United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240

In Reply Refer to:
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Memorandum DEC 2 1 2012

To: Secretary

Through: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

From: Director

Subject: National Fish Habitat Action Plan Secretarial MOU Report

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) is a science-based, partnership driven approach to implement Strategic Habitat Conservation for aquatic resources. It provides a national strategy to address aquatic habitat from the interior to the oceans and is implemented through the voluntary and non-regulatory participation of all levels of government and the private sector. The Action Plan supports cooperative, proactive, aquatic habitat protection and restoration goals at multiple geographic scales.

In March 2012, the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Interior signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for implementing the Action Plan. The purpose of the MOU is to promote collaborative, science-based conservation by ensuring that the component agencies, bureaus, and offices of the Departments support efforts to implement the Action Plan in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations. The document also outlines the importance of communication and coordination among the Departments to further improve the quality of the nation's aquatic resources.

Consequently, the Secretaries agreed that all applicable bureaus, agencies, and offices implementing the MOU would report on their accomplishments and progress towards achieving Action Plan goals within 180 days of the MOU signature date. Furthermore, subsequent reports would be produced and provided to the Secretaries at 2 year intervals thereafter.

The attached National Fish Habitat Action Plan Secretarial MOU Report is a brief account of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) activities in support of the Action Plan between 2006 and 2012. The report highlights the Service's leadership role in developing and supporting Fish Habitat Partnerships recognized under the Action Plan, funding and staff support provided by the Service and the planning and management of on-the-ground habitat conservation activities undertaken by multiple Service programs and external partners.

It is intended to provide a qualitative baseline for future cooperation and coordination among agencies and their partners and is organized by the four key implementation strategies of the Action Plan:

- Supporting existing fish habitat partnerships and fostering new efforts;
- Mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals;
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of aquatic habitats; and
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats.

This report, along with reports from applicable offices and bureaus of the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce, will illustrate the depth of Federal agency involvement in conserving, protecting, and restoring aquatic habitat across the nation for the benefit of the American people.

If you have questions, please contact Mr. Jeff Underwood, Acting Assistant Director, Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at (202)208-6393, or Mr. Tom Busiahn, the Service's Action Plan Coordinator, at (703)358-2056.

Attachment

Report to the Secretary
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Progress and Accomplishments in Implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

October 2012

In March 2012, the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Interior signed a memorandum of understanding to promote collaborative, science-based conservation of the nation's waterways and fisheries through the National Fish Habitat Partnership and the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) provides a national strategy to address aquatic habitat from the interior to the oceans. The Action Plan is a science-based, voluntary, and non-regulatory effort providing a nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise, and existing programs of Federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, foundations, and individuals. It supports cooperative, proactive, aquatic habitat protection and restoration goals at multiple geographic scales.

The mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is 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.

The goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are:

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

This report highlights agency accomplishments and progress through September 2012 and provides a qualitative baseline for increased future cooperation and coordination among agencies and their partners. This report is organized by the four key implementation strategies of the Action Plan:

- Supporting existing fish habitat partnerships and fostering new efforts (page 2).
- Mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals (page 3).
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of aquatic habitats (page 4).
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats (page 7).

Foster New and Support Existing FHPs National Fish Habitat Action Plan -Implementation Strategy #1: *Support existing Fish Habitat Partnerships and foster new efforts*			
Agency	**Project Title**	**Timeline**	**NFHAP Goal Addressed**
FWS	**Project Funding Support**	2006-present	1, 2, 3 , and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	• The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has provided coordination and funding in the development phase of all 18 recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) and 5 candidate FHPs recognized under the National Fish Habitat Partnership's (NFHP) Action Plan. • Between 2006 and 2012, FWS provided $18.9 million in project funding to implement fish habitat conservation projects that address FHP priorities. Those funds were matched with $49 million in partner contributions and financed a total of 432 projects in 46 states. • Since 2005, more than $5.6 million has been granted through the Multistate Conservation Grant (MSCG) program to develop FHPs and increase scientific understanding through the NFHP. The MSCG program is jointly administered by the FWS and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.		
FWS	**Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) Coordination**	2006-present	1, 2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	• At the national level, FWS provides full-time staff support for National Fish Habitat Board activities and priorities. • At the regional level, approximately $1 million is allocated annually for FHP support. This funding provides for the development and operational costs of FHPs including coordination, meeting and travel expenses, strategic planning, and development of scientific capabilities. • FWS personnel also serve as primary support staff to 7 of 18 FHPs and some FHPs also make use of FWS facilities, databases, supplies, equipment and technical expertise.		

