



Forage & Fish Habitat Beyond 2025 Meeting - February 2025

Tuesday, February 18· 1:00 – 2:00pm EST

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/vam-oymv-ujh>

Or dial: (US) +1 216-930-9263 PIN: 477 678 974#

Meeting Minutes

1:00pm - 1:10pm

Update on Beyond 2025:

- **February 13th Management Board meeting update**
- **Timeline**
 - February 13: Present outcome assessment to the MB
 - March 27: MB completes outcome assessment
 - March 28: PSC review outcome assessment
 - April 10: Begin revising outcome language
 - May 8: Final outcome language
 - June: Prepare final outcomes for public review
- Create a better nexus for water quality and living resources - way to do that through living resource assessment and habitat outcome
- Large discussion around fish habitat outcome at last Feb 12 MB meeting
- Lots of different outcomes related to habitat- how do we create better coordination across these different outcomes? What does this mean for fish habitat outcome?
- Suggestion to broaden outcome throughout watershed (tidal and nontidal)
 - Sense of what a non-tidal outcome could look like
 - Current managers on goal team is tidal focused
- Now is the chance to really focus in
 - But uncertain of resources/funding available to do work
- Next steps:
 - CBP office hours - follow up of Feb 13 conversation and figure out what is the next move for fish habitat



- Discussion:
 - *A.K Leight*: Follow up discussion with board members-tomorrow?
 - *Bruce Vogt*: Yes. It is set up as office hours tomorrow- Management Board will be doing this after every outcome assessment MB meeting to follow up on things not fully addressed. Not sure who to expect
 - *Gina Hunt*: expect MB members very vocal during the MB meeting- pulse check doc with comments (agreement, concerns, suggestions). Office hours meant to dig into further questions. Expect a good attendance because it's the first one and fish habitat had the most conversation around it. Fish habitat outcome is both tidal and nontidal and is not narrow. Nontidal shallow water is important in CESR- if it is not in fish habitat, where does it go? Other outcomes that align with shallow water habitat haven't been heard yet. Expect good convo with other goal teams regarding this.
 - *Bruce Vogt*: Fish GIT Excomm meeting planned for tomorrow at same time but canceled and have invited them to office hours tomorrow. Consensus in Excomm on these outcomes but would be good for them to be part of convo
 - *Adrienne Kotula*: Second Gina- talking about this outcome without talking about others (brook trout) was disjointed. Figure out non-tidal fish habitat outcome could be once we have this larger discussion.
 - *Chris Guy*: Group not represented in Bay Program was fresh water mussel group (not rep in any outcome/outputs right now). We brought that up as well- will push that because we still need to rep those groups.
 - *Bruce Vogt*: fresh water mussels and clams did come up as comments around the oyster outcome- we are open to those conversations. Would be separate from the oyster outcome because we want to keep the oyster outcome focused. Surprised by the depth of conversations had at



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management board level- confusion because of disjointedness. Hard to give a pulse check without knowing the outcome language is- but that is not part of the task. MB needs more detail to give a pulse check.

- *Gina Hunt*: They want to know outcome language so they know if it affects them. But we don't have the language- depends on how you update it. Legitimate question but not the one we are supposed to be answering.
- *Peter Tango (in chat)*: Nontidal linkages as extensions of tidal habitat are fundamental and simple: physical elements - fish passage/reduce fragmentation from dams/culverts, chemical elements - keep freshwater fresh because life stages of migratory and resident species need non-salty, non-contaminated water, Biological elements - every jurisdiction has rising rates of invasive species - reverse the trend. Societal - stewardship around people not releasing species in nonnative habitats. Life cycle management.
- *Bruce Vogt*: fast track for getting outcome language together- will find out more tomorrow. Will not know results of outcomes until late march. We will start working on crafting language around outcomes now and figure out tidal and nontidal components. Outcome language due May 8- public component late June.
- *Thomas Ihde (in chat)*: It seems softening language could help, for instance, rather than say focus is shallow tidal, present that as a current focus, recognizing that we need to remain nimble to respond to changing needs over the next decade or more, but that is our current highest priority; same with striped bass (lots of other species will become priorities) or specific living habitats (other habitats beyond SAV are also need to be prioritized, including wetlands, oysters and other bivalves, and restored habitats)
- *Nick Staten (in chat)*: So is the idea to eliminate non-tidal language within Fishery GIT's outcome?



- **Living Resource tidal segment habitat assessment update**
 - *Bruce Vogt*: score card for 92 tidal segments to rank the segments for habitat suitability. Develop habitat suitability models for a select number of species - no funding but interest in pursuing further and scoping cost. Plan by Kenny Rose and Mark Manoco. Will reach out to additional people (through workshop possibly) for more input. Timeframe?
 - *A.K Leight*: Will have to update schedule due to recent changes - will send out emails with updates
 - *Bruce Vogt*: The person that was supporting us no longer has a position. Bringing LR project up bc we think this would be a major output under fish habitat outcome - good way to link water quality to habitat. Tidal shallow water habitat focused outcome.

