary for changing priorities (STAR & STAC).
        + Some goal teams have geographic priorities and developing these for the others is a critical step (Saunders).
  + Important to optimize water quality efforts (as mandated by TMDL) by combining with habitat benefits and BMPs to maximize ecological lift.
    - Protecting aquatic resources and water quality is vital for habitats conservation.
    - Specific habitats such as riparian forest can easily fit in this collaboration. As mentioned in multiple SWAPs, aquatic species make up the majority of SGCNs.
  + Other funding sources such as in-fee-lieu programs and mitigation programs (Farm Bill cost share, DOT) can be utilized with habitat benefits in mind.
* **Action**: Breakout session discussion to be shared with the Fisheries GIT by Whitehurst and GIT coordinators/chairs by Saunders.

Results of Habitat GIT Funded Projects

Patch-Scale Brook Trout Monitoring in Chesapeake Bay Headwaters, Zachary Robinson

* The goal of this project was to develop a large monitoring program to track occupancy and status of brook trout to assess management successes and lead to efficient management actions. Population estimates require extensive monitoring. Patch-scale genetic metrics can reduce required effort in that you can sample less frequently and get more accurate results.
  + Patch size can overcome number of patches in importance to brook trout.
  + About 200,000 acres of brook trout habitat are required to meet the 2025 goal of 8% increased occupancy. In the field of brook trout, there is a constant struggle between conservation and restoration of brook trout habitat.
  + Recommendation to patch-scale monitoring is to split a patch into three different sites in order to find better representation of the genetic output of the stream. Each state should establish target patches and return to a five year sampling cycle. eDNA can determine occupancy (at lower time and cost commitments) for brook trout and other species, opening opportunities for collaboration.

Culvert Assessments, Julie Devers (MD) and Lisa Moss (VA)

* The North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) has an objective to improve aquatic connectivity across a thirteen state region, from Maine to West Virginia with a focus on flood resiliency and fish passage. The NAACC has developed common protocols and training, a regional database, and a tool to identify high priority watersheds. More information about NAACC can be found at [www.streamcontinuity.org](http://www.streamcontinuity.org).
* GIT Funding has been provided to continue road stream crossing assessments in Virginia and Maryland.
  + There are over 30,000 road stream crossings in Maryland, so priorities must be set.
  + Various online tools help identify flood risk, dam removal prioritization, and fish habitat prioritization. We are working to include culverts into some of these tools.
  + Assessments include starting at the lowest site in a system and progressing upstream. Over 50 metrics of data are collected, including inlet/outlet dimensions and drop, substrate and water depth and width. The information obtained is then entered into an online database and is available to the public on [www.streamcontinuity.org](http://www.streamcontinuity.org). The system generates an aquatic organism passage (AOP) score of full, reduced, or no AOP.
  + The focus within Virginia takes place at the Susquehanna and James River drainages. 1,303 site assessments have been completed and entered into the NAACC database to date.
    - The Virginia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office would also like to create a stream-road crossing inventory for the York River system.
* Question for a Fish Passage Workgroup discussion/recommendation: Is there value of adding West Virginia, New York, and/or Delaware to the road-stream crossings work?

Agricultural Landowner Assessment, Erin McLaughlin

* As the Wetlands Workgroup recognizes significant progress must be made to achieve the wetland outcome of 85,000 restored acres by 2025, it was decided that barriers to wetland restoration must be studied in order to more efficiently implement wetland projects. A significant barrier is agricultural landowner attitudes towards wetland restoration.
  + Agricultural landowners of over 40 acres not already enrolled in a wetland program from Maryland’s eastern shore and southern central Pennsylvania were surveyed by mail and phone, and focus group sessions were facilitated to test attitudes, expectations, and outreach techniques.
  + Barriers were described as a lack of information/advocacy, privacy and trust concerns, financial uncertainty, need for flexibility, and difficulties reaching the audience.
    - A simple adjustment that can change the attitude of landowners is using the term “wildlife pond” rather than “wetland,” which has developed a negative connotation.
  + Concerns of the audience differed between locations. Delmarva residents are worried about water impairment, while Pennsylvania landowners are concerned with erosion and flash flooding. Encroaching development was a common concern.
  + The level of trust for various agencies and other information sources was surveyed. Soil conservation districts and extension offices were among the most highly trusted, while retailers and the state department of the environment were among the least.
  + 40% of landowners were not aware of wetland programs while only 29% have participated or investigated.
  + Improved water quality, rental payment, and wildlife habitat were all major reasons landowners identified for being interested in these programs.

Stream Health Baseline Re-Assessment, Zachary Smith

* The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) is working on updating and refining the 2011 Chessie BIBI (Basin-wide Index of Biotic Integrity) for Chesapeake Bay Program assessment purposes.
  + A master taxa list has been developed with 222 families and 760 genera. Common attributes (municipal waste tolerance values, functional feeding groups, and habits) as well as EPA attributes (respiratory type, voltinism, and specific stressors) are assigned to each taxa.
  + Sites are classified within bioregions (as done in the 2011 BIBI) as reference, near reference, minor degradation, moderate degradation, severe degradation, and mixed (insufficient data). Degradation scores based on specific conductivity, rapid habitat assessment, and pH determine the classification of a site.
    - Various approaches are available as options for analyzing metric sensitivity, redundancy, and scoring. A confusion matrix accuracy, pairwise confusion matrix accuracy, and threshold gradient for the three analyses, respectively, delivers the greatest separation between site classifications, and thus appear to be the best option.
  + Index resolution can be delivered at a low, moderate, or high resolution.
    - Volunteer and in situ identification at the order level will suffice for low resolution.
    - Moderate resolution is at a family level index, and is applicable where studies with limited funding or minimal identification experience.
    - A genus level identification is high resolution and can be expected from studies with extensive funding and identification experience.
* Ongoing analyses include testing for agency differences within each bioregion, dealing with unidentified taxa, and comparing 2011 and 2016 BIBI indices.

