

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT BOARD MEETING

October 7-8, 2009 Arlington, VA



NATIONAL
FISH HABITAT
ACTION PLAN



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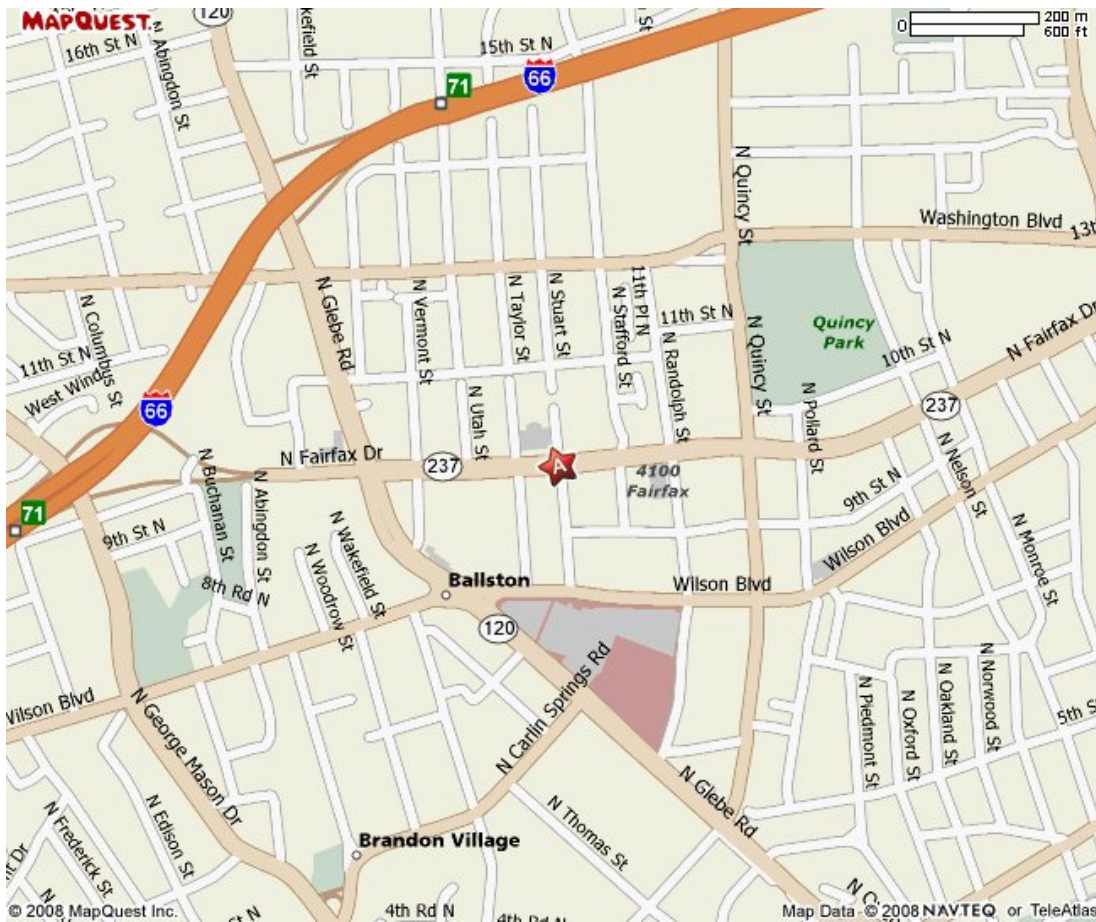
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National Fish Habitat Board meeting October 7-8, 2009

Location: The Nature Conservancy
4245 North Fairfax Drive , Suite 100
Arlington, Virginia 22203



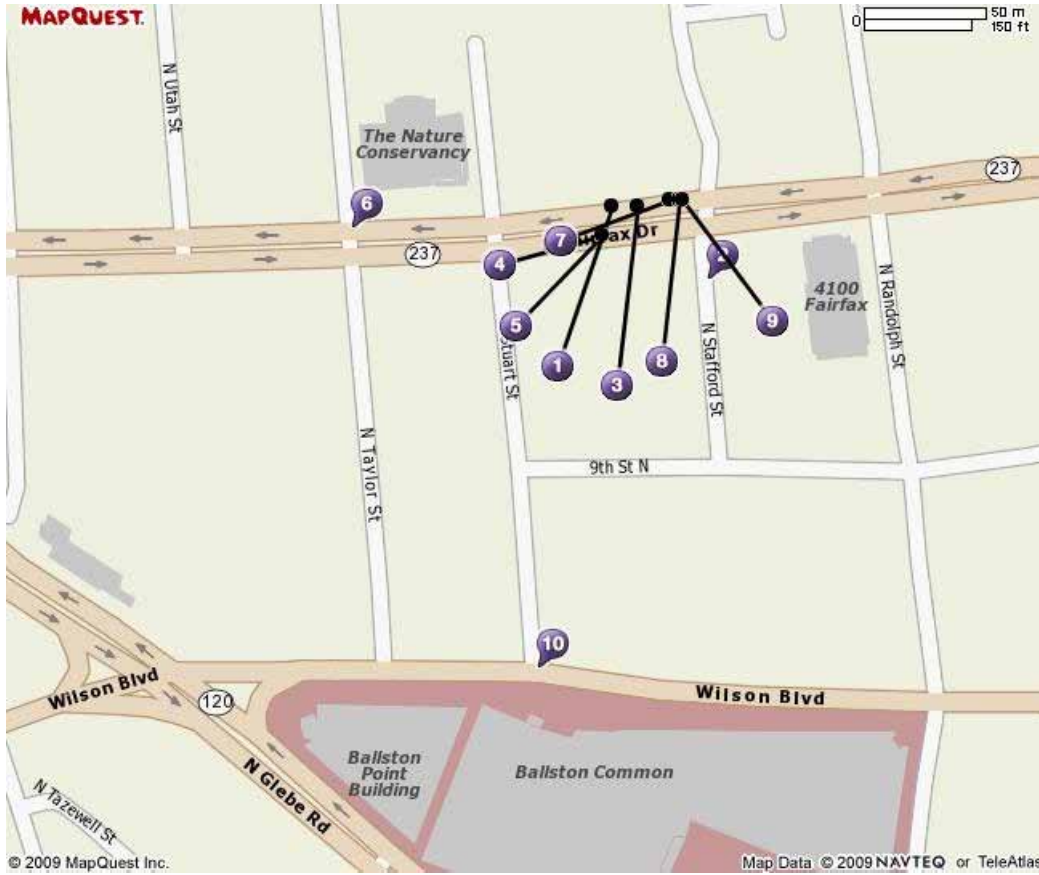
Metro Accessible

Take the Orange line in the direction of Vienna to the Ballston metro station. Exit and cross North Fairfax Drive, The Nature Conservancy will be on your left.

Restaurants near:

The Nature Conservancy

4245 North Fairfax Drive , Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22203



1. Alladin's Eatery
4245 Fairfax Dr
Arlington, VA
703-807-4100

2. Potbelly Sandwich Works
4250 Fairfax Dr
Arlington, VA
703-528-0078

3. Pizza Roma
4219 Fairfax Dr
Arlington, VA
703-243-4949

4. Cosi
4250 Fairfax Dr
Arlington, VA
703-527-9717

5. Eat N Run Deli
4215 Fairfax Dr
Arlington, VA
703-243-3433

National Fish Habitat Board Members

Kelly Hepler, <i>Chair</i>	Alaska
Doug Austen, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Northeast AFWA
John Frampton	Southeast AFWA
Rich Leopold	Midwest AFWA
Mike Stone	Western AFWA
Matt Hogan	AFWA
Jim Balsiger	NOAA/NMFS
Bryan Arroyo <i>for</i> Sam Hamilton	DOI/FWS
Anne Zimmermann	USDA FS
Jason Stark <i>for</i> Michael (Mic) J. Isham, Jr.	Tribal, GLIFWC
Krystyna Wolniakowski	NFWF
Steve Moyer <i>for</i> Charles Gauvin	Conservation/Academic, TU
Michael Andrews	Conservation/Academic, TNC
William W. Taylor	Conservation/Academic, SFBPC
Stan Moberly	Conservation/Academic, AFS
Stan Allen <i>for</i> Randy Fisher	At large/Interstate Fishery Commission, PSMFC
Bob Mahood	At large/Fishery Management Council, SAFMC
Gordon Robertson	At large, ASA
Chris Horton	At large, BASS/ESPN
Pat Murray	Conservation/Academic, CCA

National Fish Habitat Board staff

Ron Regan	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Ryan Roberts	NFHAP Communications Coordinator
Christopher Estes	AK Department of Fish and Game
Susan-Marie Stedman	NOAA Fisheries Service
Tom Busiahn	US Fish and Wildlife Service

Committee Chairs

Science and Data Committee:

Gary Whelan	MI Department of Natural Resources
Doug Beard	US Geological Survey

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National Fish Habitat Board meeting

October 7-8, 2009
The Nature Conservancy
4245 North Fairfax Drive – Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22203-1606

October 7, 2009

8:00 – 8:30 Coffee

8:30 – 9:00 Welcome Kelly Hepler, Board Chair
Introductions: Board (and proxies), staff, and attendees – Tab 2
Agenda and proposed amendments – Tab 3
Approve draft minutes from March 2009 meeting – Tab 4

9:00 – 9:30 Board membership Kelly Hepler

9:30 – 10:00 Update on NFHAP funding from FWS Bryan Arroyo
Reference material: Tab 5
INFORMATIONAL

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 10:30 NFHAP Branding Guidance Susan-Marie Stedman
Desired Outcome: Adoption of the revised NFHAP Branding Guidance
Background: The NFHAP Branding Guidance was discussed at the March 2009 Board meeting and Board members made a number of suggestions for improvements. The revised Branding Guidance incorporates these suggestions and others made by Board members who reviewed an interim revised draft.
Reference Material: Tab 6
ACTION: Approval of guidance

10:30 – 12:00 Climate Change and NFHAP
Desired Outcome: Understanding of the way climate change is affecting natural resource conservation in the USA.
Background: The topic of climate change is affecting how Federal and state agencies fund and implement some of their natural resource conservation programs. Opportunities have been created that could tie into NFHAP.
Reference material: Tab 7

draft agenda

Speakers: Sue Haseltine, USGS
Mike Stone, AFWA
Dan Ashe, FWS
Pat Montanio, NOAA/ NMFS
Mark Smith, TNC

INFORMATIONAL AND DISCUSSION

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 3:00 Applications for Board Recognition of Fish Habitat Partnerships
Tom Busiahn

Desired Outcome: Approval or Deferral of applications for Board recognition as Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Background: The Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships listed below have submitted material to the Board and staff per the Board's invitation. Board staff have reviewed the material and prepared recommendations to the Board.

Reference Material: Tab 8

ACTION – Approval or deferral of applications for Board recognition

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
California Fish Passage Forum
Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership
Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

3:00 – 3:15 Break

3:15 – 4:45 Applications for Board Recognition of Fish Habitat Partnerships (cont.)

4:45 – 5:00 Partnerships Committee Update Tom Busiahn
INFORMATIONAL

6:00 – 8:00 Fish Habitat Happy Hour at TNC

October 8, 2009

8:00 – 8:30 Coffee

8:30 – 9:00 Update on Legislation Gordon Robertson
Reference material: Tab 9
INFORMATIONAL

9:00 – 9:15 Update on NFHAP Executive Order Tom Busiahn
Reference material: Tab 10
INFORMATIONAL

9:15 – 9:30 Update on Results of 1-Year-Out Workshop Ron Regan
Reference material: Tab 11
INFORMATIONAL

9:30 – 10:15 Communications Committee Update Ryan Roberts
Reference Material: Tab 12
INFORMATIONAL

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:15 Science and Data Committee Update Gary Whelan and Doug Beard
Reference Material: Tab 13
Desired Outcome: Understanding of the current status of science and data efforts, and approval of Standard Operating Procedures for Data Management.
INFORMATIONAL and ACTION

11:15 – 12:00 2010 Report on Status of Fish Habitats Doug Austen
Desired outcome: Understanding and agreement by the Board on the process that will be used to create the “Report on the Status of Fish Habitats” that is due in 2010.
Background: The Action Plan calls for a “Report of the status of fish habitats” to be released in 2010. This report will be based on the results of the habitat assessments being conducted under the management of the Science and Data Committee, but will be a public-friendly outreach document. A Writing Team will be responsible for developing the Report, with direction from the Board.
INFORMATIONAL and DISCUSSION

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 2:00 Assessment and Decision Support System White Paper

Doug Beard/Gary Whelan

Desired Outcome: Endorsement by the Board of the White Paper on the NFHAP Assessment and Decision Support System.

Background: At the “1-Year Out” workshop held in June of 2009 there was considerable concern and lack of understanding about the purpose of the NFHAP assessment and how it might be used to inform decisions made by the Board. The white paper was drafted to alleviate concerns and clarify the purpose and use of the assessment and proposed decision support system.

Reference Material: Tab 14

ACTION: Approval or revision of white paper.

2:00 – 3:00 2010 Budget

Ron Regan

Desired outcome: Update on 2009 spending and preliminary Board direction on 2010 budget priorities.

Background: Board staff will draft a budget proposal, in November, based on considerations identified today. The Board will be asked to approve a FY 2010 budget at a January conference call meeting.

Reference Material: Tab 15

DISCUSSION

3:00 – 3:30 Wrap-up, next meetings

3:30 Adjourn

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
June 25, 2009, 1-5 PM
National Conference Center, Leesburg, Virginia

Kelly Hepler, Board Chair opened the meeting at 1:00 PM.

Board members present included:

Kelly Hepler, Chair (AK)
Doug Austen, Vice-Chair (PA)
John Frampton (SC)
Mike Stone (WY)
Joe Larscheid, with proxy for Rich Leopold (IA)
Matt Hogan (AFWA)
Gary Frazer, with proxy for Rowan Gould (FWS)
Pat Montanio, with proxy for Jim Balsiger (NOAA)
Mark Smith, with proxy for Mike Andrews (TNC)
Krystyna Wolniakowski (NFWF)
Stan Moberly (AFS)
Mike Leonard, with proxy for Gordon Robertson (ASA)
Bob Mahood (SAFMC)
Stan Allen, with proxy for Randy Fisher (PSMFC)
Steve Moyer, with proxy for Charles Gauvin (TU)
Anne Zimmermann (USDA FS)

Staff:

Tom Busiahn
Susan-Marie Stedman
Ron Regan
Ryan Roberts
Christopher Estes
Gary Whelan
Doug Beard

The draft minutes from the March 2009 meeting were approved, with the clarification that the next meeting is October 7-8 2009 at the TNC office in Arlington VA.

Gary Frazer gave an update on the Executive Order. It has the support of Jane Lyder, DOI's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, and Parks. Approval will be sought through the Secretary of the Interior. Both the Board and AFWA will send letters of support for the Executive Order.

Tom Busiahn gave an update on Fish Habitat Partnerships. He expects as many as six Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships to apply for Board recognition at the October 2009 meeting.

Steve Moyer gave an update on the NFHCA legislation. He indicated that the legislation is in good standing and that the hearing by the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife on June 16 was a big step to this point. There is a concern however that Representative Ron Kind (D-WI-3rd) is the only sponsor in the House at this time. There seemed to be agreement that it would be desirable to secure 10-15 additional co-sponsors in the House. A template letter and talking points are being crafted and will be provided to the Board for those members who wish to contact members of Congress on behalf of the legislation. Other information regarding project expenditures by partnership geographic area will also be provided including guidance as to what is allowed based on entity affiliation rules relating to congressional communications (similar information is desired by FHPs)

Christopher Estes summarized the relationship of the Salmon Stronghold legislation to the NFHAP legislation as well as prior and current efforts to coordinate mutual support and the relationship to Pacific Conservation Restoration Fund.

