

Initiating a Campaign for Land Conservation and Fisheries Health (Engaged Citizens, Informed Decision makers)

Proposal submitted by:

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team (Fisheries GIT)

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Description of Workshop:

The Fisheries GIT proposes to hold a workshop between August and October, 2013 to investigate ways to improve habitat and fisheries conservation through communication strategies that incorporate ecological and social science in the land use planning process. The Fisheries GIT will work with the Habitat and Healthy Watersheds GITs to convene experts in social science, communications, public planning, ecology, fisheries, and citizen action to develop a communication strategy that seeks to balance conservation of natural places and healthy living resources with population growth and development pressure.

The Fisheries GIT is proposing a two day workshop to develop communication strategies for better connecting habitat and fisheries science, management and conservation to land use decision making. The goal of this workshop is to develop messaging that incorporates habitat and fish conservation objectives (based on sound science) with societal objectives to advance planning decisions that mutually benefit economic growth as well as support sustainability of our fished resources.

The workshop would:

- Develop an inventory and synthesis of the available science and tools to explain environmental impacts of land use decisions on habitat and fisheries for use by the planning community (this would be done pre workshop for use by workshop participants).
- Identify commonalities between stakeholders (for example: fishery managers and developers) by examining and better understanding through social science what is motivating the decision-makers

- Develop clear messaging for habitat conservation and fisheries sustainability for target audiences such as by media, politicians, general public, planners and resource managers.

Justification for Proposed Topics and Management Implications:

In the United States, coastal zones represent less than 17% of the available land area and serve as a home to over 50% of the total population. The concentration of commercial and recreational activities associated with our intense use of coastal areas is taking a toll on the fisheries benefits we can and expect to obtain from these systems. The potential for habitat and environmental “squeeze” from impending population growth will only increase the challenges faced for fisheries managers, planning commissions and public consumers.

Specifically, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to more than 17 million people, and about 150,000 new people move into the 64,000 mi² Bay watershed each year. By 2030, the Chesapeake Bay watershed population is projected to grow to approximately 20 million. Since the 1940s, metropolitan areas have been the center of growth in the watershed creating a growing intersection between land use management, habitat, and fisheries resources. The high concentration of people living within the Chesapeake Bay has led to significant changes in land use patterns, habitat degradation, and declining water quality.

Land based planning and development activities are largely detached from their direct implications on Bay living resources, including fisheries. This poses significant challenges to sustainably managing commercial and ecologically important fish and shellfish species and their habitats, on which a great number of people are financially dependent. Within the jurisdictions managing tidal Chesapeake Bay Fisheries, there are over 9,000 licensed commercial fishermen, including commercial crabbers, oystermen, finfish harvesters, guides, and charter captains. Furthermore, there are over 600,000 licensed recreational fisherman and crabbers in both tidal and non-tidal portions of the watershed.

The Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team is working toward better integrating habitat and ecosystem based considerations into fisheries management. Fisheries managers in the Chesapeake Bay are concerned that expanding population growth and urban development, paired with a lack of fisheries and habitat representation in decision making, is leading to loss and permanent degradation of critical fish habitats both on land, near shore and in water that are causing habitat loss and declines in fisheries resources. In many cases, modern management frameworks effectively identify the interconnectivity of habitat, ecosystem health, and trophic interactions. However, fisheries managers are generally bound by managing the sustainability of fished resources through regulating removals rather than inputs to the system. Without the necessary controls in place to limit factors that impact watershed health (on which sustainable fisheries rely), managers are faced with increased competition for a shrinking resource base.

At the Fisheries GIT biannual meetings in December, 2011 and June, 2012, the Fisheries GIT held workshops to investigate the issues surrounding land use practices and their impacts on water quality, habitats, and fisheries. These were very successful full day events with a wide range of participation from land based organizations, environmental planners, citizen stakeholders, scientists, and fisheries managers with the goal of better understanding the connections between land based policies and the sustainability of Chesapeake Bay fisheries. One of the challenges that emerged was the need for a consolidated set of the latest research findings regarding land use impacts on fisheries, combined with the translation of that science into guiding principles that can be used by planners, community members, and local officials. This workshop seeks to bring together a broad range of experts in land use

impacts analysis, fisheries, social science and communication to better articulate the linkages between land-use, habitats, fish health, and research in order to support the sustainability of fishery resources and ecosystem based management throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Detailed Description of Workshop Products:

Workshop discussions will be documented in a workshop report and submitted to the Chesapeake Bay Program and interested parties. This report will provide recommendations and next steps for developing a communication and messaging strategy that incorporates habitat and fish conservation objectives (based on sound science) with societal objectives to advance planning decisions that mutually benefit economic growth as well as support sustainability of our fished resources. It will explain how to best apply available state-of-the-science and tools for predicting environmental impacts of land use decision practices and enhancing conservation of natural and rural lands, and suggest messaging and engagement strategies to increase awareness and participation of advocacy groups, managers, and local citizens in planning decisions. The final report will be released within 90 days following the workshop.

Pre workshop preparation:

The steering committee will coordinate primer sessions to bring invited participants up to speed on available science and tools describing habitat and fisheries resources and their connection to land based activities. We will attempt to address the following questions with currently available information and describe gaps.

- What are the most important areas for shallow water habitat in tidal waters?
- What data currently exists on shallow water habitat?
- What watersheds have the most potential for continuing to provide meaningful fish spawning grounds for important fish species?
- How vulnerable are these watersheds (ecologically and high or low development risk)?
- What can be done to reduce the vulnerability of key habitat areas?
- Is available information in a usable and applicable format for land use planners?
- What additional tools would planners and activists need to facilitate sustainable land use?
- What additional tools do managers need to have better control over watershed management?

Logistics:

The workshop will be invitation only, and we estimate that about 25-30 participants will attend the workshop. The workshop will be held over a two day period between August-October, 2013 in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.

Estimated Budget:

Venue: \$1,000

Catering: \$2,500

Facilitation: \$2,000 – Recognizing the broad scope of professional attendees the steering committee feels that facilitation may be a very useful tool in this effort. We will attempt to keep all facilitation in house but an external team is being considered.

Travel for invited speakers/participants: \$4,500

Total requested from STAC: \$10,000