Black Duck Habitat Prioritization, Tim Jones (recorded)

*Presentation not played at meeting due to time constraints. It is posted on the event webpage for full review. Questions should be directed to tim\_jones@fws.org.*

* The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture’s priority is to provide wintering habitat for black ducks. Projects are opportunistic and the habitat delivery strategy is un-stated.
  + A decision support tool is under development to provide strategic guidance on where black duck restoration and conservation projects will most efficiently achieve Chesapeake Bay and ACJV goals.
    - Black Ducks within the ACJV jurisdiction are under threat to urban growth and the increase of shoreline infrastructure. Climate change can also reduce available habitat area. These threats will be acknowledged in the decision support tool. Various projections are available for these threats.
    - A bioenergetics (food availability) framework will be the basis of the model.
      * Currently, the model does not account for other species competing for black duck food or variability in wetland quality. These additions are priority next steps.
    - The tool will point out areas that have high energy values that currently aren’t protected but may be susceptible to urbanization in the future. The tool is using HUC12 watersheds (2231 total) across three time steps, current, 2050, and 2075.

Integrating Habitat GIT Priorities: Funding to Support Regional Collaborative Work, Jake Reilly

* The National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) has multiple funding opportunities to support regional collaborative work for species and habitat restoration. NFWF’s partnership with EPA’s Chesapeake Bay Program Office supports the CBP partnership through restoration and implementation grants, technical assistance grants, and networking and information-sharing opportunities. [www.nfwf.com/chesapeake](http://www.nfwf.com/chesapeake)
  + There are two programs within restoration and implementation grants, with annual total funding of about $12 million: the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants (INSR), and the Small Watershed Grants (SWG). The RFP for these grants is released in early March, with a deadline of early May.
  + Technical assistance grants provide access to project specific technical services. In 2016, restoration/stewardship and stormwater based applications are still open, while agriculture has closed.
* The [Chesapeake Bay Business Plan](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/23815/reilly_chesapeake_bay_business_plan.pdf) allows NFWF to define strategies and actions to achieve measureable conservation outcomes. Specific watersheds are targeted based on geographical needs, and cost estimates for achieving these outcomes are included. This helps determine funding priorities and define NFWF’s role within the broad watershed restoration effort.
  + Much of the Business Plan was developed using the 2010 Executive Order. The 2014 Watershed Agreement provides an opportunity to refine the plan and NFWF would like to engage the Habitat GIT in this refresh in the summer of 2016 to include the best available science and most pressing priorities, by both species and geographies.
    - Example needs – establish new conservation outcomes for black duck and deploying next generation GIS and decision support tools.
    - **Action**: The Habitat GIT can serve as a principal liaison to NFWF in integrating a range of new information and resources into the process and associated products (Workgroup Chairs 🡪 Greiner 🡪 Reilly).
    - Better alignment of the SWAPs and the Habitat GITs priorities can be developed via this process to leverage existing funding where shared priorities are found.
    - Reilly to present the refreshed Chesapeake Bay Business Plan to the Habitat GIT at their Fall meeting.

Facilitating Local Government Implementation, Richard Baugh

* The scale of government and time availabilities makes engaging federal, state, and local government extremely difficult. Communication between scales of government and localities is not perfect and getting multiple municipalities on the same page can be challenging; finding common interests is vital.
* Keeping environmental issues simple is important when communicating to constituents and local government leaders. Repeating the important, simple issues can reinforce these key ideas.
  + Government boards are happy to host educational presentations that provide opportunities to disseminate useful information. Coordination is with the city/town managers/administrators, who are key players in the dynamic of providing information to elected officials.
* Grants are very important as local governments generally do not have money for issues such as environmental. Grassroots support can prioritize those (environmental) issues.

Reflecting Back

* The GIT Funding process has been rushed in the past years; CBT and CBP are working on improving that process. We have relied on workgroup chairs to offer priority needs but are open to other processes that may promote more cross-workgroup proposals.
  + GIT Funding criteria are being proposed to the Management Board on 5/19, and HGIT leaders will share with the membership as soon as possible so they can start thinking about proposals. Proposals should be accepted starting in June-July.
  + The GIT should consider developing two 'cross-workgroup' proposals for 2016 GIT funding (wetlands/SAV/black duck and stream health/fish passage/brook trout).
* Big thanks to our former leadership, Mike Slattery and Jana Davis!

Next Steps

* **Action**: Conn and Whitehurst will solicit a NRCS and DOT member for the GIT.
* **Action**: A leader for the Brook Trout Action Team will be solicited (interest from Steve Faulkner and Zak Robinson).
  + **Action**: Greiner will speak with Scott Scarfone (TU, Upper Gunpowder) regarding possible funding for a brook trout coordinator for the region.
* Fall meeting- November 1-2 or 2-3 in Pennsylvania? (Theme: Framework for implementing RCOAs?)
  + **Action**: Conn will lead the discussion of communication needs of the Bay Program and GIT topic for our next meeting.
  + **Action**: NFWF’s refreshed Business Plan will be presented at the Fall 2016 Habitat GIT meeting.
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* **Action:** The NALCC is looking for participants for a workshop this June regarding aquatic connectivity and riparian restoration. Contact Steve Fuller for more information.
* **Action:** Whitehurst will initiate request for NALCC and Appalachian LCC webinars for the GIT.