Workshop Recommendations

Susan-Marie Stedman presented the recommendations from the Science and Data breakout groups at the Workshop. The Board adopted the following recommendation:

- Recommend the Board direct its staff and the Science and Data Committee to write a short white paper describing the approach and purpose of the assessment and the conceptual priority-setting tool, and their use and limitations.

Tom Busiahn presented the recommendations from the Fish Habitat Partnerships breakout groups at the Workshop. No action was taken on any recommendations, but there was quite a bit of discussion about whether there were too many FHPs, whether the ones that existed, both recognized and “Candidate”, are the “right” FHPs targeting priority habitats, etc. and what consideration should be given, if any, to the impact of more FHPs on a fixed amount of project dollars that are currently available from the FWS, the limitations for use of those FWS dollars for protection of intact habitat and monitoring etc., versus dollars without those restrictions that may be available in the future through the legislation. There was general agreement that the Board would not place a “freeze” on new FHPs, but recognized that further discussion on this topic was warranted. Tom Busiahn and the Partnership Committee will take a closer look at the numerous suggestions provided by the breakout groups and report back to the Board on follow-up actions. Tom Sadler and Gary Frazer both volunteered to participate in the Partnership Committee.

Ryan Roberts presented the recommendations from the Communications breakout groups at the Workshop. There were three main recommendations:

- 1) Establish a Writing Team to start work on the 2010 Report.

Doug Austen was placed in charge of establishing this team and developing a plan to present to the Board in October.

- 2) Create a letter template for asking Congress to support legislation to be given to partners along with talking points, etc.

Ryan will work with the Legislative Team on the template and supporting materials such as project funding by partnership legal considerations and guidelines for communication with congress based on entity affiliation etc.

- 3) Create a communication strategy to specifically target tribes and territories.

The Communications Committee has already been directed to do outreach to tribes per Board action in October 2008. Ryan and the Communications Committee will follow up.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

**FY 2010 funding allocation for the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)**

Background

In Fiscal Year 2009, FWS' NFHAP funding was \$5.153 million within the Fisheries Program budget, of which \$246,100 was earmarked for the Secretary of the Interior's "Healthy Lands Initiative", targeted to the Green River basin in Wyoming.

The President's request for FY 2010 was \$7.153 million, an increase of \$2 million. The requested increase is part of a cross-program climate change budget initiative. Congress has not yet enacted the appropriations bill, but is likely to do so by the end of October.

In FY 2009, NFHAP was advanced through FWS funding support at local, regional, and national levels.

- A total of 52 on-the-ground, cost-share projects were funded for \$2.746 million (53% of total funds). Funds were provided for priority projects for each of the six Fish Habitat Partnerships that were in place at the start of FY 2009.
- FWS supported activities of Fish Habitat Partnerships and Candidate FHPs (meeting costs, travel support, strategic planning, etc.).
- FWS supported the science, communication, and coordination activities of the National Fish Habitat Board with \$156,900.
- FWS consulted with the National Fish Habitat Board and the Fish Habitat Partnerships on funding decisions, demonstrating successful collaboration.

In March 2009, the FWS policy guiding the expenditure of funds for NFHAP was approved, after extensive internal and external review. The policy is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/717fw1.html>.

Proposed Allocation of FY 2010 funds

At the Board meeting of February 2008, FWS and the Board agreed to consult on recommended allocation priorities at the start of each Fiscal Year. The table below shows FWS's proposed allocation for FY 2010. Amounts shown differ from FY 2009 as follows:

- Funds for Board priorities are increased by \$180,000.
- Funds for FWS involvement at national and regional levels are increased by \$830,000 to support expanded activities and commitments.
- Funds for "FHP development and operations" are increased by \$100,000. FWS Regions use these funds to support activities of recognized FHPs and development of Candidate FHPs.
- Funds for priority projects of Fish Habitat Partnerships are increased by \$890,000. These funds will be reallocated as needed among recognized Partnerships based on Board decisions of October 7, 2009.

National		
Board priorities	\$336,900	To be transferred through Cooperative Agreement to AFWA and/or Michigan State University to support science, communications, or other priorities of the Board
Board staff	\$180,000	Full-time senior staff support for Board activities, including travel. Focused on Fish Habitat Partnership coordination and liaison
Coordination & Leadership	\$240,000	Includes Federal Caucus coordination, maintenance and development of the NFHAP web site, development of Fish Habitat Partnerships, printing NFHAP communications materials, and other Washington Office staff costs.
Subtotal National	\$756,900	
Regional		
FHP development & operations	\$1,000,000	Supports operation of Fish Habitat Partnerships and development of Candidate FHPs, including meeting and travel expenses, strategic planning, and development of scientific capabilities.
Coordination & Leadership	\$1,760,000	Includes staff support for FHP operations, helping FHPs rank and select habitat projects, reporting accomplishments of habitat projects, providing biological expertise and technical assistance to FHPs, and outreach efforts in support of the Action Plan.
Subtotal Regional	\$2,760,000	
Local projects		
	\$600,000	Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
	\$600,000	Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
	\$846,100	Western Native Trout Initiative (includes \$246,100 for the Secretary of the Interior's "Healthy Lands Initiative" in the Green River basin, Wyoming)
	\$300,000	Driftless Area Restoration Effort
	\$300,000	Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Desert Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Midwest Glacial Lakes Initiative
	\$90,000	Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	California Fish Passage Forum
	\$90,000	Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
	\$90,000	Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership
Subtotal projects	\$3,636,100	
GRAND TOTAL	\$7,153,000	

For more information:

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Tom Busiahn, FWS NFHAP Coordinator, 703-358-2056

Guidance on the Use of the “National Fish Habitat Action Plan” Brand

Purpose:

The purpose of this Guidance is to establish guidance for the authorized use of the registered trademark term “National Fish Habitat Action Plan¹” and its logo. To protect the value and integrity of the “National Fish Habitat Action Plan” brand, all programs, partnerships, individual projects, or other entities wishing to use the National Fish Habitat Action Plan label or logo must follow the guidelines below.

Background:

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) is an unprecedented national effort to build and support strategic partnerships for fish habitat conservation. The Action Plan establishes a process that brings together partners, challenges them to identify and collaborate to advance *strategic* conservation priorities, and to measure and report progress. It is this commitment to strategic work, conducted by partners working together, and a commitment to progress measurement that distinguishes the Action Plan and its Partnerships from other fish habitat conservation efforts.

*The National Fish Habitat Board*² (Board) has the responsibility for promoting, overseeing, and coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan, in cooperation with all of the NFHAP partners. Additional information is available at www.fishhabitat.org.

Partnerships:

Partnerships that have been formally recognized by the National Fish Habitat Board may use the NFHAP brand in their outreach material and other communications. These Partnerships are encouraged to identify themselves as “Fish Habitat Partnerships” or “NFHAP Fish Habitat Partnerships”.

Partnerships that have submitted a Letter of Intent to the National Fish Habitat Board may use the NFHAP brand in their outreach material and other communications. These Partnerships are encouraged to identify themselves as “Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships” or “NFHAP Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships”.

Individual projects:

The term “NFHAP project” may be applied to:

1. projects funded by NFHAP sources such as the Board or Federal agency funds designated for NFHAP;
2. projects proposed by FHPs but not funded by NFHAP sources; and
3. projects that are not funded by NFHAP sources or proposed by FHPs, but that address one or more of the strategic priorities of a Board-recognized FHP (as

¹ Trademark registered February 10, 2009.

² References to the Board include staff and committees that are established to support the Board.

established in the FHP's strategic plan) or of the Board itself (as established by the [Final Interim Conservation Strategies and Targets for National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) and successive updates), and include an evaluation plan that complies with criteria established for Board-funded projects.

Projects that fall under categories 1 and 2 above may use the NFHAP brand in their outreach and communication materials. Projects that fall under category 3 above should apply to the appropriate FHP for endorsement, and once a letter of endorsement is received the project proponents may use the NFHAP brand. The Board will establish guidelines for FHPs in issuing such letters of endorsement.

Grant programs:

Grant programs may use the NFHAP brand in their outreach and communications materials under the conditions below:

Grant programs that are created specifically to support the Action Plan should include protection, restoration, and enhancement of all types of fish habitat as activities eligible for funding. They should be limited to funding projects that address priorities identified by the Board (as established by the [Final Interim Conservation Strategies and Targets for National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) and successive updates) and Board-recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (as established in the FHP's strategic plan). They should be required to include project assessment, evaluation, and reporting requirements consistent with the progress measurement criteria established by the Board and/or appropriate Fish Habitat Partnerships. The Board must review and approve eligibility of these grant programs before they are implemented to ensure the programs are aligned with the Action Plan mission and goals. The grant programs' communications efforts should be coordinated with the Board's communications staff. The grant programs should also coordinate evaluation and reporting requirements and processes with the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships where appropriate. Grant programs meeting these criteria may call themselves a "NFHAP Grant program", and all projects funded by these grant programs may be considered NFHAP Projects.

Grant programs that are created for other purposes but that wish to state they are supporting the Action Plan should apply to the Board for endorsement. In order to be eligible for Board endorsement, grant programs should include the goals and objectives of the Action Plan in the grant program description and describe how the projects funded by the program will help to achieve the goals of the Action Plan. They should identify as a priority for funding projects that address priorities identified by the Board (as established by the [Final Interim Conservation Strategies and Targets for National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) and successive updates) and Board-recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (as established in the FHP's strategic plan), or include NFHAP strategic priorities in the ranking criteria in some other way. Grant programs should include performance reporting that is consistent with or equivalent to the progress measurement criteria established by the Board and/or appropriate Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Grant programs meeting these criteria should submit a letter to the Board requesting endorsement, and once a letter of endorsement is received the grant programs may call themselves a “Grant Program in Support of NFHAP”. The Board will establish an official process for issuing such letters of endorsement.

A project funded by these grant programs may be considered a “NFHAP project” if the project address one or more of the strategic priorities of a Board-recognized FHP or of the Board itself, and includes an evaluation plan comparable to that which is required for Board-funded projects. Project proponents should apply to the appropriate FHP for endorsement, and once a letter of endorsement is received the project proponents may use the NFHAP brand. The Board will establish guidelines for FHPs in issuing such letters of endorsement.

Other Entities:

Other entities wishing to use the NFHAP brand should apply to the Board for permission. The Board will establish an official process for granting permission for use of the NFHAP brand.

A Recommended Approach for State Agencies to Incorporate Climate Change Considerations in Fish and Wildlife Conservation

State fish and wildlife agencies have an extensive history of managing natural resources for the “public trust.” State agencies need to continue to demonstrate management of healthy and robust ecosystems as a viable and valuable strategy for providing for fish and wildlife resources and their uses in the face of climate change. Agencies also will be challenged to reduce their carbon footprints.

Global climate trends indicate warming temperatures, sea level rise, and increased frequency of extreme precipitation events in North America over the past century (Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). Milder winters, longer and warmer growing seasons, and extreme snowfall and rain events leading to increased flooding are manifestations of the global climate trends. The consequences of these climate trends will exacerbate other recognized impacts to fish and wildlife resources such as habitat fragmentation, degradation, and loss from changing land uses, pollution and sedimentation, deleterious or invasive species, and unsustainable use of natural resources. The anticipated acceleration of climate change will challenge 21st century resource agencies to manage for healthy ecosystems in uncertain future conditions.

Management Principles

Although each state agency has specific mandates, authorities, and missions, agencies will be faced with similar challenges in managing natural resources in uncertain future conditions. The following management principles should guide initial agency responses.

- Healthy and robust ecosystems are necessary to support fish and wildlife conservation.
- Reducing nonclimate stressors on ecosystems will help to reduce impacts from changing climate conditions.
- Systems in transition will present management challenges commensurate with the rate and extent of climate change.
- Some species will become extirpated, or even worse extinct, while others will increase or adapt under changing climate conditions.
- Long-term management objectives and implementation options will be influenced by changes in species compositions, distributions, and changing interactions with humans.
- Effective partnerships and collaborations at state, regional, and international levels will be needed to address climate change challenges.

Key Initial Actions for State Agencies

1. Identify the likely and potential impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife resources and their uses at state regional, and national levels.
2. Conduct a vulnerability assessment (including threat assessment) that considers the ecological, economic, and socio-political ramifications of climate change effects on fish and wildlife resources and their uses at state regional, and national levels.
3. Incorporate climate change considerations into State Wildlife Action Plans and other fish and wildlife management plans.
4. Implement research and monitoring to assess the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife resources and their uses.
5. Adaptively manage species, habitats, and ecosystems in light of their vulnerability.
6. Identify and address statutory changes needed at the federal, state, and local levels to effectively address and manage climate change impacts on fish and wildlife resources (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act).
7. Evaluate budgetary needs to respond to climate change impacts and allocate existing funding to implement first order priorities.
8. In coordination with AFWA, identify and actively pursue new sources of funding to effectively respond to climate change issues.
9. Identify or develop regional partnerships to address common climate change goals and strategies.
10. Develop effective communication systems and outreach efforts for state agencies, researchers, policy makers, planners, natural resource managers, and stakeholders to enhance collaborative efforts.



National Fish Habitat Action Plan

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444 North Capitol Street, NW,
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Web www.fishhabitat.org

To: National Fish Habitat Board

From: Staff

Date: September 23, 2009

Subject: Recommendations for Board action on Fish Habitat Partnership applications

On May 20, 2009, the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) invited Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships to apply for Board recognition, pursuant to the *Policies and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships* as amended by the Board on October 8, 2008, and the process and schedule for recognizing Fish Habitat Partnerships approved by the Board on June 7, 2007.

Seven completed applications with supporting material were submitted by the August 21, 2009 deadline:

- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
- Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
- Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
- Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership
- Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
- California Fish Passage Forum
- Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership.

The applications and supporting materials are posted online at www.fishhabitat.org (click on Partnerships / Partnership guidance). Board staff reviewed the applications, and requested additional written information or explanations from six of the applicants and held a conference call with one applicant to seek more in-depth clarification. The applicants responded fully to these requests.

In sum, staff was pleased with the work put into all the application packages. They demonstrate good science, a high level of energetic partner collaboration, and a commitment to making a difference by delivering priority conservation projects on the ground – all in keeping with the goals, objectives, interim strategies, and science framework established by the Board.

The staff provides the following recommendations:

1. The Board should approve five of the applications and recognize the applicants as Fish Habitat Partnerships, in that they have demonstrated through their applications that they meet the criteria in the *Policies and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships*.
2. The Board should defer recognition of two applicants until they have progressed further on strategic planning and coordinated more fully with neighboring and overlapping FHPs and Candidate FHPs.
3. The Board should strongly encourage all applicant Partnerships to continue to coordinate with the Science & Data Committee to ensure that their habitat assessments are compatible with the National Fish Habitat Assessment, and their data systems are compatible with the National Data System.
4. At the October 7 meeting, the Board should ask focused questions of each applicant Partnership on how they have addressed the Board's requirement to "consult with neighboring and overlapping FHPs to resolve competing or conflicting conservation goals".

Following are specific recommendations for each applicant Partnership and information excerpted from each of the applications.

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP). The Board's response to the ACFHP application should provide the following guidance:

- ***The ACFHP should consult with other coastal FHPs and the Science & Data Committee to develop a process for using inland habitat condition scores in the assessment of coastal waters. This is a difficult problem that will be faced by all coastal FHPs.***

The geographic extent of the ACFHP stretches from Maine to the Florida Keys, including all or part of 16 States. It covers 476,357 square miles, including land areas inland to the headwaters of coastal rivers, and ocean areas outward to the continental slope. The ACFHP plans to work throughout the region, but will focus on estuarine environments and place less emphasis on coastal headwaters and offshore marine ecosystems. Its development was facilitated by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The Atlantic coast is home to some of the most populous and fastest growing areas of the United States. Aquatic habitats of the Atlantic coast are being heavily impacted by a variety of human disturbances. The ACFHP will strive to achieve sufficiently healthy habitats to support the survival and sustainability of the many species that utilize Atlantic coastal habitats for some portion of their life history. These species provide recreational opportunities and an economic resource for commercial fishermen, processing plants, and food fish markets locally and across the U.S.

