COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

2013 DRAFT REVISION

Committee Members:

Ryan Roberts,
NFHP Communications Coordinator (Chair)

Laura MacLean,
Director of Communications and Marketing, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (Vice Chair)

Lindsay Gardner,
Communications Coordinator, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

Kris Gamble,
Public Affairs, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Joe Starinchak,
Outreach Coordinator,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Maureen Gallagher,
Midwest Regional Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dianne Timmins,
Cold Water Fisheries Biologist, EBTJV, N. Hampshire Fish & Game Department

Jeanne Hanson,
Field Office Supervisor,
Habitat Conservation Division, Alaska Region,
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries

Thomas Litts, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (Science and Data Committee liaison)

Katie Haws,
Project Manager, Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership

Cecilia Lewis,
Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Kayla Barrett, Desert Fish Habitat Partnership,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Callie McMunigal, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Board Liaison(s)
Chris Meaney, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Tom Busiahn,
NFHP Coordinator,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Board Oversight
Mike Andrews,
Vice President,
The Nature Conservancy

Krystyna Wolniakowski,
Director, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-NW

2013 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

The communications strategy for the National Fish Habitat Partnership is critical to issuing and promoting a common message and synergy among the Board, state agencies, federal caucus, fish habitat partnerships and developing “candidate” fish habitat partnerships and the national fish habitat partner coalition. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of maintaining the National Fish Habitat Partnership as a state-led effort in cooperation with our other partners.

This communications strategy framework guides the mission of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, as it strives to build an engaged community concerned with the conservation of our nation’s aquatic habitats. The communications strategy as described in this document, will be implemented and, managed by the communications committee, and overseen by the National Fish Habitat Board to help meet the objectives set forth by the 2nd Edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

The direction of overall communications through the communications committee will improve the National Fish Habitat Partnership and make it a vehicle to engage additional partners as well as fuel the further growth of the Partners Coalition, bringing new opportunities to expand the constituency base of existing Fish Habitat Partnerships.

The committee emphasizes the value of communications as a tool for fostering lasting, productive relationships among diverse partners. These relationships are what makes all our efforts to revive fisheries and waterways effective and builds credibility with a growing audience.

Priority actions of this strategy are based on objectives 3 and 5 from the 2nd Edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Published 2012):

Objective 3:
Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of local communities –especially young people – in conservation activities, and raising public awareness of the role healthy fish habitats play in the quality of life and economic well- being of local communities.

Objective 5:
Communicate the conservation outcomes produced collectively by Fish Habitat Partnerships as well as new opportunities and voluntary approaches for conserving fish habitat to the public and conservation partners.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 3:

1. Foster partnerships with organizations to increase reach of NFHP marketing and communications.

2. Increase media reach of “Waters to Watch” campaign. “Waters to Watch” is the top vehicle for making an impact by strategically choosing projects of highest importance to communities across the country. Projects that involve the support and assistance of local communities and offer educational opportunities to youth are a high priority.

3. Create a grant program database for FHPs to utilize to find funding and partnership resources. This database would be navigable regionally and species/watershed specific.

OBJECTIVE 5:

1. Create tools and informational items for FHPs and NFHP partners to tell the story of NFHP and clearly explain the value of aquatic habitat conservation and value added in working through partnership with other organizations.

2. Explore new potential opportunities through FHPs to work with new organizations to expand partners working under the National Fish Habitat Partnership. These opportunities to work with new partners would be influenced by specific project areas in which the FHPs are working on conservation projects.

3. Expand use and gather additional data on socio-economic benefits of the National Fish Habitat Partnership as it relates to cost benefits and improving recreational angling opportunities for the American people.

4. Create tools for promotion of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act for FHP and partner utilization for meeting with constituents and for project site visits.

PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

- **Serving in an advisory capacity to the National Fish Habitat Board and its staff, particularly in identifying outreach opportunities and potential challenges related to policy decisions.** Committee members have different levels of expertise, some in marketing, some in communications and others with a familiarity of working with broad partnerships to expand their appeal. Working together, the committee will operate in the most succinct manner possible, recognizing that individual efforts may be limited to advance the communications effort. Despite a short and long term focus now established, further support and investment will be needed to meet the goals of the committee.

