

# Meeting Notes

## Inland Bays Habitat Plan –Stakeholder Work Session 3

Date: June 6, 2024

Time: 9:00AM to 12:00PM

*The purpose of this work session is to discuss high level comments and respond to questions on the draft Habitat Management Plan.*

### Welcome/introduction

- Our approach to referencing datasets will be appendix and making data available upon request
- Land use analysis section to come forward
- Question: final document format
  - Intended for online publication
  - Figures can be zoomed in on
  - Color blindness – Kelly thinks that any EPA funded documents must have 508 compliance
  - EPA Mapping Best Practices that describes color palettes : <https://www.epa.gov/geospatial/map-design-cartography-epa>
  - If you look at the document in grayscale and it's clear, that's a good proxy

### Section 1 & 2 Discussion

- Project context map –
  - DNREC – don't cut off the top of the state.
  - Kelly – why Chesapeake Bay watershed called out specifically? Either call out all waterways or only IB
- Green Infrastructure section
  - Kelly comment: Clarify that GI includes both natural and built
  - Patch size comment (Figure 5 Vegetated Habitat Patches): core habitats are defined later in the document
  - White space on map: add something to legend to clarify (white space is not something that is considered primary habitat)
  - Kelly: Perhaps definitions section can come at beginning of document
    - Everyone agrees a definition section would be useful
    - Discussed high level definitions in the footnotes and full list of definitions in appendix
    - Since this is going to be online, you could hotlink in the document to the definition
- Spatial Framework

- o Data sources with years they were from – we will have an appendix
- Habitat Categories
  - o EPA comment
  - o Is there a desire for a more comprehensive habitat map? Yes but it might be too busy to to serve the purpose. Instead add context to existing spatial framework map.
  - o Make nomenclature more useful (idea of changing spatial framework to something about broad habitat)- e.g. spatial framework of habitat categories
  - o Table 1: Species of conservation need
    - Comment – these columns are the same
    - Is there something else we can show?
- Stressors and threats
  - o Kelly: mention roads and highways more as source of fragmentation
  - o Pollution sources, County ordinances, TMDL – revisions made
- Figure 8 - Upland and nontidal habitat cores – take out tidal habitats layer
- Streams, Rivers, Ponds - Added tax ditches
  - o Calculate lengths
- Add summary statistics table for upland and nontidal
- Stressors & threats to upland
  - o We have not done conversion of forest only or wetland only being lost to development – but the State of the Bays report has this data, looking into whether we can use it or reference it
- Recommended actions
  - o All core habitats are “high value” – do we need this term?
  - o High value for conservation – differentiate?
- Partnering with developers
  - o Demonstrate value
  - o Don't leave it all up to them though
- Early successional habitat – do tax ditches fit better here?
  - o Any agricultural buffer
- Not clipping habitat areas on wetland map – consider which basemap holds things together the best, see if something else looks less weird
- LULC data has to move up
- Wetness comment – wetness is not a main factor slowing down development, but our approach is that they are marsh migration spaces
- Watershed Resources Registry (WRR) for implementation
- SAV objective to support a long-term recovery plan – feasibility?
  - o SeaGrant Presentation
  - o Michael Bott
  - o Reference water quality criteria for SAV growth per 7401 Regs.
- Nonpoint source pollution – not addressed heavily here but addressed heavily in CCMP

### Section 3

- LULC section will move up
- Consistency with basemaps
  - SLR map uses aerial imagery
  - Can we be consistent with basemaps without losing value?
  - Comments that some prefer aerial background for context of what is impacted
- New wetland (clarify this term) – is it a migrated wetland? Retreated wetland?
  - New wetland gives the impression of gain
- Make sure wetland migration concepts are defined early in document and consistently throughout
- Bryanna: going back in narrative and making sure context exists for all the maps. (perhaps a narrative under each map with corresponding terminology)
- Text and maps are more adjacent to one another
- Melina – maps need to be clearly explained in terms of what is the intention behind each map, both in the image itself and also in the narrative