Partners in the ACFHP include 16 States, one Native American government, several Federal agencies, and many non-governmental organizations focused on conservation of aquatic resources generally or in specific geographic areas. A 25-member Steering Committee is the decision-making body. Subsidiary committees include the Science &

Data Working Group, Communications Working Group, Funding Subcommittee, and Project Selection Subcommittee. Decisions are made by consensus, or lacking consensus, by a simple majority vote. ACFHP will continue to actively recruit additional partners.

The ACFHP has developed several guiding documents:

- Memorandum of Understanding signed by 30 partner organizations
- ACFHP Management Structure (charter and bylaws)
- (Draft) ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan
- Species-Habitat Matrix Project Summary Report
- Assessment of Existing Information on Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitats
- Project Endorsement Application
- Project Endorsement Protocol and Guidance

The Assessment of Existing Information contains over 500 documents, data sets, and information portals. The Species-Habitat Matrix was used to evaluate the importance of 25 habitat types to the life stages of over 100 coastal fish species, providing a starting point for prioritizing habitats and focusing conservation efforts.

The ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan is a well-developed draft that will be finalized in January 2010. The Plan identifies critical threats and “priority habitats” for each of 3 sub-regions. The priority habitat types will be used to identify “areas of opportunity” where ACFHP has opportunities to make a measurable difference for fish habitats.

The geographic area of the ACFHP overlaps with the Southeastern Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) in coastal watersheds in the southeastern States. ACFHP and SARP coordinators have attended each other’s meetings since 2007. ACFHP also overlaps with the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, most notably in Maine. ACFHP and EBTJV have exchanged information and coordinated through overlapping committee representatives from USFWS and the State of Maine.

Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application of the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership (ORBFHP).

The Ohio River is the second largest river in the United States as measured by annual discharge, and supports a substantial and economically important sport fishery. The Ohio River drainage contains at least 350 species of fish and more than 120 mussel species, many listed as threatened or endangered. Fish range from endemic darters and dace in the headwaters to “great river” fishes such as paddlefish, blue sucker, lake sturgeon and shovelnose sturgeon. Fisheries for largemouth bass and smallmouth bass are widespread in the Basin. Fish and mussel habitat in the basin is imperiled by historical impacts and continuing threats, including mineral extraction, row crop agriculture, and livestock grazing.

The area encompassed by the ORBFHP includes the Ohio River basin (excluding the Tennessee and Cumberland drainages), an area of 143,550 square miles. The ORBFHP includes large areas of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, and smaller portions of Maryland, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

The ORBFHP conservation planning team excluded the Tennessee-Cumberland drainage in part to limit overlap with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). The decision also recognizes that the high dams of the Tennessee River system result in a very high degree of system fragmentation with a high degree of irreversibility.

The ORBFHP is governed by a Steering and Coordination Committee comprised of 20 permanent members (primarily State and Federal agencies) and 12 at-large members (e.g. NGOs, businesses, watershed groups). Support is provided by a coordinator (FWS biologist) and several committees (e.g., Partnership and Outreach, Science and Monitoring). Decisions are reached by consensus when possible, but a ¾ majority vote is used if consensus cannot be reached.

The ORBFHP Strategic Plan is in its third draft, and will be completed within several months. It identifies conservation targets for six habitat types, and analyzes legacy and near-term threats across the basin. The Plan also identifies habitat improvement actions under the four interim conservation strategies of the National Fish Habitat Board, and “early action sites”, smaller scale watersheds that possess key conservation targets and/or outstanding aquatic biodiversity.

The ORBFHP has established a GIS clearinghouse at the Ohio Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The ORBFHP will use the *Framework for Assessing the Nation's Fish Habitats* and the National Fish Habitat Assessment to establish its datasets and GIS files. ORBFHP partners conducted condition assessment and threat analysis based on expert opinions from throughout the Basin. The ORBFHP is also using biological criteria that are currently in place in each State in the basin.

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board defer approval of the application of the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership (KPFHP) at this time. The Board should encourage the the KPFHP to submit a revised application when it has progressed further on strategic planning and has coordinated more fully with neighboring and overlapping FHPs and Candidate FHPs. The Board's response to the KPFHP application should provide the following guidance:

- *The KPFHP should take advantage of technical assistance available from the Board staff to meet the requirements of the Board's FHP guidance.*
- *The KPFHP Strategic Plan should identify priorities in the form of geographic focus areas or key stressors or impairments. The current draft plan does not identify priorities or describe a means of prioritizing conservation strategies and actions. Supplemental information provided by the KPFHP states there are “multiple prioritization processes...that we will be able to draw from over the next year” but does not identify them.*

- ***The KPFHP Strategic Plan should describe the known condition of aquatic habitats in the area, and the desired future condition. The application states that member organizations have substantial capabilities for assessment, and that much has been done to assess and plan, but the knowledge gained from this work is not reflected in the Strategic Plan.***
- ***The KPFHP should continue to coordinate with adjacent FHPs, but should also initiate communication with other FHPs that overlap its interests, specifically the Western Native Trout Initiative, the Salmon Stronghold Partnership, and the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership.***

The Kenai Peninsula is a premier destination for residents and out-of-state visitors, and is known for its world-class sport fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. The Peninsula's salmon stocks and resident fish species like rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, and lake trout support vital commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries; are important sources of food for bears, eagles, and other wildlife; and are a key source of nutrients for terrestrial and aquatic environments.

Fish habitat in the Kenai Peninsula is relatively intact, but population growth, unregulated development, habitat fragmentation, degraded water quality and quantity, and climate change threaten these resources. Since the early 1990s, a variety of government and non-governmental organizations and land owners have collaborated to identify threats and implement projects to protect and restore fish, wildlife and their habitats.

Organizations affiliated with the KPFHP have completed over 500 habitat projects, removing over 1,900 feet of structures detrimental to juvenile fish. They have identified over 100 fish passage barriers and restored 14 of them to date. Water flow reservations have been established in major watersheds. Water quality monitoring and baseline assessments have been implemented or are being developed by member organizations.

The geographic boundary of the KPFHP is the political boundary of the Kenai Peninsula Borough, differing in a few locations based on watershed boundaries. This geographic area of 25,000 square miles encompasses 14 major watersheds with 20,000 miles of stream habitat and 350,000 acres of wetlands. The KPFHP addresses habitat needs of freshwater and marine fish species that reside in waters of the Kenai Peninsula at some point in their life cycle.

The KPFHP is adjacent to the recognized FHPs Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership and the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, and the candidate FHP Salmon in the City. KPFHP's geographic area coincides with the Western Native Trout Initiative, which includes the entire State of Alaska. KPFHP has consistently communicated with adjacent FHPs and participated in several statewide FHP meetings. Bi-annual meetings of all Alaska FHPs are planned.

The KPFHP is governed by a nine-member steering committee, which strives to make decisions by consensus. A science and technical committee is established. Member groups cover the range of fishing user group interests, habitat management, and land management jurisdictions. Currently the KPFHP has 18 active organizations, and nine

others have expressed interest. There has been considerable outreach to local communities and Alaska Native interests.

The KPFHP Strategic Action Plan was drafted following three public stakeholder meetings and several organizing committee meetings, and will be submitted to the full Partnership in winter 2009. The Plan lists objectives and actions under 6 broad focal areas: Partnership, Biological Complexity, Water Quality and Quantity, Science and Technology, Education, and Policy. It also lists existing causes of habitat decline and potential threats.

KPFHP organizations possess well-established scientific capacities and the capabilities for habitat assessment and restoration. KPFHP makes use of existing habitat and population data to prioritize efforts using an integrated landscape approach. Fine-scale geospatial data is limited for the Kenai Peninsula and much of Alaska, but the KPFHP and is acquiring high resolution physical and biological data for the areas. KPFHP partners have also developed aquatic and terrestrial land use models, and are tracking habitat conditions for the area.

Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP).

The RFHP is different from all other FHPs in that it is system-based, not geographically based. The Action Plan specifically mentions “system types” as one possible organizational focus for FHPs, and the Board’s October 8, 2008 revision of the *Policies and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships* states that “a limited number of FHPs may be based on system types in those cases where system characteristics transcend geographic boundaries”.

Reservoirs number in the tens of thousands in the U.S., and are found in most major river systems. They can dramatically alter the ecological functions and structures upon which fish and other aquatic species rely. Generally, reservoirs are enduring features of the landscape, and are important to society for the services they provide, such as water power and recreation.

The RFHP does not consider reservoirs in isolation, but as *reservoir systems* that include downstream waters and encompassing watersheds. Many reservoir systems are unhealthy due to poor land-use practices, reservoir aging, shoreline development, and dam releases that adversely affect flow, temperature, and oxygen levels. The many regulatory and ownership jurisdictions that manage reservoir systems are barriers to cooperative fish habitat conservation.

The RFHP is governed by a 15-member Executive Committee including four State agency members, four permanent Federal members, four NGO or non-profit members, and three industry members. Decisions are made by consensus or, in the absence of consensus, by a two-thirds vote of members present. The Outreach & Communications Committee and the Science & Data Committee support the Executive Committee, as do

the Regional Workgroups, representing each of the four regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies. “Friends of Reservoirs” will be organized to provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the RFHP. To date, 32 State fish and wildlife agencies have signed the RFHP Memorandum of Understanding, and many industry and non-governmental organizations and Federal agencies have indicated their support.

The RFHP has met with three of the four regional associations, and has received their full support. RFHP has two northeastern States on board, but has not completed its outreach to NEAFWA. Gaining the support of NEAFWA is a high priority for RFHP; in the interim, RFHP will implement the governing structure based on the three regional associations and provide informal channels for the currently involved northeastern States to participate.

The RFHP will coordinate with geographic FHPs by acquiring and sharing knowledge, tools, and practices pertaining to fisheries management in reservoir systems, and making that information and other support available to FHPs that have reservoir interests and issues. Support by the RFHP to geographic FHPs may include assessment, classification, monitoring, current technologies, best management practices, and material resources. The RFHP will rely on geographic FHPs to effectively address the reservoir issues identified by RFHP, and for which RFHP can provide requisite scientific and technological information.

The RFHP has completed a draft strategic plan. The final strategic plan will be published no later than August 2010, prior to which the RFHP will complete its national reservoir classification and reservoir assessment, and expand its partnership base among tribes, NGOs, watershed groups, and local communities. The RFHP relies on reservoir classification and assessment to identify strategic priorities. The systems for classifying reservoirs and assessing impairment variables are described in detail in the strategic plan.

Scientific capacity for the RFHP is provided by State agencies and USGS, which developed the classification and assessment methodology. State agencies have committed to provide data required for classification and assessment, and several States are providing statistical and GIS support. The RFHP will develop a web-based, geo-referenced database that is coordinated with the NFHAP fish habitat database. The RFHP assessment is linked to the NFHAP national fish habitat assessment, and the RFHP is working with Michigan State University to address data gaps in the NHD+ database.

Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application of the Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership (GLBFHP). The Board’s response to the GLBFHP application should provide the following guidance:

- *The GLBFHP should consolidate its planning and outreach documents to reduce redundancy and to clarify planning terminology. These documents are “Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership: A Strategic Conservation Framework” and “A Basin-wide Fish Habitat Strategic Plan for the Great Lakes”.*
- *The GLBFHP should initiate communication with the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership to lay a foundation for future collaborative interaction.*

- ***The GLBFHP should consult with other coastal FHPs and the Science & Data Committee to develop a process for using inland habitat condition scores in the assessment of coastal waters. This is a difficult problem that will be faced by all coastal FHPs.***
- ***The GLBFHP should examine its system for classifying Great Lakes waters, and consider using a hierarchical system that takes into account physical geography and geology.***

The international Great Lakes Basin is a unique and biologically diverse region containing the largest surface freshwater system in the world, with sport and commercial fisheries valued at over \$7 billion annually. The fishery and aquatic resources of the Great Lakes have suffered detrimental effects of invasive species, loss of biodiversity, poor water quality, contaminants, loss or degradation of coastal wetlands, land use changes, and other factors.

The Basin includes all of Michigan; portions of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota in the U.S. and Ontario and Quebec in Canada. It covers 295,710 square miles, including 94,250 square miles of surface water and 201,460 square miles of land in the U.S. and Canada. The Great Lakes and connecting waters have over 11,000 miles of coastline. The Basin is home to 10% and 31% of the human population in the U.S. and Canada, respectively, with over 43 million people relying on the Great Lakes as a source of drinking water. More than 300 species of fish and other aquatic organisms inhabit the rivers, streams, coastal areas, and open waters.

The GLBFHP is built on a foundation of numerous binational restoration and protection efforts (i.e., Great Lakes Fishery Commission 1955; Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement 1972, 1978, 1987; Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries 1981). More recent efforts include the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (2004), Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (reauthorized in 2006), Canada-Ontario Agreement (2007), and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (2010). Even with all these efforts, no other initiative is in place to advance on-the-ground aquatic habitat protection and restoration Basin-wide. The GLBFHP will provide the leadership, collaboration, and coordination necessary to bring a comprehensive, strategic approach to fish habitat conservation.

The GLBFHP Steering Committee consists of 25 members, representing State, Provincial, Tribal, and Federal agencies and Basin-wide non-profit organizations with fishery management interests. The Steering Committee makes decisions by consensus, defined as “when no party objects to the proposed action or decision”. The Steering Committee is currently operating under a Working Agreement finalized in February 2009. GLBFHP will formalize its governance through a Memorandum of Understanding that references a set of By-Laws unique to the Partnership. The GLBFHP has three standing working groups: Strategic Planning, Communications, and Science and Data. All interested parties are encouraged to become involved in working groups.

The GLBFHP overlaps two recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership (MGLP), and to a much lesser extent, the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV). The conservation goals of GLBFHP will complement those of the

other FHPs. Improving the quality and quantity of water and overall health of glacial lakes located within the Basin will have positive impacts to the Basin ecosystem. The EBTJV has identified several priority watersheds that lie within the Basin watershed. GLBFHP anticipates having areas of mutual priority in headwater streams of the eastern portion of the Basin. The GLBFHP has not coordinated with the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership yet, but estimates that potential areas of conflict with RFHP to be minimal, and will work with RFHP as needed to develop solutions to joint issues.

The GLBFHP draft strategic plan will be completed by June 2010. The Strategic Planning Workgroup reviewed existing Great Lakes planning documents and State Wildlife Action Plans to identify human-induced stressors / threats and root causes of those threats to produce a threat matrix by habitat type. The GLBFHP used a modified version of The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Action Planning process to develop goals and objectives. The plan includes the strategic priorities of the GLBFHP and a 5-year implementation plan. The GLBFHP used existing Fish Community Objectives for each of the Great Lakes to identify fish species for tracking habitat restoration and protection progress.

The *Strategic Framework* serves as an outreach document geared toward those entities currently not engaged in the Partnership, and also articulates the GLBFHP organizational structure and further refines the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan.

The GLBFHP will draw upon scientific capabilities of the USGS Great Lakes Regional Aquatic GAP Program for landscape-level planning; State and Federal fish management agencies for fish population monitoring; a proposed FWS Landscape Conservation Cooperative for linking population response to habitat actions; USDA Forest Service for watershed restoration science and technology; and a network of local conservation groups to evaluate the success of specific habitat actions. Data on current conditions and treats will be standardized to link with the national NFHAP data systems. The GLBFHP is working with four other NFHAP partnerships to develop and support a hub for support services for science, GIS, and other shared applications or administrative processes. (Note: the Multistate Conservation Grant for this effort was approved by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on September 16.)