- **Developing professional communications materials to keep partners fully informed, foster mutually beneficial relationships, and encourage new partners to join Fish Habitat Partnerships.** The committee will continue to develop communications materials that are cohesive and complementary in message, design, and delivery to have the greatest impact for advancement of the work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

- **Maintain and fulfill a list of measurable outcomes for the work of the communications committee and Fish Habitat Partnerships.** A list of outcomes will be maintained and built upon to show measurable results in terms of growth in media placement for Waters to Watch and other Fish Habitat Partnership related products. Growing the National Fish Habitat Partnership Partner Coalition will be viewed as the ultimate outcome measure.

- **Foster partnerships with organizations specializing in marketing and communications.** The committee will work to build mutually beneficial relationships with other organizations aimed at enhancing the brand and recognition of the Partnership.

- **Advance the work of the Fish Habitat Partnerships.** The committee recognizes the most important factor to promote through the National Fish Habitat Partnership is the work of the individual Fish Habitat Partnerships FHPs are the work units of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The work of the Fish Habitat Partnerships, are of the utmost importance to showcase, especially how addressing the objectives in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is making a difference. Input by the Fish Habitat Partnerships is critical to making this function of the committee a reality. Project updates and reports that show the Action Plan making a significant impact will be essential to elevating the work of the Fish Habitat Partnership and gaining recognition through media outlets. Full establishment of a “10 Waters to Watch” subcommittee will help tell the story of NFHP.

- **Advance the passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act.** Coordinate with our legislative team to create the best communications support materials to help advance the passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation

Act. This is a primary objective for the committee to focus on as directed by the National Fish Habitat Board.

COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

National Fish Habitat Partnership communications target the following primary networks to build awareness, support, engagement, advocacy, and action in various forms. The committee will work through these networks to reach out to their constituencies and local groups.

(Internal):
National Fish Habitat Board
Promotion of the Board's leadership, coordination, and facilitation role, and supporting the Board in its role as ambassadors and influential advocates for the National Fish Habitat Partnership in policy arenas is critical for communicating Board progress.

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and State Agencies
Communications will support the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) in serving as the main conduit for communications with state fish and wildlife agencies. Communications will also support AFWA's role in assisting states align priorities and resources for Fish Habitat Partnerships. AFWA serves as a direct link to State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and other related staff contacts, which are critical to informing and seeking input on the work of the Partnership. The relationship with AFWA also provides opportunities to brief state leadership on the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

Federal Caucus
Communications will also benefit the cohesiveness of the National Fish Habitat Federal Caucus, by informing the Caucus of initiatives of the Communications Committee at scheduled meetings led by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Working to inform policy makers and political appointees within federal agencies, on the work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, will be critical to advancing our efforts and helping them to recognize the work of the partnership as a priority within their agencies. Working with the Federal Caucus on emphasizing the importance of the National Fish Habitat Partnership MOU and getting the word out about the requisite reports will be critical to the Partnership's importance within Federal Agencies.

Partner Coalition
The Partner Coalition will serve as an outlet for information sharing as well as spreading the word about the role of NFHP in a grass roots manner. Growing the number of partners in the Coalition is a priority for 2013.

Fish Habitat Partnerships
Developing compelling communications that strategically illustrate what the National Fish Habitat Partnership is all about is one of the most important contributions the committee can make. Fish habitat conservation projects are the marketable force for communications, rather than the Action Plan. More visibility and emphasis on Fish Habitat Partnerships through website updates and media outreach will be a key to growing a community of support that will assist in the efforts to obtain long-term sustainable funding for partnerships and their conservation actions.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

Broader visibility through the media will help grow the community of support for the National Fish Habitat Partnership and shine a light on the work of Fish Habitat Partnerships, as well as significantly influence future policies and investments. The "10 Waters to Watch" campaign is the most visible element of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to date with regards to gaining media attention. Building upon this current level of media attention and coordinating visits to "10 Waters to Watch" project sites with media outlets and policy makers will help increase awareness of the Partnership and Action Plan, as well as the Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Website

The revamped www.fishhabitat.org webpage was launched in June of 2012 and is the most critical component of National Fish Habitat Partnership communications as it's the main source of broadcasting information. The website is our "newspaper" and it houses all of the relevant documents for the Partnership. In the technologically savvy world that exists today our website needs to be direct and succinct if we are to be successful in getting our messages out. There is a need to clarify the working parts of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, in an understandable format, since the Partnership operates at a number of different levels. At the core of the Partnership is the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The National Fish Habitat Board oversees implementation of the Action Plan and establishes guidance and policies for Fish Habitat Partnerships and the Partnership overall. The individual Fish Habitat Partnerships are the primary working units of the Partnership, which are strategically focused on protecting, restoring and enhancing fish habitat at a landscape scale.

