

FY13 HABITAT PRIORITIES

- Implement the Habitat Blueprint
- Demonstrate ecosystem services and the economic benefits of habitat conservation
- Implement RESTORE ACT & Deep Water Horizon habitat restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico
- Promote a healthy ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Ensure excellence in quality of work by empowering staff to increase effectiveness and focus priorities on OHC's desired results

CONTEXT – The FY13 Habitat Priority Plan Supports:

- NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan:
 - Goal: Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained with healthy and productive ecosystems.*
 - Objective: Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities*
- NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2013
 - *Improve ocean and coastal stewardship by focusing habitat efforts in priority areas and demonstrating landscape scale results*
 - *For FY 2013 NOAA Fisheries will focus on establishing habitat conservation priorities and objectives that will contribute to improved stock status and protect biodiversity and ecosystem structure to support sustainable fisheries and protected resources. Improving habitat scientific information and planning efforts with our partners is essential in linking habitat conservation improvements to fishery productivity and protected resource recovery and conservation. We will work with the states and our federal partners to implement the*

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

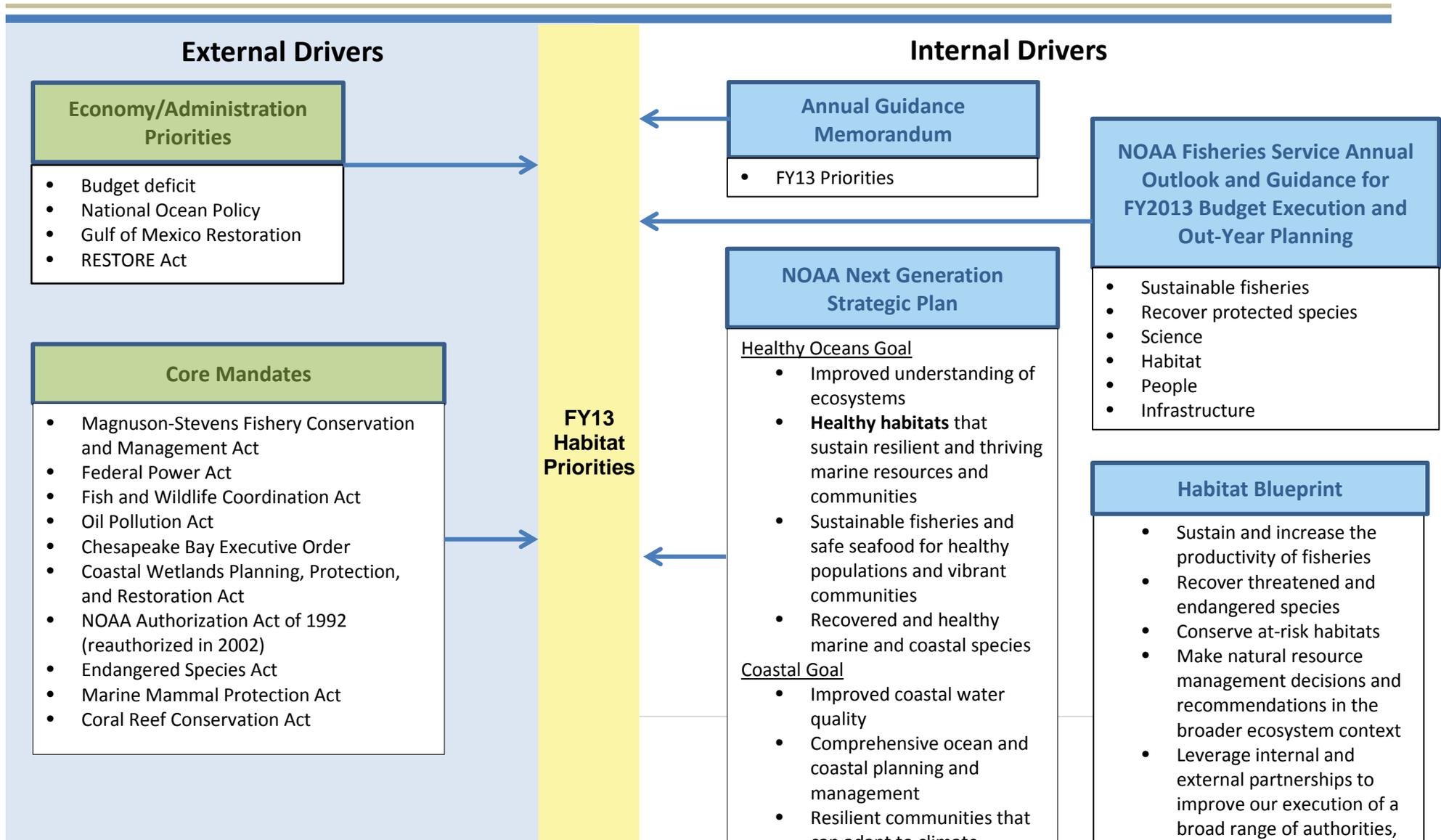
- Allow leadership to regularly assess priorities and make choices on where to direct resources to have the biggest impact
- Keep Directorate informed so they can share progress and raise issues with NMFS/NOAA leadership
- Provide greater cross-division input across programs; use collective ideas to advance and succeed in meeting these priorities
- Hold OHC leadership accountable through other requirements such as Annual Operating Plan milestones, Director's SES and staff performance plans, and Division planning efforts

