



**Chesapeake Bay Program
Principals' Staff Committee Meeting
September 22, 2014**

Program Update

CBPO Calendar

Sept. 22	PSC meeting (WashCoG, Washington, DC)
Sept. 25-26	LGAC Quarterly Meeting (Shepherdstown, WV)
Sept. 26-28	Chesapeake Watershed Forum (Shepherdstown, WV)
Oct. 9	Management Board conference call
Oct. 21-22	Habitat Goal Team Meeting

Program Updates

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Watershed Agreement Field Hearing

Several Chesapeake Bay Program Partners were invited to testify at a field hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works on September 8 in the Maryland Legislative Building in Annapolis. The hearing, organized by Subcommittee on Waters and Wildlife Chair, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), focused on the new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the development of management strategies and how partners intend to achieve the goals and outcomes. The title of the hearing was, "Examining the Strategy for Achieving the Goals of the New Voluntary Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement." The witness panel included Chesapeake Bay Program Office Director Nick DiPasquale, and NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Director Peyton Robertson, Virginia Natural Resources Secretary Molly Ward and Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair Ronald Miller. Harford County Council member Mary Ann Lisanti and Maryland State Senator Steve Hershey also testified on the panel.

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Responses to STAC Workshop and Review Panel Reports

The Chesapeake Bay Program recently provided formal written responses to several reports by the CBP Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), including: the "Designing Sustainable Coastal Habitats" workshop report, the "Evaluation of the Use of Shellfish as a Method of Nutrient Reduction in the Chesapeake Bay" review panel report, and the "Research-Based Best Practices for Environmental Education" workshop report.

The Management Board agreed with the recommendations from the Designing Sustainable Coastal Habitats report and concurred that efforts to design sustainable habitats should be continued by engaging specific groups within the Partnership, such as having the Partnering Leadership and Management Goal Implementation Team investigate the possible aggregation and integration of multiple outcomes within management strategies to institute a more balanced approach to sustainable habitat restoration. In response to the "Evaluation of the Use of Shellfish as a Method of Nutrient

Reduction in the Chesapeake Bay” report, the Partnership decided not to incorporate the recommended BMP into the Bay Program modeling suite as this time; however, the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team supported addressing the issue of crediting oyster aquaculture as a BMP in the model through the expert panel process and the Oyster Recovery Partnership and is interested in coordinating a panel. The “Research-Based Best Practices for Environmental Education” report was strongly supported by the Management Board which agreed with the recommendations for education best practices for students, educators, and Green Schools. The recommendations provided the framework for the new environmental literacy goals and outcomes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. The Program’s full letter responses to these STAC reports were sent to Management Board members and are available upon request.

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Advisory Committee Updates

Local Government Advisory Committee

The purpose of the LGAC is to advise the Executive Council on how to effectively implement projects and engage the support of local governments to achieve the goals of the Bay Agreement.

LGAC and the Alliance are hosting a workshop in late September about increasing the use of watershed assessments and monitoring as tools for local government implementation. LGACs next quarterly meeting is being held September 26 in Shepherdstown WV.

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Citizens’ Advisory Committee

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is charged with responsibility for representing residents and stakeholders of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in the restoration effort and advising the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership on all aspects of restoration.

CAC met on August 21-22 in Harrisburg, PA and heard updates from PA DEP, the 2-year milestone reviews, nutrient trading, fracking, and discussed work for CAC subcommittees as it relates to their priorities and Agreement outcomes.

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Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) provides scientific and technical guidance to the Chesapeake Bay Program on measures to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay.

STAC held its second quarterly meeting of FY 2014 on September 9-10, 2014 at The Sheraton Hotel in Annapolis, Maryland.

An ad hoc group of STAC members developed a guidance document (spreadsheet) to assist the GITs in identifying factors influencing outcomes in the Bay agreement. STAC invited members of the GITs to

participate in a working session at the September quarterly meeting where STAC members reviewed and discussed the GIT identified factors.

