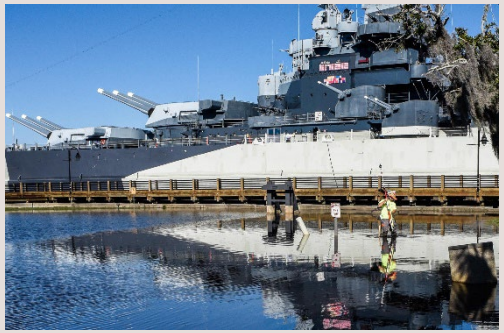
ACFHP PROJECT UPDATES

October 21, 2024

Battleship North Carolina: *Living with Water*



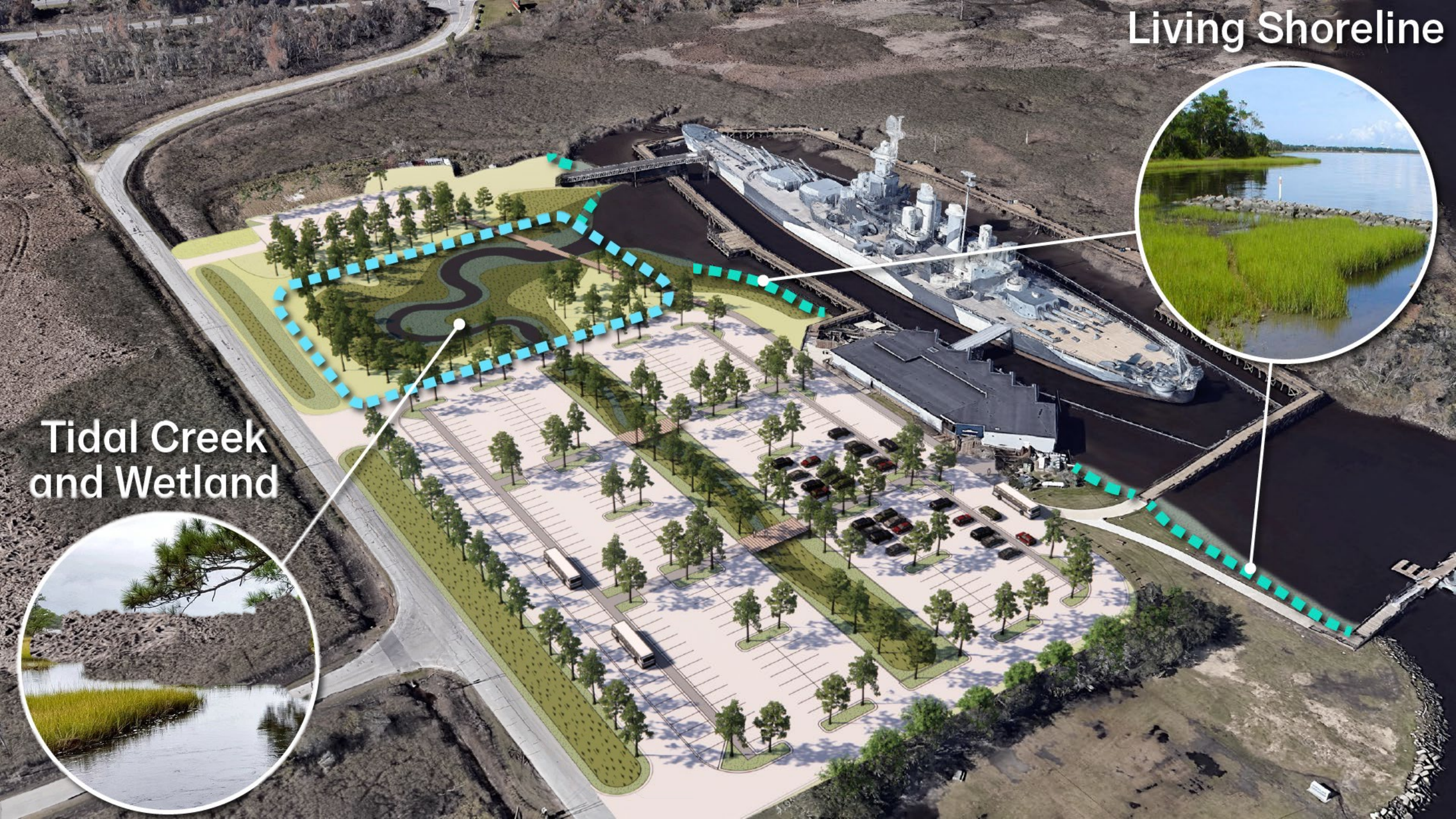
Cape Fear River, Wilmington, NC

(FY21) Delayed due to COVID-19

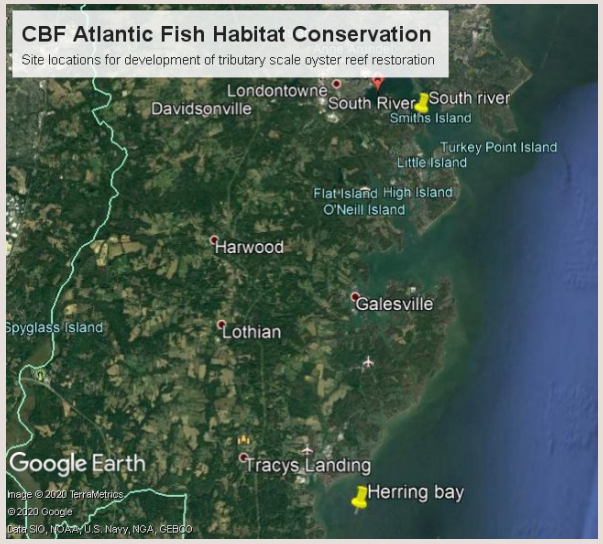
Expected Completion: **early 2025**

Led by USS North Carolina Battleship Commission

Restores ~800 ft. of intertidal shoreline & ~2 acres of tidal wetland to mitigate nuisance tidal flooding.


