



Chesapeake Bay Program

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Habitat GIT Spring 2025 Meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 10:00-1:00 ET

[Link to the Meeting Materials](#)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, UPDATES

Presenters: *Gina Hunt (HGIT Chair) & Chris Guy (HGIT Coordinator)*

Beyond 2025 Update

- In the phase of developing outcome language for Management Board consideration at their retreat on [May 7th](#) and [May 8th](#).
- Outcome structure now includes the broad language with the associated targets as bullets.
- There was the potential for 3 new outcomes
 - Braiding Knowledge – not going to become an outcome
 - Soil Health – not going to become an outcome
 - Sustainable Oyster Fishery – will become an outcome
- There hasn't been a decision on structure, but one consideration is combining habitat and fisheries into one goal.
- This work will continue until a decision is made in December.

Federal Partners Update

- Ken Hyer with USGS gave an update on how things have changed and how they might impact USGS's work with CBP & Habitat GIT.

Habitat GIT Strategic Framework Update

- Further updates to the [HGIT Strategic Framework](#) are on pause until after the Agreement is revised.

Indicators Update

- By December 2025 we want to have the HGIT indicators updated and accurate on [Chesapeake Progress](#).

WORKGROUP UPDATES

Brook Trout – *Dan Goetz (MD DNR) & Katie Ombalski (Woods & Waters)*

- GIT funded project with Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture and Trout Unlimited looked at habitat tracking and brook trout occupancy and found a 0.5% net increase in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Proposed Outcome Language



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- Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay watershed by increasing:
 - Occupancy in stronghold and persistent patches by 1% and no net loss in other patches by 2035
 - Abundance at 10 (2 per state) sentinel monitoring sites within priority patches by 2035
 - Resiliency within stronghold and persistent patches by reducing identified threats by XX% through BMP implementation by 2035
- STAC Workshop: To work with local jurisdictions to implement on the ground projects for brook trout conservation.
 - Workshop Focused Geographies
 - PA: Potter and Clearfield counties.
 - MD: Garrett, Baltimore, and Carroll counties.
 - Workshop Dates/Locations
 - PA Workshop:
Lakeview Lodge in DuBois, PA on May 29th.
 - MD Workshop:
McDaniel College in Westminster, MD on June 3rd.
 - Workshop Focus
 - Hear from BMP manager experts at the county, state, and federal levels and science and technical experts on how to better work together and scale up brook trout conservation on the county level in the stronghold and persistent patches.

Discussion

- **Gina Hunt**: It seems like the STAC Workshop fits perfectly with the resiliency target in the proposed outcome. Was that connection planned?
 - **Dan Goetz**: Yes, we adjusted the language after the STAC workshops were already planned. The STAC workshop will allow us to say how we can accomplish the target efficiently and effectively in the areas that matter the most.

Wetlands & Black Duck – *Pam Mason (retired), Tess Danielson (DOEE), Nancy Schumm (City of Gaithersburg), Alicia Berlin (USGS), Ben Lewis (DWR)*

- Plan to update the wetlands outcome to separate out tidal and non-tidal targets and integrate waterbirds as part of the outcome.
- Proposed Language
 - Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and cultural benefits.



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- [University of Michigan SEAS Report](#)
 - The master's students conducted interviews and literature research to understand current perceptions of non-tidal wetlands, identify barriers to communication and participation in restoration projects, and develop a targeted strategy to better engage local stakeholders.
- Terminology White Paper
 - Objective to define wetland terms to have a shared understanding for use in CBP wetland outcome tracking and communications.
 - Primary author Linh Nguyen, Intern from Franklin and Marshall College.
 - Wetland best management practices were organized into creation, restoration, and enhancement categories for both tidal and non-tidal wetland types.
 - Final draft will be released to the workgroup in July.
- National Wetlands Inventory Update- NFWF Small Watersheds Grant
 - Funding request to update **piedmont region of Maryland**.
 - Ducks Unlimited partnering with City of Gaithersburg.

Discussion

- **Faren Wolter:** What is the fundamental difference between restoring and enhancing acres? Clarity helps to fund appropriate projects.
 - **Tess Danielson:** That is what the paper is getting at. Restoring is usually used when the land was once a wetland and creation is when it was not.
- **Chris Guy:** I want to point out that the SEAS students and the Franklin & Marshall intern did their work for free! Any workgroup can get access if they submit proposals. [SEAS website](#) & [F&M website](#).

