



NATIONAL
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Meeting Book for The
National Fish Habitat Board

June 27, 2018
Webinar

National Fish Habitat Board Webinar

June 27, 2018

Agenda and Board Book Tabs

Conference line: 800.768.2983, Passcode: 8383462

WebEx link: <https://cc.callinfo.com/r/13xwg8hmxg78s&eom>

1:00 – 1:15	<p><u>Welcome, Attendance, Introductions, and Housekeeping</u> <i>Desired outcomes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board action to approve the agenda and March meeting summary. • Board awareness of future meeting schedule and locations. 	Tab 0a	Tom Champeau (<i>Board Chair – Florida FWCC</i>)
1:15 – 1:30	<p><u>Science & Data Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness and understanding of committee accomplishments as they relate to 2018 Board priorities. 	Tab 1	Gary Whelan (<i>SDC Co-Chair - Board Staff/MI DNR</i>) & Chris Moore (<i>SDC Co-chair/MAFMC</i>)
1:30 – 1:45	<p><u>Legislative Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of and engagement on the National Fish Habitat Conservation through Partnership Act. 	Tab 2	Mike Leonard (<i>Board Member/Sportfishing</i>)
1:45 – 2:05	<p><u>Update on FWS allocation to FHPs</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of FY18 FWS allocation decisions to FHPs. 		David Hoskins (<i>Board Member, USFWS</i>)
2:05 – 2:15	<p><u>Partnerships Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of 2018 FHP review and other partnership committee activities. 	Tab 3	Bryan Moore (<i>Board Member, TU</i>), Stan Allen (<i>Board Member, PSMFC</i>)
2:15 – 2:25	<p><u>Multistate Grant Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of the status of multistate grant process. 	Tab 4	Ryan Roberts (<i>Board Staff/AFWA</i>)

2:25 – 2:35	<u>2018 FHP Workshop Planning</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness and discussion of topic ideas for 2018 FHP Workshop October 15-16.	Tab 5	Jeff Boxrucker (<i>FHP Coordinator/Workshop Planning Team</i>)
2:35 – 2:45	<u>Communications Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of the progress on the committee's 2018 work plan.	Tab 6	Ryan Roberts (<i>Board Staff/AFWA</i>)
2:45 – 3:05	<u>Beyond the Pond Fundraising Action Plan Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board discussion of the NFHP input to the Beyond the Pond Board Meeting in July 2018.	Tab 7	Ryan Roberts (<i>Board Staff/AFWA</i>)
3:05 – 3:15	<u>FHP Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of the FHP bi-monthly calls and topics.	Tab 8	Debbie Hart (<i>FHP Coordinator/Workshop Planning Team</i>)

Draft National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary: March 7-8, 2018

Members present:

Peter Aarrestad (NEAFWA)
Stan Allen (PSMFC)
Mike Andrews (TNC) *by phone*
Chair Tom Champeau (At-Large State Seat)
David Hoskins *for* Jim Kurth (USFWS)
Tom Lang (AFS) *by phone*
Mike Leonard (ASA)
Vice Chair Chris Moore (MAFMC)

Bryan Moore *for* Chris Wood (TU) *by phone*
Clint Muhlfeld *for* Doug Beard (USGS)
Doug Nygren (MAFWA)
Sam Rauch (NOAA Fisheries)
Ron Regan (AFWA)
Christy Plumer (TRCP)
Ed Schriever (WAFWA)
Dan Shively *for* Rob Harper (USFS)

Members absent:

Benita Best-Wong (EPA), Doug Boyd (SBPC), Fred Matt (NAFWS), and Sean Stone (CCA).

Approved by motion:

- January Meeting Summary; motion by Chris Moore, seconded by Ed Schriever.
- March Board meeting agenda; motion by Stan Allen, second by Chris Moore.
- Membership of the 2018 FHP Review Team (Bryan Moore, Doug Nygren, Stan Allen, Tom Lang, Gary Whelan, and Alex Atkinson); motion by Bryan Moore, seconded by Ron Regan.

Updates and discussions:

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

- Welcome – Carl Lucero of the U.S. Forest Service welcomed everyone to USDA headquarters in the Whitten Building in Washington, D.C. He spoke about the Forest Service’s Rise to the Future National Fish and Aquatic Strategy in November of 2017 whose main strategies overlap somewhat with the NFHP objectives. He played the “[Your Best Waters](#)” video which highlights the USDA Forest Service’s managed streams, rivers, and lakes and thanked the Board for their support. Tom Champeau informed the Board that Ross Melinchuk has left his position on the NFHP Board representing SEAFWA and that conversations are ongoing to name his replacement for SEAFWA. Tom Champeau also reviewed the 2018 NFHP Board meeting schedule (June 27 call, October 17-18 in San Antonio, TX, January 2019 call). There is an FHP workshop planned before the October meeting to occur on October 15-16. The Board discussed Michigan (Great Lakes region) and the northeast as two potential options for the fall 2019 meeting.
- Update on Department of Interior – Tom Champeau welcomed the USFWS back to the NFHP Board after almost a one year-long administrative strategic pause from participating in NFHP Board meetings. David Hoskins informed the Board that Cecilia Lewis, the National NFHP Coordinator, left the USFWS, that the DC office is under a hiring freeze, and that the President’s budget proposed a \$1M cut to NFHP. He iterated that the highest priority of the USFWS was funding allocation once Congress authorizes the federal budget. David emphasized that the USFWS will need to discuss how to shuffle the current staff, given early retirements and the hiring freeze, in order to cover their top priorities. David clarified that the USFWS remains on schedule for releasing funds this year to the 18 eligible FHPs. The Board asked for clarification on threshold amount beyond which the Secretary must review grants before they’re awarded (confirmed to be \$50K – memo sent out on December 28, 2017). The Board

asked to be included in discussion with the USFWS about where cuts would be made if a NFHP budget reduction does occur.