Living Shoreline
Tidal Creek
and Wetland

South River Tributary-Scale Oyster Reef Restoration



South River & Herring Bay, Annapolis, MD

(FY22) Monitoring nearly complete. Awaiting final reports

Led by Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Restores, augments, and expands existing oyster reef sanctuaries
1.5 ➔ 5 acres.

Annual NFHP Funding Cycle

Project Status:

Project Name	FY Funded	Status (MM/YY)	Notes about status[1]	NCP
Lower E.R. Collins Dam (NJ #24-28) Removal on the Pequest River, NJ The Nature Conservancy	2023	Active	Engineering and design completed 06/2023; Regulatory comment process ongoing (01/2024 – 07/2024); **Demolition of dam expected Summer 2025**	2. conserve hydrologic conditions 3. conserve physical and living habitats 4. reconnect fragmented fish habitats 5. conserve water quality for fish
Paulina Dam (NJ #21-2) Removal on the Paulins Kill, NJ The Nature Conservancy	2023	**Complete (ish)**	Construction finished for the season; **barrier removed** Construction crew will reenter the stream next year to implement Adaptive Management Plan (i.e., grade banks). Photos requested.	2. conserve hydrologic conditions 3. conserve physical and living habitats 4. reconnect fragmented fish habitats 5. conserve water quality for fish
Salt Marsh Restoration & Donor Marsh, Wards Creek, North River Wetlands Preserve, NC NCCF	2023	Active	Contract started 01/2024; Preliminary designs completed 03/2024; Permit application on-going	4. reconnect fragmented fish habitats 5. conserve water quality for fish
FHP Operations	2023	Active		6. Support structure and function of FHPs

FY2023

Project Status: Active

DELMARVA RESTORATION & CONSERVATION NETWORK

#1: Maryland Coastal Bays Salt Marsh Restoration Project - Phase I - *Worcester County, MD*

Objective: Restore **114** acres of heavily degraded salt marshes in Maryland Coastal Bays

Funds Requested: **$100,000**

The Nature Conservancy

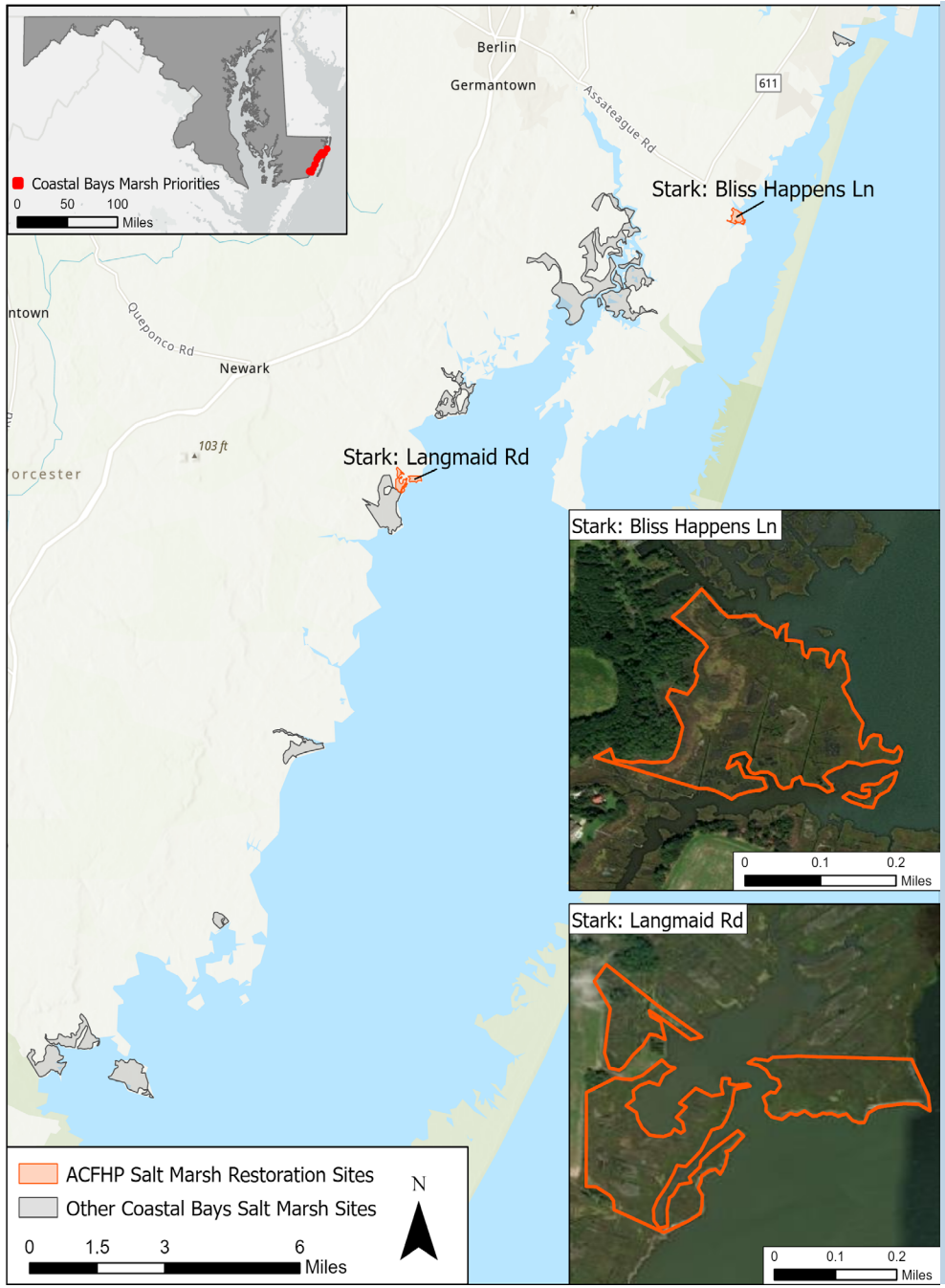
#2: Upper E.R. Collins Dam (NJ Dam #24-29) Removal on the Pequest River - *Warren County, NJ*

