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Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay **Provides Guidance for Living Resource Management**

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, with partners including the American Fisheries Society, has published the first-of-its-kind guidance document to provide information for ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Bay.

Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay (FEP) is a guide that describes the structure and function of the Bay's ecosystem, including key habitat and the interactions among species. The guide describes how resource managers in the Chesapeake Bay region can incorporate new concepts that use ecosystem principles into their management decisions. This work, which was recently published by the American Fisheries Society, will facilitate the incorporation of ecosystem principles into fisheries management.

Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay provides valuable guidance for ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Chesapeake Bay and coastal region. The recently signed federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act emphasizes an ecosystem approach to management and encourages managers to take ecosystem effects into their management decisions.

While many current management strategies focus on a single species at a time—for example, limiting fishing on a certain species if data show that the population of that species is dwindling, ecosystem-based management principles look at how other ecosystem components affect fisheries and how fisheries affect the ecosystem. These include habitat, water quality, species interactions, ecological processes and human activities. This added information will allow resource managers to manage fisheries more effectively.

Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay contains information on the structure and function of the Chesapeake Bay fisheries ecosystem, and is designed to increase awareness of how management decisions can affect the ecosystem and to facilitate the incorporation of ecosystem principles into fisheries management.

“We are delighted to see the FEP in print, as it represents a significant step forward linking sound science and resource management,” said Steve Giordano, Fisheries Program Manager at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. “This document—and the better integrated management actions that will flow from it—are important steps as we transition from single-species management to ecosystem approaches to management.”

In November 2005, the Executive Council of the Chesapeake Bay Program formally adopted *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay*—then still in draft form—to provide important guidance on key features of the Bay ecosystem to support effective management of fishery resources.

“The shift to ecosystem-based fisheries management requires that we maintain the broadest possible view of the resources we manage, in order to fully comprehend the scope of our individual management decisions,” said Matthew Fleming, Program Manager of Watershed Services at Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Living Resources Subcommittee. “This plan calls to broaden current management efforts, taking into account the linkages among fisheries, habitat and water quality management.”

The document is available on line at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office web site at http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/docs/FEP_FINAL.pdf; hard copies of *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay* can be purchased at <http://www.afsbooks.org/x55051p.html>

Since 1984, NOAA has provided science, service, and stewardship to advance NOAA’s mission in the mid-Atlantic region, and to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay through its programs in fisheries management, habitat restoration, coastal observations and education and collaboration with the Chesapeake Bay Program. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office was established in 1992 to provide a focus for NOAA’s multiple capabilities and activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America’s scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

- NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>
- NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net>
- *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning for Chesapeake Bay*: http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/docs/FEP_FINAL.pdf