Mobilize and Focus National Support National Fish Habitat Action Plan -Implementation Strategy #2: *Mobilize and focus national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals*			
Agency	**Project Title**	**Timeline**	**NFHAP Goal Addressed**
FWS	**Communicating NFHP's Economic, Human Health and Environmental Value**	2005- present	2
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	• The FWS is committed to communicating the economic, human health, and environmental value of a science-based and voluntary approach to aquatic resource conservation. FWS regularly provides technical and administrative support at the regional and national level to execute Congressional briefings and respond to questions from members of Congress. • Regional and national staff work with national conservation organizations to communicate accomplishments and the value of continued Congressional support to promote economic, human health, and environmental value in their respective districts. • To this end, the FWS also uses a portion of NFHP funding for the development and distribution of outreach materials that tell NFHP's story to citizens, partners, and Congressional members. • Recent publications include the 2nd edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, the annual NFHP Update, a one-page fact sheet, and a national assessment of aquatic habitats titled Through a Fish's Eye: The Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010.		

Measure and Communicate Aquatic Habitat Needs National Fish Habitat Action Plan -Implementation Strategy #3: *Measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habits.*			
Agency	**Project Title**	**Timeline**	**NFHAP Goal Addressed**
FWS	**Habitat Conservation Decision-Making Tools**	Ongoing	1, 2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	• The FWS's Fish Passage program created and continues to develop the Geospatial Fisheries Information Network (GeoFin), a tool used to identify fish barrier locations. Through GeoFIN, the aquatic conservation community and the general public have access to geospatial web tools for accessing and analyzing a wide range of spatial data. • The system can be integrated with the national aquatic habitat assessment to support strategic aquatic conservation initiatives and to facilitate decision making. The system may also act as a catalyst for engaging potential partners, enhancing awareness of aquatic habitat issues and garnering public support for aquatic resource conservation. • GeoFIN is available to all FHPs and the public at https://ecos.fws.gov/geofin.		
FWS	**Coordination of Midwest/Great Plains Habitat Assessments**	2010 - present	1, 2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	• Since 2010, FWS has coordinated an effort by the Midwest FHPs in cooperation with the Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) to complete habitat condition assessments for all or part of 7 FHPs covering all or part of 24 states. • The LCC contributed $383,000, matching more than $1.4M in partner contributions, to complete the assessments and a series of GIS based support tools. • These products will allow Midwestern FHPs and individual partners to assess habitat condition and help predict the outcomes of future restoration work. Additionally, socioeconomic data will be added to the GIS-based support tools, in 2013 as the result of an interagency agreement between the Plains and Prairie Pothole LCC and the U.S. Geological Survey.		

FWS	**National Assessment of Aquatic Habitats**	2006-2011	1, 2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	Since 2006, FWS has provided $777,000 to support ground-breaking scientific analysis of landscape effects on the condition of fish habitats. The research, led by Michigan State University Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and a team comprised of staff from NOAA and FWS, works on behalf of the National Fish Habitat Board's Science and Data Committee. In 2010, the Board published the first national assessment of aquatic habitats titled Through a Fish's Eye: The Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010.		
FWS	**Communicating Aquatic Habitat Needs**	Ongoing	2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	FWS biologists have shared information on NFHP at many national and regional meetings, including several symposia at annual meetings of the American Fisheries Society. A sampling of others includes: • Desert Fishes Council, November 2007 • Midwest Fish and Wildlife conference, December 2007 • National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs, October 2008 • Land Trust Alliance, October 2009 • Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, June 2010 • National Fisheries Friends Partnership, October 2010 • Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, May 2011		

FWS	**FHP Coordination and Cooperation with LCCs**	2010 - present	1, 2, 3, and 4
	Brief Project or Program Description		

	• Conservation challenges in the U.S. are too large for any single entity to address alone. The Service encourages collaborative efforts between Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC). LCCs use a science-based, partnership approach similar to NFHP's; however, the LCC's main role is to provide science and technical expertise to support conservation planning at landscape scales.
	