Objective: Open 3 miles of riverine habitat to enhance fish migration and mitigate local flooding in Belvidere, NJ

Funds Requested: **$50,000**

FY2024

Project Status: Active



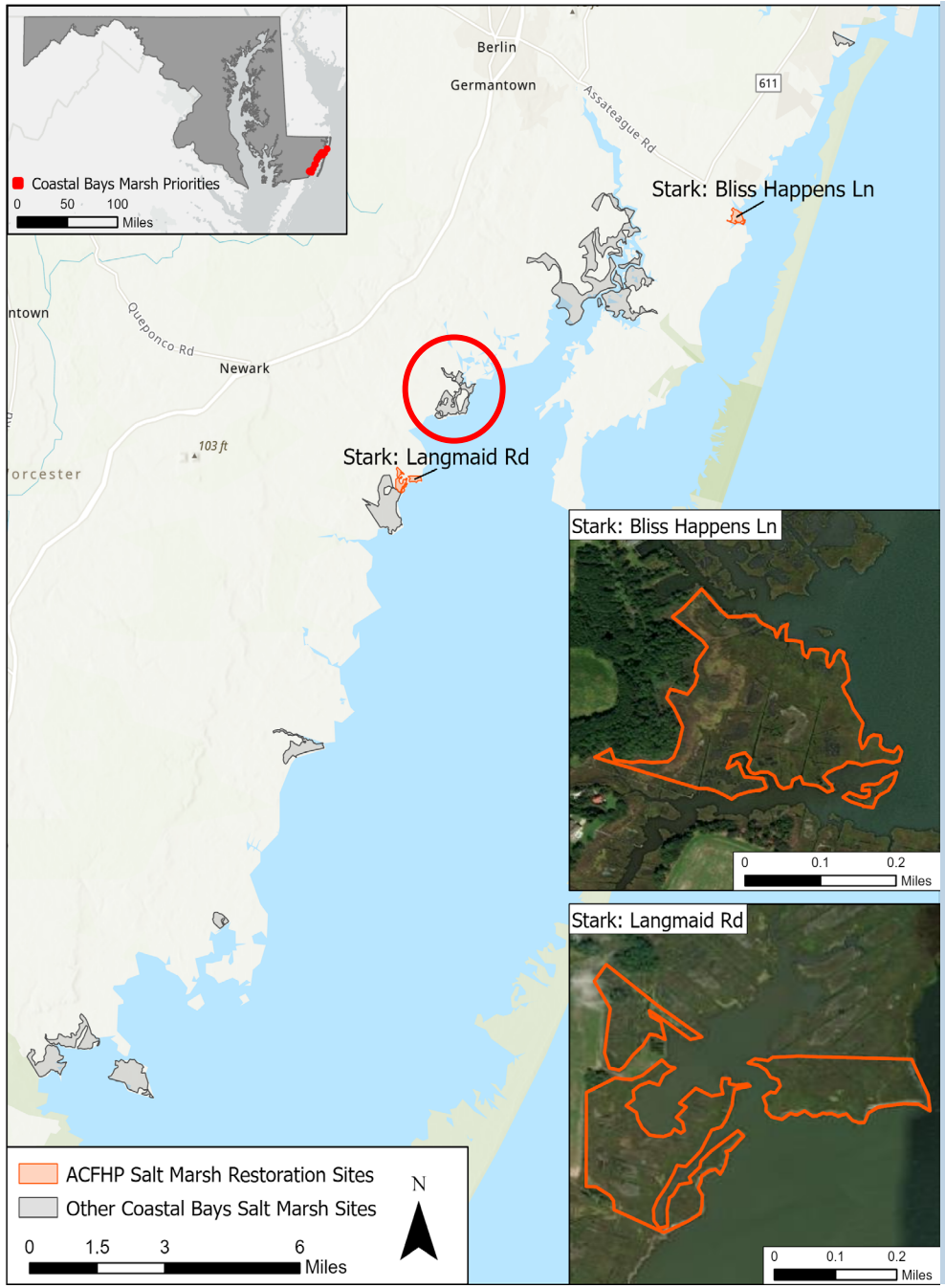
Original Scope:
Restore 39 acres across two private properties using four techniques:

1. Sediment addition for marsh nourishment
2. Filling man-made ditches
3. Creating meandering drainage channels
4. Planting marsh grasses for revegetation

Impact:
Improve fish habitat, water quality, and coastal resiliency

FY2024

#1: MD Coastal Bays Salt Marsh Restoration



Updated Scope:
Restore 114 acres across two private properties using four techniques:

1. Sediment addition for marsh nourishment
2. Filling man-made ditches
3. Creating meandering drainage channels
4. Planting marsh grasses for revegetation

Impact:
Improve fish habitat, water quality, and coastal resiliency

FY2024

#1: MD Coastal Bays Salt Marsh Restoration

Upper E.R. Collins Dam (credit: TNC)

Lower E.R. Collins Dam - funded in FY23

Scope:
Reconnect 3 miles of riverine habitat on the Pequest River

1. Pequest River = NOAA "high priority" for fish passage restoration (northeast region)

2. E.R. Collins Dams are 2 of 4 dams slated for removal

3. American shad, blueback herring, alewife, American eel, and native sea lamprey

Impact:
Enhance fish migration, habitat, and mitigate local flooding

FY2024

#2: Upper E.R. Collins Dam (NJ Dam #24-29) Removal on the Pequest River

#1: "No Name" Dam (#24-31) Removal Restoration Construction, Pequest River, White Township, NJ

Funds Requested - **$130,092.87**

#2: "Cedar Grove" Dam (#24-32) Removal Restoration Construction, Pequest River, White Township, NJ

Funds Requested: **$89,542.09**

Scope: Builds upon previous restoration impact of Lower (FY23) and Upper (FY24) E.R. Collins Dam removals. Continued collaboration between TNC, NJDEP, USFWS, private landowners, and Statewide Dam Removal Partnership

Impact: Removal of No Name and Cedar Grove Dams upstream will open additional 57.8 miles on the main stem Pequest River (7.8 miles) and its tributaries (50 miles)

FY2025

Project Status:

Approved
(NFHP Board)

#3: Oyster Reef Restoration for Increased Habitat and Ecosystem Services in the Matanzas River, St. Augustine, FL

Funds Requested - **$90,000**

Scope: Installation of oyster arches (left) to construct 500 feet of oyster reef; mitigation of severe boat wake and tropical storm damage to shoreline vegetation.

Impact: Addresses erosion, restores oyster biomass + tidal vegetation, and enhances fish habitat and forage along Marineland, Florida shoreline.

FY2025

Project Status:

Approved
(NFHP Board)






National NFHP Update

Alex McOwen
NOAA Fisheries

Jason Olive
USFWS

ACFHP Steering Committee

October 22, 2024

Annapolis, MD

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Outline

1. FY26 Funding
2. America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act Reauthorization
3. Congressional Designation of FHPs
4. Interagency Operational Plan (IOP)
5. NFHP Action Plan

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

FY26 NFHP Funding

Date	Action
March 31, 2025	All FY26 FHP proposed projects due to Board.
July 1, 2025	Board submits FY26 project list to Secretary of Interior for review.
September 30, 2025	Secretary of Interior approves or rejects Board FY26 proposed projects.

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

ACE Act Reauthorization

- Bill (S. 3791) passed out of Senate on May 8
  - Sponsored by Senator Carper (D-DE)
- Bill (H.R. 8811) introduced in the House on June 21
  - Sponsored by Representatives Wittman (R-VA), Dingell (D-MI), Kiggans (R-VA), and Thompson (D-CA)
  - Passed out of the House NRC on September 19

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Bill Revisions/Amendments

- Reauthorize NFHP funding through 2030
- Added 2 Board seats (BLM and seat for both Council ***and*** Commission)
- Funding timeline condensed
- FHP level match requirement
- Add BLM to scientific & technical funds
- Increase NFHP authorization to $10M (Senate only)
- Add $1M authorization for the assessment (Senate only)
- Clarify annual report language, only required when changes occur
- Clarify on 5-year summary report, one condensed report as opposed to overlapping reports
- Exemption added to allow FHP coordination funding to be requested without non-Federal match
- Designation process

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Congressional Designation of FHPs

- All 20 FHPs were nominated by NFHP Board for designation at the July 2024 Board meeting.

- Current ACE language requires an act of Congress to approve Board's recommendation.

- Amended language will change to approval via inaction.