STAC and STAR leadership met on August 7, 2014 at the CBP Fish Shack in Annapolis to define clear roles regarding interactions with the Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) during development of management strategies, indicators, and monitoring plans to implement the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Those roles will be clearly articulated to the GITs in the near future.

STAC recently held a workshop entitled “Exploring Applications of Behavioral Economics Research to Environmental Policy-making in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The workshop took place on August 27-28, 2014 at the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center in Annapolis, Maryland. The goals of the workshop were to broaden participants’ knowledge of behavioral economics and behavioral decision-making and potential applications of these fields in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, explore in an in-depth manner the potential of applications in the problem areas of non-point source agricultural pollution, and household/homeowner land and water management, increase the exchange of knowledge and expand collaboration between behavioral economics scholars and social science researchers in the region who know the policy-making challenges, and to identify and prioritize follow-up strategies for extending the insights gained at the workshop, and communicate this knowledge to state and EPA policymakers and other key audiences. The steering committee is currently drafting a workshop report that will be distributed in a few months.

STAC is currently planning four workshops that will take place before May 31, 2015. Those four workshops are listed below.

- 1) Re-plumbing the Chesapeake Watershed: Improving roadside ditch management to meet TMDL water quality goals.
- 2) Comparison of Shallow Water Models for Use in Supporting Chesapeake Bay Management Decision-making.
- 3) Assessing the Chesapeake Bay Forage Base: Existing Data and Research Priorities.
- 4) Evaluating Proprietary BMPs: Is it time for a State, Regional, or National Program?

For additional information about the workshops above, contact Natalie Gardner at gardnern@si.edu or visit that STAC Workshop webpage at http://www.chesapeake.org/stac/stac_ws.php.

STAC is in the process of finalizing five activity reports. Below is a list of reports that STAC will distribute over the next few weeks.

- 1) In my Backyard: An Innovative Look at the Advances of Onsite Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems
- 2) Management Effects on Water Quality Trends
- 3) The Peculiarities of Pervious Cover: A Research Synthesis on Allocating Pollutant Loads to Urban Land Use in the Chesapeake Bay.
- 4) Designing Sustainable Stream Restoration Projects in the Chesapeake Bay.
- 5) Final Report of the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team Invasive Catfish Task Force – The final review report is due from STAC on October 31, 2014

Finally, STAC distributed a review report entitled "A Review of Agricultural P-dynamics in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model" on August 26, 2014. The report is a product of a 2011 STAC review to investigate how phosphorus (P) transport from cropland was simulated in the CBP Watershed Model (CBWM). As always, the report can be found at: http://www.chesapeake.org/pubs/327_Staver2014.pdf.

Contact: Natalie Gardner, gardnern@si.edu

Goal Implementation Team, STAR and Communication Workgroup Updates

Fisheries Goal Implementation Team

The Sustainable Fisheries GIT focuses on advancing ecosystem-based fisheries management by using science to make informed fishery management decisions that cross state boundaries.

- Fisheries GIT leadership is developing plans that will guide the development of the management strategies for each fisheries outcomes and identify stakeholders that need to be involved in the process.
- The Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) will meet in-person at the end of September to discuss blue crab summer survey data, gear efficiency in the winter dredge survey, and the future stock assessment.
- STAC's review of the Invasive Catfish Task Force's final report is ongoing and is set to be complete in October 2014.
- The Fisheries GIT's STAC workshop titled "Assessing the Chesapeake Bay Forage Base: Existing Data and Research Priorities" is scheduled for November 12-13, 2014 at the Chesapeake Biological Lab in Solomons, MD. Tom Ihde (STAC member) and Ed Houde (Chesapeake Biological Lab) are co-chairing this workshop. The workshop Steering Committee has been holding regular conference calls to plan the workshop.
- The Fisheries GIT Executive Committee will have their next monthly conference call on Monday, September 29th.
- See attached report: Blue Crab Status And Management Actions

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Habitat Goal Implementation Team

The Habitat GIT is restoring a network of land and water habitats to afford a range of public benefits and to support priority species.