Fish Passage – *Ray Li (USFWS) & Jim Thompson (MD DNR)*

- Jim Thompson is stepping down as chair but will stay on until there is a replacement.
- Membership
 - Trying to make the workgroup more relevant to other jurisdictions that aren't actively engaged.
 - Transitioning from migratory fish to holistically consider the aquatic community throughout the watershed has led to membership increase from WV, NY, & DE.
 - Broadened focus to include AOP work at road stream crossings.
- [Spring Workgroup Meeting](#)
 - Invited the brook trout folks to talk about opportunities for cross outcome work.
 - Brainstormed social science ideas for the NFWF Small Watershed Grants program.
 - Heard updates from jurisdictions with transformational projects.
 - VA – Ashland Mill Dam removal project along the South Anna River.
 - MD – Feasibility study for Daniels Dam along the Patapsco.



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- PA – Nature like fishway being constructed at York Haven Dam along the Susquehanna.
- 2025 Agreement
 - Increase outcome from 132 miles to 150 miles every 2 years.
 - Broaden the scope to target the full aquatic community and nonphysical barriers to fish passage.
 - Proposed Language: Improving habitat, water quality, and creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams by removing barriers to restore aquatic organism passage and connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years.

Discussion

- **Denise Clearwater:** In your consideration for nonphysical barriers where does flow fit in? Were you thinking about urban watershed with higher flows or projects that may reduce flows in a channel?
 - **Ray Li:** Most conversations so far have focused on the acid mine drainage issue. Flow did come up, but we are figuring out what the workgroup's role should be or if we have a role. If you have any comments we welcome that at our next [workgroup meeting](#).
 - **Nick Staten:** Hopefully this broader language will allow partners to identify co-benefits and include fish passage in project proposals like toxic reduction, thermal barrier mitigation, and stream restoration, like you mentioned Denise. With funding sources pulling priorities from the bay program, hopefully focusing fish passage outcome language on a broader aquatic community and non-physical barriers will strengthen project proposals.
- **Kristin Saunders:** Speaking of acid mine drainage, this STAC technical review has just been completed and may be of interest so some of you....[STAC Technical Review Report: Quantifying Nutrient Load Reductions for Restored Stream Segments in AMD-impacted Watersheds](#).

SAV – Brooke Landry (MD DNR)

- In 2023 SAV acreage in the Bay was up by 8%.
- Shallow Water Habitat Sentinel Site Program Development
 - GIT funded project – contracted to Green Fin Studios.
 - If interested in joining the workshop send Brooke Landry (brooke.landry@maryland.gov) an email.
- Protecting Chesapeake Bay SAV Given Changing Hydrologic Conditions: Priority SAV Area Identification and Solutions Development
 - GIT Funded Project – contracted to Tetra Tech.
 - Final report can be found on the [SAV WG webpage](#).



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- SAV Watchers
 - Volunteer led program.
 - Train the trainer events coming up in the summer.
 - Can subscribe to the newsletter [here](#).
- SAV Data Dashboard is getting updated.
- SAV Mitigation and Monitoring Workshop
 - Convened the SAV workgroup and regulatory partners to identify in-kind SAV mitigation and monitoring requirements, success criteria, and performance standards for SAV mitigation projects.
- Proposed updated SAV Outcome
 - Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the ultimate outcome of 196,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide necessary for a restored Bay.

Discussion:

- **Gina Hunt:** What's the next step for the BMP project? How do we get the information out?
 - **Brooke Landry:** The only plan right now is to present the results to the Bay Program folks, like water quality and land use. If you have ideas for that would love to hear them. It goes hand in hand with the shallow water habitat sentinel site program.
- **Kristin Saunders:** Brooke, related to sentinel site monitoring, are you talking to the other goal teams to see if they have interest/need in being involved in the STAC workshop.
 - **Brooke Landry:** We're getting there. Green Fin Studios is collecting names now. I'll suggest that they scour the CBP org list and workgroup chairs to get contact info. Or if anyone has a handy dandy list they want to send me, that would be great too.
- **Nick Staten:** Can brook trout be worked into the Shallow Water Sentinel Site program?
 - **Brooke Landry:** Yes. Based on the amount of funding provided there might be an argument for tidal focus, but we want nontidal folks included.
- **Brian Callum:** Thinking about shared resources, many of the frequently hit aquaculture farms are shallow and may be useful for sentinel monitoring as well.
- **Christina Garvey:** Brooke - one of the targets for the updated Fish Habitat outcome is to develop a shallow water habitat suitability score for the 92 tidal bay segments. I am not sure if the shallow water sentinel sites could be part of a model for habitat suitability scoring? Or if this project could help with the sentinel project? May be worth a conversation. Let me know if this seems relevant and I can help facilitate connections.
 - **Kristin Saunders:** Fisheries was one of the agencies I had in mind when I asked the question about what other goal teams are included.



