SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES GOAL

Fish Passage Outcome

2025 PROGRESS
ON COURSE

OUTCOME: Continually increase access to habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed's freshwater rivers and streams. By 2025, restore historical fish migration routes by opening an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage. Restoration success will be indicated by the consistent presence of alewife, blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad, American eel and brook trout, to be monitored in accordance with available agency resources and collaboratively developed methods.

PROGRESS AS OF 2021: The Fish Passage Outcome is on course to meet its target of opening an additional 132 miles of streams every two years. In 2018 and 2019, an additional 1,379 stream miles were opened to fish passage through dam removal projects, far exceeding this goal. Data collection for 2020 and 2021 is not yet complete, and the numbers will not be reported until January 2022. Interest by dam owners is still a major challenge, so the workgroup is focusing on ways to incentivize dam removal projects. Moving forward, the workgroup is planning on using infrastructure funding to expand dam removal and culvert initiatives—funding opportunities made available through sources such as the Infrastructure Bill (H.R.3684) will aid in completing these projects.

BACKGROUND: The outcome was developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program Fish Passage Workgroup between 2009 and 2010 to address the need for improved fish passage for the watershed's aquatic species, although fish passage data began to be continuously reported in 1988. There are more than 140,000 miles of rivers and streams in the watershed and more than 5,000 dams. Dams and other obstructions block the natural migration of diadromous fish (those that migrate between sea and freshwater) to their historic spawning habitats, as well as disrupt the migration of resident fish like American shad, hickory shad, river herring, American eel and brook trout. The original target for the Fish Passage Outcome was to open 1,000 additional miles of waterways to fish passage by 2025. However, this target was met only two years after the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* was signed, mainly due to the development of more accurate technologies to measure stream and river habitat. In 2020, the outcome was revised with a target to open an additional 132 miles of fish passage every two years, which is more consistent with the best available science.

BASELINE: The progress of this outcome is measured from zero miles starting in 2011. During the period of 2011 to 2013, the Fish Passage Workgroup reported a total of 215 stream miles re-opened.

DATA SOURCE: Fish passage coordinators in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania report how many stream miles have been opened annually through the Chesapeake Bay Fish Passage Prioritization Tool. The number of miles opened each year is determined through a GIS exercise where a dam removal or fish passage project is located and mapped and an assessment of stream miles accessible to target species is calculated.