- Legislation Update – Christy Plumer informed the Board that the legislative team is tracking two bills in the Senate (S1514 & S733). On the Senate side, an Energy Bill could be brought forward in the near future. Senator Murkowski is interested in advancing the NFHP language. Mike Leonard informed the Board that progress in the House has been slower and it will be difficult for any package to move forward given the current political environment. However, Mike is hoping to have the House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop and his staff briefed on NFHP soon. The legislative team is also working on appropriations and FY19 requests are due this Friday, March 9. In discussion, the Board determined that it's critical to reeducate members (using videos, one pagers, infographic, etc.) about NFHP and that we need to distinguish NFHP from organizations with only science- and research-focused objectives. NFHP should highlight our work on the ground with states, private landowners, local groups, and more.
- Communication Committee Update – Ryan Roberts updated the Board about committee activities including: Facebook activity and ads, Rep Your Water company fundraising deal with Beyond the Pond, Waters to Watch, and the new NFHP video (created with help from Bass Pro Shops).
- Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Update – Tom Champeau shared background on the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) Council as well as an AFWA Working Group that was developed to review landscape conservation initiatives on which Ed Schriever serves on behalf of WAFWA. Ed Schriever informed the Board that the working group which is charged with examining existing landscape scale partnerships, their governance, challenges, successes, and lessons learned and synthesize that information into a white paper. There will be a discussion of this group at the North American meeting at the end of March. The Board was made aware that changes in LCCs could impact FHPs and the development of projects.
- 2018 FHP Review Update – Bryan Moore updated the Board about the 2018 FHP Review metrics (including the new voluntary #5 pilot metric), the timeline, and asked that the Board approve the membership of the review team assembled during the January call. There were concerns about proceeding with the review timeline as planned without national coordination support from USFWS. USFWS will be unlikely to provide the same amount of support as they did during the 2015 review, but suggested that potentially the NFHP coordinators can be utilized to help with review coordination and assembling materials for the review. The Board approved the review team and understood that timelines may have to be adjusted based on USFWS administrative support for this project. Stan Allen will provide the USFWS with a list of specific needs for the assessment to be completed so that the USFWS can better determine their ability to provide support.
- Beyond the Pond Fundraising Action Plan Update – Ryan Roberts updated the Board on fundraising progress and our initiative with Rep Your Water (hat sales fundraising). The Board discussed fundraising challenges and iterated that Beyond the Pond has very limited capacity. Completed fundraising efforts seem to be more successful with a more project-specific ask (e.g. Tongass Top 5). There was discussion about when fundraising is more feasible for FHPs (i.e. when a specific project is identified with partners, when timing is not a critical limiting factor, etc.).
- FHP and Board Engagement – Tom Champeau gave an introduction of the topics that were discussed at the March 2016 Board Executive Session and opened it up for discussion among the Board and with FHPs. A variety of topics were raised including:
 - Several people raised concerns about USFWS funding that is directed to NFHP and FHPs. Many Board members would like to have a better understanding of how USFWS regional

staff support the work of FHPs. Many members also would like to see the Board have more input in the allocation process, and see more funding go to the partnerships.

- The USFWS reminded the Board that NFHP needs to be looking to diversify their funding base.
 - It was suggested that the entire focus of the FHP workshop in October be fundraising and that we should consider inviting some outside speakers or experts on this topic to share with the FHPs.
 - The Federal Caucus was raised as something that NFHP should revisit to develop ideas for goals that the Caucus should pursue.
- SEAKFHP Presentation – Debbie Hart presented an update to the Board on the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership which was fully recognized as an FHP in 2014. Since their recognition, the FHP has developed a framework to grow the capacity of their partnership and developed a business plan. Debbie shared background on their team, and described FHP coordination and the very engaged public in the region. She highlighted the Tongass Top 5 project and encouraged the Board to view the [Salmon Forest video](#). Debbie emphasized that coordination support is among the FHP's most important needs and some of the most challenging funding to secure. As one of two FHPs excluded from USFWS NFHP funding allocation, Debbie requested that the Partnership Committee consider requesting USFWS to reconsider the current funding moratorium.
 - EPA Presentation – Doug Norton shared with the Board several [EPA tools and data resources](#) which may be useful for NFHP. Tools and resources included the National Hydrography dataset, the Water Quality Portal, ATAINS, the How's my Waterway app, CADDIS, NARS, preliminary [Healthy Watersheds Assessment](#), and the [Watershed Index online](#). Doug informed the board that the Habitat Condition Index developed by NFHP is used as one of the criteria within the Healthy Watersheds Assessment. Doug also shared with several EPA grant programs with the Board that may be applicable to FHPs including the [Healthy Watersheds Consortium grant](#) and the [Clean Water Act Nonpoint Pollution Control grant](#).
 - Pacific Lamprey FHP Presentation – Bob Rose updated the Board on the Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership. He reviewed the USFWS' Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative which began in 2007 and arose from strong tribal concerns. The Initiative's goal is to achieve the long term persistence of Pacific Lamprey and to support traditional tribal cultural uses. The Initiative consists of three parts; the assessment, the regional implementation plans (by regional management unit), and the Pacific Lamprey conservation agreement (reaffirmed in 2017). Bob thanked Emily Greene for presenting to the Pacific Lamprey Policy Committee in December 2017. The PLFHP's strategic plan includes incorporating guidance from NFHP, an outreach campaign, and guidance on local policy support. The Pacific Lamprey Assessment was revised in 2017 and will be available in June 2018 with population demographics and threats (updated risk assessment).
 - Restore America's Estuaries Presentation – Elsa Schwartz and Leigh Habegger presented an overview of Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) to the Board. [RAE](#) is a nonprofit comprised of 11 member organizations across the country all focused habitat protection and restoration, especially in bays and estuaries. Leigh and Elsa shared opportunities for NFHP to get involved including social media campaigns (National Estuaries Week and #IHeartEstuaries) and their national summit (held every other year). RAE also has a mini-grant program which is money awarded from CITGO to RAE and dispensed to local groups on the ground. RAE also leads a Blue Carbon Initiative (infogram handout distributed to the Board), provides living shorelines resources and materials, and has a coastal restoration grant program. The Board inquired how RAE diversified their funding base since NFHP is looking to grow our funding sources and acquire more non-traditional partners (e.g. Scotts Miracle Grow).