#### Section 4

- HVCH within focal areas vs HVCH outside of them- clarify terminology
  - Focal area cores? Focal area core habitats?
- Question of whether certain things demonstrate benefits
- Demonstrate benefits of conservation thresholds for land clearing (existing versus theoretical)
  - Sediment and stormwater comment (DNREC) – no more than 20 acres may be disturbed at a time, if we need specifics we can follow up with them
  - Model of Maryland FCA
  - Include STAC – Jenn Volk
- Identify loopholes in development regulations (ordinances more correct term?)
  - Michelle: just because we have someone listed as responsible parties doesn't mean it's required, just a guideline of who might be involved
  - Michael Bott "loopholes" can imply something negative – maybe change term. This is a general comment to review terminology in certain objectives. There may be a worthwhile intent in the regulation.
- Priority corridor/HVCH language needs clearing up.
  - Corridors within focal areas?
- Setting numeric performance metrics – Kelly. Is this realistic/within scope? If not, it's ok.
  - Michelle – we tried with CCMP, we can talk to Megan about this
  - Fish passage, for example x number of fish barriers cleared
    - Fish passage- opportunistic- hard to give numeric measures
  - Tracking purposes
- Effort targets are always within focal areas – say this clearly
- Objective 1.6
  - Comment missing in version in shared screen. Others could see comment in their version.

- o “The regs are restrictive in how much land can be cleared at a time, but not in how much total land can be cleared for a project. The DSSR regulations section 4.0 state no more than 20 acres may be disturbed at one time unless approval is granted from the Delegated Agency. The Sussex Conservation District oversees all residential builds in this watershed and would have more specific information. Please refer to previous comments”
- o Add Sussex Conservation District as a partner
- Confirming and characterizing early successional habitats
  - o Kelly: haven’t we already done it (since there is a map)
  - o Data might be 2016/inaccurate – may require an update
  - o Performance measure may instead be creating an updatable map or just updating map every x years through field verification
- Wording – “non-habitat” or “less valuable habitats”
  - o Meghan – this wording is odd
  - o We don’t have control over agricultural lands
  - o Isn’t all land some form of habitat?
  - o Change wording to “Improve habitat value of developed and agricultural land”
- Pollution control strategy numbers – objective 2.2
  - o Is putting these values relevant? Michelle/Kelly
  - o These are based on open space/land cover at the time
  - o Michelle to follow up
- 2.2.A
  - o Goals for riparian forest and grassed buffers are from 2008
  - o Revise to “Revisit 2008 control strategy and set new restoration goals,” Then implement strategies to meet those goals
  - o They were probably based on open space and landcover in 2008
  - o Were these values an aggregate value, or specific to the ag community?
  - o Performance measures – CIB can look into what has already been done, same as CCMP
- “too wet” comment
  - o Can we reframe that so it doesn’t say “too wet for agriculture”? – tax ditches exist for this reason (M. Bott).
  - o If tidal migration salination of ag and wells- would not preclude current or future ditching
  - o Areas that were historically wet for ag- but drainage network added to make them work
  - o Can focus more on migration spaces and how to prioritize them

## **Section 5 Focal Areas prioritization**

- Mention focal areas for conservation earlier in the document.
- Executive summary/list of tables and figures and terminology can be done earlier in the document

- HVCH and focal areas are not the same thing. HVCH are guiding and within focal areas – all this terminology needs reworking
- How were the circular areas created?
  - Shape is intentionally generic because they are just meant to direct attention to the set of delineated important things underneath it
  - Very detailed focal area shape could be much harder to see
  - Enlarged version would be extremely helpful
- This is the first time focal areas for conservation are mentioned. This map is really helpful, but hard to see. I suggest changing the colors and moving the map to an earlier section to lessen confusion.
- Think about where and how the rationale is explained
- Suggestion to break the habitats to have less on the same map? (Christina)
- Idea – having focal areas outlined lightly on previous maps?
- Final delivery of GIS maps
  - CIB will receive ArcGIS project packages
- Stand alone maps vs text? intent is for text to be paired with maps in the document
- Watershed-wide map of focal areas can be key map and then details could be in the watershed specific maps? -Aiman
- Explain what a wetland complex is (glossary)
- Cross hatch not in legend
- Is there a specific focus in each watershed?

### **Next steps & final discussion**

- Debrief with CIB & make final updates to plan
- Final version completion with formatting
- Looking at having final plan developed by the end of August. Plan approved by end of 2024.