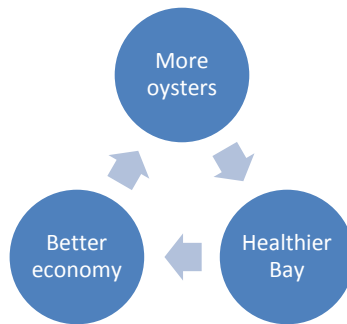


Oyster Summit September Update

- Bruce Vogt (NCBO), Amy Freitag (NCBO/VASG) and Emilie Franke (ERT/NCBO) are reaching out to key partners to build the workshop steering committee.
- Steering Committee will meet at the end of this month to decide on Summit dates/venues and workshop themes.
- Possibly combine Oyster Summit with December Fisheries GIT meeting. Could address non-oyster GIT business immediately before or after the Summit.

Steering Committee Proposed Members

- NCBO
- CBC
- Sea Grants
- CBF
- MD DNR
- PRFC
- VMRC
- NOAA Aquaculture
- USACE
- TNC
- MD and VA Industry reps (Harvesters and Aquaculture)
- Academic reps (VIMS, UMD)
- Recreational fishing interests



More oysters, healthier bay, better economy

Purpose: Develop a vision for increasing the number of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay

Objectives:

- Discuss the need for and benefits of increasing the number of oysters in the bay (support the economy, provide habitat for fish and crabs, help clean the water, and maintain cultural heritage)
- Explore and prioritize the obstacles to increasing oyster populations
- Identify strategies to increase oyster populations that include restoration, wild harvest and aquaculture interests/objectives

Potential Session Topics:

The meeting would begin with high level presentations on:

- The status of oyster restoration
- The health of the wild fishery
- The growth oyster aquaculture; and
- The latest oyster science

These presentations will provide the participants the background information needed to enter into more interactive sessions. Some examples of interactive sessions are:

- What are the primary factors limiting or challenging the bay wide recovery of oysters?
- What new tools and information are improving our ability to increase oyster populations (e.g., disease resistance, habitat mapping and suitability, aquaculture siting tools, etc)
- How can we account for the ecosystem value of oysters to the Bay (the services they provide for harvest, clean water, and habitat)?

- Are current policies facilitating more oysters in the Bay?
- What business models are driving aquaculture (ranging from high volume production for shucking to smaller scale operations targeting high end half shell market)?
- How can we work more effectively together across research, industry, and restoration interests to restore oyster populations in the Bay?
- How will sea level rise and climate change affect the Bay and oysters, and what can we do to address these concerns?

Rationale:

More oysters to harvest, sell, eat, clean the water and provide habitat for fish and crabs are objectives the Bay community can all support. The question is, can we increase oyster populations to sustainably meet those interests and, if so, how? The good news is that oysters in the Chesapeake Bay are at a turning point. Oyster restoration efforts, aquaculture production and wild harvest are on the rise prompting renewed commitment to rebuild populations for the economy and ecosystem services. Still oysters face challenges as loss of habitat, poor water quality, shell limitation and disease continue to threaten their recovery.

It is time to develop a shared vision for recovering oysters using science as a foundation for assessing the status of the oyster population, the factors limiting recovery and the primary social and economic drivers affecting oysters.

Participants will share information and lessons learned on the following topics: oyster economics; the status of Chesapeake Bay oyster populations; sustainable aquaculture; harvest fisheries; restoration; and conservation. They will discuss common challenges, interests, and linkages among aquaculture, wild harvest, and conservation. Ultimately, the summit will identify actionable, integrated oyster recovery strategies to overcome common challenges and combine efforts for a future Chesapeake with more oysters.

To spur evolution of comprehensive vision for oyster recovery, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, with its partners, proposes to convene a multi-day summit. The summit will provide an opportunity for the region's oyster stakeholders to discuss and share information about current research techniques, and priorities. Through panel discussions, breakout working groups, and case studies, participants will share ideas and ways to build sustainable oyster populations that will maximize benefits for fisheries as well as conservation interests.

The summit will call together managers, scientists, government and industry representatives, and other partners to determine how to balance the needs and value of aquaculture, wild harvest, and conservation. Participants will develop strategies tailored to the specific circumstances of a given tributary, to work through how the concepts developed during the summit can be applied in a place.

When:

December 2015

Where:

TBD