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- OHC leadership will provide weekly updates on priorities at Monday DC meetings and hold a mid-year review to make modifications.

Drivers for FY13 Habitat Priorities



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FY13 PRIORITIES: RESULTS and ACTIONS (* indicates milestone included in OHC AOP)

| A. Implement the Habitat Blueprint | | | | |
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| 1. Foster and leverage partnerships with stakeholders | | | | |
| Actions | 1.1* | Develop a Habitat Blueprint stakeholder engagement plan to foster and leverage partnerships and initiate collaborative actions to improve habitat conditions. | Q1 | SPDG/ Comms |
| 2. Demonstrate efficiencies across NOAA | | | | |
| Actions | 2.1* | Develop case studies from Habitat Blueprint Regional Initiatives to demonstrate successful habitat conservation/partnerships and post on the Habitat Blueprint website. | Q1 | Comms Team |
| | 2.2* | Select Habitat Blueprint Focus Areas to maximize NOAA’s habitat conservation and science investments and the benefits to marine resources and coastal communities. • *Complete California pilot focus area selection; write up lessons learned. | Q2 | SPDG |
| | 2.3* | Complete the final Cape Fear Watershed Action Plan signed by NMFS. As part of the Cape Fear River Partnership, • Work with the NFHP Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership to select high priority projects in the action plan for implementation. | Q1-2 | HP |
| | 2.4* | Publish a federal funding opportunity (FFO) that prioritizes restoration for species managed under MSRA or listed under the ESA. | Q1-2 | RC |
| | 2.5* | Make records of deep-sea coral locations from the U.S. East and West Coasts publically available through the Ocean Biogeographic Information System-USA. | Q4 | HP |
| | 2.6* | Publish an updated Report on the State of Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Ecosystems of the United States. | Q4 | |
| 3. Strengthen policy and legislation | | | | |