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Stream Health – *Alison Santoro (MD DNR), Sara Weglein (MD DNR)*

- Update on GIT funding project
 - 2022 GIT Funded Project: Literature Review: Building Climate Resilience in Stream Restoration Practices
 - Preliminary results were shared during the [April Stream Health Workgroup Meeting](#).
 - 2024 GIT Funded Project: Phase 3B - Data Review and Development of the Multimetric Stream Health Indicator
 - An update will be provided at the [June Stream Health Workgroup Meeting](#).
- Proposed updated outcome language
 - Continually improve and protect stream health and ecological integrity, including their living resources, functions, and ecosystem services for people, throughout the watershed using sound science to inform land management, planning, and conservation.
 - Improve health and ecological integrity of at least 3% of non-tidal stream miles every 6 years.
 - Annually increase the stream miles protected by X% per year or X% over 10 years.
 - Develop multi-metric stream health indicators to complement the Chesapeake Basin-wide Index of Biological Integrity (Chessie BIBI) by 202X.
 - Healthy Watersheds New Measurable Target TBD.
 - Added protection and conservation & clarified what “stream health” means.

Discussion

- **Peter Tango:** Thank you for the Stream Health Outcome update. Question - robust outcome language should have clear definition of the words we use within it. Will we somewhere have clear, concise, easily understood 1) definitions of ecological integrity, health, and 2) is there a date of expectation for the new indicators to be available and in use? If not for 10 more years, should we consider indicator development an activity rather than an agreement commitment in an output?
 - **Alison Santoro:** We can better define these terms in the management strategy, or whatever the equivalent is in the new structure new year. That won't be available for the public comment period, but we are thinking about it.
 - **Sara Weglein:** Don't know if we will get more specific than including “living resources, functions, and ecosystem services for people”. We are on phase 3B and phase 3C should be the final phase. The end date will depend on the future of GIT funding.



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CHANGING OUR MINDSETS: THINKING LIKE A NETWORK

Presenters: Gina Hunt (HGIT Chair) & Chris Guy (HGIT Coordinator)

- When the HGIT met last Spring, we had a presentation from USFWS that described network thinking, and there was an evaluation on where we are and where we would like to be across the “Continuum of Collaboration” in the Habitat GIT.
- When we met in the Fall, we had participants provide suggestions on how to get there on the spectrum.
- Today we are going to briefly revisit those details, discuss next steps, change suggestions into actions, and prioritize.
- Key Challenges
 - **Siloed Work:** Limited cross-GIT communication and collaboration; updates often lack depth.
 - **Infrequent Interaction:** Too few joint meetings and opportunities for real-time exchange. Large meetings lack interaction.
 - **Low Engagement:** Limited in-person participation, unclear collaborative roles, and inconsistent commitment.
 - **Communication Gaps:** Minimal info sharing, lack of shared liaisons, and inaccessible updates.
 - **Structural Barriers:** Decisions often top-down, jurisdictional disparities, and resource overlap.
 - **Remote Work Impact:** Harder to build trust, relationships, and collective momentum.
- Opportunities for Action
 - **Enhance Communication:** Appoint liaisons, increase summary updates, and foster regular informal check-ins.
 - **Foster Cross-GIT Collaboration:** Thematic think tanks, co-benefit projects, and targeted workshops. Focus on concrete cross-cutting challenges.
 - **Build Community:** Prioritize in-person engagement, shared events, and social connection (e.g., lunch & learns, annual conferences).
 - **Support Collaboration:** Align goals, provide recognition and funding support.
 - **Increase Visibility & Access:** Share agendas, outputs, and meeting outcomes broadly; utilize reminders and shared calendars.
- Mentimeter responses can be [found here](#).

Discussion:

- **Greg Noe:** A STAC workshop to brainstorm and discuss these ideas could be effective...
- **Nick Staten:** Ecosystem services seem like an obvious way to break down silos and find connections across GITs.