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Interagency Operational Plan

- Federal resources supporting fish habitat
- Federal agencies' commitments to FHP's
- Federal agencies' coordination mechanism(s)
- Interagency MOU's

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

NFHP Action Plan Update

- Team of 6 Board members and 3 FHP coordinators assembled following July AK Board meeting
- Drafting goals and SMART objectives
- Internal and external surveys planned to gather ideas and recommendations (winter/spring)
- Launch of updated Action Plan to coincide with the NFHP 20th Anniversary in spring 2026

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

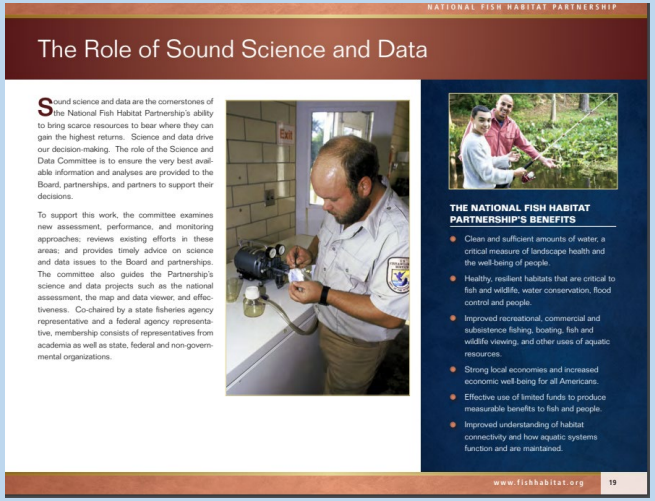
ACFHP Science and Data Cmt - overview

- Overview: Role of Science and Data

- Next Area of Focus
  - Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
    - Overview: SAV Webinar with EPA, VIMS, and East Coast SAV Collaborative
    - Product Development:
      - Areas of Focus, Aim
      - Timelines and funding opportunities
  - Other topics or products

- Discussion: restructuring Science & Data Working Group

NFHP – Role of Science and Data

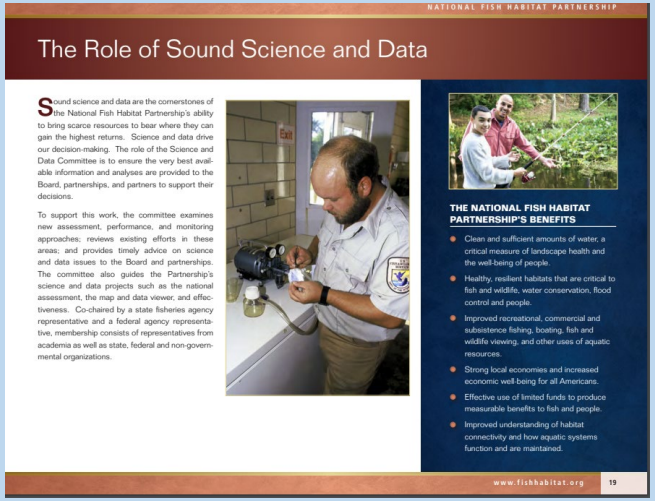


Sound science and data are the cornerstones of the National Fish Habitat Partnership's ability to bring scarce resources to bear where they can gain the highest returns.

Science and data drive our decision-making.

The role of the Science and Data Committee is to ensure the very best available information and analyses are provided to the Board, partnerships, and partners to support their decisions.

NFHP – Role of Science and Data



To support this work, the committee examines new assessment, performance, and monitoring approaches; reviews existing efforts in these areas; and provides timely advice on science and data issues to the Board and partnerships.

The committee also guides the Partnership's science and data projects such as the national assessment, the map and data viewer, and effectiveness.

Co-chaired by a state fisheries agency representative and a federal agency representative, membership consists of representatives from academia as well as state, federal and non-governmental organizations.

NFHP – Science and Data Strategy

- The National Fish Habitat Action Plan's **science and data strategy** is focused on the physical, chemical, and biological processes of aquatic systems and is built on the following four objectives:

  i. Identifying causative factors for declining fish populations in aquatic systems;

  ii. Developing and implementing an integrated landscape approach that includes the upstream/ downstream connections of large-scale habitat condition factors;

  iii. Classifying and then assessing the condition of the nation's fish habitats; and

  iv. Providing partners easy digital access to key habitat information to support their work.

ACFHP – Restructuring Science & Data Working Group - Stand by

- There is a need and opportunity to address current data and science needs via guidance, reports, and potential tools.

- Focus and Products

- Aspects to think about while discussing focus
  - How does Science and Data interact with the SC?
    - Is this a top-down, bottom up, or both
  - Composition and members
    - Fixed or flexible membership
    - Ability to get input from external members

Next Area of Focus - SAV Background Discussions

Overview: SAV Webinar with EPA, VIMS, and East Coast SAV Collab.

1. Methodology standardization for mapping and monitoring

    a. there is not a one-size fits all to mapping or monitoring
        i. different regions and states will use and require approaches.

    b. Although there may not be a specific universal approach, there are research and management needs that could benefit from unified set of goals and objectives

Next Area of Focus - SAV Background Discussions

Overview: SAV Webinar with EPA, VIMS, and East Coast SAV Collab.

1. Methodology standardization for mapping and monitoring

2. Research and Management Needs
   - Define a meadow (SAV Collaborative in Dec ’24), including edges
   - Better understand how climate change is impacting SAV and the species using the habitat
     - changes in SAV distrabution and composition
   - Assisted Migration using seed-based restoration is needed to increase resiliency and genetic diverstiy and restore lost functions and services

Next Area of Focus - SAV Background Discussions

Overview: SAV Webinar with EPA, VIMS, and East Coast SAV Collab.