	• Targeted communication efforts, financial contributions and staff provided by the Service have facilitated collaborative relationships between FHPs and LCCs. Of the 18 recognized FHPs under the Action Plan:
	
	  ○ Eleven have formal communications with one or more LCCs about science and data needs,
	
	  ○ Six FHPs have formal representation on LCC governing or technical bodies, and
	
	  ○ Five FHPs have collaborated with LCCs on projects that involve LCC technical expertise and were supported by LCC funding.
	
	• Approximately $395,000 in joint project funds has been used to develop standardized monitoring strategies and hydrologic data. A portion of the funding was also used to process and analyze monitoring data for conservation decision-making.		

Provide National Leadership and Coordination National Fish Habitat Action Plan -Implementation Strategy #4: *Provide national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats.*			
Agency	**Project Title**	**Timeline**	**NFHAP Goal Addressed**
FWS	**FWS Senior Leadership**	Ongoing	N/A
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	The senior leadership involvement in key national level roles and the commitment to successfully implement a partner-led, science-based, non-regulatory approach to conservation is evidence of the FWS's commitment to aquatic habitat conservation. The Director of the FWS or his designee serves as a member of the NFHP Board and Executive Leadership Team. The FWS's senior leadership, and senior leadership from other Federal agencies, has helped facilitate cooperation among governments, NGOs, and civic associations.		
FWS	**Funding Board Activities**	Ongoing	N/A
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	A portion of the FWS's annual appropriation is allocated for the operations of the National Fish Habitat Board. This financial commitment makes it possible for the Board to fulfill its responsibilities and directly or indirectly support the efforts of all federal agencies, bureaus, and offices that implement the Action Plan. The National Fish Habitat Board is responsible for promoting, overseeing, and coordinating implementation of the Action Plan. Their activities include: • Establishing national measures for success and evaluation criteria guidelines for FHPs; • Oversight and execution of national science and data committee activities; • Reporting NFHP accomplishments to Congress, states and other partners; and • Convening quarterly Board meetings to coordinate agency and stakeholder involvement		

FWS	**Lead Agency for the Federal Caucus**	2005-present	N/A
	Brief Project or Program Description		

	• The Service has been the lead agency for the Federal Caucus since 2005 and continues its leadership role by providing staff support to coordinate Federal Caucus activities.
	
	• The Federal Caucus was established to coordinate efforts among Federal agencies implementing the Action Plan. Caucus members meet quarterly to identify opportunities for Federal agency involvement and intersections between on-going aquatic habitat conservation efforts. However, Caucus members do not commit additional resources outside of the mission, goals, and funding obligations of their respective agencies.
	
	• Specifically, the Federal Caucus was created to:
	
	  ○ Provide communication links among federal agencies cooperating under the National Partnership
	
	  ○ Provide a mechanism through which federal partners can jointly identify strategies and resources to support goals of the National Fish Habitat Partnership
	
	  ○ Ensure that the National Partnership helps agencies achieve their missions by enhancing partnerships and improving measurement of results and performance; and
	
	  ○ Enhance networking and collaboration among federal partners, the National Fish Habitat Board, and other partners implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.		

FWS	**Lead Agency for FHP Coordination at the National Level**	2005-present	N/A
	Brief Project or Program Description		
	Since the establishment of the Action Plan, the FWS has provided full-time staff support to the NFHP Board. Headquarters staff acts as a liaison between the FWS, the Board, and individual partnerships while also facilitating Board operations and activities. National level staff support includes:		

	• Advising FHPs on strategic plan development; • Developing policies, guidance, and procedures used for FHP governance; • Leading the project review, prioritization, and selection process; • Maintaining accurate FHP records (i.e. contacts, performance metrics, funding history); and • Facilitating communication among FHPs through bi-monthly FHP coordination calls.