California Fish Passage Forum

The staff recommends that the Board defer approval of the application of the California Fish Passage Forum (CFPF) at this time. The Board should encourage the CFPF to submit a revised application when it has progressed further on strategic planning and coordinated more fully with neighboring and overlapping FHPs and Candidate FHPs. The Board's response to the CFPF application should provide the following guidance:

- *The CFPF should take advantage of technical assistance available from the Board staff to meet the requirements of the Board's FHP guidance.*
- *The CFPF Strategic Plan should describe the known condition of aquatic habitats in the area, and the desired future condition. Information on current condition should be readily available from the California Passage Assessment Database. Desired future condition and intermediate milestones form the basis for goals and*

objectives. The Strategic Plan as written states goals and objectives as activities, with no defined endpoints or milestones.

- *The CFPP Strategic Plan should describe restoration priorities, or at a minimum, how restoration priorities will be decided upon. The Strategic Plan as written simply says that “consistent protocols for prioritizing fish passage restoration at barriers” will be developed and communicated.*
- *The CFPP should clearly describe the strategic planning process that led to the Partnership’s focus on fish passage for anadromous salmonids. Supplemental information provided by the CFPP describes the importance of fish passage, but not how it was determined that fish passage for anadromous salmonids is more important than any other habitat threat in California.*
- *The CFPP can play a unique role in NFHAP by providing expert advice on fish passage to other Fish Habitat Partnerships that are working to restore connectivity. This role would be of great value nationally.*
- *The CFPP should expand its coordination with other FHPs that overlap its interests, especially the Western Native Trout Initiative, the Salmon Stronghold Partnership, and the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership. The working relationship with the Salmon Stronghold Partnership in particular needs to be established and described.*
- *The mid-winter meeting of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (January 7-10, 2010 in San Diego) should be considered as an opportunity for representatives of the CFPP to meet with representatives of the Board on how CFPP can strengthen its strategic plan and help achieve the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.*
- *The CFPP should provide a GIS shapefile that clearly illustrates the geographic boundaries of the partnership, as requested in the FHP application.*

Almost every stream along California’s 1,100-mile coast has been fragmented by roads, dams, irrigation diversions, concrete channels, or other structures that create difficult or impassable migration barriers to fish. There are more than 16,000 potential barriers to fish passage in California’s coastal and Central Valley watersheds, of which at least 1,500 are severe or impassable. The cumulative effect of migration barriers has greatly impaired California’s fish populations. Barriers prevent salmon and steelhead from reaching areas needed for spawning and rearing, delay migration of adult and juvenile fish, and inflict injury or death on fish attempting to migrate upstream. Other species affected include Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker (Klamath River Basin), Pacific lamprey, and white sturgeon and green sturgeon.

The CFPP was convened in 1999 by the California Resources Agency to serve as a communication platform and state-wide vehicle for coordination among agency programs and private sector activities across jurisdictions to target high priority projects and improve the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of fish passage restoration. CFPP combines the experience and knowledge of a broad spectrum of practitioners to improve efficiency, coordination, and remedies for technical and procedural obstacles. To date the CFPP has developed inventory and assessment protocols, design criteria and guidelines for replacing barriers, a statewide fish passage barrier database, training for transportation engineers, and public information materials.

The CFPF focuses on California anadromous watersheds, including the coastal and Central Valley regions, an area of approximately 60,657 square miles. A variety of listed populations of Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead trout exist throughout the Forum's coverage. CFPF subdivides the area into four regions, each with its own population characteristics, challenges, and issues: North Coast, Central Coast, South Coast, and Central Valley. Forum members and partners vary in each region. There is strong local government involvement by County representatives. Data management systems, assessment protocols, design manuals, and outreach programs are developed for statewide use.

The organization of the CFPF is based on a Memorandum of Understanding through which Forum members commit to specific actions and agree to the purpose and value of the Forum. All Forum members participate in the decision-making process, but issues of significant importance require consensus of the MOU signatory members. Signatory members include four Federal agencies, four California state agencies, local governments, a non-profit group, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. Other members that have not signed the MOU represent local communities and organizations, landowners and utility owners, and land and water districts. The Forum meets quarterly in rotating locations across California. New members have been invited to join, and new participants have become involved. To date, Native American governments have not joined the Forum, but participate indirectly through barrier removal projects.

The CFPF geographic extent overlaps with the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) and the candidate North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership (NASSP). The Forum has consulted with California Fish & Game Department representatives of WNTI, NASSP, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) and the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP). The CFPF describes its coordination efforts as follows:

- WNTI – CFPF differs significantly from WNTI in the types of projects and the goals to benefit fish. To date in California, WNTI has only focused on watersheds in the Sierra Nevada, while CFPF does most of its work on the coastal ranges. CFPF could assist WNTI in barrier removal projects.
- NASSP – NASSP has identified stronghold watersheds in California. In the future it is probable that NASSP will work closely with CFPF to remediate barriers in the selected watersheds. There is also a chance to coordinate trans-state and watershed restoration through joint efforts with Washington and Oregon fish passage organizations and transportation departments.
- RFHP – There are very few reservoirs of the size RFHP deals with in the watersheds that are the focus of the CFPF. The CFPF maintains that there seems no need for coordination other than being aware of the general direction the groups are moving, and a willingness to coordinate should a need arise.
- DFHP – The life history of desert fishes does not present passage or migration problems in most situations. The CFPF has offered its experience, expertise, and resources should such a situation arise.

The priority of the CFPF is to protect and restore listed salmonid species by advancing fish passage improvement projects and programs. The CFPF has circulated a 4-page draft strategic plan among its members. The plan is scheduled to be completed in January 2010. The plan is based on the Forum's MOU and workplan, and was prepared in consultation with watershed and recovery plans in California. Goals in the plan were updated from the MOU, which is ten years old, taking into account completed objectives, newly arisen needs, and commitment to involvement at a national scale. The plan will be used by the Forum to assist California state agencies to prioritize barrier removal projects throughout California, with final decisions made by the funding agencies.

The strategic plan does not attempt to prioritize fish passage restoration relative to other conservation strategies. For CFPF, "prioritization" is usually associated with areas that need assessment surveys or actual barrier locations within watersheds. The CFPF cites scientific literature indicating that a process-based watershed restoration strategy (as promoted by the Action Plan) calls for restoration of connectivity as the first priority step after protecting intact processes and high-quality habitat and a watershed assessment. CFPF also points out that large fish passage projects involve other habitat condition variables, including geomorphology and channel characteristics, flooding capacities, sedimentation, water quality, stream flow, invasive species, and instream cover.

The CFPF created the California Passage Assessment Database (PAD), a state-wide, centralized inventory of fish passage barriers with user-friendly access. The PAD is a decision-support tool similar to that proposed by the NFHAP Science & Data Committee, with a specialized focus on connectivity, a habitat condition variable that is a key stressor for California salmonid populations.

Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application of the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (GPFHP). The Board's response to the GPFHP application should provide the following guidance:

- *The GPFHP should increase its coordination efforts with the Western Native Trout Initiative and the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership. The GPFHP application does not adequately recognize the significant interactions that GPFHP is likely to have with these two partnerships.*

Streams of the Great Plains are home to an aquatic fauna adapted to harsh changes in temperature and water availability. Low human population density has enabled many Great Plains streams to remain relatively unimpaired, yet aquatic species have experienced a slow but steady decline in abundance and diversity during the 20th Century. Habitat loss is attributed to the conversion of native prairie to land uses for agriculture, energy development, and urbanization, which are reflected in degraded water quality, water quantity, fragmentation, and isolation of rivers from their floodplains. Climate change and invasive species are also factors affecting Great Plains stream habitat.

Individual resource agencies have some funding to conserve Great Plains aquatic habitats, but it is inadequate to make strategic system-wide changes needed to maintain aquatic species. The GPFHP was created to forestall and reverse habitat loss with the

philosophy that by working together sufficient fiscal and human resources can be strategically focused on rivers and streams for conservation. The GPFHP focuses on the conservation of native aquatic species, many of which are of commercial or recreational economic interest, such as sauger, sunfishes, catfishes, buffaloes, and paddlefish.

Included in the GPFHP are the Missouri River watershed, the Arkansas River watershed within the State of Kansas, and the Souris and Red River watersheds within the State of North Dakota and western Minnesota. The area encompasses approximately 626,524 square miles, and includes all of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas, and portions of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. The area includes 28 species of fish, mussels, amphibians, and riparian plants that are federally listed or candidates for listing. State Wildlife Action Plans identify almost 90 fish species as being of greatest conservation need, of special concern, or listed.

The governance structure will initially be comprised of four components: Partners Council, Science and Assessment Team, Planning and Prioritization Team, and Outreach and Marketing Team. The structure has not been formally established, but will be within six months. The Partners Council will be the primary decision-making body and will strive for consensus but will use informed consent as necessary. The Partners Council will be comprised of up to 20 members, with at least four members from each of five categories of partner groups: State, Tribal, Federal, non-governmental, and the public. To date, entities that have expressed active interest include 10 States, seven Native American governments, four Federal agencies, three NGOs, and four universities.

The boundaries of the GPFHP overlap with four recognized and Candidate FHPs. The GPFHP describes its coordination efforts as follows:

- Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) – WNTI addresses primarily the trout and cold water habitats of the western States. GPFHP will focus on the warm and cool water habitats and species of the prairies.
- Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) – SARP and the GPFHP overlap within the State of Missouri, an area that is a junction of key geographic areas and watersheds. Unlike SARP, the GPFHP will focus only on river and stream habitats within the Missouri River drainage. SARP has provided a letter of support for recognition of GPFHP.
- Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership (MGLP) – MGLP addresses the glacial lakes aquatic habitats, and the overlap occurs primarily in the eastern Dakotas. MGLP has provided a letter of support for recognition of GPFHP.
- Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) – RFHP will deal with man-made reservoirs, and GPFHP will focus on rivers and streams.

GPFHP has coordinated its activities with the overlapping FHPs through extensive communication. Future efforts will require coordination through the Midwest and Western Associations of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and other regional groups.

The GPFHP has developed a strategic plan that will remain in a draft until the Partners Council finalizes the document. The plan will be completed within one year of the first meeting of the Partners Council. The strategic plan uses existing information from the

State Wildlife Action Plans, and aligns with the four goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

In the strategic planning process, watersheds (8-digit Hydrological Units) were prioritized into four categories: High, Medium, Low, and no priority. The GPFHP will focus on conservation strategies for the high priority watersheds, and communicate with potential partners who would be interested in those watersheds. The Science and Assessment Team will focus on those areas to develop the knowledge base to further refine conservation strategies. The strategic plan also includes a list of goals and objectives stated as activities, with some time-bound targets for accomplishment.

State resource agencies, South Dakota State University, and the University of Missouri have made significant contributions to the GPFHP assessment. A Geographic Information System is under development to collate existing habitat and species data, and to link with the national NFHAP database. State, Tribal, and Federal agencies have a variety of expertise and monitoring programs that will provide the data needed to assess and focus conservation efforts and understand the effects of habitat conservation on aquatic species.

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT UPDATE

H.R.2565

Title: To conserve fish and aquatic communities in the United States through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation, to improve the quality of life for the people of the United States, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: [Rep Kind, Ron](#) [WI-3] (introduced 5/21/2009) [Cosponsors](#) (3)

Related Bills: [S.1214](#)

Latest Major Action: 6/16/2009 House committee/subcommittee actions. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

COSPONSORS (3), ALPHABETICAL

[Rep Christensen, Donna M.](#) [VI] - 9/10/2009

[Rep Murtha, John P.](#) [PA-12] - 9/10/2009

[Rep Thompson, Mike](#) [CA-1] - 7/23/2009

S.1214

Title: A bill to conserve fish and aquatic communities in the United States through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation, to improve the quality of life for the people of the United States, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: [Sen Lieberman, Joseph I.](#) [CT] (introduced 6/9/2009) [Cosponsors](#) (12)

Related Bills: [H.R.2565](#)

Latest Major Action: 6/9/2009 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

COSPONSORS (12), ALPHABETICAL

[Sen Begich, Mark](#) [AK] - 7/16/2009

[Sen Bingaman, Jeff](#) [NM] - 9/8/2009

[Sen Bond, Christopher S.](#) [MO] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Cardin, Benjamin L.](#) [MD] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Casey, Robert P., Jr.](#) [PA] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Crapo, Mike](#) [ID] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Klobuchar, Amy](#) [MN] - 6/23/2009

[Sen Murkowski, Lisa](#) [AK] - 6/15/2009

[Sen Sanders, Bernard](#) [VT] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Stabenow, Debbie](#) [MI] - 6/9/2009

[Sen Udall, Mark](#) [CO] - 6/10/2009

[Sen Whitehouse, Sheldon](#) [RI] - 6/9/2009

DRAFT
EXECUTIVE ORDER
IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Preamble

Aquatic habitat supports fish, shellfish, amphibians, and other aquatic life that is important to the Nation's biological diversity, the economies of local communities and the Nation, and recreational use and enjoyment by millions of Americans. However, coastal, marine and freshwater habitats have been damaged and destroyed by human activities. These losses have caused significant declines in fish populations throughout the United States, and have resulted in substantial economic losses. The health of aquatic habitat reflects the quality of our Nation's stewardship as the American people pursue sustainable development of energy resources, agricultural lands, and urban landscapes. Aquatic habitats that are intact and healthy will help fish and other aquatic species adapt to the emerging effects of climate change.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of this order is to promote collaborative, science-based conservation by ensuring that Federal agencies with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat support State-led efforts to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations. The Action Plan is a voluntary and non-regulatory partnership organized at local, regional, and national levels to protect, restore and enhance the Nation's fish and aquatic communities and improve the quality of life for the American people. The voluntary partnership approach embodied in the Action Plan complements Federal and State regulations that protect aquatic habitat. Communication and coordination among all Federal agencies

whose activities affect aquatic habitat will help to improve the quality of our stewardship and the health of our Nation's aquatic habitat.

Section 3. Definitions

- a) National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) - the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan* dated April 24, 2006 and any subsequent revisions or amendments to that plan.
- b) National Fish Habitat Board - a governing board established by the Action Plan to promote, oversee and coordinate implementation of the Action Plan.
- c) Federal Caucus - a working group open to all Federal agencies, chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, organized to coordinate Federal participation in implementation of the Action Plan.
- d) Fish Habitat Partnership – an entity designated by the National Fish Habitat Board as a Fish Habitat Partnership that coordinates the implementation of the Action Plan at a regional level. A Fish Habitat Partnership may include among its members state, tribal, federal, local, non-profit, or private entities or individuals.
- e) Aquatic communities – aquatic organisms living or growing in, on, or near freshwater, estuarine or marine habitats and interacting with one another in a specific region under relatively similar environmental conditions.
- f) Aquatic habitat - any area on which an aquatic organism depends, directly or indirectly, to carry out the life processes of the organism, including an area used by the organism for spawning, incubation, nursery, rearing, growth to maturity, food supply, or migration, including an area adjacent to the aquatic environment if the adjacent area:
 - 1) contributes an element, such as the input of detrital material or the promotion of a planktonic or insect population providing food, that makes fish life possible;
 - 2) protects the quality and quantity of water sources;
 - 3) provides public access for the use of fishery resources; or
 - 4) serves as a buffer protecting the aquatic environment.

- g) Aquatic organisms – species that depend upon aquatic habitat for one or more stages of their life cycle, such as spawning, incubation, nursery, rearing, growth to maturity, food supply, or migration, including but not limited to fishes, shellfish, amphibians, turtles, and aquatic invertebrates.
- h) Conservation - activities that protect, sustain, and, where appropriate, restore and enhance, populations of fish, wildlife, or plant life or a habitat required to sustain fish, wildlife, or plant life or its productivity.