Thursday, March 8, 2018

- Welcome – Dan Shively made an announcement to the Board informing them of the resignation of U.S. Forest Service Chair, Tony Tooke on the evening of March 7th. The Board raised some concerns and discussed the EPA using the assessment data within their tools. The concern is that there are caveats with the data and the Board wants to be sure that EPA is clearly conveying those data caveats when using the assessment data. The EPA did not consult with any members of the NFHP Science & Data Committee before including these assessment data into their tool.
- NOAA Recreational Fisheries Presentation – Tim Sartwell and Russell Dunn presented an update to the Board on NOAA's Recreational Fisheries efforts. NOAA led a series of roundtables in 2017 to better understand regional issues, identify long term challenges, and emerging issues facing recreational fishers. Results from an informal survey of these groups showed that the two largest concerns are with access and sustainability (of the sport of recreational fishing) and youth participation. NOAA released a National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy in 2015 after which an Implementation Plan was developed with 68 commitments to the recreational fishing community. Tim shared a progress update on that Implementation Plan and indicated that more than 75% of the 68 commitments have been completed or have made substantial progress. Tim also informed the Board about the upcoming National Saltwater Summit (March 27-29) to be held in Arlington, VA (hosted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission). Chris Moore will present about NFHP at this the Summit that will focus on four main topics with presentations and panels on each followed by small breakout group sessions by region. There was discussion about how to get habitat included in the conversation with the recreational community when it is easily overshadowed by access and regulation. The Board suggested to show examples of where habitat restoration is ongoing in order to bring habitat into the conversation at the summit. The Board also recognized that there is a research gap connecting the habitat quality and quantity to the productivity of the fisheries, which could likely facilitate the inclusion of habitat more readily in these settings.
- Science and Data Committee Update – Gary Whelan provided an update to the Board on committee operations (they're working to identify a replacement for Peter Ruhl) and future assessment work. The inland assessment has not made progress since there is not yet funding for this effort. The NE Coastal assessment is moving forward with a steering committee identified that met in January 2018. That team is working to identify products (e.g. EFH maps, model-based approaches, etc.), gaps, and appropriate scale and scope. The NFHP data system remains in a maintenance phase thanks to in-kind USGS support. PSMFC is doing low level updates and is mostly maintaining the NFHP Project Tracking Database. The Board inquired about the number of users accessing the information from the 2015 assessment. We have had about 80 accesses of the website for download purposes since November. This number of downloads is quite good given the low amount of marketing we have done as a result of assessment funding not being available. Chris Moore provided a more in-depth update on the progress of the Regional Fish Habitat Assessment and the Board and FHP members emphasized the value in implementing this assessment at the regional level. It was noted that the current Board assessment strategy has both national and regional components.
- Multistate Grant Update – Ryan Roberts updated the Board about where NFHP stands in the multistate grant awards proposal process. The language in our National Conservation Need statement was adjusted slightly after the January call (in a friendly amendment put forth by NOAA) to include language that would permit the project tracking database to be funded through this mechanism.
- American Fisheries Society Award Proposal – Tom Bigford presented an opportunity to the Board to co-sponsor an award with the American Fisheries Society which recognizes career achievements in habitat conservation and protection at multiple levels. This concept, originally called the "Habitat Warrior",

was passed onto Bigford from Stan Moberly who had been collecting potential award winners over the last few decades. Bigford would like to rename the award after Stan and call it the “Stan Moberly Habitat Hero Award”. The Board discussed other awards (previous NFHP awards and NOAA’s Nancy Foster award) and the need for this new award to not be redundant with existing awards.

Action items:

- Draft brief talking points (3 bullets) for Ron Regan to relay to his leadership to present at a high level meeting at the North American about the EPA utilizing the NFHP Assessment criteria (Habitat Condition Index) in their Healthy Watersheds Assessment (available publicly online). The Board may want to assign a value to the Habitat Condition Index data in advance of this conversation.
- Gary Whelan will be looking into the accuracy of the EPA model (Healthy Watershed Assessment) via the FHPs and discuss data caveats on behalf of the Science and Data Committee with EPA.
- Board staff will follow up with Tom Bigford on the “Habitat Hero” award proposal to figure out what makes the most sense given other awards in this arena and will provide an update to the Board in June.

