National Science and Data Committee Recommendations to the National Fish Habitat Board on a Developing an Effectiveness Measures Framework for NFHP

One of the intended uses of the national assessment is to be able to detect long-term progress of the condition of fish habitat across the United States. The timeline needed both from a data availability and analysis perspective, as well as the time needed for the habitat to respond to specific conservation actions, leads to some of the challenges with measuring short-term effectiveness of aquatic conservation projects. Another challenge is the wide breadth of project types that are supported through NFHP and its partners in order to meet NFHP goals. Other project actions that extend outside the scope of an "on-the-ground" activity are difficult to quantify and report effectiveness in a summarized way. Despite these challenges, we recognize that the Board needs to determine an approach for measuring effectiveness of NFHP in the short term, leading to the charge of the Science and Data Committee at the October 2011 Board meeting.

The Science and Data Committee recommends that (2) two approaches be implemented *concurrently* to determine which better addresses the needs to measure effectiveness for the range of conservation work implemented by the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The first approach focuses on process and pre-defined criteria, whereas the second can be place-based. The two approaches are listed below with brief mention of the benefits and opportunities as well as coordination and resources needed.

Approach	Benefits/Opportunities	Resources Needed
(1) Using the existing framework developed for the State Wildlife Grants program; form a new working committee (separate from the Science & Data Committee) to facilitate the development of a framework for evaluating effectiveness of all project types implemented through the NFHP. The new working committee would be expected to consult findings from other monitoring and evaluation procedures of habitat restoration programs such as USDA Conservation Effectiveness Assessment Program (CEAP) and NMFS community-based habitat restoration as well as solicit feedback and review from the Science & Data Committee while the framework is being developed.	• Results would inform the development of the project tracking system by identifying specific information regarding effectiveness to be collected • Results could also inform a future revision of the FHP performance reviews in ways that would enable better comparison and summarization	• Funding ($15K) to support a contract with experts • Committee members for new working group • Science & Data Committee • Project tracking development team • Performance development team • FHPs – For Review and feedback
(2) Identify up to 5% of all projects as demonstrations for evaluating effectiveness. Include past Waters to Watch with a clearly defined monitoring component and representatives that have had enough time to show ecological response. Conduct detailed reviews of the project outputs to determine if and how project defined project objectives, specific actions implemented, monitoring efforts, and results led to measurable outcomes. This work would be conducted as a cooperative work activity between members of the National Science & Data Committee and selected FHPs willing to participate. A Board guidance document and SOP would be produced on how to such results could supplement or inform revision of the effectiveness framework developed under (1) above.	• Results, data, and information provided to the National Science & Data Committee would inform future assessments through the increased understanding of regional responses to certain activities, as well as lead to the revision of Science & Data SOPs. • FHPs and Board will benefit from the increased opportunities to communicate project outcomes.	• National Science & Data Committee • Time investment by a select number of associated FHPs • Communications Committee • NFHP website content development