1. Methodology standardization for mapping and monitoring

2. Research and Management Needs
   - Define a meadow (SAV Collaborative in Dec ’24) …
   - Climate change impacts to SAV and the species using it …
   - Assisted Migration using seed-based restoration …
     - Identify source material and locations – transfer policies
     - Need to include research and monitoring into restoration if we’re going to make timely progress
     - Outreach to policy makers and grant reviewers (urgency and validity of approaches and potential for fishery losses)

Next Area of Focus - SAV Focus and Products

Products:

- East Coast seed transfer policy guidance
    - Needed to both facilitate restoration and enhancement as well as address concerns by funding entities
    - This would be a guidance document, not a binding agreement.
    - Up to states to develop policies, or lean on guidance, to make decisions

Next Area of Focus - SAV Focus and Products

Products:

- East Coast seed transfer policy guidance

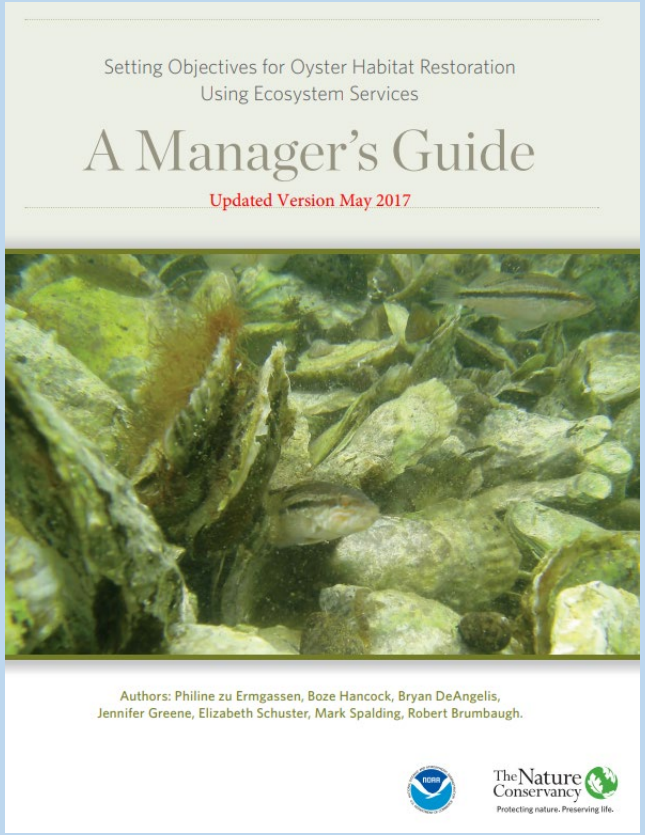
- Technical Paper / Peer Reviewed Manuscript with ACFHP (user friendly) vers
  - Need for seed-based, assisted migration (Zostera)
    - Case studies showing rapid loss and drivers (temp)
  - Need for increased monitoring and assessment
    - twice annual SAV surveys, edge effects
    - Increased fish surveys (sp. assemblage, distrabution, density)
  - Potential impacts for fisheries

Next Area of Focus - SAV Focus and Products

- Use existing tools to illustrate importance of conservation
- Quantitative estimates for oyster, seagrass, saltmarsh
  - Gulf of Mexico and South & Mid-Atlantic

(zu Ermgassen et al. 2016, zu Ermgassen et al. 2021)

- Results conveyed via an online tool for Managers and Practitioners:
  - Estimates are conservative estimates
  - Data is limited for East Coast



Estimating and Applying Fish and Invertebrate Density and Production Enhancement from Seagrass, Salt Marsh Edge, and Oyster Reef Nursery Habitats in the Gulf of Mexico

Philine S. E. zu Ermgassen[1] · Bryan DeAngelis[2] · Jonathan R. Gair[3] · Sophus zu Ermgassen[4] · Ronald Baker[5] · Andre Daniels[6] · Timothy C. MacDonald[7] · Kara Meckley[8] · Sean Powers[5] · Marta Ribera[9] · Lawrence P. Rozas[10] · Jonathan H. Grabowski[11]

Next Area of Focus - SAV Focus and Products

Products:

- East Coast seed transfer policy guidance

- Technical Paper / Peer Reviewed Manuscript with ACFHP (user friendly) vers
  - Need for seed-based, assisted migration (Zostera)
    - Case studies showing rapid loss and drivers (temp)
  - Need for increased monitoring and assessment
    - Twice annual SAV surveys, edge effects
    - Increased fish surveys (sp. assemblage, distrabution, density)
  - Potential impacts for fisheries
    - Fish Production Estimates (species that benefit and estimates)
    - New Analysis of striped bass reliance on SAV (YOY and SAV)
    - Using habitat status to trigger restoration to support fish (FL Example)

Next Area of Focus - SAV Focus and Products

Products:

- East Coast seed transfer policy guidance - Short-Term (poss workshop)