The fall 2014 Habitat GIT meeting is being planned for October 21st and 22nd at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission office. The purpose of the meeting is to engage state fish and wildlife experts in a Chesapeake landscape conservation planning and design effort to exemplify scalable, strategic habitat conservation in action. This meeting will also inform participants about the opportunity to influence management strategies being developed to achieve habitat outcomes in the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement signed by the Governors in June.

Brook Trout

- A proposal to present the Pilot Brook Trout Habitat Prioritization model for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed was accepted for the Restore American Estuaries (RAE) Summit, November 1-6, 2014 in Washington, DC. The first planning session was held August 14th. The panel presenters include Alan Heft (MDNR), Scott Schwenk (FWS), Todd Petty (WVU), and Sandy Davis (FWS). A panel member will also present at the December STAR meeting as a lunch-time seminar.
- The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture is meeting on September 8-10th at NCTC in West Virginia.

Wetlands

- The Wetland Expert Panel is underway and being coordinated by Neely Law, CWP.
- A Wetland Workgroup meeting is scheduling for September 11th. The newly appointed workgroup chairs, Amy Jacobs (TNC) and Erin McLaughlin (MDNR), have drafted an agenda that includes discussing the wetlands outcome in the Watershed Agreement, overview of how wetlands are tracked and credited, and the scope of work for the wetlands expert panel.

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Water Quality Goal Implementation Team

The Water Quality GIT works to evaluate, focus and accelerates the implementation of practices, policies and programs that will restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries to conditions that support living resources and protect human health.

- Upcoming BMP panel reports for WQGIT review include Riparian Buffers, Shoreline Management, Oyster Aquaculture and Stream Restoration.
- The WQGIT will be discussing the Toxics strategy and workgroup in September.
- In early fall the WQGIT will be approving the Phase 6.0 land use classifications proposed by the Land Use Workgroup.
- A face to face WQGIT meeting will be held in October 2014 to review progress and determine next steps toward the 2017 Midpoint Assessment.

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Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team

The goal of the Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team (GIT 4) is to maintain local watershed health across a range of landscape contexts. With this goal, GIT 4 intends to bring attention to the challenge of protecting streams and watersheds that are healthy today. This initiative complements the "dirty waters" approach which focuses on restoring impaired waters.

Management Strategy Development:

- The Healthy Watersheds GIT is working on identifying key stakeholders that need to be involved in the development of management strategies for the Healthy Watersheds Outcome and Land Use Options Evaluation Outcome. The GIT is working collaboratively with the WQGIT's Land Use Workgroup to identify key stakeholders needed for the management strategy development of the Land Use Metrics and Methods Outcome.

Workgroup Updates:

- The Tracking Workgroup had a conference call on August 25th. The group discussed details on the GIT's funding proposal to identify additional healthy watersheds.

- The Local Engagement Workgroup plans to have a face-to-face meeting in the near future.

Conferences:

- GIT leaders and select members will present a Healthy Watersheds session at the 2014 Watershed Forum scheduled to take place September 26th – 28th in Shepherdstown, WV.

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Foster Stewardship Goal Implementation Team

The Fostering Stewardship GIT promotes individual stewardship, supports environmental education for all ages, and assists citizens, communities and local governments in undertaking initiatives to achieve restoration and conservation in the Chesapeake region. It aims to build public support of restoration efforts and increase citizen engagement and active stewardship.

No new updates.

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Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management Goal Implementation Team

The goal of the Enhance Partnering, Leadership, and Management GIT is to continually improve the governance and management of the CBP Partnership.

GIT Funding:

The final amount of funds available for FY14 funding was determined to be \$850,000. With this amount of funding, the top three proposal priorities across GITs will be funded. Projects will be funded through an existing Interagency Agreement, contract, or with the assistance of the Chesapeake Bay Trust through a Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant. The Bay Trust has agreed to administer ten of the projects at a low administrative fee. Actions to pursue and finalize funding mechanisms and prepare detailed project specifications continue. In general, a strong spirit of collaboration and cross-GIT planning allowed for seventeen different projects to be funded.