Future Board meetings (2018):

- Summer Introductory Call for new members (Date TBD)
- June 27 Conference Call 1:00 – 3:30 PM EDT
- October 17-18 (San Antonio, Texas) with FHP Workshop October 15-16

Board approved documents:

- January Board Meeting Notes

Additional attendees:

Alex Atkinson (Board Staff – NOAA contract)
Gary Whelan (SDC Co-Chair MI DNR – By phone on the second day because of illness)
Ryan Roberts (Board Staff - AFWA)
Pat Montanio (NOAA, NMFS)
Doug Norton (EPA)
Lisa Havel (Atlantic Coastal FHP)
Steve Perry (EBTJV)
Therese Thompson (WNTI)
Jillian Cohen (LCC)
Daniel Wieferich (NFHP, SDC)

David Miko (USFWS)
Alison Bowdoin? (TNC)
Nat Gillespie (USFS)
Joe Nohner, MGLFHP
Jeff Boxrucker (RFHP)
Leigh Habegger (RAE)
Elsa Schwartz (RAE)
Tim Sartwell (NOAA Fisheries)
Russell Dunn (NOAA Fisheries)
Tom Bigford (AFS)

Title: Science and Data Committee Report**Desired Outcome:**

- **Board understanding** of Science and Data Committee accomplishments as they relate to 2018 Board Priorities

2018 Priorities and Outcomes:**Priority L: Science and Data Committee Operations**

- Convened a Science and Data Committee (SDC) call on June 15, 2018 to brief the Committee on Board actions, funding status, and assessment status. The SDC is reviewing USEPA Healthy Watersheds Assessment as requested by the Board on the March 2018 call and will have a full report prepared by the October meeting.
- Working on filling the current SDC co-Chair vacancy.

Priority N: Planning and Initiation of Future Assessment Work.

- Inland
 - No progress has been made on the Board's Inland Fish Habitat Assessment as funding has not been made available. The delay in funding has created that following outcomes at this time: no new work has or can be done on improving and updating the Assessment; Assessment staff is not available to assist FHPs in their assessment work or to facilitate needed coordination between the National and FHP Assessment products; and the Board planned update to the 2015 Assessment will not be available until late 2022 or early 2023 at the earliest assuming funding is available in the near term.
- Coastal
 - Work has started in earnest on the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment using the Board approved assessment direction. The Assessment Steering Committee (Chris Moore, Chair) convened a call on May 11. The overall assessment guidance document is completed, inshore and offshore project teams have been populated and beginning work, potential model approaches were reviewed, and funding is being acquired to work on the assessment. Work is also continuing at a very good pace on the West Coast and Great Lakes Assessments. An example of these products is on the PMEP website with part of the West Coast Assessment work displayed as an estuary viewer and explorer that includes information on current and historical estuary extent, estuary points, biotic habitat, tidal wetland losses, and eelgrass habitat.

Priority O: Continue work to complete the NFHP Project Tracking Database

- Efforts at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) have been focused on maintaining the existing data system as Kate Sherman (PSMFC) has been on leave. Work is expected to resume when she returns in the near future.
 - Expected near term work will include:
 - FHPs reviewing and updating their project data or have updated their data in the online system and/or shared updates from their own databases with Kate Sherman who will bulk update data in the existing NFHP database.
 - Continuing outreach to FHPs to assist them with data updates and using the existing online system.
 - Continuing to do QA/QC on data entered by FHPs in database.
 - Funding for completing most of the database functions, particularly reporting functions, is part of the MSCG request.

Priority P: Maintain and improve the NFHP Data System (USGS In-kind support)

- As a result of other USGS priorities, limited effort has been made on the NFHP Data System and viewer since the last Board update.
 - Daniel Wieferich (USGS) reported that the main effort has been on USGS developing a viewer to summarize and display NFHP assessment data in the National Biogeographic Map. USGS has been working on open source solutions to summarize habitat condition indices and disturbances (i.e. severe, pervasive and total lists) to ecological and jurisdictional areas. The viewer system will accept and process new areas of interest as they are identified and can be adapted to help drive the next generation of the NFHP data system.

Report Prepared By:

Gary Whelan
MI Department of Natural Resources
June 8, 2018

Title: Legislative Update

Desired outcome: Board awareness of and engagement on the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnership Act

Background:

Since the inception of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, a NFHP legislative coalition has been working to craft a legislative proposal that would achieve the goals of the Board and establish an organic statute for the Partnership and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The NFHP legislative team includes representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the American Sportfishing Association, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Coastal Conservation Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. Since 2006, this team has worked closely together to advance this legislative proposal – now known as the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act (NFHCTPA). Previous versions of NFHCTPA have enjoyed broad bipartisan support in Congress, including bipartisan approval by the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee (the Senate Committee of jurisdiction) and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee. The legislation has not been introduced in the House of Representatives since 2009, and instead the legislative team has focused in recent years on the Senate as the most likely body in which to advance the bill. For several reasons, Congressional approval of NFHCTPA has been complicated, with leadership shifts, initial concerns about the scope and extent of the program, a general distaste for new federal programs and the cost of the legislation among the primary obstacles.