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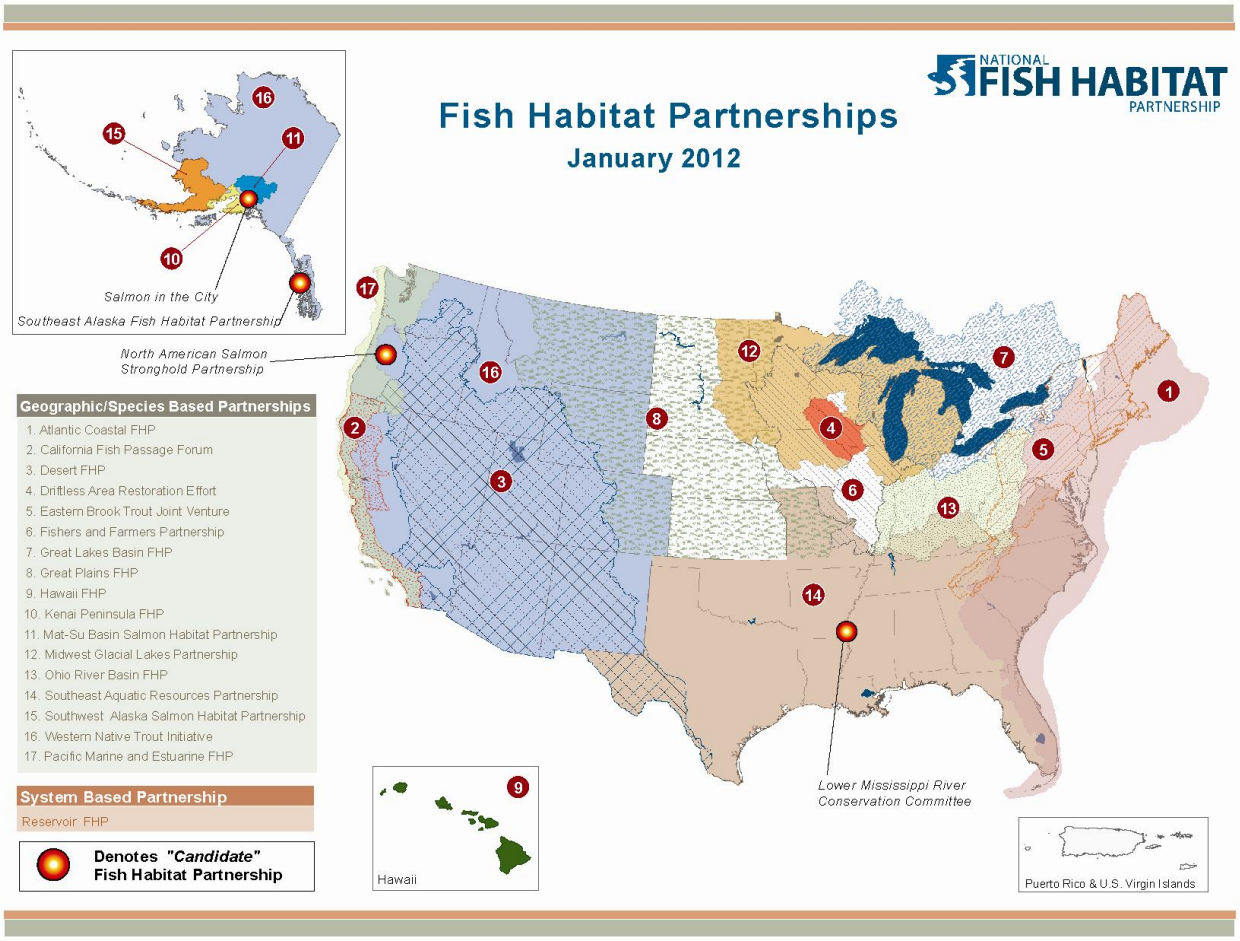
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides funds, leadership, and technical assistance to support the operation and development of Fish Habitat Partnerships, the primary work units of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. There are currently 18 recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships, encompassing all 50 States.



Each FWS Region receives funds to assist Fish Habitat Partnerships, and tailors its approach to meet the unique needs within each Region. FWS Regional coordinators and field offices work closely with Partnerships to identify and implement projects that address strategic conservation priorities. FWS staff members serve as primary coordinators of several Fish Habitat Partnerships.