New Financing Workgroup:

GIT 6 has proposed the formation of a new Financing Workgroup that would provide guidance on a range of issues related to funding with a purpose of continually improving coordination and innovation on budgeting in the Bay Program. This workgroup will go beyond EPA funding, and will address issues related to funding including state and federal budget issues. GIT 6 plans to provide details on this workgroup to the MB this fall.

Program Performance:

GIT 6 is currently in the process of developing a set of options for future MB consideration on the concept of an annual program performance review meeting. These options will be presented to MB in fall or early winter.

Governance Document:

The new Governance Document was accepted as final by the PSC on July 16 as a living document that will incorporate changes in a defined process. GIT 6 began maintaining a list of potential revisions to be made at a six month review in December.

Local Leadership Outcome:

The MB recently agreed to place lead responsibility for the Local Leadership Outcome under GIT 6. The GIT will begin planning an approach for stakeholder outreach and management strategy development during the September GIT meeting.

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Scientific, Technical Assessment, and Reporting Team

The purpose of STAR (Scientific, Technical Analysis and Reporting) is to facilitate productive deployment of scientific resources, to provide timely, quality information to managers, and to expand communication between workgroups.

No new updates.

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Communications Workgroup

The Communications Workgroup provides strategic planning and expert advice to support the communication needs of the Chesapeake Bay Program partners, and spur public action through consistent messaging, expanded media coverage, use of multimedia and online tools, comprehensive branding and promotion, outreach to stakeholders, and coordinated internal and external communications.

The Communications Office will be communicating relevant and updated information on the management strategies via Chesapeakebay.net.

Editorial Calendar:

September:

08.31 (Sun.): [Letter from Leadership: Sister waterways](#)

09.01 (Mon.): Critter of the Month: [Northern Harrier](#)

09.04 (Thurs.): [Chesapeake Currents](#)

09.09 (Tues.): Blog Post: Ghost pots impact Chesapeake ecosystem

09.12 (Fri.): List: Eleven lighthouses in the Chesapeake Bay watershed

Week of Sept. 22: News Release and Blog Post: NFWF Chesapeake Stewardship Fund awards

TBD:

Indicator Update: Protected Lands

Indicator Update: Tidal Wetlands Abundance

Indicator Update: WQ Standards Attainment

Restoration Spotlight: Beekeeping

Restoration Spotlight: Horse pasture management

Photo Essay: Paddling the Anacostia water trail

Blog Post: Chesapeake Forest Champions

CBP News Releases/Stories

Pending: Wetlands Abundance – tent: week of 9/15

Pending: NFWF Grant awards – tent: Monday 9/22

Pending: Water Quality Standards Achievement – tent: early Oct

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Recent Meetings and Events

August 21-22 CAC Quarterly Meeting

Sept. 8 Sen. Ben Cardin Agreement Testimony (Annapolis, MD)

Sept. 9-10 STAC Quarterly Meeting (Annapolis, MD)

Sept. 11 Management Board meeting (Annapolis, MD)



Blue Crab Status and Management Actions



September 4-5, 2014

Blue crabs are the most valuable fishery in the Chesapeake Bay, and they play an important role in the Bay food web as both predator and prey. Their larvae, as plankton developing in near shore oceanic waters, are fed upon by menhaden, numerous fish and filter feeders. As they grow, the juvenile crabs are eaten by fish, birds, and even other crabs. Juvenile and adult crabs are also predators that feed upon almost everything. They eat many benthic organisms such as worms and bivalves along with dead fish and other plant and animal detritus. Their presence and role in scavenging is critical to the functioning of the Bay food web.