Section 4. Goals

The goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are to:

- a) Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems.
- b) Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected.
- c) Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms.
- d) Increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species.

Section 5. Federal representation on the National Fish Habitat Board

The following shall participate as members of the National Fish Habitat Board:

- a) The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
- b) The Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Assistant Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- c) The Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service and the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and
- d) The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, acting through the Assistant Administrator for Water.

Section 6. Federal Activities

To carry out the purpose of this order, each Federal agency with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation shall, as appropriate and to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, and in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations:

- a) Participate as a member of the Federal Caucus at policy and technical levels to coordinate Federal participation in implementation of the Action Plan, in support of State-led efforts to achieve the goals of the Action Plan.
- b) Review its policies, procedures, resources, and capabilities for opportunities to further the goals of the Action Plan, and revise these where appropriate to support the goals.
- c) Incorporate the goals of the Action Plan in its own plans for managing Federal lands and water resources, during regularly scheduled reviews of such plans.
- d) Contribute materials, services, or matching funds to projects that support the goals of the Action Plan and Fish Habitat Partnerships established under the Plan.
- e) Consider the goals of the Action Plan when awarding loans, grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements when such awards may influence aquatic habitat.
- f) Consider the goals of the Action Plan when issuing permits to States or private entities when such permits may influence aquatic habitat.
- g) Collect, manage, analyze and share data and contribute information technology expertise to build or integrate databases to assess aquatic communities, habitat conditions and outcomes of projects.
- h) Encourage and support efforts by non-federal partners to implement the Action Plan, including the fulfillment of the Federal trust responsibilities to Native American governments.
- i) Contribute to the development of informational materials for stakeholders and the general public to raise awareness of the values of aquatic habitat and the Action Plan.

- j) Coordinate its activities in support of the Action Plan with other interagency efforts, including but not limited to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Coral Reef Task Force, and the National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes.
- k) Coordinate its activities with States, Territories, Tribes, and local governments to meet the goals of the Action Plan.

Section 7. Agency Reports

Within 180 days from the date of this order, and at two-year intervals thereafter, Federal agencies with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation shall report to the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality and to the National Fish Habitat Board through the Federal Caucus on agency accomplishments and progress in support of State-led efforts to achieve the goals of the Action Plan.

Section 8. Exceptions

The heads of agencies may authorize exceptions to this order, in the following circumstances:

- a) during time of war or national emergency;
- b) when necessary for reasons of national security;
- c) during emergencies posing an unacceptable threat to human health or safety or to the marine environment and admitting of no other feasible solution; or
- d) in any case that constitutes a danger to human life or a real threat to vessels, aircraft, platforms, or other man-made structures at sea, such as cases of force majeure caused by stress of weather or other act of God.

Section 9. General Provisions

- a) This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch. Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:
 - 1) authority granted by law to a department, agency, or the head thereof; or
 - 2) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals
- b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.
- c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

DRAFT



National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Hall of the States
444 North Capitol Street, NW,
Suite 725, Washington, DC 20001
Tel: 202/624-7890 ♦ F: 202/624-7891

Web www.fishhabitat.org

July 24, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to encourage that the Department of the Interior approve and forward to the President for signature an Executive Order on implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan).

The Action Plan is a national investment strategy to maximize the impact of conservation dollars on the ground for fisheries and aquatic resources. It brings together the resources and expertise of a broad community of agencies and organizations in an unprecedented attempt to reverse the declines of aquatic habitats in the United States.

We are pleased that the Department of the Interior and several of its bureaus have supported the Action Plan in word and deed since 2002, when the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council recommended this approach in a report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Your Department is joined by all the State fish and wildlife agencies and hundreds of other organizations in the public and private sectors across the United States in efforts to conserve habitats more effectively under the Action Plan.

The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) was organized in 2006 to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the Action Plan. The Board has approved nine Fish Habitat Partnerships, the primary work units of the Action Plan, and will consider several more for approval later in 2009. The Board has also made significant progress in a national assessment of fish habitat condition, and in raising awareness of the need for more effective conservation.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress to authorize the Action Plan. The *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act* (S. 1214 and H.R. 2565) is needed to solidify the institutional structure of the Action Plan and to authorize funding for aquatic habitat conservation and the supporting science. We are pleased that the Department of the Interior testified in support of H.R. 2565, with technical amendments, on June 16, 2009. The legislation describes roles for key Federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and NOAA Fisheries.

An Executive Order has been drafted that would encourage the many other Federal agencies whose actions affect fish habitat to participate fully in the Action Plan, consistent with their diverse missions. The draft Executive Order is fully consistent with and complementary to the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*. The Board fully supports the Executive Order, and encourages you to champion its approval by the Administration and its signature by the President.

The Executive Order, in tandem with the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*, will build on progress made under the Action Plan to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

If you need additional information, please contact me at 907-242-1907 or you may contact Ron Regan, Resource Director, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at 202-624-7890.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly R Hepler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Kelly Hepler, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Chairman, National Fish Habitat Board



**ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES**

The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

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Phone: 202-624-7890
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E-mail: info@fishwildlife.org
www.fishwildlife.org

July 22, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I am writing in support of a draft Executive Order regarding implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). It is my understanding this Executive Order is still under final review within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but I encourage you to endorse it and to forward it to the White House for signature by the President once it reaches your office.

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan was adopted in April 2006 by the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Interior and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association). The Action Plan has benefited from the leadership of state, federal, NGO, and industry participants, including strong engagement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. The Plan is based on science, relies on regional partnerships for habitat restoration and management projects, and has already produced meaningful results across the country.

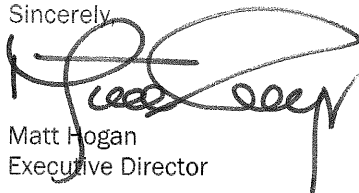
State fish and wildlife agencies were on the ground floor in the development of the Action Plan and strongly support its future work. The Association was delighted to see formal introduction of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act in the 111th Congress, in both the House and the Senate. This legislation is vital to the sustainable future of the Action Plan in terms of legislative endorsement, funding, and accountability.

We believe there continues to be the need for the Executive Order noted above. There are many federal agencies with trust responsibilities for aquatic resources and this Executive Order offers a foundation for collaboration and communication, within the federal government, on Action Plan implementation, all in keeping with the partnership approach embraced by the Action Plan. The Executive Order will actually ensure the best possible coordination among federal agencies, all so important at a time when conservation dollars must be spent efficiently and effectively and in the midst of pressing issues, with implications for fish and aquatic habitats, including climate change and energy development.

The legislation and the Executive Order offer a complementary package for advancing the work of the Action Plan. The Executive Order offers a great opportunity for a new administration to demonstrate its commitment to aquatic natural resources and to government accountability via an Action Plan that is strongly embraced by the states.

Thanks in advance for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if you have questions or want to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Matt Hogan
Executive Director

Cc: Mr. Kelly Hepler, Chair, National Fish Habitat Board

ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

Hall of the States
444 North Capitol Street, NW • Suite 725 • Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: 202-624-7890 • Fax: 202-624-7891 • E-mail: info@fishwildlife.org • www.fishwildlife.org

RECE



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/AFHC/041884

SEP 01 2009

Mr. Matt Hogan
Executive Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 725
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Hogan:

Thank you for your letter of July 22, 2009, to Secretary Salazar regarding a possible Executive Order on implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). The Department of the Interior (Department) supports the Action Plan as a means of involving citizens and diverse groups in reversing past declines in aquatic habitat, and protecting key habitats that remain intact and healthy.

On June 16, 2009, the Department testified at a hearing in the House of Representatives in support of H.R. 2565, the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*, with technical amendments. Your suggestion that legislation and an Executive Order would be complimentary is worthy of consideration and in consultation with the Director of the Service, we will consider it. Your advice on this issue is very much appreciated.

If you have questions, please contact me or Mr. Bryan Arroyo, the Service's Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at 202-208-6394.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Strickland
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



In Response Reply to:
FWS/AFHC/041965

SEP 21 2009

Kelly Hepler
Chairman
National Fish Habitat Board
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
444 North Capitol Street, NW Suite 725
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Hepler:

Thank you for your letter of July 24, 2009, to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, in support of an Executive Order on National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) implementation. The Secretary has asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to respond to you directly.

The Department of the Interior (Department) supports the Action Plan as a means of involving citizens and diverse groups in reversing past declines in aquatic habitat, and protecting key habitats that remain intact and healthy. The administration has requested funds in the Service's budget for that purpose. Several other Department bureaus are also active partners in implementing the Action Plan. These bureaus coordinate their activities by participating in the Action Plan's Federal Caucus.

On June 16, 2009, the Department testified at a House of Representatives hearing in support of H.R. 2565, the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*. The Service will consult with the Department to determine whether an Executive Order is warranted to enhance coordination among Federal agencies, and how an Executive Order would relate to the legislation that has been proposed. Your input on this issue is very much appreciated.

If you have questions, please contact me or Mr. Bryan Arroyo, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at (202) 208-6394.

Sincerely,

DIRECTOR

TAKE PRIDE[®]
IN AMERICA 



Feedback on the NFHAP One-Year-Out Workshop

Report to the
National Fish Habitat Board
October 8, 2009



Purpose of the Workshop

- provide an opportunity for ***structured*** and ***informal*** communication among partners working to implement NFHAP
- review progress
- renew commitment and enthusiasm
- maximize the likelihood that the objectives with 2010 milestones will be achieved



Planned Outcomes

- **Primary**

- **Clear *understanding of what remains to be done*** by 2010 and who will do it.
- Enhanced ***networking and collaboration among participants***, including identification of human, financial, and technical resources.
- Enhanced ***understanding of the roles*** of the Board & its committees, FHPs, Fed Caucus, etc.
- Enhanced ***commitment and enthusiasm*** for implementing the Action Plan.

- **Secondary**

- Enhanced awareness and support among political leaders in Congress and the Administration
- News media attention and products focusing on the Action Plan



Planned Attendance

- **Planning target = 120**
- Board members / proxies / staff
- Science & Data Committee members
- Communications Committee members
- Legislative Team members
- Fish Habitat Partnership representatives (including Candidate FHPs)
- State & Federal agency leaders
- NGO leaders
- Business / Industry leaders
- Journalists / communications professionals



Time & Place

- June 23-25, 2009
- 2 ½ day workshop followed by ½ day Board meeting
- National Conference Center, Leesburg, Virginia





Workshop Budget

- Board approved \$40,000 budget
- \$150 registration fee
- Expenditures:
 - Meeting planner
 - Facility rental
 - Printing program
 - Thumb drives
 - Travel assistance to States





Actual Attendance per registration data

Board members / staff	20
Facilitators / recorders	8
Fish Habitat Partnerships: representatives of 17 FHPs and Candidates	37
Science & Data Committee	9
Speakers	4
No specific NFHAP role	42
TOTAL REGISTRATION	120



Actual Attendance per registration data

Federal agencies	7 agencies	67
State agencies	14 States	21
NGOs	TNC, TU, Kenai Watershed Forum	8
Academia		3
Other	FHPs, interstate commissions, industry, local government, etc.	21
TOTAL		120



Federal Agency Attendance

BLM	2
Forest Service	6
FWS	31
NOAA	22
NRCS	2
OSM	1
USGS	3
TOTAL	67



State Agency Attendance

Alaska	4
Florida	1
Iowa	2
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	1
Michigan	1
Minnesota	2
North Dakota	1
New Hampshire	1
Nevada	1
Pennsylvania	3
South Carolina	1
Texas	1
Wyoming	1
TOTAL	21

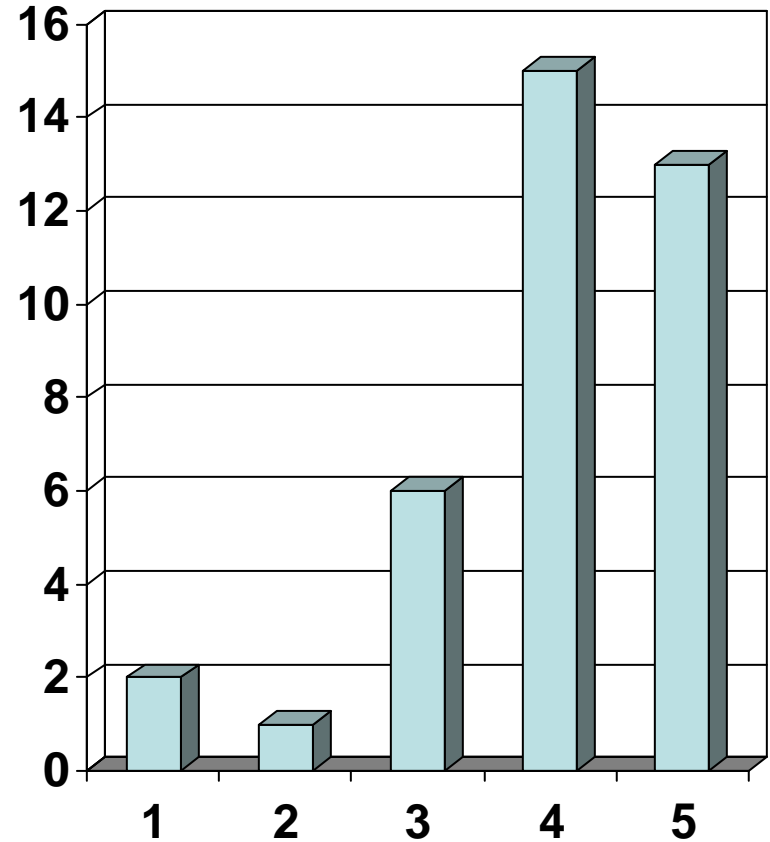


Follow-Up Survey

- Eight questions (multiple choice & open response)
- Distributed via email by Delaney Meeting & Event Management
- Open for ~ 10 days in early July
- 37 people responded

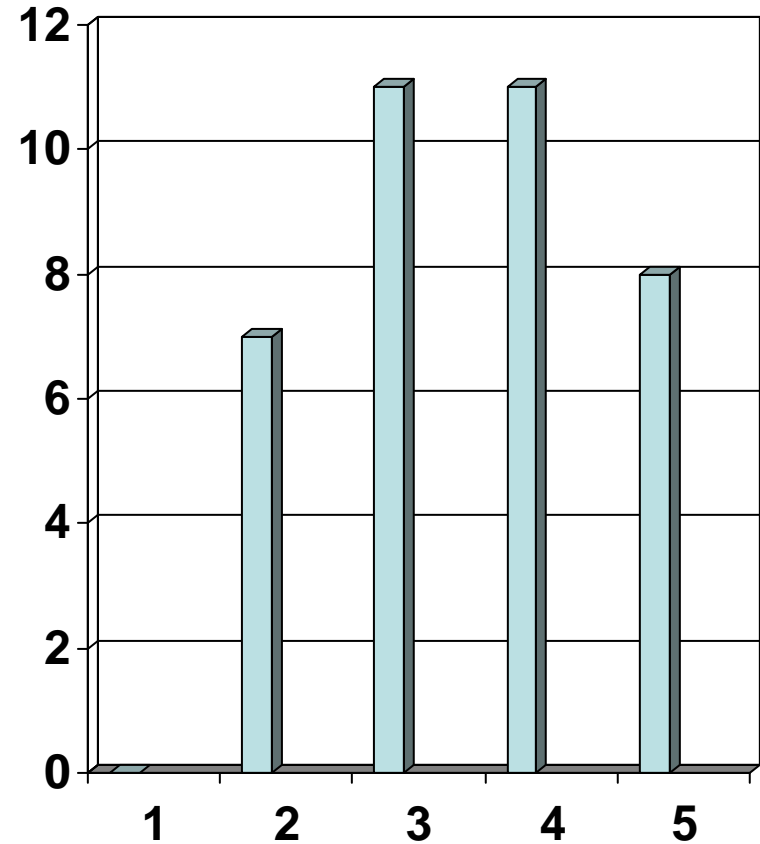
Question 1

- ***How valuable was the Workshop to you professionally?***
- 1 = low value
- 5 = high value
- Mean response = 3.97