1:10pm - 1:20pm

Review outcome report summaries & example case studies

- *Christina Garvey*: Review of [report summaries](#) and [funded projects](#) related to fish habitat
- Discussion:
 - *Bruce Vogt*: These summaries show that there is important work being done to better understand fish habitat and that this work was being funded due to fish habitat being an outcome under CBP.
 - *Chris Moore*: Important to note how our work already aligns well with CESR- continue to move into the direction that was recommended
 - *A.K Leight (in chat)*: Happy to add info - I'll work with Christina
 - *Ryan Woodland (in chat)*: I have to log off now but if there are any follow-up summaries from this discussion, I'd love to be able to review them (if possible). Thanks Bruce, Christina, and all
 - *Jim Uphoff (in chat)*: The States may have a good bit of relevant information that is published in their federal aid



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reports (federal aid to sportfishing for instance). Or is the list confined to federal agencies and academic institutions?

- *Bruce Vogt (in chat)*: open to all Jim. Including those would be great.

1:20pm - 1:55pm

Discussion on outcome structure & language

- [Guiding questions](#)
- Draft fish habitat outcome concept:

“Maintain suitable shallow water habitat area for striped bass and other key species through focused water quality, conservation and restoration improvements informed by a synthesis of fisheries science and habitat assessments completed by xxxx.”

- Outputs:
 - Tidal segment Living resource habitat assessment
 - Status and trends of structured habitat (oysters, SAV, tidal wetlands, shoreline condition) linked to fish productivity if possible to define habitat objectives (how much habitat is needed to sustain x level of productivity)
 - Strategies to build habitat and fish resilience as temperature increases
 - Assessment of forage availability, trends and projections of change. Is there enough food now and going forward for key predators
 - Evaluation of movement and behavior of striped bass and other species relative to habitat conditions
- Indicators:
 - Forage abundance for key species
 - Habitat use and movement patterns (spatial indicators at local, bay and regional scales)
 - Juvenile index



- Discussion:
 - *Bruce Vogt*: Review of list of guiding questions.
 - *Donna Bilkovic*: Commercial Rec Fishing and role of fish habitat outcome- lots of potential. Recent work- interview on decision makers. By bringing in additional stakeholders we can better link different types of management. I don't like the single species approach. Collection of habitats and species that matter. Support more of an ecosystem based approach
 - *Donna Marie Bilkovic (in chat)*: Susanna Musick <susanna@vims.edu> - POC for recreational fishers
 - *Bruce Vogt*: Open to any approach (ex: Invite key folks to these meetings). I hear you on single species- whatever we do will be multispecies but have a focal point- but work would all be about improving habitat for all species.
 - *Gina Hunt*: Are these guiding questions just for this team to help craft the language?
 - *Bruce Vogt*: That was the idea- created these questions before MB- but idea was to get input from everyone here and use input to get into language development
 - *Gina Hunt*: Stuck with tidal/nontidal- scope of outcome could be both or not be and nontidal shallow water would go somewhere else. Don't want it out of the discussion. I understand wanting to pick a species to resonate with people- but it is very limiting. Striped bass spawning reaches are limited and dwindling. Fish Habitat outcome needs to be SMARTer but doesn't need to explain everything in the outcome language- can spell it out more in outputs etc. A lot of ways to build metrics into an outcome without writing it out into the language. Need to narrow and define it- but don't need to define it in the language but do so in metrics and indicators.
 - *Bruce Vogt*: I completely agree- we have been zeroing in on habitat suitability for multiple species - something we can assess and track with data and modeling approaches. Way to do this without trying to achieve a fisheries based



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metric. We need to track other habitats, not just water quality. Track habitat types and how to restore those areas.

- *Tom Ihde*: Support what Gina spoke on. These might be identified as current priorities but those priorities are going to change in the future as things change. Forage is not limited to fish. Continue down the path to make advances in living habitats. Not just one living habitat- our work suggests SAV goal is not currently appropriate but work was leverage focused on fish harvest and trying to look at current goals and SAV goal isn't reflecting any sort of reality (based on the 30s) not the watershed we have anymore. We can comment beyond fish harvest. Some outcomes may no longer be appropriate- but cannot keep to achieve a goal that is unachievable.
- *Chris Guy*: Conversations in habitat workgroups- current outcome for streams is to increase healthy streams by 8% by 2025- related to water quality but specific to healthy habitat. Sort of like habitat suitability index. Other workgroups coming to the same conclusion- SMART outcome = % of percentage in a healthy shape that is able to support things. Pattern to define a healthy system. Not hearing that in our conversation now- only talk about metrics. I don't think that we will have funding from the Fed or states. Need to think about this with less dollars, not more. What data do we already have? Take data from other groups and create indices of health with that. Will not be able to collect new data to create new indices.
- *Donna Marie Bilkovic (in chat)*: and resilient system...
- *Bruce Vogt*: We will set up more of these meetings- open to others, feel free to invite. Next month or so will set up more of these meetings. Will create a smaller drafting team to collect feedback and share out.

1:55pm - 2:00pm

Next Steps

- Office hours with CBP tomorrow 2-4pm
 - *Andrew Leight (in chat)*: Would be good to hear some high-level summary of the "office hour" convo