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| Actions 3.1* | <p>Complete a report for NMFS and Council leadership on options and recommendations for developing habitat conservation objectives for managed fisheries based on the AFS Habitat Blueprint symposium.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and promote those objectives as a necessary and missing component of achieving sustainable fisheries by working with SF and the FMCs to explore having a Council/Region test those options. | Q2 Q1-4 | HP |
| 3.2* | <p>Refine the approach to achieving the Coral Reef Conservation Program National Goals and Objectives related to fishing impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Develop a Fishing Impacts Implementation Plan to determine annual investments of the Coral Reef Conservation Program to address the adverse impacts of commercial and recreational fishing on U.S. coral reef ecosystems and potentially support recovery of listed coral species. | Q2 | HP |
| 3.3 | <p>Establish policies that promote EFH consultations for the highest priority actions/impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for revising EFH regulatory guidelines. • Strengthen processes for engaging FMCs in high priority consultations. | Q1-2 Q1-4 | HP |
| 3.4* | <p>Complete interagency review of existing project monitoring data standards established through the Estuary Restoration Council.</p> | Q1 | |
| 3.5 | <p>Develop interagency partnerships to advance habitat conservation goals identified in the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a coastal conservation corps network that is aligned with and contributes to national and regional initiatives such as the America's Great Outdoors 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and Veterans Job Corps. • Incorporate coastal blue carbon sequestration services into domestic U.S. policy mechanisms. • Establish a marine and coastal focus within the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) to achieve greater habitat conservation and strengthen connections within NFHP to recreational fishing interests. • Analyze the underlying factors for loss of wetlands in coastal watersheds through tools and strategies identified in regional coastal wetland reviews, and co-lead completion of two coastal watershed interagency pilots. | Q1-4 | SPDG SPDG SPDG HP HP |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete interagency review of existing project monitoring data standards established through the Estuary Restoration Council. | | RC |
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| B. Demonstrate ecosystem services and the economic benefits of habitat conservation | | | | |
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| Actions | 1.1 | Implement ecosystem service pilot projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue ecosystem services valuation survey of the Elwha River Flood Plain restoration project. Produce a report on project benefits such as flood protection and infrastructure improvements from the Fisher Slough restoration project in Washington State. | Q2 | RC/ SPDG |
| | 1.2 | Initiate ecosystem services pilot project to investigate the effects of oyster restoration on habitat complexity and fish assemblages | Q3-4 | NCBO |
| | 1.3 | Continue analysis of ARRA restoration projects to refine contributions restoration makes to job creation. | | RC |

| C. Implement RESTORE ACT & Deep Water Horizon habitat restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico | | | | |
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| Lead habitat restoration planning and project implementation for the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resources Damage Assessment | | | | |
| Actions | 1.1 | Establish a chain of command to provide weekly Directorate briefings. | Q1 | RC |
| | 1.2 | Provide monthly DWH status briefings to the NMFS Front Office. | Q1-4 | RC |
| Closely coordinate RESTORE Act implementation with and complementary to the DWH NRDA. | | | | |
| Action | 2.1* | Provide DWH NRDA briefings and updates to NOAA staff working on RESTORE Act implementation to ensure agency leads and their staff are well-versed in NRDA perspectives on key RESTORE Act issues. | Q1-4 | RC |
| Gain initial public support for the general approach to DWH NRDA restoration. | | | | |
| Action | 3.1* | Complete a Draft Programmatic Restoration Plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Deepwater Horizon Trustee Council Review. | Q4 | RC |

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| Complete DWH Emergency Restoration projects. | | | |
| Action | 4.1 | Complete DWH Emergency Restoration Projects to restore submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the Gulf. | RC |

D. Promote a healthy ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay watershed

1. Restore native oysters in selected Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

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| Actions | 1.1 | Refine Virginia tributary selection process and formally select a restoration site. | NCBO/ RC |
| | 1.2* | Continue execution of Executive Order 13508 and the NOAA Habitat Blueprint by implementing the second phase of oyster restoration in Harris Creek, Maryland and completing a tributary restoration plan for the Little Choptank River, Maryland by September 2013. | Q4 NCBO/ RC |

2. Coordinate inter-jurisdictional, ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Chesapeake Bay

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| Action | 2.1 | Chair and coordinate the Chesapeake Bay Program's Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team | NCBO |
| Action | 2.2 | Prioritize and support Bay-wide research goals (FFO) for species such as blue catfish, menhaden, sturgeon, and striped bass | NCBO |
| Action | 2.3 | Support the development of male reference points for blue crab management | NCBO |

3. Monitor and model changes in ecosystem conditions to assess progress to protection and restoration goals.

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| Action | 3.1 | Develop a public private partnership to jointly manage CBIBS in future years. | NCBO |
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4. Establish joint priorities between NCBO, HCD, RC, PR and SF in the Chesapeake Bay

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| Action | 4.1 | Continue restoration and protection prioritization process with NCBO, RC, HCD, and TNC | NCBO |
| Action | 4.2 | Evaluate linkages between NCBO field team & Bay Program involvement and permit review (EFH, FERC), restoration (oysters, wetlands, fish passage), Sturgeon, and managed fish species. | NCBO |

