Title: A proposal and opportunity to partner with federal agencies to advance federal fish habitat goals and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Desired outcome(s): The desired outcomes are to:
1) Approve this concept; and
2) Initiate discussions with USFWS and NOAA staff to identify alignment in fish habitat goals and pursue opportunities to achieve mutual fish habitat-related goals by designating a portion of existing federal grant program funding to national fish habitat partnerships.

Background: Among other efforts, the Board carries out the mission of the Partnership by mobilizing and focusing national, regional, and local support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, which seeks to achieve significant gains in fish habitat protection, enhancement and restoration. It is proposed that initially, NOAA and the USFWS conduct a review of their fish and fish-habitat related grant programs, and, beginning in 2015, potentially dedicate or align a percentage of those grant funds for disbursement through the 18 NFHP fish habitat partnerships to achieve mutually agreed upon fish habitat objectives.

The recently announced competitive grant process that the USFWS and NFHP implemented for 2014 could serve as the cornerstone for focal species and habitats and reporting requirements; this process could be expanded to include NOAA trust species and habitats.

It is proposed that these funds could be disbursed to NFHP annually as a pilot project for five years, and that at the conclusion of five years of funding, a thorough analysis of specific and measurable deliverables, challenges, and other key aspects be examined to determine the merits of the program and efficiencies gained, and to allow for course corrections to maximize mutual benefits.

Staff Recommendation/Proposal:

- The Board should discuss the positive outcomes that could be achieved by strengthening its relationship with federal agencies that seek deliverables and outcomes associated with protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish habitats.
- The Board should discuss how this proposal integrates with numerous federal agency competitive funding processes and the federal MOU for implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Reference material: Proposal to partner with federal natural resource agencies to advance federal fish habitat goals and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.