Social Media

The National Fish Habitat Partnership currently has a social media presence on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** and has a news curating program called **Scoop.it** that digs for news articles related to fish habitat in general. Working to expand our reach in these mediums has brought in additional partner coalition members in support of the National Partnership and will expand the NFHP email database capacity. A presence in social media is important and serves as a forum to relay stories about the achievements occurring under the guidance of the Action Plan. Staying current with these mediums is important if we want to stay on the cutting edge of the social media fronts. In the ever-changing environment of press outreach, social media is one of the Partnerships far reaching tools we have to utilize effectively.

Trade Shows/Meeting Exhibits

Maintaining a presence among our constituents, by having displays at Trade shows and meetings across the country will help advance the work and reach of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Whenever possible we will work to get out in front of these audiences to help grow our community of support. ***(2013 Targeted Events – Exhibit A)***

Email Newsletters

E-mail newsletters are another source of communication and are the chief outreach tool for maintaining contact with our Partner Coalition. Newsletters are the most succinct way to reach out to this audience and inform them about Fish Habitat Partnership news both locally and nationally. Our newsletter database program is better suited for our current needs through the new fishhabitat.org website.

Other Outreach Tools

- National Fish Habitat Action Plan ("one-pager")
- Annual Update
- State Fact sheets created for "Status Report"
- National Fish Habitat Partnership Map
- 10 Waters to Watch fact/update sheets

PowerPoint Presentations

A compilation of National Fish Habitat PowerPoint presentations on the core elements of the Action Plan will be made available on the web for partner use. A NFHP template PowerPoint presentation is currently available for use by partners.

Marketing Signage

A "traveling display" describing core elements of the Partnership has been created, and will be updated and refined as needed to meet the desires of the committee and Board. This will assist partners in establishing a prominent presence at major conferences and other venues with the potential to expand brand awareness and support for the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

Brand Enhancement Guidance

The National Fish Habitat Board approved a change to enhance our brand as The National Fish Habitat Partnership in 2011. Our brand is reflective of what we are to all audiences, so we want to present a clear picture of our identity to policy makers, constituents, volunteers and colleagues in the conservation community. Enhancing our brand and raising our profile needs to be a top priority for the National Fish Habitat Partnership. This effort will enhance fundraising opportunities and promote our mission. The image and influence of the National Fish Habitat Partnership brand will clearly communicate our strengths. The full Guidance can be found here:
http://fishhabitat.org/FHP_resource

Logo Guide and Style Sheet:
http://fishhabitat.org/FHP_resource

Social Media Guidance *(Exhibit B)*

2013 Trade Shows/Meeting Exhibits-*(Exhibit A)**

River Network River Rally
May 17-20, St. Louis, MO.
http://www.rivernetwork.org/events/national-river-rally-2012

American Fisheries Society Meeting

September 8-12, Little Rock, AR.
http://afs2013.com/

**** Other events may be targeted by the Communications Committee in 2013. This list does not include other related events meetings for 2013.***

Social Media Guidance - *(Exhibit B)*

Overview
The National Fish Habitat Partnership's Social Media Guidance is based on promoting the conservation practices of the National Fish Habitat Partnership and individual Fish Habitat Partnerships respectively. The guidance contained in this document should serve as advised practices for use of Facebook, Twitter and You Tube. If your Fish Habitat Partnership is currently using social media, please apply these long-tested principles to the social media space. The Social Media Guidelines are designed to advance the National Fish Habitat Partnership brand on social networks.

KEY SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE

There are many social media channels available to users, and new channels are being introduced frequently. As such, it would be impossible to provide information on all of them. We will focus on three of the most popular and most applicable to the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Those channels are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Facebook
Facebook is a wonderful way to form online communities where groups of people can gather to have conversations and share information. Indeed, the National Fish Habitat Partnership and Fish Habitat Partnerships are already using Facebook to communicate about their work in aquatic conservation. Of course, creating and maintaining a Facebook page is a big responsibility and should not be entered into lightly.

It may be valuable to think of a Facebook page as meeting that is always open, always going on, and where members of the public and partners may drop by and watch or participate at any time of day or night. But it's also easy to see how, if left unstructured or unattended by page administrators this never-ending meeting could easily become a problem.