In recent years, smaller pieces of legislation such as NFHCTPA are often unsuccessful as stand-alone bills and must move forward on larger legislative packages such as comprehensive energy legislation or public lands packages. For several Congresses now the legislative team has worked to ensure NFHCTPA language is an integral component of any sportsmen's package. During 2015 and 2016, the NFHP legislative coalition worked actively with Congressional staff from the Senate ENR Committee on the inclusion of NFHCTPA in S. 659, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act. NFHCA language was included in this package thanks largely to the leadership of Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act was then included in the Senate Energy Bill, which passed the Senate in April 2016 by a vote of 85-12. While companion NFHCTPA language was not included in the House Energy Bill, Congress ran out of time to rectify differences between the two chambers' Energy Bills during conference negotiations last year. Further, the start of the new Congress required the legislative team to focus once again on reintroduction of NFHCTPA in the 115th Congress.

2017 Legislative Priority and Accomplishments:

Board Priority Task A: *Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act; (assign to eligible Board members and legislative team)*

Accomplishments: With a shift in leadership this Congress at the Senate EPW Committee from Chairman Boxer (D-CA) to Chairman Barrasso (R-WY), the legislative team has recently seen a renewed interest in an EPW Committee-driven sportsmen's package (as compared to last Congress when the Senate ENR Committee ran this package). Last year, EPW Committee Chairman Barrasso

introduced the HELP for Wildlife Act (S. 1514) which includes strong NFHCTPA language. Senator Cardin (D-MD), the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee of jurisdiction over NFHCTPA, has also continued to be one of our strongest proponents and has worked closely with Chairman Barrasso to ensure inclusion of NFHCTPA in the Committee's sportsmen's package. The HELP for Wildlife Act was approved by the Senate EPW Committee and moved to the full Senate calendar on October 5, 2017.

Similarly, the legislative coalition has received ongoing support for NFHCTPA from the Senate ENR Committee this year, still under Chairman Murkowski's leadership, as this Committee works to advance their own sportsmen's package. Currently, the Senate ENR Committee sportsmen's package (S. 733) does not include NFHCA language. However, Murkowski staff supports pulling the EPW Committee NFHCTPA language into a merged sportsmen's package should a pathway become evident for advancing a Senate Energy Bill this Congress.

Additionally, for the first time since 2009, we may also see NFHCTPA legislation introduced in the House of Representatives. Through the American Sportfishing Association's leadership, Congressman Rob Wittman (R-VA, 1st) is slated to introduce companion House NFHCTPA legislation in the coming weeks.

Approach: As the 115th Congress shifts into a second session, the NFHP legislative coalition is focusing on educating key Congressional members on the importance of enacting NFHCTPA this Congress. The Legislative Team will be focusing greater attention on House Member outreach and education on fish habitat partnerships and their on-the-ground success as well as working to identify potential packages upon which the NFHCTPA may be able to move through Congress this year.

Title: Partnerships Committee June 2018 Update

Desired outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of Partnerships Committee 2018 accomplishments and ongoing activities.

Background

The Partnerships Committee serves as a forum for preliminary discussions, fact-finding, and formulating recommendations for Board actions that affect Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Members:

Jeff Boxrucker (RFHP)

Doug Boyd (SBPC)

Jessica Graham (SARP)

Debbie Hart (SEAK FHP)

Lisa Havel (ACFHP)

Heidi Keuler (F&F FHP)

Joe Nohner (MGLFHP)

Steve Perry (EBTJV)

Tri-Chairs

Stan Allen (PSMFC)

Bryan Moore (TU)

Therese Thompson (WNTI)

Staff

Susan Wells (USFWS)

Alex Atkinson (ERT-NMFS)

2018 Priorities

- **Priority A:** Complete recommended improvements to the FHP Performance Evaluation measure wording and overall evaluation process for Board approval.

Update: Revisions to the FHP Performance Evaluation measures were completed by the work group during 2017 and a timeline for the 2018 process was established. At the March Board meeting the Performance Evaluation Review Team was established (Tom Champeau, Doug Nygren, Tom Lang, Stan Allen, Bryan Moore, Susan Wells, Gary Whelan, and Alex Atkinson). Performance Evaluation materials were distributed to the FHPs on April 6, 2018 with a revised deadline to submit completed materials to the committee by June 15, 2018. The team plans to have a draft report summarizing the FHP review by the October 17-18, 2018 Board meeting.

FHP Evaluation Timeline:

The 2018 performance measures and timeline were approved at the January 2018 NFHP Board meeting.	January 17, 2018
Board staff distributes FHP Performance Evaluation form, spreadsheet, and scoring criteria on behalf of the Board.	April 7, 2018
Each FHP submits a completed performance evaluation form.	COB May 31, 2018
Board staff distributes FHP evaluation forms and scoring materials to the Review team	Rolling – ongoing between May 31 – June 15
Review Team provides completed scoring materials to Board staff for compilation	June 21, 2018
Review Team discusses scoring results via conference call	Week of June 25
Review Team provides evaluation outcomes to FHPs for review	Week of July 9
FHPs provide responses to Review Team	July 27, 2018
Review Team convenes via conference call to finalize FHP evaluation scores	Week of July 30
Final scores are provided to the FHPs and included in the Board briefing book	August 10, 2018
Draft report by Review Team to the NFHP Board at October 2018 Board meeting	October 17, 2018
NFHP Board approves final report by Review Team at January 2019 Board meeting	January 2019

- Priority B: Develop an approach for future Multistate Conservation Grant Program submissions (in collaboration with the Budget and Finance Committee).
- Priority C: Develop strategies for multiple FHPs to jointly submit project proposals to alternative funding sources and programs (in collaboration with the Budget and Finance Committee).

