**Habitat Goal Implementation Team Action Plan**

February 2021.

**Introduction**

On November 16th and 17th 2020, the Habitat Goal Implementation Team (HGIT) held their semi-annual meeting. At the end of each day an open discussion of the day’s events was held to identify concerns and ultimately actions that the HGIT as whole should focus their energy on over the next 6 months and beyond. Five main themes came out of these discussions including: learning how to incorporate social science and ecosystem services into workgroup products; learning how to infuse Diversity Equity Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) into the workgroup products; shallow water habitat conflicts; thermal changes in streams; and urban habitat opportunities. Each of these topics and HGIT action items are discussed further in this document.

*Social Science and Ecosystem Services*

The general consensus from the Fall HGIT meeting was to support incorporating social science and ecosystem services into the workgroup products. However, there was also clear concern that the workgroups did not necessarily have the skillset that would allow them to be successful in this task without additional assistance.

*Social Science and Ecosystem Services Action Item*

The HGIT Coordinator, Chairs, and Staffers will engage with the Bay Program to continue Social Science and Ecosystem Service trainings and discussions within the workgroups as information becomes available.

* Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship (GIT 5) will be developing a “Chesapeake Bay Program Social Science Assessment and Integration Road Map Development” which will assist the workgroups in the integration of social science with work plans. As this progress proceeds, we will ask that workgroups provide time on their agenda to receive updates and provide input into the development of this plan.
* Develop a shared document showing which outcomes have different ecosystem services in common. This document will help identify the overlap and help establish priorities for the HGIT and lower the burden on the workgroups during SRS review.
* Develop cost benefit analysis process that can be adopted by workgroups and the overall HGIT as it pertains to the ecosystem services and social science.
* Identify how social science projects can be incorporated into the Workgroups and developed to meet workplan objective.
* Work with EPA (Bo Williams) to identify when Bay Program ecosystem service projects are available. Identify expertise that can help the workgroups understand how to use these products.
* Ensure that HGIT workgroups continue to engage the DEIJ Action Team and ecosystem service team to determine ways to integrate products to make progress on both fronts, including identifying underserved communities and the issues they are facing. E.g., using bay-wide and jurisdictional DEIJ maps such as those available in MD, PA, and other geographies.
* Explore how environmental literacy can help with social science, social marketing, and DEIJ.

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)*

On August 18th, 2020 the Executive Committee signed the DEIJ Action Plan. As part of this plan the Bay Program has put a team together to develop a strategy for incorporating DEIJ throughout the Bay Program. The HGIT has embraced this challenge and has agreed to identify strategies to infuse DEIJ issues into our work.

*DEIJ Action Item*

The HGIT Coordinator, Chairs, and Staffers will engage with the Bay Program to continue DEIJ trainings and discussions within the workgroups as information becomes available.

* Work with the DEIJ Action Team to identify steps to start the process of incorporating DEIJ strategies into workplans. Provide guidance on how to bring this and social science into physical science-based workplans.
* Include relevant ideas as workgroups come up for workplan revisions and share findings.
* When drafting each workgroup’s 2-year workplan, the groups will include evaluation of DEIJ impact for each action with an appropriate management action.
* Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship (GIT 5) will be leading a project on “Cultivating and Strengthening Partnerships with Underrepresented Stakeholders” which should also be informative for work plan revisions. Ensure that updates are provided to the workgroups as they become available. Provide assistance to the workgroups in incorporating these updates in their work.

*Shallow Water Habitat*

One of the conflicts that was discussed in the meeting was the shallow water habitat conflict between marshes, fisheries, living shorelines and submerged aquatic vegetation. Sometimes there is competing interest and identifying geographic priorities is necessary.

*Shallow Water Habitat Action Item*

The HGIT will host a cross-workgroup/GIT (fisheries) meeting to discuss specific conflict issues and prioritize restoration areas for competing interest, potential unintended consequences, and co-benefits across the watershed. Identify specific conflicts and approaches to resolve them.

*Warm Water Stressor in Streams*

Increasing temperatures of streams has been a concern that several of the work groups have shared, including the Brook Trout Workgroup, Fish Passage Workgroup, Stream Health and Wetlands Workgroup. The Healthy Watersheds GIT is investigating strategies to reduce thermal loadings of streams as well.

*Warm Water Stressor in Streams Action Items*

The HGIT will host an interim meeting between interested workgroups to look for common strategies to reduce thermal loadings on streams.

* HGIT will provide a letter of support for the Forest Buffer Workgroup’s proposal for STAC: *Review of Water Temperature Increases in the Bay and its Watershed: Ecological Significance and Implications for Tidal Water Quality, WIPS, Habitat Strategies, Fisheries Management, Bay Temperature Indicator, and Tidal and Non-Tidal Monitoring*. We will ask workgroups to nominate a representative to serve on the steering committee.

*Urban Opportunities for Habitat Restoration*

Many of the outcomes tied to Bay Program goals for habitat are on agricultural and rural lands. There may be untapped potential for achieving some of these outcomes through urban habitat restoration.

*Urban Opportunities for Habitat Restoration Action Item*

The HGIT will create a task force from interested work group members (including other GITs and their workgroups) to identify potential for habitat restoration in urban areas, and what tools and data are available to identify places, issues, and groups to work with. This will need to include many of the aspects of DEIJ, social science and ecosystem services.