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| E. Ensure excellence in quality of work by empowering staff to increase effectiveness and focus priorities on OHC's desired results. | | | | |
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| 1. Improved work environment and greater clarity on objectives and staff actions in support of those objectives through improved communications. | | | | |
| Actions | 1.1 | Convey concept of completed staff work as an operating principle. Outline the concepts of completed staff work to managers and staff. Convey the merits of this approach in reducing stress, catalyzing communication regarding work load and activities, and build this into regular approach for staff and feedback for management team. | Q1 | Directorate |
| | 1.2 | As an operating principle, provide immediate feedback after meetings, deadlines, and other milestones and at key points in project development. Using the tenets of good staff work and other best practices (e.g., public speaking and email etiquette for taskers) provide quick "things you did well, and things that could be improved" review. Encourage this approach among staff and your direct reports. | Q2-4 | Supervisors |
| | 1.3 | FY2013 performance feedback and review will more strictly adhere to the benchmark standards and summary guidance of the identified performance attributes. This refined approach needs to be discussed and communicated thoroughly with staff. | Q4 | Supervisors |

| Congressional Reports and Directives for OHC | | | | |
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| Congressional Reports | Report Directive | Contact | Due Date | Comments |
| *NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Biennial Report to Congress | This report to Congress details NCBO's accomplishments during the given fiscal year timeframe and is submitted in accordance with NCBO's authorization, enacted by Congress in 1992 (Public Law No. 98-210) and reauthorized in 2002 (Public Law No. 107-372). | Peyton Robertson | Q3 (?) Every two years | The last report was for fiscal years 2009-2010. The report for FY2011-2012 is in development as of September 2012. |

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| Deep-Sea Coral Research & Technology Report to Congress | The Magnuson-Stevens Act, reauthorized in 2006, established the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program and required NOAA to prepare biennial reports to Congress and the public on steps taken to identify, monitor, and protect deep-sea coral areas. | Fan Tsao | Every two years | The last report was submitted in 2012. |
| Congressional Directives | Directive Language | Contact | Due Date | Can Bureau Comply? |
| Cooperative Oxford Lab from NCCOS to NCBO | The Committee also directs NOAA to provide the Committee with a report within 60 days of enactment of this act detailing a clear strategic plan for transferring the Cooperative Oxford Laboratory [COL] from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science to CBO." | Vicki Schwantes | Within 60 days of enactment | NOAA is still determining final FY12 funding allocations which may impact the lab and office. NOAA is still evaluating the transfer proposal. NOAA anticipates that some budget or organizational concerns may arise and/or that some of the potential benefits may not be achievable in the near term. Additional time is needed for developing the plan (8 weeks) and sufficient time is needed for clearance (4 weeks). |
| Senate Report 112-78: Multiple Species Management | NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office [CBO] is directed to collaborate with State agencies and the National Sea Grant Programs to advance multiple species management. | | | It is not yet known how the reduction will affect NMFS' ability to meet the directive due to the substantial reduction in funding in FY 12 Conference for the Survey and Monitoring line. |
| Senate Report 112-78: Habitat Conservation and Restoration | NOAA is directed to consolidate funding for restoration and conservation grant programs throughout the agency, not only within NMFS, including the Estuary Restoration Program; the Damage Assessment, Remediation and Restoration Program; and the Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Program. NOAA is directed to work with its federal | | | ERA, DARRP, and Community-based Restoration are already consolidated in the way we administer grants. The CELCP program is uniquely oriented to acquiring land as opposed to restoring habitat and has staff with this specialized expertise, so the efficiency or rationale for consolidating two disparate programs would need to be explored. Also, considering funding sources for the different |

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| | and non-federal partners to prioritize which funding sources are most important to communities, eliminate duplicative activities, and administration, and establish a reasonable path forward for sound environmental restoration within the scope of the agency's authorization and financial potential. | | | programs, DARRP funds cannot be combined with appropriated funds because DARRP funding is obtained through legal settlements to address specific damages via Natural Resource Damage Assessments. Complicating this issue, the FY13 OMB passback directs NOAA to consolidate Marine Debris and Estuary Restoration Programs with OHC without additional funding, which differs with the Congressional direction for consolidation in FY12. |
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