FWS helps to ensure that Partnerships effectively conserve fish and aquatic communities. Operations of Partnerships include planning, project development and implementation, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, communication and outreach. FWS does not fund all facets of Partnership operations; support also comes from other Federal and State agencies, Native American governments, conservation organizations, and private interests.

Fish Habitat Partnership (Date of Board recognition)	Web page
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (October 2007)	http://southeastaquatics.net
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (October 2007)	http://www.easternbrooktrout.org/
Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership (October 2007)	http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/alaska/preserves/art18561.html
Driftless Area Restoration Effort (October 2007)	http://www.darestoration.com/
Western Native Trout Initiative (February 2008)	www.westernnativetrout.org
Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership (May 2008)	http://www.swakcc.org/
Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (March 2009)	http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/DFH_partnership.cfm
Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership (March 2009)	www.midwestglaciallakes.org
Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership (March 2009)	http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/hfhp.html
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (October 2009)	www.atlanticfishhabitat.org
Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership (October 2009)	http://science.marshall.edu/jonest/Ohio%20river%20basin%20habitat/ORBmain.htm
Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (October 2009)	http://www.reservoirpartnership.org/
Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership (October 2009)	http://www.fws.gov/midwest/GLBFHP/
Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (October 2009)	www.prairiefish.org
Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership (January 2009)	http://www.kenaiwatershed.org/
Fishers and Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin (March 2010)	http://fishersandfarmers.org/
California Fish Passage Forum (March 2010)	http://www.calfish.org/Programs/AdditionalPrograms/FishPassageForum/tabid/82/Default.aspx
Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (January 2012)	http://www.pacificfishhabitat.org

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

www.fishhabitat.org

The New Triple Bottom Line
Healthy Habitats = Healthy People = Healthy Economy

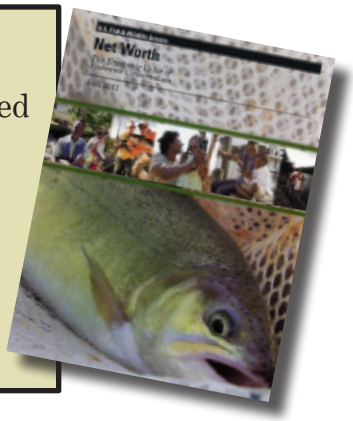
ECONOMICS OF FISHERIES CONSERVATION

It's all in the numbers...

28:1 ROI ($28 generated for every $1 taxpayer funds used)

$3.6 billion generated annually

Supports **68,000** jobs

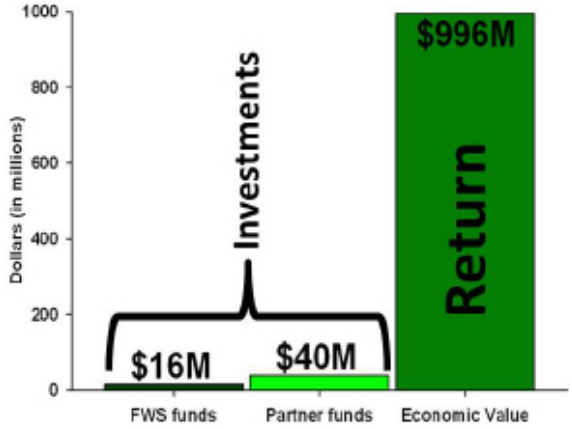


NFHP ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- 342 fish habitat conservation projects restored 27,000 acres and 1,560 miles of rivers

NFHP ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Direct economic impacts (wages and materials) = $145 million and 1,099 jobs
- Estimated long-term value of improved habitat = $851 million, 19,259 jobs



THE POWER OF PARTNERS

- FWS provides seed money for fish habitat conservation projects
- Strategic investments support priorities of 18 Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs)
- Regional FHPs leverage money with non-federal contributions from State and local governments, Tribes, non-Governmental organizations, and landowners

UNDERWATER, OUT-OF-SIGHT, OUT-OF-MIND

"Fish" projects provide so much more than just benefits for fish.