Update: Although the Partnerships Committee has not completed specific actions to advance these priorities (B & C), conversations have been happening among the FHPs during bi-monthly calls and beyond as to how we can advance these priorities. This topic has also come up in FHP Workshop planning for October 2018.

- Priority D: Work with staff to develop purpose and agenda and implement a 2018 Fish Habitat Partnership workshop.

Update: At the March Board meeting, the Board discussed fundraising as the primary theme for the FHP Workshop planned for October 15-16, 2018 in conjunction with the Board meeting. The Workshop Planning Team was formed (Bryan Moore, Stan Allen, Jeff Boxrucker, Debbie Hart, Therese Thompson, Gary Whelan, and Alex Atkinson) on the FHP bi-monthly call on May 24. The group developed a survey for FHPs and Board members to provide input on agenda planning and met on June 6 to review the survey results. The group will continue to meet regularly to plan the workshop agenda, identify speakers, and solidify workshop logistics.

Title: Multistate Conservation Grant Program Update**Desired outcomes:**

- Board awareness of final National Conservation Need (NCN) supporting NFHP through the AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and Ocean Resources Policy Committee.

Background:

In 2015, the FHPs under the National Fish Habitat Partnership agreed to a 3-year collaborative approach to applying for Multistate Grant Funding through the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). The 2018 application marks the last year of that agreement.

The first grant in this 3-year approach was awarded during the 2016 Grant cycle, at \$86,000. The 2017 grant was awarded at \$143,000 and the 2018 grant was awarded at \$209,000. The grant from 2016 is expected to be closed out at the end of 2017. It is expected that NFHP will request a 12 month extension on the funding remaining for the 2017 grant that would extend the grant until December of 2018. The 2018 application funding is expected to be received between January to March of 2018.

The National Conservation Need (NCN) established by the Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and Ocean Resources Policy Committees of AFWA was reviewed in December and the Board through AFWA should work with the Committees to maintain that support for NFHP.

Timeline for future proposals:*November (Complete)*

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) solicits National Conservation Needs (NCNs) from each Association committee and the four Regional Associations of state fish and wildlife agencies.

February (Complete)

Each committee or Regional Association may submit one proposed NCN. NCNs are due to the MSCGP Coordinator.

March -April

North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference (Grants Committee Meeting – March 29)

During the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, the National Grants Committee convenes to review the proposed NCNs and prepare a list of recommended NCNs for the State Directors' approval.

State Directors approve NCNs during the Association's business meeting at the North American Conference. The selected NCNs establish the states' funding priorities for the upcoming grant cycle.

Briefing Book Materials:

Tab 4a 2019 AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and Ocean Resources Policy Committee National Conservation Need (NCN)

Proposed NCN 13

Broadening Conservation Partnerships through the National Fish Habitat Partnership

Submitted by: Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee / Ocean Resources Policy Committee

Statement of Need: The National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) seeks to arrest and reverse declines in the quality and quantity of our nation's fish habitat in freshwater, estuarine, and marine waters through voluntary partnerships throughout the United States (www.fishhabitat.org). NFHP is identified as an Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) priority. The NFHP is comprised of 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) based on fish species, landscapes or habitat types. FHPs develop and implement landscape-scale approaches to protect, restore, and enhance priority fish habitats, both natural and manmade, across the United States. All 50 states are engaged in one or more of the FHPs. The conservation practices of the umbrella National Fish Habitat Partnership and FHPs are guided by the framework set forth in the 2nd Edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2012) and by the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) which includes AFWA and representatives from the four regional associations and the Chair of the Board, who holds an at-large seat representing a state fish & wildlife agency. FHPs implement on-the-ground conservation activities that complement and strengthen efforts to conserve fish habitat by coordinating closely with local, regional, and national fisheries programs and priorities. The Multi-state Conservation Grant Program enables FHPs to leverage other federal, state, and private resources to fully implement the priorities of the Board and the FHPs. Grant resources support FHPs, Board and other committees under the Board, including the Science and Data Committee by providing funds to:

- improve ecological condition, restore natural processes, or prevent the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions and better recreational fishing opportunities.
- raise public awareness of the importance of healthy fish habitats and communicate conservation outcomes.
- coordinate with federal initiatives to maximize impact and results.
- track and ensure projects are consistent with national conservation initiatives for fish species.
- improve the National Fish Habitat Assessment, and increase coordination between Fish Habitat Assessments being implemented through the NFHP.

Desired Proposals: Grant recipients would compete for Multi-state Conservation Grants (MSCG) to:

- promote strategic fish habitat conservation through regionally-and nationally coordinated science and conservation efforts by building upon previous MSCGs.
- assist FHPs with development, growth, organizational capacity and management.
- improve FHP capabilities to implement habitat assessments and habitat-related projects to identify priority watersheds.
- improve science based tools to meet fish conservation goals and objectives.
- compile socio-economic (recreational, commercial, subsistence and other) benefits associated with FHP projects.
- communicate habitat improvement efforts to the greater fisheries community and to the Board,

FHPs, state fish chiefs, AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy and Ocean Resources Policy Committees and the National Fish Habitat Fund on fisheries issues affecting state fish and wildlife agencies.