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- **Gina Hunt:** Factsheets for ecosystem services were developed over 5 years ago that highlight what the ecosystem services are to put them into CAST. It's an idea to look at where ecosystem services overlap.
- **Rachel Felver:** STAC Ecosystem Services Workshop 2024:
<https://www.chesapeake.org/stac/document-library/using-ecosystem-services-to-increase-progress-toward-and-quantify-the-benefits-of-multiple-cbp-outcomes/>.
- **Pam Mason:** STAC Wetlands Ecosystem Services Report:
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/publications/evaluating-an-improved-systems-approach-to-wetland-crediting-consideration-of-wetland-ecosystem-services>.
- **Katie Brownson:** If anyone is interested in reading more about ecosystem service conceptual models, here is some info from the [National Ecosystem Service Partnership](#).
- **Gina Hunt:** With or without a cross-GIT coordinator, we should be able to do these actions. We can still make improvements.
- **Pam Mason:** The new VIMS tool- the living shoreline benefits evaluator. That framework can be repeated because to crosses water quality, habitats, and fisheries are all in that tool.
- **Jeremy Hanson:** The weekly Bay Brief includes funding opportunities.
 - **Rachel Felver:** [Here](#) is how to sign up for Bay Brief.
 - **Alison Santoro:** NWF has a [funding database](#).
 - **Rachel Felver:** We post only funding opportunities offered through CBP-related organizations on [the website](#), but Bay Brief has several.
- **Pam Mason:** Before the wetlands workgroup got big- we did live intros. Maybe a quick engagement game.
- **Alison Santoro:** This is a super cheesy corporate thing, but we did the ["gift of the goose"](#) for a few years.
- **Tess Danielson:** What about satellite in-person locations in addition to Annapolis?
- **Gina Hunt:** It takes more time and more work to do collaboration. Do WG chairs ask WG members to help develop meeting agendas? WG chairs need that feedback to build agendas that are more meaningful.
- **Kristin Saunders:** Taking a page from the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, rather than just making people aware of funding opportunities, offer to be a convener for conversations about co-development of proposals and finding connections with potential partners. If you are able to successfully strengthen your membership's ability to get funding, you will automatically increase membership participation.
 - **Gina Hunt:** Where can we have those conversations about funding? Would it be a special meeting at the beginning of funding season or building time into Habitat GIT meetings to discuss?



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ATTENDEES (82): Gina Hunt (MD DNR), Chris Guy (USFWS), Nick Staten (CRC), Christina Garvey (CRC), Jason Detar (PA FBC), Kristin Saunders (UMCES), Scott Heidel (PA DEP), Brenda Winn (VA DEQ), Jim Thompson (MD DNR), Rosemary Fanelli (USGS), Emily Young (ICPRB), Julien Martin (USGS), Greg Noe (USGS), Katie Ombalski (Woods & Waters), Nancy Roth (Tetra Tech), Louise Finger (VA DWR), Claire Buchanan (ICPRB), Tammy O'Connell (MD DNR), Kelly Sommers (EPA), Ken Hyer (USGS), Greg Zuknick (Bio Habitats), Rachel Harrison (WV DNR), Ed Farley (DU), Melissa Yearick (USC), Tess Danielson (DOEE), Denise Clearwater (MDE), Katie Brownson (USFS), Amanda Small (MD DNR), Megan Lang (USFWS), Adrienne Kotula (CBC), James Early (USFWS), Dan Goetz (MD DNR), Michael Runge (USGS), Joe Berg (Bio Habitats), Alison Santoro (MD DNR), Gabriella Vailati (DNREC), Lori Maloney (EBTJV), Alan Weaver (VA DWR), Mark Southerland (Tetra Tech), Everlad McDonald (PA DCNR), Sandra Davis (USFWS), Ray Li (USFWS), Brittany Sturgis (DNREC), Sara Weglein (MD DNR), Ben Sagara (VA DWR), Nancy Schumm (City of Gaithersburg), Helen Golimowski (Devereaux Consulting), Pam Mason (VIMS retired), Lori Brown (DNREC), Robert Isdell (VIMS), Sarah Koser (CBT), Meredith Hudson (EPA), Breck Sullivan (USGS), Olivia Devereaux (Devereaux Consulting), Cassie Davis (NYS DEC), Tom O'Connell (USGS), Theaux Le Gardeur (Gunpowder Riverkeeper), Joe Love (MD DNR), Andrew Larkin (NOAA), Brian Callam (??), Amanda Poskaitis (Underwood & Associates), Clinton Morgeson (WV DWR), Dave O'Brien (NOAA), Adam Nabors (TU), Christopher Adriance (DOEE), Stephanie Hall (MD DNR), Faren Wolter (USFWS), Mark Biddle (DNREC), Brooke Landry (MD DNR), Lydia Brinkley (USC), Suzanne Trevena (EPA), Angie Sowers (USACE), Doug Bell (EPA), Karinna Nunez (VIMS), Julia Fucci (CRC), Sadie Drescher (CBT), Peter Tango (USGS), Jeremy Hanson (CRC), Rachel Felver (ACB)