- *Reduced flood risk and maintenance costs (e.g., roads and levees),*
- *Improved human health and quality of life, and*
- *Increased property values*

- Decreased property value
- Limited recreational value
- Reduced water quality
- Limited economic value
- Increased flood risk
- Limited aesthetic value

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

It's All About Value

- Increasing visitor revenue
- Supporting 20,358 jobs
- Restoring 1,560 miles with estimated value of $843.7 million
- Increasing property value
- Restoring 27,000 acres with estimate value of $7.9 million

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Fish Habitat Partnership at work in Alaska

Local efforts protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish habitat in the last frontier

Recognized partnerships operating in Alaska

1. Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
2. Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership
3. Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
4. Western Native Trout Initiative

Candidate Partnerships in (or of relevance) to Alaska:

5. Salmon in the City (Anchorage, Alaska)
6. Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership
7. North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership
8. Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

A way of life...

Alaska's fish feed our forests, wildlife, and people. Commercial and recreational fisheries are worth billions of dollars annually to the State's economy and produce 80% of the world's supply of wild sockeye, Chinook, and coho salmon. Resilient fish populations—and the habitats they depend on—are critical to the continued vitality of Alaska's economy and a unique way of life valued by many.

...worth protecting

Alaska is currently the only state without any fish listed on the Endangered Species Act; however, localized declines are occuring and populations are vulnerable to the same stressors that have caused declines in other regions. Partnerships that strategically protect Alaska's intact habitats and restore degraded habitats can help make the most of limited resources.

The need for active partnerships

Active and diverse partnerships are essential to achieving fish habitat conservation, due to Alaska's remoteness and other challenging project logistics.

"Burst speed" by Chris Cilfone (2011 Alaska Fish Photo Contest)

Awards The U.S. Department of the Interior honored the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership with its Partners in Conservation Award ◆ The Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded "Outreach and Educational Achievement in Support of Fish Habitat Conservation" for its work associated with the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership

"Reds heading to redds" in southwest Alaska by Todd Radenbaugh (2011 Alaska Fish Photo Contest).

Southwest Alaska Snapshot

Protecting Fish Habitats - Bristol Bay is home to the largest, most resilient sockeye salmon stock complexes in the world. Oil and mineral development in Southwest Alaska pose a potential threat to the region's largely intact fish habitat. The Southwest Partnership represents a diverse group of tribal, non-governmental, private, local, State, and Federal partners. The Partnership is actively working to protect intact salmon habitat, watersheds, and cultural and national heritage resources while maintaining access to regionally-important fisheries. For example, this partnership recently received a U.S. Department of the Interior "Partners in Conservation Award" for securing a conservation agreement protecting 21,000 acres of private in-holdings inside Wood-Tikchik State Park—the nation's largest—from land use activities that might degrade sensitive fish habitats. Its "2011 Southwest Alaska Salmon Science Symposium: understanding habitat and the science of sustainability" is helping identify regional research needs related to salmon resiliency to focus the partnership's future work.

Matanuska-Susitna Basin Snapshot

Restoring fish passage - Of the hundreds of road culverts surveyed in the Mat-Su Borough, 65% impede salmon migrations. While overall salmon numbers remain strong in the 24,000 square mile basin, localized habitat degradation and salmon declines along the heavily populated southern border of the Borough spurred local partners to form the Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership. Recently, the Mat-Su Borough matched $51,155 in NFHAP funds with $52,000 to restore passage at the Weltin Way-Wasilla Creek stream crossing and revegetate its banks with native plants. This project improved access to 15 miles of Wasilla Creek for native anadromous fishes.

Kenai Peninsula Snapshot

Restoring streambank and in-stream habitat - Known for its world-class sport fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities, the Kenai Peninsula is one of Alaska's premier destinations. Increasing population growth and development, and climate change, are high interest fish habitat issues in this region. The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, matched $9,100 in NFHAP funds with $34,825 to address water quality and habitat degradation associated with the Watermelon Trail off-road vehicle crossing at Beaver Creek. A tributary to the Anchor River, Beaver Creek is catalogued as an anadromous stream and provides important habitats for salmon and char. The project relocated the crossing to a clear span bridge at a new location and restored the stream bank at the original crossing.

Kenai Peninsula pink salmon by Kentaro Yasui (2011 Alaska Fish Photo Contest).

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http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/restoration/partnerships.htm
facebook: http://www.facebook.com/USFWS.AK.Fisheries.Habitat