



OYSTER OUTCOME

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES GIT/ MD & VA OYSTER RESTORATION INTERAGENCY TEAM

2014 WATERSHED AGREEMENT: GOAL & OUTCOME LANGUAGE

OUTCOME:

Continually increase finfish and shellfish habitat and water quality benefits from restored oyster populations. Restore native oyster habitat and populations in 10 tributaries by 2025 and ensure their protection.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES GOAL:

Protect, restore and enhance finfish, shellfish and other living resources, their habitats and ecological relationships to sustain all fisheries and provide for a balanced ecosystem in the watershed and Bay

OUTCOME DISPOSITION ADVICE TO MANAGEMENT BOARD:

UPDATE

2. Consider if the Outcome is SMART, and specifically, whether the current outcome meets the definition of an outcome, as described in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (“Agreement”), or if that outcome is an output or indicator.

Yes, it meets the criteria of a SMART outcome. It addresses the ingredients needed for secret sauce. There are federal and state champions, there are allocated resources, and strong partnerships in place. We have clear bay wide and tributary level restoration targets, success metrics and monitoring to evaluate them.

3. Consider aspects of “what makes a good Outcome”.

This is a “good outcome” as it has a clear objective, is measurable, has a monitoring program that supports the outcome, has strong partner commitment, as well as being centered around living resources alongside water quality. Moving into Beyond 2025, this outcome will work towards centering work more around people and community by increasing education and outreach opportunities.

4. Consider the challenges to and opportunities for achieving the outcome.

Challenges for achieving the outcome include: sustaining the resources and partnerships needed to continue working at the present scale or larger, substrate availability and cost effective approaches including public (an industry) perception of alternative substrates, and availability of funding for restoration costs. Future restoration is expected to become more difficult due to bottom availability. We also need to ensure the currently restored areas are conserved and managed over time. Opportunities for achieving the outcome lie in the current momentum that exists for restoring reefs in more areas.

More areas have been identified where large scale oyster reef restoration and the benefits (WQ and fish habitat) they provide can be achieved. Some challenges pose new opportunities such as: broadening public involvement and quantifying the public benefits gained by restoration efforts, garnering public support (NIMBY) and conducting meaningful public engagement, and working more closely with wild harvest and aquaculture. The approved oyster BMPs may provide another tool for engaging industry and local governments, and quantifying benefits of oyster reef restoration.

5. Consider how the outcome relates or could relate to the Bay Agreement mission, vision, and themes/pillars.

The outcome should stay under the abundant life theme and sustainable fisheries goal. Restored oyster reefs provide fish and shellfish habitat and improve water quality, and oyster reef populations Bay wide remain depleted as compared to historical baselines.

6. Consider the timescale for completing the outcome (5, 10, 15 years). Determine if achieving the outcome is an incremental step or is it a final outcome.

The current outcome will be completed in 2025. Operating at the current scale or larger takes time, so 10-15 years is likely a reasonable time horizon, but will ultimately depend on the specifics of the updated outcome.

7. Consider resource needs and availability (high, medium, low).

The resource needs are high. The current outcome will cost about \$110M. Some resources for future reef restoration have already been identified. There is strong state and federal (both MD & VA) support that we can anticipate will continue.

8. Consider the risk or unintended consequences of removing the Outcome.

Removing could result in reduced coordination and collaboration, loss of momentum, partnership and leveraging of resources. We do not want to return to several small projects implemented by disparate entities, when we've proven large scale, collaborative projects work to improve oyster reef habitat and their benefits.

9. What value is added by having the Chesapeake Bay Program work on the outcome?

Successfully completing work at this globally-unprecedented scale required partners working together toward a common goal; the Bay Program has provided a framework for that essential coordination and collaboration. Outcomes have clearer accountability to the partnership and public. Being at an outcome level has facilitated the request and attainment of additional funding resources.

10. Consider how the Outcome, as written, benefits the public. Does the outcome reflect public input already received and have the potential to galvanize public support/engagement?

Oyster reefs are iconic to the citizens of the Bay region. They provide habitat and clean the water. They have cultural and historical value. More oyster reefs are an indicator of a healthier Bay and ecosystem. This outcome has generated both regional, national and international attention and engaged multiple entities to work together in a way they have not in the past. Healthy oyster reefs also provide economic benefits to the Bay.