Question 2

- ***How well did the Workshop help to move the National Fish Habitat Action Plan forward?***
- 1 = little help
- 5 = great help
- Mean response = 3.54

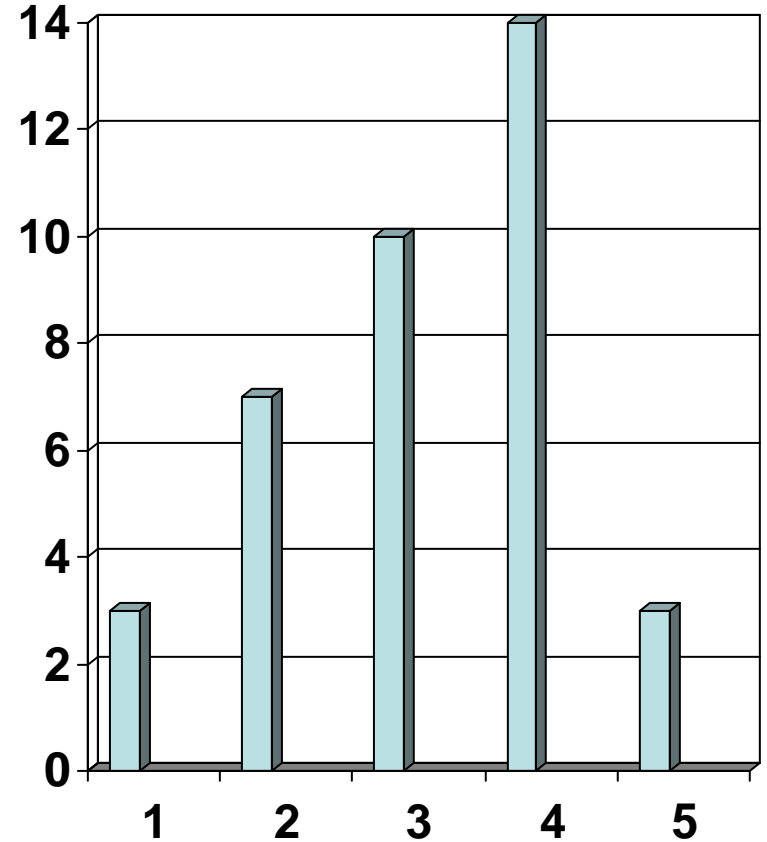


Question 3

- ***Which plenary session or plenary speaker made the most impact on how YOU will move forward with your NFHAP engagement in the next year?***
- Highest ranked sessions:
 - Partnerships, Communications, Funding ranked equally
 - Others: Science & Data, Policies that affect NFHAP
- Highest ranked speakers
 - Dr. William Smith on social marketing
 - Dr. Larry Nielsen on strategic approaches
 - Dr. Mamie Parker on “healthy fish, healthy habitats, a healthy economy, and healthy people
 - Six others mentioned

Question 4

- ***How helpful were the breakout sessions?***
- 1 = little help
- 5 = very helpful
- Mean response = 3.19



Question 5

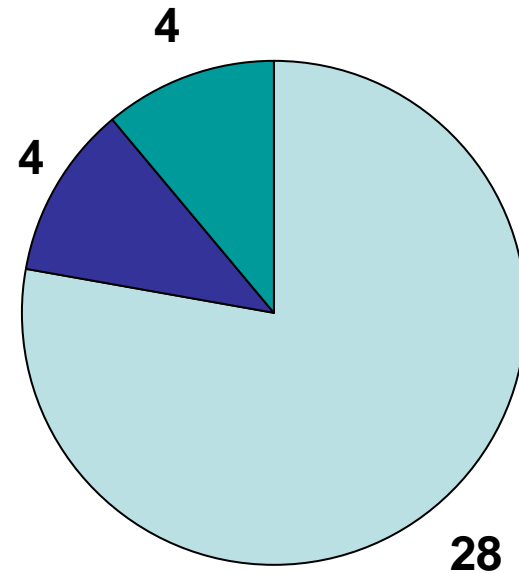
- ***How could we have made the breakout sessions more effective?***
- 35 responses in approximate order of frequency
 - More background information to prepare participants
 - More time
 - Better framed questions
 - Smaller groups
 - Clearer expectations
 - Simpler process
 - Allow participants to select their sessions

Question 6

- ***Are there any outstanding issues that were not addressed at the Workshop that would have helped YOU move forward with your NFHAP work?***
- 28 responses in approximate order of frequency
 - Role of national fish habitat assessment and role of FHPs in the assessment
 - Enacting the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*
 - Funding available for NFHAP implementation
 - Communication & human dimensions
 - Role of FHPs in implementing NFHAP

Question 7

- ***Do you think it would be valuable to host a similar Workshop in 2011, after the 2010 deadlines have been met, to chart progress and next steps?***



Yes No It depends

Comments on Question 7

- ***Hold a similar Workshop in 2011?***
 - At a beach or a lake
 - To maintain momentum
 - Only if better organized
 - 2011 may be too soon
 - A “wasteful week”
 - With more pre-work with participants
 - Especially if legislation passes
 - “Similar but different”

Question 8

- ***Any additional comments pertaining to your experience at the Workshop that you'd like to share?***
- 27 highly variable responses
- Most common:
 - Great job. Enjoyed the workshop
 - Interacting with colleagues was valuable
 - Use different facility – consider NCTC



Question 8, continued

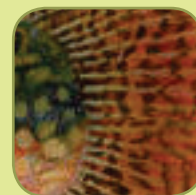
- Board should consider all recommendations and take swift action
- Lots of time & effort for little action
- Would like more State involvement – NGOs and Feds seem to be in the lead
- Not enough direction – why were we there?
- Important to keep everyone on the same path
- More on “healthy economy, healthy people”



Follow up actions taken

- Breakout summaries and speakers' presentations posted on web
- Toolkit for communicating with Congress developed & widely distributed
- Partnerships Committee expanded and re-convened
- White paper on National Fish Habitat Assessment / Decision Support System drafted

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT



A CONSERVATION VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Why Now?

America's fisheries are facing a conservation crisis. Nearly 40% of North American fishes, 700 species in total, are listed as imperiled. More than two-thirds of these are considered federally threatened or endangered. Habitat alteration is the principal factor in this conservation crisis and is the principal motivation for the development of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is a national investment strategy to maximize the impact of conservation dollars on the ground. Under the Action Plan, Federal, state and privately-raised funds will be the foundation for building regional conservation partnerships that address the Nation's biggest fish habitat problems. The National Fish Habitat Action Plan relies on this legislation for its critical on-the-ground work.

If passed this legislation will:

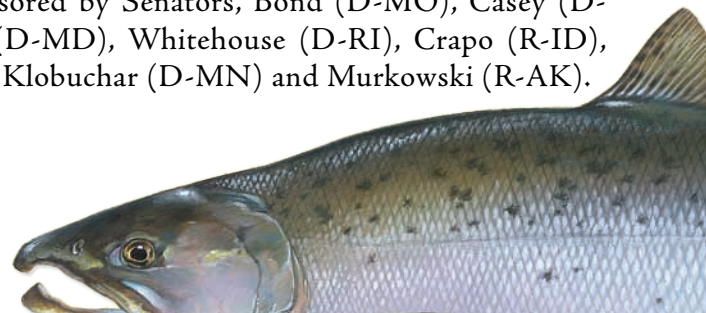
Bring to the forefront the importance of America's fisheries to our society. This legislation will undoubtedly bring jobs to the fisheries industry through the work of our conservation partners. The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act will also clean up critical waterways, providing a more green and healthy environment. The Act will also help to slow and reverse the listing of threatened and endangered fish species. This landmark legislation would put into focus the scientific and conservation capabilities of stakeholders including: States and Territories, Federal agencies, Tribes, industry, conservation organizations, and local communities to improve the condition of fish habitat nationwide through partnerships, science, and on-the-ground projects.

Partnership Driven Initiative:

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is a partnership driven initiative that encompasses the entire United States through the work of its Fish Habitat Partnerships under the guidance of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Along with nine officially recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships there are currently 11 "Candidate" Fish Habitat Partnerships working towards official recognition by the National Fish Habitat Board. This increased effort to expand member partnerships will ensure quality fish habitat through restoration efforts in the United States.

111th Congress:

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act was introduced on May 22, 2009 by Congressman Ron Kind, (D-WI) and in the Senate on June 9, by Senator Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) and co-sponsored by Senators, Bond (D-MO), Casey (D-PA), Stabenow (D-MI), Cardin (D-MD), Whitehouse (D-RI), Crapo (R-ID), Sanders (ID-VT), Udall (D-CO), Klobuchar (D-MN) and Murkowski (R-AK).



Provisions of the Bill would:

- Authorize the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
- Establish the National Fish Habitat Board to provide oversight
- Establish Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships as delivery mechanisms
- Establish a National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership Office within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the Board and administer grants
- Establish a \$75 million grant program for aquatic habitat projects through the Department of the Interior.
- The Act is intended to encourage stakeholder and government partnerships consistent with the Plan's goals including restoring, protecting, and enhancing aquatic habitat; improving fisheries and their economic output; and coordinating federal actions.

National Fish Habitat Action Plan progress to date:

- National Fish Habitat Board organized in 2006
- Nine Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships have been established, and 11 more are in development, which would cover all areas of the United States
- National framework for scientific assessment of fish habitats has been developed and implemented.

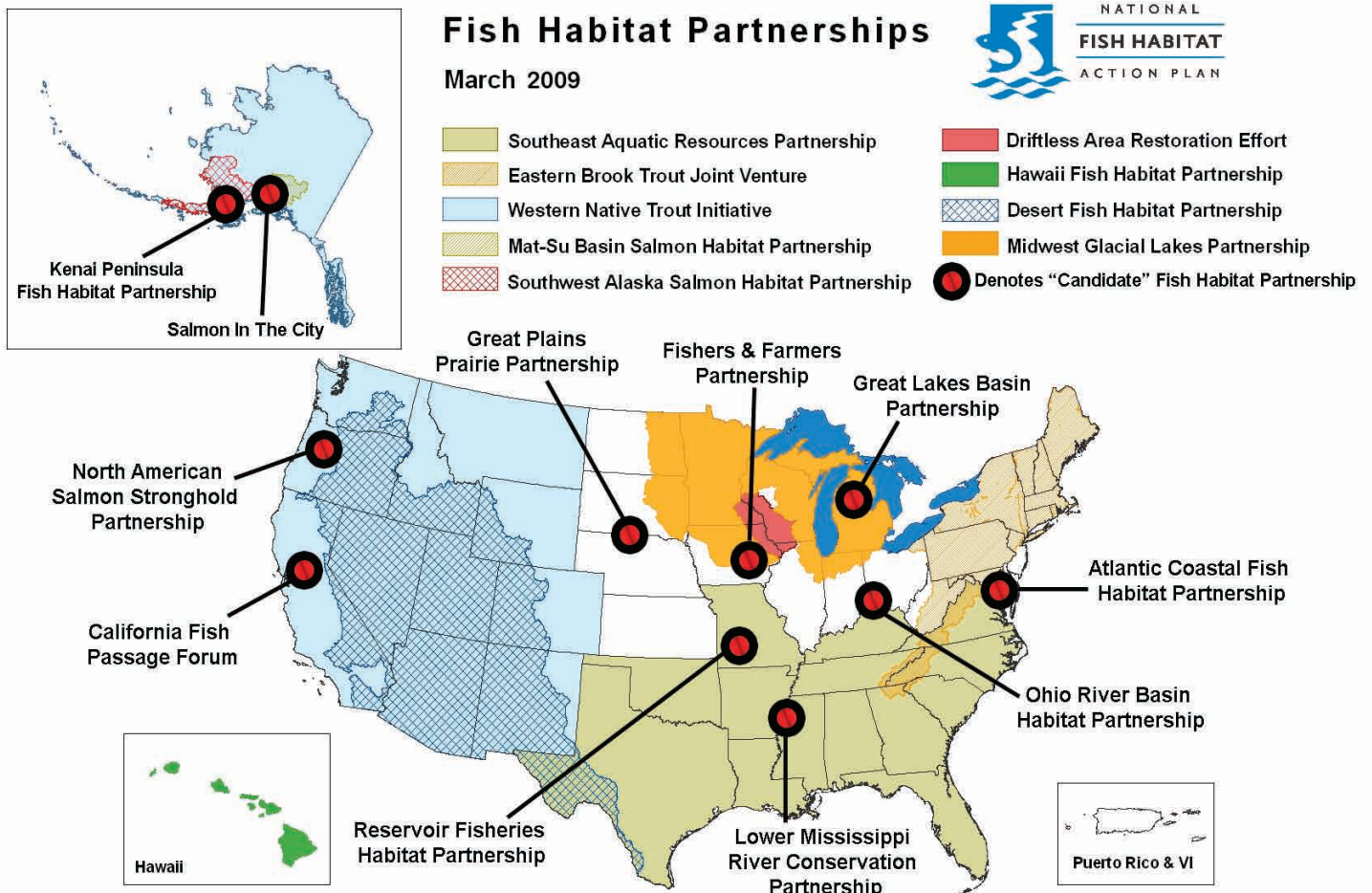
• Since 2006, the Fish and Wildlife Service has provided \$8.5 million to support 188 on-the-ground projects in 36 states, leveraging \$20 million in partner match, to address the priorities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships..

National Fish Habitat Action Plan Knowledge:

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan focuses on fish and their habitats as keystones for the full range of aquatic biodiversity and aquatic habitats in the United States.

A focus on fish includes the protection, restoration and enhancement of freshwater, estuarine and marine species, including amphibians, shellfish and crustaceans.

National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships:



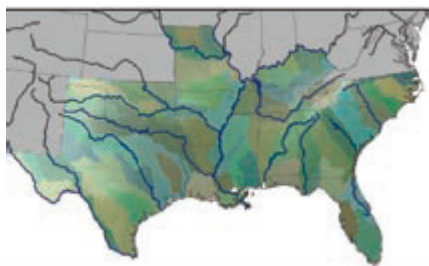
FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY

Southeast Aquatics Resources Partnership

The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) was initiated in 2001 to address issues related to the management of aquatic resources in the southeastern United States.

These issues include significant threats to the aquatic resources and habitats of the Southeast, as illustrated by the fact that 34 percent of North American fish species and 90 percent of the native mussel species designated as endangered, threatened or of special concern are found in the Southeast.

Given these realities, and the predicted increased pressure on southeast aquatic resources in the future, SARP



was established with the following mission: With partners, protect, conserve and restore aquatic resources including habitats through-

out the Southeast, for the continuing benefit, use and enjoyment of the American people. This partnership builds on relationships developed between state and federal agencies, private organizations, conservation groups and other stakeholders that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of aquatic resource management agencies and establish a commitment to truly work together for the benefit of the resource.

SARP has developed a regional aquatic habitat plan for the Southeast that will help guide the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan efforts on a regional scale. Watershed conservation projects have already been undertaken in four major southeast river systems (Duck River, TN; Roanoke River, NC; Altamaha River, GA; and Pascagoula River, MS) that detail specific actions to improve and protect aquatic habitats and biological integrity in these systems. SARP actively seeks funding and local partners to implement specific local actions that are prioritized on a regional and national scale.

Supporters:

States through the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, National Fish Habitat Action Plan Partner Coalition Members, (500 + Member Agencies) including: Tribal Members Interstate/State/City/University Members, Private/NGO, the sport fishing industry through the American Sportfishing Association and anglers through groups such as Trout Unlimited and BASS.