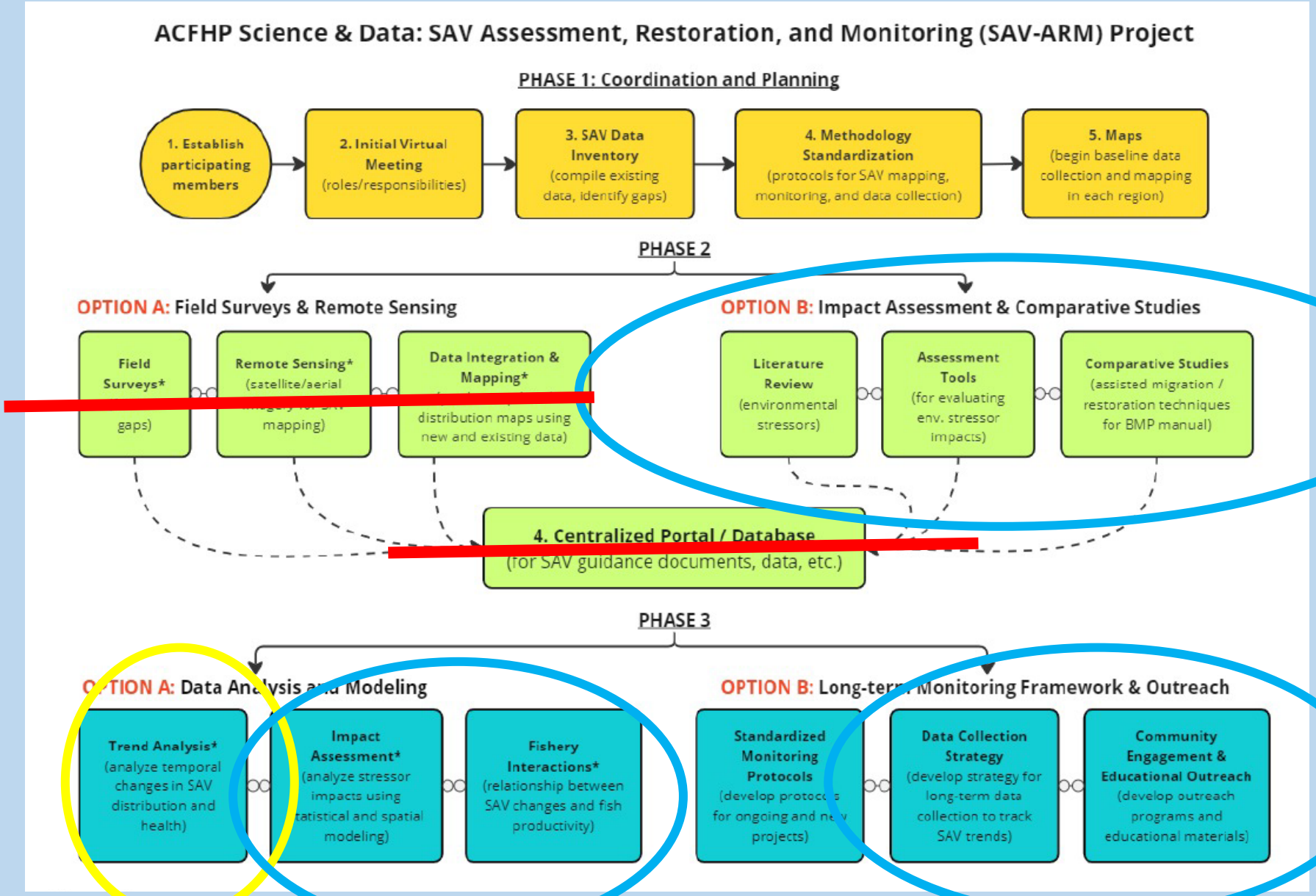
- Technical Paper / Peer Reviewed Manuscript
  - Need for seed-based, assisted migration (Zostera) - Short-Term
    - Case studies showing rapid loss and drivers (temp)
  - Need for increased monitoring and assessment Short-Term
    - Twice annual SAV surveys, edge effects
    - Increased fish surveys (sp. assemblage, distrabution, density)
  - Potential impacts for fisheries Long-Term
    - Fish Production Estimates (species that benefit and FBP est)
    - New Analysis of striped bass reliance on SAV (YOY and SAV)
    - Using habitat status to trigger restoration to support fish (FL Example)*

