

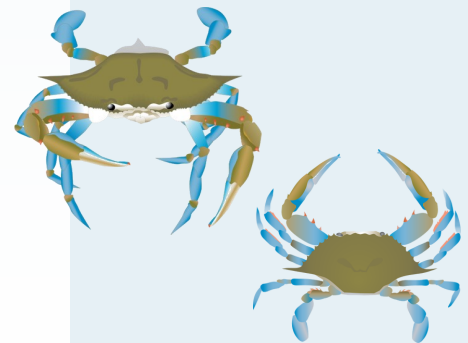
Updates from the Sustainable Fisheries GIT



Summer Meeting Postponed

In an effort to wait for a future date when it is safe to gather in person, the GIT summer meeting typically planned for June is postponed and expected to be rescheduled for around September. A decision will be made over the summer based on current public health recommendations. The Executive Committee agreed that an in-person meeting is highly valuable for discussing the latest fisheries science and management issues. GIT leadership will also explore web-based options to highlight current science in case a full meeting is not feasible.

The summer meeting traditionally focuses on blue crab abundance with a presentation of results from the winter dredge survey. Fortunately, the survey was completed before COVID-19 related work disruptions began. Discussions by the jurisdictions and CBSAC continue as blue crab data are analyzed and the annual Advisory Report prepared for public release.



New Logic & Action Plans Approved

Following the Chesapeake Bay Program adaptive management review process, the Management Board approved the updated 2020-2021 Logic & Action Plans for [blue crab](#), [oysters](#), and [forage](#) in March 2020. A plan for [fish habitat](#) was approved in January 2020. These plans help to ensure accountability and document the actions outlined for workgroups and partners to take over the next two years.

Ongoing GIT Efforts

- Invasive catfish strategy
- Telemetry receiver array
- GIT funding for FY2020
- Current GIT projects
- 11th oyster tributary named
- ORES Tech Memo



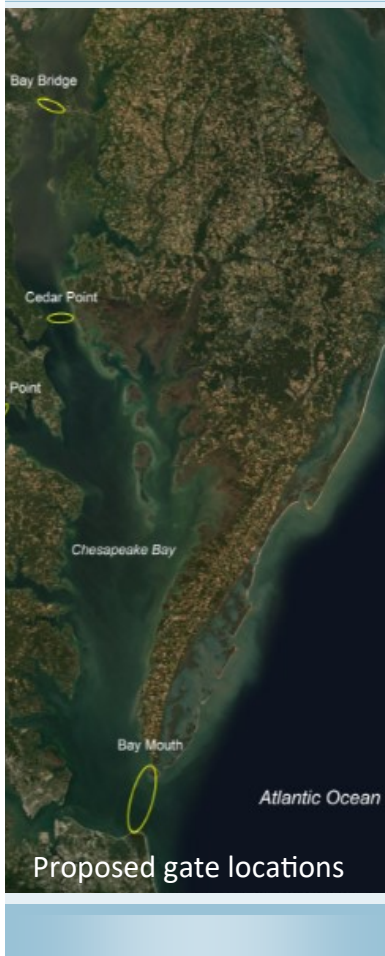
Invasive Catfish Workshop

The Invasive Catfish Workgroup held a [workshop January 29-30](#) at VCU Rice Rivers Center bringing stakeholders together to discuss the latest science on blue and flathead catfish and to explore options to manage fisheries in a way that balances ecological and economic interests. The workshop will result in a Management Strategy, expected to be finalized by the Executive Committee in May 2020, outlining recommen-

dations for action. Management approaches recommended by the workgroup were to:

- Improve public awareness through outreach and marketing campaigns
- Remove processing barriers
- Conduct and synthesize scientific research
- Develop tributary-specific management plans

[The Sustainable Fisheries GIT leadership and Executive Committee continue meeting monthly to discuss current topics in Chesapeake Bay fisheries.](#)



Chesapeake Bay Mainstem Telemetry Array

Planning is ongoing to establish a Chesapeake Bay mainstem telemetry array with three acoustic receiver gates at critical locations to track species movements through the Bay mouth, Cedar Point and at the Bay bridge. Partners involved in setting up the array include US Navy, UMCES Chesapeake Biological Lab, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Maryland DNR, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Chesapeake Bay Program and NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. The resulting database would be housed by the [Mid-Atlantic Acoustic Telemetry Observation System \(MATOS\)](#). An EPA innovation grant proposal was recently put forward that would fund purchasing of acoustic release receivers for the Bay bridge gate, allowing researchers to better connect biological species movement data with physical water quality data and habitat conditions. The need for a continued Chesapeake Bay telemetry array is a science priority identified by the Fisheries GIT, building from the array established at the Bay mouth by the US Navy for tracking endangered sturgeon and other species movements.