Federal Funding for Conservation Projects:

- Annually, the Board submits its recommended projects to the Secretary of the Interior in order of priority.

- In recommending projects to the Secretary, the Board must consider certain factors, including how well the project fulfills this Act's goals; addresses the Board's priorities; increases fishing opportunities and public access; conserves listed species; and whether non-federal matching funds are available.

- There is a 50% non-federal matching funds requirement, except for projects on federal lands or waters or that acquire in-holdings within them. Funds provided to Indian tribes are considered non-federal.

Conservation Partnership Coordination:

Regional Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships are the work units of the Action Plan. This is where it all happens: the assessment of regional needs, the planning and prioritization, and the leveraging of resources to implement local projects to protect, restore, or enhance fish habitat and population. National efforts including logistical and some financial support for the Partnerships come from the guiding principles of the Action Plan but decisions are always made at the regional level.

To achieve recognition by the Board, each of the partnerships had to demonstrate achievement in the areas of partnership diversity, scientific assessment, and strategic planning. The Board will continue to work with these partnerships as they implement on-the-ground projects and refine their scientific assessment and strategic plans.



America's waterways have always been the lifeblood of our nation's prosperity, and the time has come to reinvigorate them. The last 200 years have seen a boom in industrial, agricultural and residential settlement along our coasts, rivers and lakes. Mighty rivers became crucial routes for nationwide transportation and commerce, fueling our economic progress, while fisheries such as salmon, cod, perch, and shad became common staples of our diet and culture. The scenic appeal of our waters spurred the growth of tourism and now lures tens of millions of people each year to enjoy these national treasures.

Our nation's progress has also had unforeseen consequences as our waterways were channelized, dammed, dredged, drained, polluted, and otherwise dramatically altered. Once teeming populations of fish and wildlife now show drastic declines. Many fisheries no longer exist. In addition, non-native species—introduced intentionally or by accident—have also had a significant impact on fisheries and our economy.

To address these and many other challenges, a new approach--the National Fish Habitat Action Plan--has been launched to unite partners to restore our waterways and fisheries to healthy and sustainable levels. For the first time ever, the expertise and abilities of more than 450 Native American tribes, non-profit organizations and foundations, corporations, state and federal agencies, are coming together in a commitment to revive our vital fisheries and waterways for the benefit of the American people.



NATIONAL

FISH HABITAT

ACTION PLAN

National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Summary

This landmark legislation will for the first time establish a national framework for freshwater and coastal habitat conservation and will focus the scientific and conservation capabilities of states, territories, federal agencies, tribes, industry, conservation organizations, and local communities to improve the condition of fish habitat nationwide. Modeled on the successful Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the program carries out fish habitat protection, restoration and enhancement through regional partnerships that engage local partners in conservation action and provide a solid science-based and strategic approach to on-the-ground conservation efforts.

- Introduced in the 111th Congress in May/June 2009
 - Senate bill (S.1214) introduced by Senator Lieberman (I-CT) and sponsored by Senators Bond (R-MO), Cardin (D-MD), Casey (D-PA), Crapo (R-ID), Klobuchar (D-MN), Murkowski (R-AK), Sanders (I-VT), Stabenow (D-MI), Udall (D-CO) and Whitehouse (D-RI).
 - House bill (H.R. 2565) introduced by Representative Kind (D-WI)
- **The legislation would:**
 - Authorize the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.
 - Establish a National Fish Habitat Board to provide oversight.
 - Establish regional Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships.
 - Establish a National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership Office within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the Board and administer grants.
 - Provide for the active engagement of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Geological Survey, and other appropriate federal agencies to conduct scientific and technical assistance.
 - Authorize a \$75 million grant program for aquatic habitat projects through the Department of the Interior.
- **Progress to date:**
 - National Fish Habitat Action Plan signed by the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce on April 24, 2006.
 - National Fish Habitat Board organized in 2006.
 - Nine Fish Habitat Partnerships are established and 11 more are in development, with involvement in all 50 States.
 - National framework for scientific assessment of fish habitats developed.
 - Since 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided \$8.5 million to support 188 on-the-ground projects in 36 states, leveraging \$19.8 million in partner match, to address the priorities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships.

For more information:

Kelly Hepler, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Chairman, National Fish Habitat Board
907-242-1907

Ryan Roberts, Communications Coordinator
301-713-4300 x171

www.fishhabitat.org

Dear Senator/Representative:

(I/We) (Name/Organization Name) (am/are) writing in strong support of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (S. 1214) and (H.R. 2565) and request that you sign on as a co-sponsor of this important legislation and support its passage into law.

As you know, (state) is fortunate to have many important freshwater (and coastal) resources that are a vital part of the quality of life in our state. (I/Organization Name) (have/has) worked for many years in (river, watershed, coastal area) to (explain a compelling part of the work to restore, protect, etc). This (river/watershed/coastal area) is an important economic engine to our region, providing (recreational, commercial, social) benefits as well as being an important natural resource of our state.

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act will for the first time establish a national framework for freshwater and coastal habitat protection, restoration and enhancement. By establishing a national program to support a series of regional Fish Habitat Partnerships, this legislation will focus the attention, resources and expertise of the many public and private agencies and organizations working on freshwater and coastal habitat conservation in a way that allows us to be even more effective in conserving and protecting these vital resources.

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (S. 1214/H.R. 2565) implements the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, a national framework developed jointly by the states, federal agencies, business and the angling and conservation community that lays out a clear set of national goals and objectives for protecting, restoring and enhancing aquatic habitats on a national scale. Modeled after the highly successful North American Wetlands Conservation Act, this legislation will bring a strategic, science-based and action-oriented approach to freshwater and coastal habitat conservation and provide vital resources to support these efforts and leverage other public and private resources.

(I/We) urge you to support this bill and to work to see the swift passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act. (I'd/We'd) welcome the opportunity for you to visit (river/watershed/coastal area) so that (I/we) may show you the important work (I/we) have underway and how this national effort will benefit us, our community, and (state name).

Sincerely,

(SIGNATURE/ORGANIZATION)

Talking Points for The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act

Key Themes:

- The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act will help further implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The Action Plan provides a framework for maintaining and restoring fish habitat in freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats in all 50 states and U.S. Territories. The Action Plan's voluntary, non-regulatory incentives will result in long-term sustainable progress, with stakeholder partnerships and federal agencies being the keys for success.
- This landmark legislation would put into focus the scientific and conservation capabilities of stakeholders including; States, Federal agencies, Tribes, industry, conservation organizations, and local communities and other stakeholders to improve the condition of fish habitat nationwide through partnerships, science, and on-the-ground projects.
- The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act will implement efforts clean-up critical waterways, providing a more green and healthy environment. The Act will also help to slow and reverse the listing of threatened and endangered fish species.

Bill Details:

- Introduced in the 111th congress by Senators Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Christopher Bond (R-MO), Robert Casey (D-PA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mark Udall (D-CO), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). Introduced in the House by Representative Ron Kind (D-WI).
- Authorizes the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
- Establishes the National Fish Habitat Board to provide oversight
- Establishes Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships as delivery mechanisms
- Establishes a National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership Office within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the Board and administer grants
- Establishes a \$75 million grant program for aquatic habitat projects through the Department of the Interior.

Fish Facts

- The benefits of fish consumption far outweigh the risks, according to a variety of studies and providing healthy habitats for fish will only improve the overall health of fish stocks throughout the country. Conserving our waters will result in a win-win for both fish and the population of our country.

- The financial benefit of recreational fishing alone has great economic impact throughout the United States.

Inside the Numbers:

-Recreational Fishing Statistics

- Nearly 40 million anglers**
- \$45.3 billion in retail sales**
- \$125.0 billion in overall economic output**
- \$16.4 billion in state and federal taxes**
- Over one million jobs supported
- The National Sporting Goods Association ranked fishing sixth out of 42 recreation activities, preceded only by walking, swimming, exercising, camping and bowling.

-The more than one-million jobs supported by anglers are almost three times the number of people who work for the USPS.

**Statistics provided by Southwick Associates (2006)*

*** (Statistics for year 2006)*

A Critical Need for National Fish Habitat Legislation

Why Now?

America's fisheries are facing a conservation crisis. Nearly 40% of North American fishes, 700 species in total, are listed as imperiled. More than two-thirds of these are considered federally threatened or endangered. Habitat alteration is the principal factor in this conservation crisis and is the principal motivation for the development of a National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Existing programs and administrative structures have not been able to reverse this trend.

What This Bill will do?

- To focus and to cost-effectively coordinate and leverage scientific and conservation capabilities of state and federal agencies, tribes, industry, non-governmental organizations, local communities and other stakeholders;
- Prioritize and implement voluntary habitat conservation actions and on-the-ground projects at a scale necessary to improve the condition of freshwater, estuarine and marine fish habitats nationwide, including U.S. Territories.
- This legislation ensures Congress has an appropriate role in addressing the national need for fish habitat conservation, including infrastructure, governance, and accountability in the delivery of public funds, while leveraging them with non-federal funding sources.
- Fish Habitat Partnerships (9 endorsed, 11 candidates) are the primary work units of the Action Plan. They are formed around landscape scale aquatic habitats, distinct geographic areas, keystone fish species or system types. They operate at a scale necessary to make a measurable difference.
- The legislation includes \$30 million to fund the technical and scientific capabilities of three federal agencies – the US Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service - ensuring the science-based conservation focus of the Plan is maintained and achieved.
- State fish and wildlife technical and scientific capabilities and expertise are also a key component of Action Plan implementation and support provided to the Board and Partnerships.

How are States and U.S. Territories involved?

State's spearheaded development of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan its initial implementation with the USFWS and NOAA. State fish and wildlife agencies have broad and primary trust responsibilities for fin and shell fish and other aquatic resources (e.g., mussels, crayfish, and amphibians) within state boundaries. Each state fish and wildlife agency has a key science, data, management and research role defining and recommending the amount and quality of habitat needed to sustain habitat functions to sustain aquatic resource productivity. They also contribute to cross-boundary coordination and collaboration to manage such resources and provide technical assistance and recommendations to local, state, federal and tribal authorities with habitat regulatory authorities. These agencies are on the front lines of fish population and habitat management and coordinate with other state and federal agencies and tribal entities to meet these trust responsibilities and individual state mandated requirements.

U.S. FWS Funding Support

Since 2006, the Fish and Wildlife Service has provided \$8.5 million to support 188 on-the-ground projects in 36 states, leveraging \$20 million in partner match, to address the priorities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships. Other agencies have also contributed funding for critical fish habitat conservation efforts. Approximately 20 federal agencies participate in a federal caucus to further coordinate interagency use of funds.


Workspace

search...

National Fish Habitat Action Plan

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NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN



2009 10 "Waters to Watch" Press Coverage Tracker

FRIDAY, 10 JULY 2009 12:45

The 2009 National Fish Habitat Action Plan 10 "Waters to Watch" initiative has gained some recognition in the media, here is an updated list of some of the publications that have covered the Action Plan and the 10 "Waters to Watch" initiative as well as the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act.

National Release:
[Thisisfly.com](http://thisisfly.com)
[AFS Fisheries](http://AFS.Fisheries)
gayengbergoutdoors.com
texasnurfish.com
[AWWA Journal](http://AWWA.Journal)

National Fish Habitat Conservation Act:
[News Virginian](http://News.Virginian)

archive

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Come together The Plan National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Waters to Watch

National Fish Habitat Conservation Act

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Partner Toolkit that will empower you to make a difference in assuring that the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act gains support in the 111th Congress. The toolkit is an Adobe (PDF) portfolio that contains:

- Four-page outreach piece (PDF)
- National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Summary (PDF)
- National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Talking Points (PDF)
- National Fish Habitat Conservation Act modifiable Legislative support letter (MS Word)

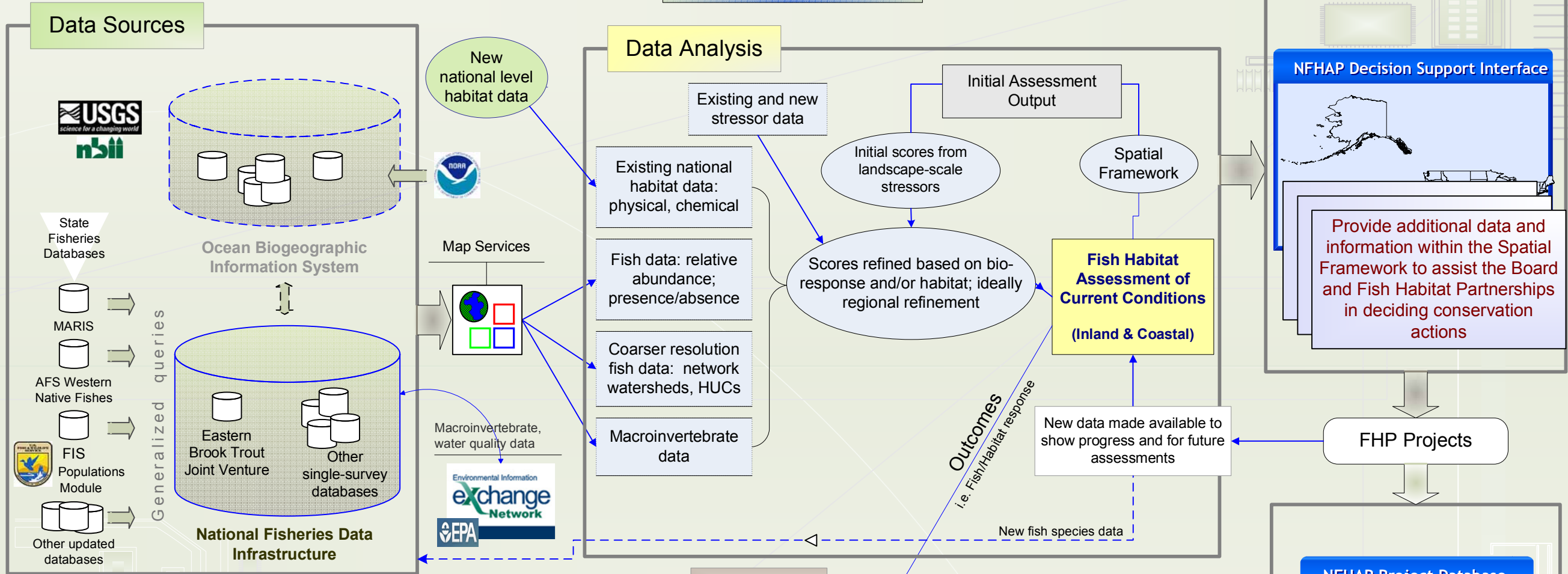




Development Plan



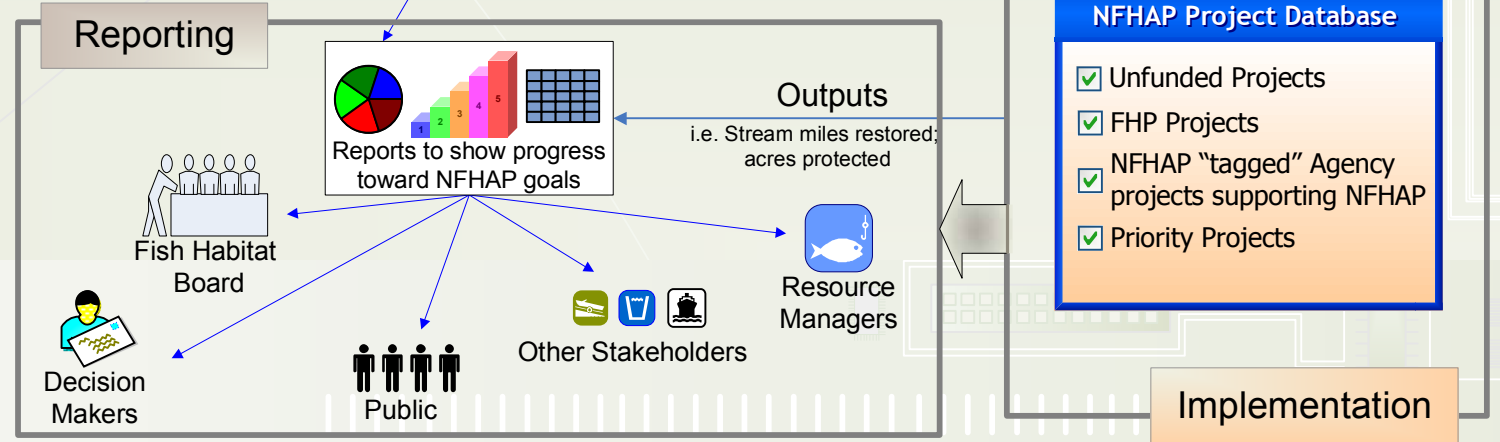
Data System



Budget

Cost to NFHAP for Development and Maintenance of NFHAP Data System Components

	2010	2011	2012	Maintenance Per Year
Data Sources	37,500			450,000
Data Analysis	365,000	495,000	210,000	100,000
Data Application	150,000	200,000	250,000	250,000
Implementation	150,000	150,000	150,000	300,000
Reporting		100,000	75,000	75,000
Totals	702,500	945,000	685,000	1,175,000