Desired Outcomes: Desired outcomes of successful proposals would include:

- increased effective and efficient science based conservation actions coordinated by and among FHPs.
- development of improved FHP coordination, strategic planning, and partnership management.
- improved FHP coordination and data collection for the 2020 National Fish Habitat Assessment.
- increased funding for FHP-sponsored conservation projects.
- increased and improved scientific capacity of FHPs and NFHP Science and Data Committee to implement conservation actions consistent with NFHP Action Plan objectives.
- increased capacity to engage new partners for FHPs and the Board.
- increased awareness and support for fish habitat conservation across the US.
- improved angling opportunities through the conservation, rehabilitation and improvement of fish habitat.
- increased coordination on marine-related FHP projects that advance collaboration among partners.

Update:

After conferring with the Fish Habitat Partnerships, the Partnerships Committee has decided upon a collaborative application for the 2019 Multistate Grant cycle. There were three applications under the NFHP NCN for 2019. The full applications can be viewed in the following pages under this tab. The three applications and funding requests are below.

2019 Grant Requests:

- 1) NFHP Board Request - \$250,680.00
- 2) NFHP Project Tracking Database Request – \$20,000.00
- 3) American Fisheries Society Request - \$77,970.00

Title: 2018 FHP Workshop Planning Update

Desired outcomes:

- Board awareness of 2018 FHP Workshop planning team progress.
- Board provides input on potential workshop topics, session types and speakers.

Background:

On October 15-16, 2018, NFHP will have an FHP workshop paired with the Board Meeting. A team has assembled to plan the workshop (*members include: Stan Allen, Bryan Moore, Gary Whelan, Debbie Hart, Jessica Speed, Jeff Boxrucker, Therese Thompson, and Alex Atkinson*). The Planning Team's progress to date is the result of discussions held on three conference calls. A survey was distributed to FHP coordinators and Board members to gather input on workshop topics, session types, and speakers. Below is a summary of the FHP Workshop survey results and notes (in red) from the most recent call (June 6, 2018) of the Workshop Planning Team. A main focus of the workshop will be FHP funding and fundraising.

Summary of FHP Survey Results & Call Notes:

FHP Workshop Survey Results

June 6, 2018 (notes from call are in red)

Participants – Gary, Bryan, Jeff, Therese, Jessica, Debbie, Alex

1-3. Total # responses: 11 (100% of respondents plan to attend the FHP Workshop)

- EBTJV
- Fishers & Farmers
- Reservoir
- Driftless Area Restoration Effort
- ACFHP
- Board Member
- Kenai Peninsula
- WNTI
- Board Member
- PMEP
- SARP

4. Does your FHP require travel support to be represented at the workshop?

- Need travel support (2)
- Do not need travel support (4)
- Require partial travel support (1)
- Other (3)

5. What do you hope to gain from the workshop this year? (results summarized into 3 groups)

- Strategies to addressing common issues FHPs are facing.
- Want to make sure we are meeting the requirements to continue to participate in the program
- Continuing the growing connection between Board and FHP's.
- I hope to make gains to support the FHPs and the mission of NFHP

- New ideas about funding opportunities, networking with other FHP's, learning/hearing from NFHP Board members, ways to improve our FHPs.
- Fund raising support
- Best ways to acquire alternative sources of funding, and best ways to maximize our leverage as FHPs.

- Strengthening our development of our statewide assessment and grow important relationships with other partnerships on being more effective with or without FWS support
- FHP workshops in the past have been wonderful opportunities to get to know the other Coordinators, and Board members, and to strengthen our team.
- Meet other FHP Coordinators and Board members. Learn more about the program. Learn how others are funding their work.
- Meet other FHP Coordinators and Board members. Learn more about the program. Learn how others are funding their work.

- Business plan use and sharing across FHPs
- How NFHP and FHPs can better use Beyond the Pond in fundraising efforts?

6. Rank the following topic ideas.

- **FHP partnering efforts (projects, assessments, outreach) – 7 people indicated in top 3**
 - Developing a targeted approach for fundraising (sharing this vision as well as themes with Beyond the Pond & their Board)
 - Reconnecting aquatic habitats & fish passage
 - Coastal FHPs (coastal resiliency)
 - Aging infrastructure is another common theme (could help attract non-traditional partners)
- **Increasing operational capacity – 7 people indicated in top 3**
 - Practical tools to help FHPs accomplish more and be more efficient
 - Document examples (e.g. concise, strategic plan, business plan, etc.)
 - Online Request for Proposals (RFP) – Jeff Boxrucker
 - Tips and best practices for engaging your steering committees or Boards
 - Staffing solutions
 - Can FHPs work with universities to increase capacity?
 - Can NFHP Board hire staff that can be shared by FHPs (e.g. data person, outreach director, etc.)
 - *maybe we can have a panel to present examples for where these are being implemented

- Alternate funding (Impact of decreasing FWS allocation effect) – 5 people indicated in top 3
- Alternate funding (Donations) – 4 people indicated in top 3
- Alternate funding (Beyond the Pond) – 3 people indicated in top 3
- Alternate funding (Grants) – 3 people indicated in top 3
- FHP Performance Evaluation Results – 3 people indicated in top 3
- Various FHP Annual Meeting models – 1 people indicated in top 3

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL	SCORE
▼ Alternate funding opportunities - Impact of decreasing FWS allocation effect on FHP operations	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	11	5.64
▼ Alternate funding opportunities - Beyond the Pond	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	11	4.00
▼ Alternate funding opportunities - Grants	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	11	4.82
▼ Alternate funding opportunities - Donations	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	10	4.40
▼ Increasing operational capacity	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	5.73
▼ Various FHP Annual Meeting models	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	11	2.64
▼ 2018 FHP Performance Evaluation Results	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	45.45% 5	18.18% 2	11	3.27
▼ FHP partnering efforts (projects, assessments, outreach)	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	5.82

7. What session type would be most useful to cover the topic of fundraising?

Mixture of session types is good (presentations, small & large group, with breakouts and large group). We want to create a safe environment for FHPs to share and be candid about their challenges and needs. Mixers and social events have been key to building relationships between Board and FHPs as well as among FHPs (want to extend invite to Beyond the Pond Board to this year's FHP workshop if possible).