Please reach out to bruce.vogt@noaa.gov to highlight any research plans to collect and analyze data supported by this array, especially for species of management interest.





Shorelines communications for coastal landowners is the focus of an upcoming request for proposals, seeking bids in late 2020 through the [Chesapeake Bay Trust](#).

2020 GIT Funding Opportunity

The Fisheries GIT is currently refining project ideas submitted by workgroup members to prioritize for FY2020 funding through the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office. This is an annual internal funding opportunity used to help achieve goals and outcomes under the 2014 Agreement. Criteria for successful projects selection include those that benefit multiple GITs and workgroups, and those addressing needs previously identified through Logic & Action Plans, partnership science needs lists, and other Chesapeake Bay Program processes. [Top project ideas are due June 15.](#)

In the past, the Fisheries GIT has advocated for 2-3 projects per year addressing high-priority needs. Since the funding program began in 2014, Fisheries GIT has been responsible for developing 11 project scopes totaling \$719,021 awarded. To view past projects' details, see the [Chesapeake Bay Trust website](#).

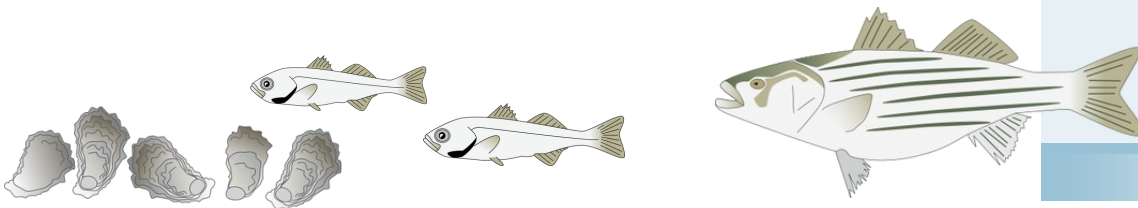
Current GIT Projects

A project from FY2018 awarded to Tetra Tech to complete a fish habitat metadata inventory of biological and environmental data sources is expected to conclude in June, resulting in recommendations for the Chesapeake Bay fish habitat assessment.

An ecosystem approach to living shorelines project design is ongoing through VIMS, with the team developing shoreline restoration and monitoring plans for a Naval facility site at Penniman Spit on the York River. The shoreline design will incorporate nature-based elements, like oyster reefs.

A project pilot testing a cost-effective vertical monitoring system for dissolved oxygen is being led by Anchor QEA working with NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. The expected application is for real-time hypoxia monitoring.

A FY2019 project focused on striped bass nursery habitat awarded to VIMS will kick-off with a steering committee meeting in June. The project will assess conditions in estuarine habitats used by juvenile (ages 0 to 4) striped bass, and quantify how changes in availability and condition of habitats impact the long-term sustainability of the stock.



ORES Tech Memo

The Oyster Reef Ecosystem Services (ORES) suite of research projects is complete. Researchers are now working with NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office to publish a technical memorandum for resource managers and policy makers, while also developing public-friendly communications to highlight results.

See [infographic](#) for some of the many benefits of oysters!

11th Tributary Named for Oyster Restoration

At the January 2020 GIT meeting, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) announced plans to complete oyster restoration in the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River, a fully funded project to restore 19.5 acres of reef at the level of 100% currently restorable oyster bottom. Because the tributary will follow the same rigorous process as the 10 tributaries selected for restoration by 2025, the Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee voted to approve the area as a 'bonus' 11th tributary, going above and beyond the Oyster Outcome. The GIT applauds Virginia partners for the commitment to restore Chesapeake Bay oyster reefs.