Current Status:

The Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) released its latest report in June 2014 which encouraged taking a more precautionary crab management approach this year due to the low numbers of females. The committee noted that the 2014 estimated abundance of spawning-age female crabs is 68.5 million. This is under the “threshold” of 70 million females, a level which managers would hope abundance of spawning age females always exceeds. The more ideal, “target” for the desirable number of spawning age females has been set at 215 million. This “target” level has only been exceeded twice since 1990, in 1991 and 2010. Despite a dip in the number of spawning-age females, fishing levels remain below the target level for sustainability. Hence, in 2014 the Chesapeake Bay crab population has been designated ‘depleted’, but overfishing is not occurring. The current low abundance of crabs appears to be related to environmental factors as opposed to harvest pressure. As a result of the low abundance, management agencies are taking actions to conserve juveniles and female spawning stock.

Management Recommendations from CBSAC:

- **Protect the existing juvenile and female blue crabs immediately** while other measures are being considered. This will help rebuild the stock of spawning age females and total crab numbers. Implement by reducing catch limits and changing season closures.

- **Consider establishing sanctuaries** in key locations important to female blue crabs in different locations throughout the Bay, i.e. upriver sanctuaries.
- **Improve accountability and reporting** for commercial and recreational crabbing to improve the tracking of harvest levels during the season.
- **Improve management data quality and analysis** with more precise estimates of overwintering mortality, evaluation of reproductive capability and gear efficiency.
- **Change the “management cycle” to summer-to-summer** allowing timelier use of data provided by the Winter Dredge Survey and recommendations of the Blue Crab Advisory Report.

Recent Actions by Blue Crab Fishery Management:

Maryland – Department of Natural Resources

- Operating under the new management timeframe July 2014 – July 2015
- Setting female crab bushel limits by license type; ex., September vessel 2 license CAP reduction from 20 bushels to 17 (12% reduction)
- Shorten male crab harvest season by 14 days, end season November 30, 2014
- Anticipate April 2015 bushel limits & considering peeler harvest limit for 2015

Achieves ~10% reduction from 2013 harvest level

Potomac River – Potomac River Fisheries Commission

- Operating under the new management timeframe July 2014 – July 2015
- Potomac is divided into an upriver and downriver section; increased upriver closure to crabbing by 6 days from Sept. 12 to Oct. 3; increased the downriver closure by 6 days from Oct. 3 to Oct. 23
- Crab season closure earlier; November 20 instead of November 30

Achieves ~8.1% reduction from the 2013 harvest level; working to achieve the remaining 1.9% unless reduced effort in 2014 achieves this by default

Virginia – Virginia Marine Resources Commission

- Imposed new July 5, 2014 to July 4, 2015 management timeframe
- Season closure for all gear except crab pots September 16, 2014 through April 30, 2015 will conserve juveniles and delay peeler pot harvest in early 2015
- Reduce bushel limits for the various crab license categories (based on number of pots)
- Close the 2014-2015 crab dredge fishery season

Achieves ~10% reduction from 2013 harvest level

Situation Summary

Each jurisdiction has responded to protect the existing stock of juvenile crabs and protect the spawning age females. Management cycles have been shifted to the July-to-July timeframe allowing more effective and timely reactions to each year's Blue Crab Advisory Committee Report.

Upriver sanctuaries have not been established, but informal and formal discussion has begun as the managers and industry consider the shifting impacts of such an action.

All jurisdictions implement "Catch Report" procedures that allow improved accountability of all commercial and recreational catches including greater efforts to characterize the biological characteristics of all catch. Maryland's pilot project for "hail-out and hail-in" mobile catch reporting is having success and will be expanded to other fisheries. All managers agree that improvements in catch reporting and enforcement are possible and they will continue to seek cost-effective means to increase reporting frequency and accuracy.

Crab fishery scientists are continuing to improve the precision of estimating overwintering mortality and evaluating the variations caused by different fishing gear. Research on the male to female ratio concerns and the availability of male sperm may provide additional information for science-based management decisions within 1 to 3 years.