When considering whether or not Facebook might be a good option, it is important to remember that Facebook requires all users to be at least 13 years of age. Before creating a Facebook page, you should educate yourself about what Facebook is and how it is used, and familiarize yourself with its terms of service. This will help you navigate carefully in your development of a fan page and when creating a Facebook page, you should make it a public fan page.

Perhaps the biggest strength of Facebook is also its biggest weakness: Facebook fan pages are open to the public, which means any information shared

on that fan page can be viewed by essentially anyone. As such, you should make sure that any information shared on that page by you or by your fans is information that is appropriate to share with the public. This is especially true regarding the level of detail you provide representing the partnership.

Once you have created a Facebook fan page, invited people to “like” your page and started gathering “fans,” it is important for you to post good and appropriate content and monitor the content that is posted to your wall. Unfortunately, not all the content posted to the wall by your fans may be appropriate. Content that does not meet that standard should be removed immediately.

If a user posts highly offensive content, the content should be removed immediately, and you may need to block or ban the user who posted it. Such an action should not be used liberally but only when content is truly objectionable.

This type of careful monitoring requires vigilance. Before creating a Facebook page, you should consider whether you or someone else who will administer the page will be able to monitor that page and post content consistently to help ensure that only appropriate content is posted. Pages with inconsistent and infrequent updates can cause your fans to become disinterested, and your page can become a target for spammers or other predatory parties who recognize that you appear not to be actively involved on your page.

Twitter

Because of its 140-character-per-post limit and relative lack of multimedia capabilities, Twitter is designed for quick, simple updates and also can be used like instant messaging or email to have conversations with one or more people in a mostly public forum.

Twitter can be a great place to share quick observations, provide updates about programs, share training deadlines, link to other websites with event details, share great Scouting stories, and have an informal conversation with followers. In general, Twitter has a more personal voice, meaning posts on Twitter are expected to be relatively informal and friendly. It is also important to remember that Twitter is a public forum and is viewable by virtually anyone. That means content placed on Twitter should be acceptable to your specific intended audience of followers as well as a wider audience.

Some direct-messaging capabilities exist with Twitter and utilizing in the right context can help with dialogue with followers.

Twitter should be updated regularly and watched closely so responses can be provided to people requesting information or trying to start a conversation.

LinkedIn

Group pages can be a powerful way to connect with other business people in a meaningful way. It won’t thrive if you don’t nurture it.

Creating a Group is an easy way to bring professionals together online. A

LinkedIn Group makes sense for colleges, alumni groups, non-profit organizations, special interest groups, and more.

To get started, navigate to the “Groups” link on the left side of your page, and click on the “Create a Group” link. Upload a logo, choose a unique name, and enter supporting details such as description, summary, and website link.
If you want others to be able to find your group when they search, check the “Display this group in the Groups Directory” box. In addition, you can choose whether or not members can display the group logo on their profiles.

Once your group is created, you can navigate to the group under the “Groups” link on the left side bar. Navigate to your group and click on the “Manage” tab on your group to get started. From here you can manage membership, invitations, and add group managers.

LinkedIn does not invite members to join your group, you must invite your members to join. To invite members to your group, you have a few options. If you already have a list of members that should be in your group you can “pre-approve” them, so that when they request to join the group they will be automatically accepted. What you need is a spreadsheet with their name and email address. You would upload the file directly by clicking on the “Invite Members” link and uploading the file under “Batch Pre-approved Members”. Alternatively, you can manually pre-approve members.

If you would like to block certain members from joining your group, click on the “Remove & Block” button on the “Manage” tab and choose which members you want removed and blocked from joining your user group.

If you’ve created a group, you are the group owner and manager by default. If you wish to share the management responsibility with others, you can promote a member to become manager of the group. To add another manager, click on the “Members” link, and next click the “Promote to manager” link next to the person you want to add as a manager. You can remove that user as a manager by clicking on the “Managers” link and selecting the “Remove as manager” option.

In addition, you can also transfer complete ownership of a group to another manager. To do this, select the “Change owner” link and select another manager to take over ownership of the group.

Tips to live by before you Post

Think of CNN, your mother and your boss
Don't say anything online that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN, being asked about by your mother or having to justify to your boss.

Add value
Sharing of information and experiences benefits the entire fisheries conservation community and ultimately our partners. Feel free to share and discuss your experiences in campaigns, field and within your partnerships. Use common sense in your social media practices where information is concerned that is internal and/or confidential. If in doubt - ask the owner of the information you want to share.

Spread the word and connect with your colleagues and other related organizations
Connect with them through social networks and spread their success stories.