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APNEP Oyster Workgroup/North-Central Coast Oyster Workgroup- working title
July 18, 2018

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Brandon Puckett, DCM; Trish Murphey, APNEP; Jason Peters, DMF; Kaitlin DeAeth, DMF; Jacob Boyd, DMF; Jordan Byrum, DMF; Allen McDowell, NCARI; Jimmy Johnson, APNEP, Bill Crowell, APNEP; Joel Fodrie, UNC-IMS; Shannon Jenkins, DMF-SS; Carol Price, NCAPKS; Lexia Weaver, NCCF; Erin Fleckenstein, NCCF; Todd Miller, NCCF; Christine Miller, NCCF

On the phone: Bridget Lussier, NOAA; Brian Boutin, TNC

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m. and began with a round of introductions.

Overview of Shellfish Initiative Launch

Erin provided an overview of the shellfish initiative launch, taking place at CMAST on August 2nd from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Sec. Regan is confirmed to speak at the event. The Initiative recognizes the importance of shellfish restoration and mariculture for the economic, ecological and cultural purposes.

NOTE: At the meeting it was stated that partners would have an opportunity for booths at the launch event, but after further planning it was determined that there was not adequate space to accommodate all the partners interested, so no booths will be on display.

Workgroup Function and Purpose

The goals of the shellfish initiative overlap with goals in both the APNEP workgroup and Oyster Blueprint for N.C. For this reason, there is a thought that perhaps all three efforts could be combined and the northern- central workgroup could serve as an advisory body for all three initiatives.

Jimmy provided an update on the workgroup progress from APNEP's perspective (see attached documents for details).

Bill Crowell provided an overview of how APNEP will be making funding decisions and using the workgroups moving forward. He said that the action teams or workgroups will help to identify and prioritize funding needs to advance CCMP identified actions. The needs would then go before an implementation committee who will vote/prioritize funding distributions. Todd stated that an immediate funding need is to assist in planning and hosting the next Oyster Summit, tentatively planned for spring 2019.

It was further discussed that a creative name to describe the group would be helpful.

Suggestions made include:

- NC SPAT: Northern Central Shellfish PArTnership

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- N-C.O.A.T.: Northern-Central Oyster Action Team
- O.R.C.- Oyster Recovery Collaboration

Please send any additional naming suggestions to Erin by August 10th.

The purpose of the group was also discussed. Words used to describe the workgroup purpose included: Interdisciplinary, science-based, restoration, site selection, collaborative, facilitate, ground-truth progress, goal setting, implementation, combine/leverage efforts. Using these words Erin proposes the following purpose statement for the workgroup (note: NC SPAT is being used as a place holder until we agree upon a name):

*The purpose of the **NC SPAT** workgroup is to collaborate and guide the restoration of shellfish habitats in the Albemarle- Pamlico National Estuary Partnership region. The group will use an inter-disciplinary, science-based approach and communicate and ground truth results of restoration efforts. **NC SPAT** will serve as an action team for APNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan oyster actions, NC Coastal Federation's Oyster Blueprint for Action, and NOAA's Shellfish Initiative goals.*

Please provide any further edits to the purpose statement to Erin by August 10th.

In addition to people in attendance at the meeting it was discussed that the following groups need representation:

- DMF regulatory- biologist for the oyster FMP
- Corps/DCM regulatory
- Fishermen (need to find way to provide per diem/travel compensation for participation)
- Additional Researchers: Stephen Fegley, Niels Lindquist, Dave Eggleston
- NOAA: Ken Riley?

Discussion of oyster monitoring protocols

Bridgett and Kait gave an overview of oyster restoration monitoring.

Bridgett began by saying that NOAA is evaluating their monitoring and reporting to ensure that they are getting the data they need to answer the questions: How is it going? Do we need more detail to understand restoration goals and success? Is the project meeting its goals? Erosion control, growing oysters both?

At a minimum they are requesting Tier 1 monitoring of project: oyster density and spatial characteristics.

In their database (RCDB- restoration center data base) they are asking for additional information such as:

- what type of material is used (granite, marl, shell?);
- is harvest allowed (yes/no?);
- what species are present (oysters, mussels?)
- what is the reef height, area, density?
- is oyster recruitment happening in year one? New recruitment in subsequent years?
- are there environmental variables to be aware of (pests?);

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- are the reefs intertidal or subtidal?

Kait DeAeth, oyster biologist with DMF then presented DMF's updated monitoring protocol (new suggested protocol attached). She stressed that DMF is trying to get at the key questions about is the material performing, if so, is one material type better than another? And are they recruiting/growing oysters? Ultimate goal is they want to build the best sanctuaries possible.

A few concerns and considerations discussed included:

- Visibility of reefs can be very challenging- may be beneficial to test underwater estimates of cover against same site extracted;
- percent cover scale could be braun blanquet ranges to provide more refined cover breakdowns for the lower end of percent cover.
- They are not monitoring mortality
- Characteristics of the reef change drastically through the year so the division is working hard to compare either one site to itself over time or compare multiple sites to each other.
- Consider analyzing the cost/benefits of restoring oysters per m².
- Consider noting oyster drills and other pests (in addition to sponge) on reefs
- Consider citizen science opportunities: even just observing fish presence/absence
- Develop set of questions for academia to assist with.

Identify and discuss future workgroup opportunities

It was suggested that the next meeting be held in January 2019, in Wanchese at the Federation's new office. Greg Allen and representatives from CSI should be included. Agenda topics for the meeting could include:

- a discussion of developing science based targets for restoration of specific waterbodies using the known distribution of oysters;
- developing a list of research questions to be addressed,
- selecting future restoration projects (sanctuary, water quality, living shorelines, cultch plantings).