

# FISH HABITAT WORKSHOP

Tom O'Connell

December 2017 Sustainable Fisheries GIT Meeting

# BACKGROUND



- Successfully competed for STAC workshop funding to evaluate fish habitat in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Building off of previous habitat assessments including:
  - National Fish Habitat Partnerships Inland and Coastal Fish Habitat Assessments
    - Utilized national datasets to develop a risk of habitat degradation score
  - Northern Gulf of Mexico Fish Habitat Stressor and Condition Evaluation
    - Developed an approach to compare estuary condition relative to anthropogenic stressor gradients identify key stressors and the scale at which they exert the most influence.
  - Pacific Coast Estuary Meta-Analysis
    - Combined data from independent sampling programs to evaluate how anthropogenic stressors in estuaries and their watersheds affect habitat quality for fishes.

# OBJECTIVES



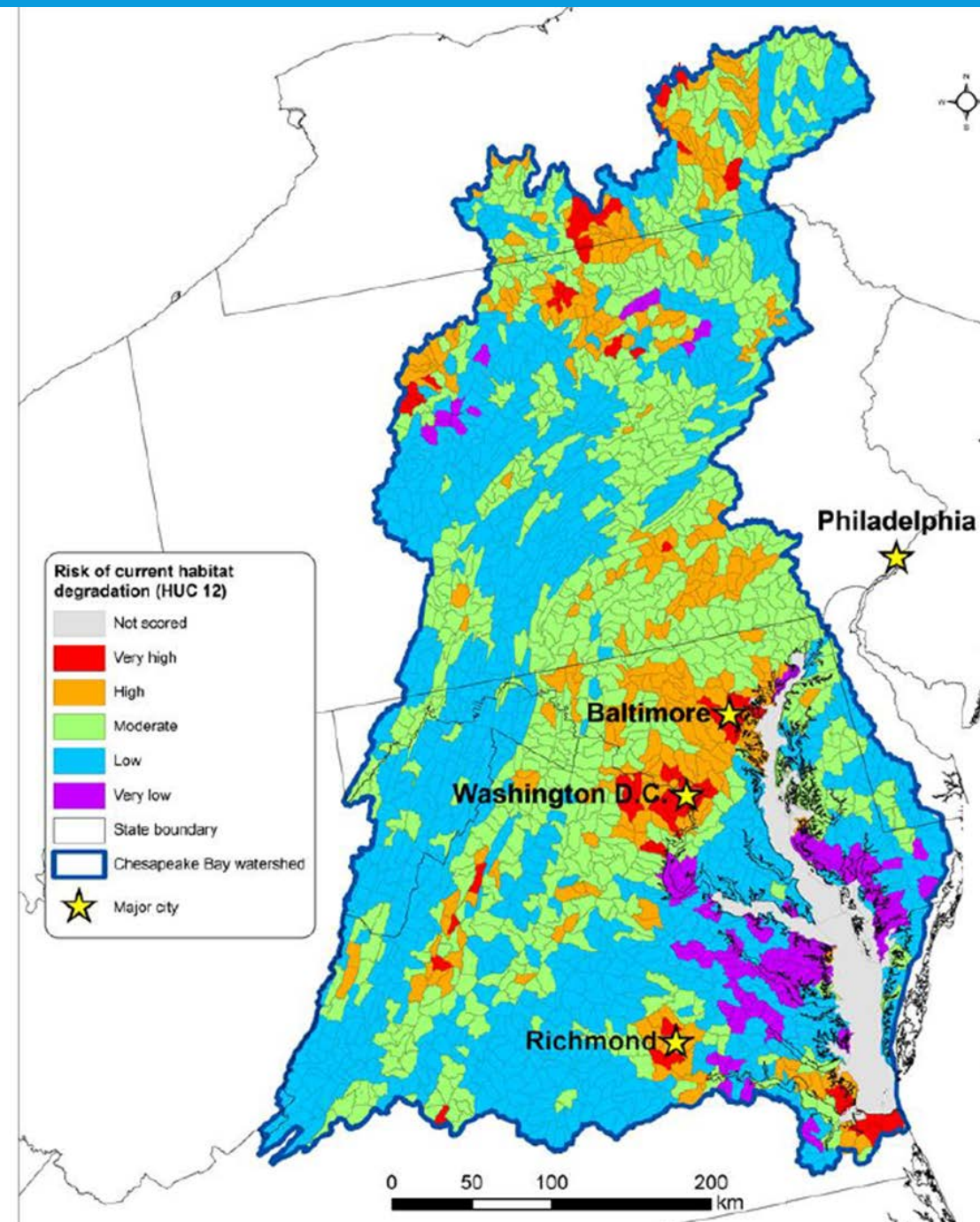
- 1. Compile datasets** on habitat condition and stressors in freshwater and estuarine habitats in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
  - Evaluate datasets based on spatial scale, duration of collection, resolution, and other factors to the National Fish Habitat Assessment (NFHA) datasets
- 2. Develop a strategy** to assess the Chesapeake Bay Watershed habitat condition using these prioritized datasets
  - Based on scale and habitat condition, identify what metrics should be used in a regional assessment and what data gaps exist and identify emerging stressors
- 3. Identify use and users** for a regional fish habitat assessment
  - Engage with local government planners, state managers, and conservation organizations on how they could use an assessment, and what tools would be useful to them

# NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ASSESSMENT

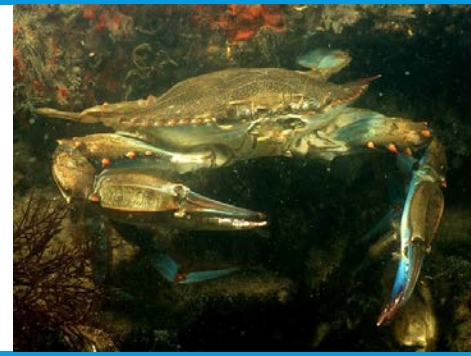
Habitat Vulnerability Scores were calculated using data from anthropogenic disturbances and accounted for natural variation.

Datasets had to be available nationally and this limits the scale and applicability regionally.

Agriculture, urbanization, mining, and nutrients were the most limiting disturbances for Chesapeake Bay habitats



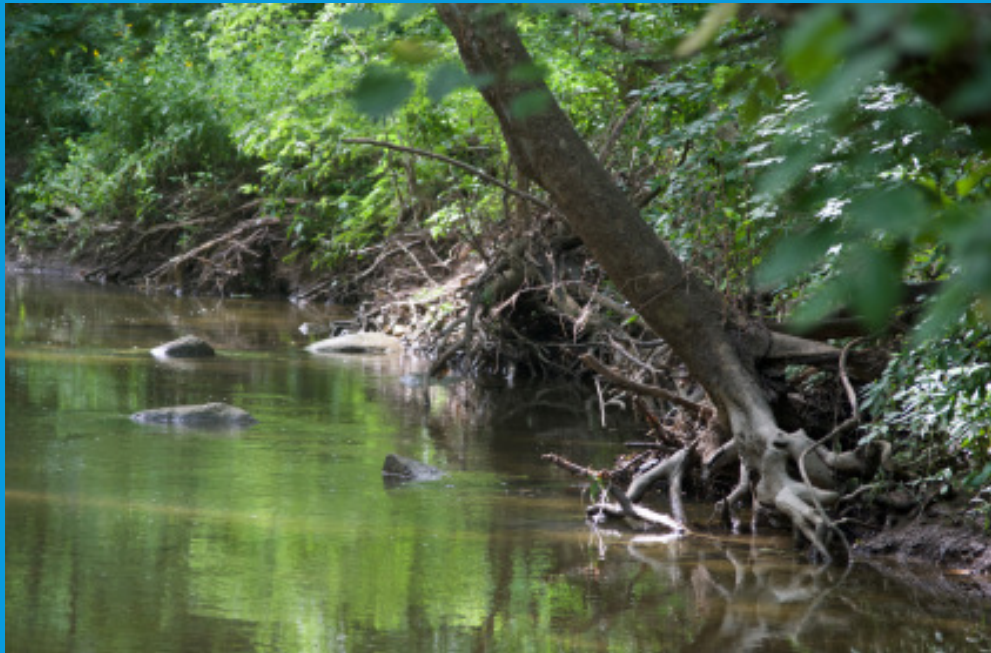
# STEERING COMMITTEE



- Bruce Vogt (NOAA)
- Donna Bilkovic (VIMS)
- Gina Hunt (MD DNR)
- Kara Skipper (CRC)
- Margaret McGinty (MD DNR)
- Mark Monaco (NOAA)
- Mary Gattis (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)
- Neely Law (CWP)
- Peter Tango (USGS)
- Tom Ihde (MSU)
- Tom O'Connell (USGS)



# STATUS



- Steering Committee (SC) Members are identifying venue, participants, and dates for the workshop
  - March – April 2018 in Maryland
- SC Members learned about the national assessment and regional assessments from experts involved in the development of the assessments
- Recruited USGS experts to collect datasets, evaluate against the NFHA and scale, and provide localized examples. USGS has begun compiling existing datasets and NOAA is providing support with estuarine/marine datasets.
- The Alliance for the Chesapeake is helping us develop a research poll to identify assessment users and utility.

# NEXT STEPS

- Finalize logistics for workshop, invite participants and speakers
- Structure agenda and format for productive discussions
- Complete compilation of data and examples
- Research poll for planners, managers and conservation project leaders is expected in Mid- January.





# ANY QUESTIONS?

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