	Contributions From *	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	Estimated Annual Maintenance Cost for 2013 and Beyond
NFH Assessment					
Develop a prioritization strategy for existing priorities to be integrated into system			\$60,000	\$60,000	
Identify other layers to be included in the decision support tool			\$60,000	\$60,000	\$18,000
Refining initial River Assessment using additional data that is made available (biotic data, FPDSS, regional partnership results, etc)		\$30,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$18,000
Perform Assessment of AK and HI		\$50,000			
Develop a plan for lakes assessment approach					
Coordination and Support for building data structure and connections between NBII, the Spatial Framework, and decision support layers for public interface		\$40,000		\$40,000	\$14,000
Perform Lakes Assessment – includes creating nationwide spatial coverage for lakes, generation of catchments for many watersheds		\$100,000	\$150,000		\$40,000
Perform Assessment of Great Lakes	inkind EPA???	\$180,000	\$180,000		
Facilitation of data exchange with FHPs		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Coastal Assessment - Test classification scheme; include linkages between inland and coastal classification schemes	inkind NOAA	\$67,500	NOAA post-docs		
Perform Coastal Assessment - Summarize conditions of coastal habitats	inkind NOAA	\$67,500	NOAA post-docs		
Coastal Assessment – Linking with Inland Assessment - Link results of the initial coastal assessment to those of the initial inland assessment			\$175,000		
NFH Assessment Total		\$545,000	\$675,000	\$210,000	\$100,000
Data System Development					
National Fisheries Data Infrastructure to provide nationwide fish presence layer, new data systems integration	inkind USGS				\$450,000
Inclusion of FIS Populations Module data into National Fisheries Data Infrastructure	inkind USFWS	\$37,500			
Building data structure between data sources, the Spatial Framework, Assessment output, and additional information		\$100,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Developing public interface		\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Project Tracking Database development/management		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$300,000
Develop feedback system from FHPs to Spatial Framework			\$75,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Develop reporting system to show progress toward NFHAP goals			\$75,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Develop reporting public interface			\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Database revisions and incorporation of new data			\$50,000	\$150,000	\$125,000
Data System Totals		\$337,500	\$450,000	\$475,000	\$1,075,000
Fiscal Yr T Totals		\$882,500	\$1,125,000	\$685,000	\$1,175,000

* Estimated matching support toward NFHAP Data System roughly valued at \$411,000 annually

Standard Operating Procedures for NFHAP Data Sharing

These Standard Operating Procedures for National Fish Habitat Action Plan Data Sharing (SOPs) have been developed for NFHAP Partnerships or other groups interested in:

- 1) Integrating regional data sets or project outcomes into NFHAP's National Assessment,
- 2) Using NFHAP's Assessment approach, or elements of the approach, to perform regional assessments, or
- 3) Using NFHAP's Spatial Framework which includes confluence to confluence stream reaches, also termed: "flowlines" or "arcs," defined in the National Hydrography Dataset Plus (NHD+) as a basic spatial unit.

These NFHAP Data SOPs outline requirements that must be adopted by Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHP), as outlined in Section 3 of the FHP Guidance. Additionally these SOPs offer operational guidance that will facilitate the exchange of information. Adhering to the NFHAP Data SOPs will ensure that information and data created by FHPs will be able to be integrated into the National Assessment framework. Please note that all new data initiated as part of a FHP are required to be provided back to NFHAP, while existing data used in support of FHP efforts are strongly encouraged to also be provided. New information and data will help to refine and improve the National Assessment and provide a more accurate picture of the status of and threats to fish habitat nationally than can be provided without such information. Examples of regional data sets that could aid in the refinement of the National Assessment include information describing biological communities of aquatic systems, habitat features of aquatic systems, management activities, and landscape-scale characteristics. Outcomes of regional activities that could be integrated into the National Assessment include results generated from regional assessments as well as protection, enhancement, or restoration outcomes. In general, most data that can be linked to any of the spatial units identified in the NFHAP Spatial Framework can be integrated; examples of spatial units include flowlines of the NHD+, river catchments, individual lakes or reservoirs, hydrologic units, ecological drainage units, etc.

- 1. Using/modifying the NHD+ data layer.** The NHD+ is a vector data set describing network hydrography and associated catchment characteristics for the conterminous 48 states and Hawaii derived at a spatial scale of 1:100,000. The NHD+ includes fluvial networks represented by confluence to confluence flowlines as the smallest spatial unit, catchment boundaries for each flowline, and some lakes and reservoirs represented as polygons.
 - A. Because stream flowlines of the NHD+ with their associated catchments are the basic spatial units of the NFHAP Spatial Framework, modifications to this NHD+ layer may prevent integration of information into the National Assessment. While modifications by individual FHPs are discouraged, if flowlines and/or their catchments are modified, be sure to keep a record of the original flowline/catchment identifiers so that modifications can be tracked and so that results generated for modified

Standard Operating Procedures for NFHAP Data Sharing

flowlines/catchments can be associated with original flowlines/catchments of the NHD+. If users link data with stream segments that have not been modeled by the NHD+, the users should instead link those data to the local catchment of the closest NHD+ flowline in which they occur. Note that the NHD+ is a modeled representation of the Nation's hydrography; consequently, it may contain errors. Those detecting errors in the NHD+ should report them to waters_support@epa.gov.

- B. If modifications to the NHD+ data layers result in the deletion of flowlines and/or catchments by FHPs, note that flow paths that are built into the NHD+ will be altered. These flow paths and their specified relationships to other flows paths are key to aggregating upstream network characteristics for any given flowline, so modifications to the NHD+ data layer may ultimately prevent aggregation of any upstream characteristics. Again, this is one reason why modification of the NHD+ by FHPs is not recommended.
- C. The spatial representation of many of the Nation's lakes and reservoirs in the NHD+ has a number of issues that prevent them from being readily integrated into NFHAP's Spatial Framework. At this time, we are working to develop some strategies for consistently dealing with these issues. In the interim, please contact Gary Whelan (whelang@michigan.gov) or Doug Beard (dbeard@usgs.gov) for more information.

2. Considerations related to types of data

- A. All point data intended to describe in-stream conditions should be attributed to an appropriate NHD+ flowline or multiple flowlines. However, the original GPS coordinates to six decimal places (or greater) should also be stored in the database for projected data to ensure that if future versions of network hydrography change, the original point locations can be evaluated against those changes. Other point data may be attributed at the level of local catchments (i.e., dams represented as points that are not directly linked to a specific flowline may be summarized as density for a given region); again, however, original GPS coordinates should also be included in the database, along with additional information describing the location of the collection (see instructions below for additional information to include about locations).
- B. Lakes that are not part of a fluvial network represented by the NHD+ should currently be treated as an attribute of catchments. In cases where catchments need to be delineated for lakes that are not part of a fluvial network represented by the NHD+, use the NHD+ flow direction grids and associated elevation data sets to perform the delineation. This will facilitate their eventual integration into the Spatial Framework.

Standard Operating Procedures for NFHAP Data Sharing

- C. For regional efforts attempting to generate finer-scale assessment results, we would encourage the use of data layers that are currently being used in the National Assessment unless more suitable data layers are available for the region of interest. More suitable data layers could include more recent information than what's been used nationally, data defined at finer spatial scales, more "data rich" layers, information that better describes habitat conditions at locations than landscape-scale surrogates, etc. For a list of data layers currently being used in the National Assessment, refer to the initial national assessment report, "An initial assessment of integrated human disturbances on stream fish habitats in the conterminous United States" or visit fishhabitat.org website and navigate to the Science and Data tab. Note that in many cases, such regional data sets would be helpful for refining and improving the National Assessment, and it would be helpful in many cases if such information could be shared with the National effort.
- D. For FHPs using hydrologic units, we would recommend using the latest version of the Watershed Boundary Dataset, which can be found at:
<http://www.ncgc.nrcs.usda.gov/products/datasets/watershed/>

3. Organismal data¹

- A. Ideally, all organismal data from streams or reservoirs should be attributed to a flowline or flowlines of the NHD+ with the original GPS coordinates to six decimal places stored in the database. If applicable, the organismal database should include the:
- Name of the water body from (with Waterbody name for data checking)
 - Purpose of collection (targeted gamefish, community sample survey, IBI development or application, etc)
 - Collection date
 - Effort details (preferably sampled reach length and/or sample area, number of persons and sample time)
 - Number of organisms collected, if possible.
 - Gear type/methods used
 - Scientific names for collected taxa
 - the associated ITIS* Taxonomic Serial Number (TSN)
 - population status/estimates, where available (including definition and/or derivation explanation)

In cases where exact location information cannot be provided, having data summarized at the smallest spatial scale (i.e., hydrologic units) with as much descriptive information as can be provided will facilitate integration into the National Assessment.

¹ Organismal data includes any information describing distributions and abundances of organisms.

Standard Operating Procedures for NFHAP Data Sharing

* Integrated Taxonomic Information System (www.itis.gov); web service also available

4. Providing data to the National Assessment

- A. Data should be provided back to the National Assessment in tabular format, with a comma-delimited text file as the preferred format. The key to providing data for use in the assessment is the ability to link to the spatial units represented in the Spatial Framework, and the COMID field is critical for linking data to the smallest spatial scale represented in our framework (the flowline or local catchment). Data attributes should include the identifying field for catchments or flowlines in the NHD+ dataset, and the COMID field in the NHD+ dataset must accompany the coordinates. The following tables are provided as a guide to summarize data records:

COMID	HUC	State	EDU	WWF	Catch Area (km ²)	Urban (%)	Ag (%)
1022432	22056782	MI	a362	14	45	55	30
...

COMID	HUC	Date	Effort	Method	Taxa A	Taxa B	Taxa C
1022432	22056782	6/7/2008	100 m	Electrofishing	10	55	30
...

- B. All metadata generated to describe layers should be FGDC compliant. Refer to the following website for more information:
<http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/metadata/biometadata/biodatap.pdf>
- C. For spatial data provided back to the National Assessment, the projection system should be specified in the metadata provided with data in shapefile or coverage format.

5. Timeline for Data Submission.

Data should be submitted within one year of project implementation. Information and data related to project evaluation is to be described in annual reports in subsequent reporting periods.

*** Guidelines for project information tracking will be provided when developed.**

Purpose and Use of the National Fish Habitat Assessment and the NFHAP Decision Support System

Introduction

Habitat assessment is an integral part of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). Two of the Action Plan's objectives are:

- *Conduct a condition analysis of all fish habitats within the United States by 2010.*
- *Prepare a "Status of Fish Habitats in the United States" report in 2010 and every five years thereafter.*

Another objective of the Action Plan calls for setting conservation (protection, restoration and enhancement) priorities:

- *Identify priority fish habitats and establish Fish Habitat Partnerships targeting these habitats by 2010.*

In 2008 the Board adopted interim conservation strategies to guide the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships until science-based priorities could be developed.

Assessment and prioritization support a fundamental principle of the Action Plan: that to effectively improve fish habitat, conservation efforts must be strategic and based on sound science. The Action Plan states: *"The plan uses existing and emerging science-based tools to target priority areas and implement needed projects, address causative factors, and use best practices."* The Action Plan envisions assessment and prioritization to occur at both national and regional (Fish Habitat Partnership) levels.

The Board is sponsoring the ***National Fish Habitat Assessment*** to fulfill the Action Plan's assessment objectives. However, science-based habitat assessment is only one of many factors that will be used to prioritize habitat conservation efforts by the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships. A ***Decision Support System*** (DSS) that takes into account economic and sociologic factors as well as scientific factors will be developed for use as a prioritization tool. The Board will not use the habitat assessment as the sole factor in making decisions about funding projects or setting priorities.

The National Fish Habitat Assessment

The first National Fish Habitat Assessment, to be completed in 2010, will characterize the condition of inland and coastal/nearshore habitats in the lower forty-eight contiguous United States. Some parts of Hawaii and Alaska also will be assessed, but the scale and methodology may not allow for direct comparison with the assessment for the lower forty-eight contiguous States. Oceanic areas will not be assessed in detail in 2010, but will be included in planned future revisions of the assessment.

The assessment is being conducted within a geospatial framework constructed using watershed, water body, and ecosystem boundaries. Each geospatial unit is assigned a “score” that corresponds to the level of “disturbance” of the habitats in that unit. Disturbance is measured by compiling anthropogenic (i.e. human-caused) factors such as land use and degree of eutrophication (i.e. excess nutrients). The results of the assessment pinpoint areas of high disturbance vs low disturbance. The assessment assumes that the habitat in more highly disturbed areas is likely to be in poor condition, and vice-versa.

The assessment uses the statistical method of “principal component analysis” to determine which factors explain most of the variation in the results. Because rivers accumulate disturbance effects as water flows downstream, the relative importance of local vs regional factors was calculated for small streams, medium-sized streams, and large streams. The disturbance score for each river reach was weighted based on the relative importance of local and regional factors. No local vs regional weighting will be applied to the coastal assessment.

The 2010 assessment is an effort to meet the objectives in the Action Plan within the constraints of time and resources. Data gaps identified as part of the 2010 assessment will be addressed in future iterations. Subsequent assessments will rely less on surrogate indicators of disturbance and more on data collected on the ground, in coordination with the Fish Habitat Partnerships.

The results of the National Fish Habitat Assessment will be summarized in a report written on behalf of the Board and distributed by the Board’s Communications Committee. The scientists conducting the assessment will also publish technical papers on the methodology and results in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Decision Support System (DSS)

The primary purpose of the DSS is to assist the National Fish Habitat Board in setting national priorities for fish habitat conservation activities the Board controls. Fish Habitat Partnerships may also be able to use the DSS or an adapted version of it for their priority-setting processes.

The “Framework for Assessing the Nation’s Fish Habitat” states the DSS may include:

- The results of the National Fish Habitat Assessment
- The top 10 habitat conservation priorities from each state or comparable unit for tribal lands and marine areas
- Proximity to population centers
- Likely investment return

The Board will determine which of these and other factors will be included in the DSS. The Science and Data Committee will develop the DSS in close coordination with the

Board. As it is being developed, the DSS will be sent out to all NFHAP interests for review and comment. Completion of the DSS is scheduled for 2010.

Conclusion

A science-based approach to fish habitat conservation is key to ensuring that project funding results in tangible and sustainable gains in fish habitat and fish populations. The National Fish Habitat Assessment will provide the Board with scientific information that will be one of a number of factors in a Decision Support System that will help the Board to set conservation priorities. As a self-directed body, the Board has the ability to make decisions guided, but not constrained, by this information.