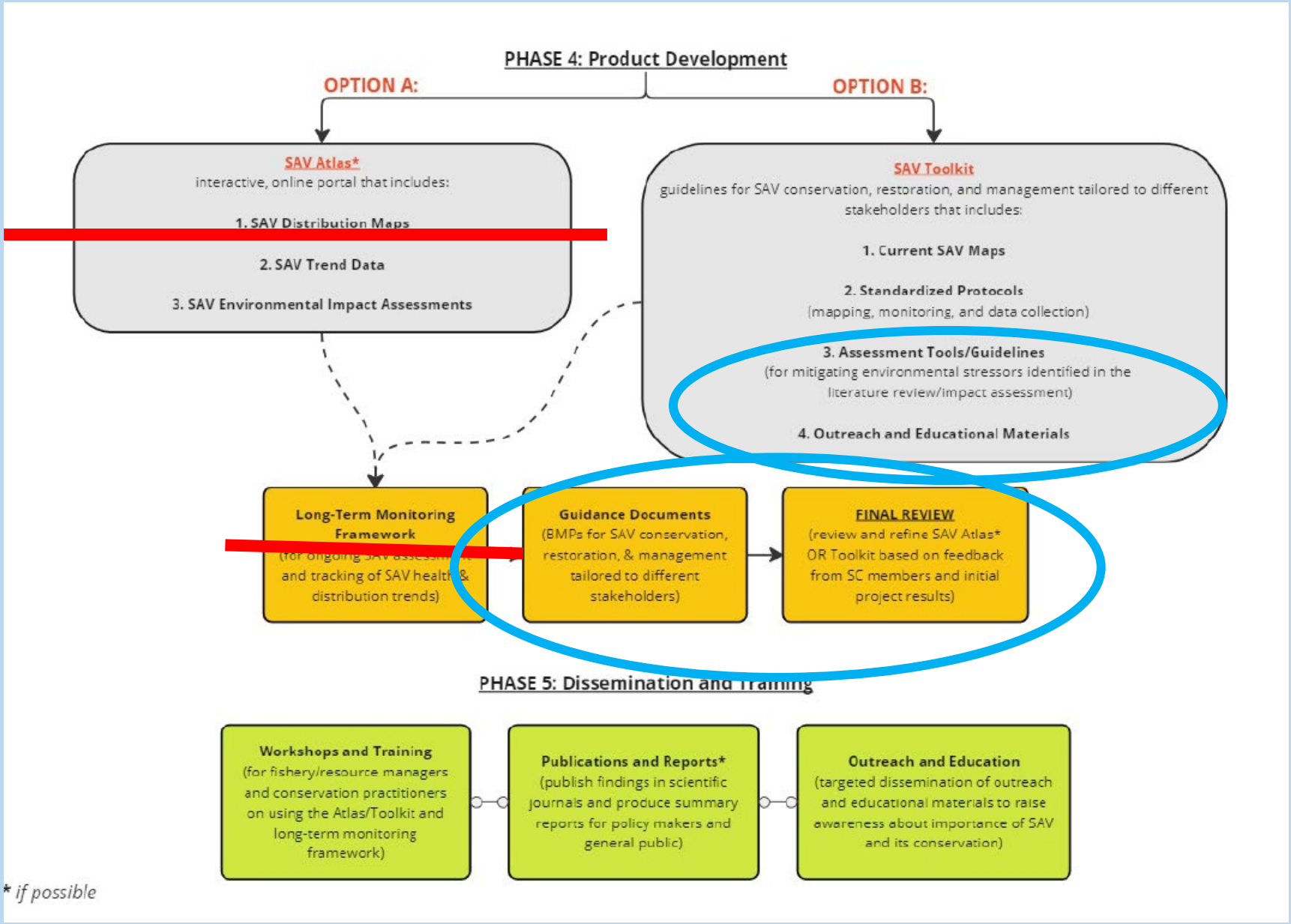
ACFHP – Restructuring Science & Data Working Group - Discussion

- Focus and Products

- How does Science and Data interact with the SC?
    - Is this a top-down, bottom up, or both

- Composition and members
    - Fixed or flexible membership
    - Ability to get input from external members
    - Discuss members?


ACFHP Science & Data: SAV Assessment, Restoration, and Monitoring (SAV-ARM) Project
PHASE 1: Coordination and Planning
1. Establish participating members
2. Initial Virtual Meeting (roles/responsibilities)
3. SAV Data Inventory (compile existing data, identify gaps)
4. Methodology Standardization (protocols for SAV mapping, monitoring, and data collection)
5. Maps (begin baseline data collection and mapping in each region)
PHASE 2
OPTION A: Field Surveys & Remote Sensing
OPTION B: Impact Assessment & Comparative Studies
Field Surveys*
gaps)
Remote Sensing* (satellite/aerial
mapping)
Data Integration & Mapping*
distribution maps using new and existing data)
Literature Review (environmental stressors)
Assessment Tools (for evaluating env. stressor impacts)
Comparative Studies (assisted migration / restoration techniques for BMP manual)
4. Centralized Portal / Database (for SAV guidance documents, data, etc.)
PHASE 3
OPTION A: Data Analysis and Modeling
OPTION B: Long-term Monitoring Framework & Outreach
Trend Analysis* (analyze temporal changes in SAV distribution and health)
Impact Assessment* (analyze stressor impacts using statistical and spatial modeling)
Fishery Interactions* (relationship between SAV changes and fish productivity)
Standardized Monitoring Protocols (develop protocols for ongoing and new projects)
Data Collection Strategy (develop strategy for long-term data collection to track SAV trends)
Community Engagement & Educational Outreach (develop outreach programs and educational materials)


PHASE 4: Product Development
OPTION A:
OPTION B:
SAV Atlas*
interactive, online portal that includes:
1. SAV Distribution Maps
2. SAV Trend Data
3. SAV Environmental Impact Assessments
SAV Toolkit
guidelines for SAV conservation, restoration, and management tailored to different stakeholders that includes:
1. Current SAV Maps
2. Standardized Protocols
(mapping, monitoring, and data collection)
3. Assessment Tools/Guidelines
(for mitigating environmental stressors identified in the literature review/impact assessment)
4. Outreach and Educational Materials
Long-Term Monitoring Framework
and tracking of SAV health &
distribution trends)
Guidance Documents
(BMPs for SAV conservation, restoration, & management tailored to different stakeholders)
FINAL REVIEW
(review and refine SAV Atlas* OR Toolkit based on feedback from SC members and initial project results)
PHASE 5: Dissemination and Training
Workshops and Training
(for fishery/resource managers and conservation practitioners on using the Atlas/Toolkit and long-term monitoring framework)
Publications and Reports*
(publish findings in scientific journals and produce summary reports for policy makers and general public)
Outreach and Education
(targeted dissemination of outreach and educational materials to raise awareness about importance of SAV and its conservation)
* if possible