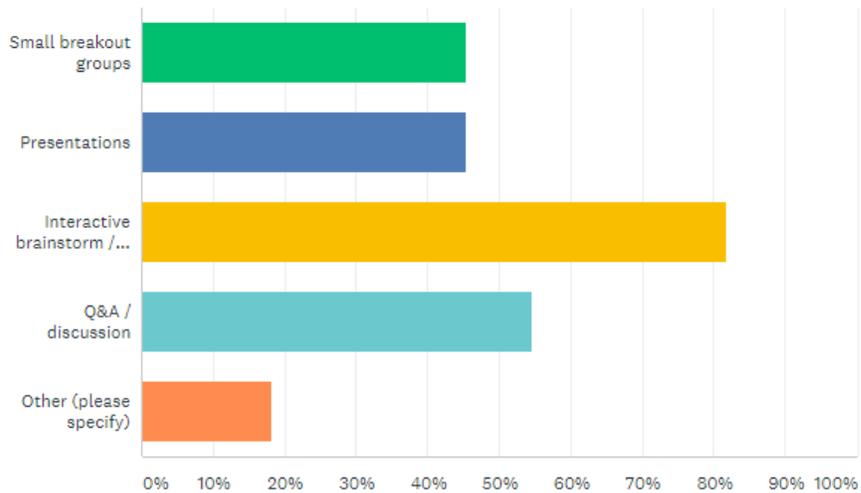
- Interactive brainstorm (9)
- Q&A/discussion (6)
- Small breakout groups (5)
- Presentations (5)
- Other (2) – presentations/interactive brainstorm and discussion, a mixture of sessions

Q7

Customize Export

What session type would be most useful to cover the topic of fundraising?
 (check all that apply)

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Small breakout groups	45.45% 5
Presentations	45.45% 5
Interactive brainstorm / discussion	81.82% 9
Q&A / discussion	54.55% 6
Other (please specify)	Responses 18.18% 2
Total Respondents: 11	

8. Who would you prefer to hear from as a presenter on the topic of fundraising?

Still progress to be made here. Potential speakers could include:

Operational Capacity:

- SEAKFHP (Debbie) – FHP business plan (several other FHPs have developed business plans i.e., EBTJV, RFHP, others?)
- Reservoir FHP (Jeff) – Online RFP process, lessons learned
- Partnering with universities/students?
- Funding a shared staff position at AFWA?

Fundraising (may be good to hear from agencies with funding):

- NRCS
- NOAA
- USACE
- BOR
- FEMA
- State agencies that have independently-funded habitat restoration programs
 - How the programs are funded (i.e., Habitat Stamp, Legislative Appropriations, Mitigation Funding)
 - Strategies used to develop those funding sources
 - Does AFWA have a role in leading discussions to elevate habitat restoration within agency programs
- Non-profit fundraiser
- Non-traditional partner
 - As per discussion from FHP conference calls (given the current federal budget climate, it may be more practical to identify existing federal/state programs that receiving funding that aquatic habitat restoration would fit into than try to go after new money)

- Other FHPs (7)
- Federal agency re: grants (4)
- NGO development representative re: grants, fundraising (7)
 - NFWF, TU, CCA
- Industry representative re: funding (6)
 - Corporations with conservation programs
 - Bass Pro Shops/Cabelas
- Other (2) – NRCS could present on opportunities to partner with them, whomever is getting it done and raising funds

9. Are there other topics or session ideas you'd like to suggest be included in the workshop agenda?

- Thinking outside the box, creative problem solving... what are FHPs doing differently now that they weren't doing three years ago
- Potential implications of **Recovering America's Wildlife Act**, how we position NFHP to take advantage of potential new funding source, and how it could help FHPs. Other pertinent legislation as well.

Additional Discussion Topics for Board Consideration

- BTP role in funding topics to be discussed at the FHP workshop should be discussed at BTP meeting in July and hopefully reported to FHPs at the October workshop.

Title: Communications Committee Report

Desired outcome: An informational update to the Board regarding progress on the committee's 2018 work plan.

Priorities:

Task A – NFHP website additions. Additions in 2018 are expected to improve partnership pages and connections between The National Fish Habitat Partnership and Beyond the Pond.

Update: In July we will be adding 2018 Waters to Watch projects to the website. We will also be highlighting our expanded relationship with RepYourWater through an ad spot on the NFHP website.

Task B - Develop an improved marketing strategy integrating both NFHP and Beyond the Pond develop a marketing strategy that integrates both the National Fish Habitat Partnership and Beyond the Pond. This strategy will be intricate in raising awareness of FHP project needs and work to help raise funding to meet FHP needs.

Update: We will be working with our FHPs to identify priority projects in need of funding. We would like to have 5 pilots established to develop a fundraising/marketing strategy around. Ultimately, we will work through our Beyond the Pond Board to help raise funds to support these pilots. Framework will be presented during the Beyond the Pond update. The Beyond the Pond Board is planning to have a strategy meeting in July.

Task C - Expand the reach and messaging of the NFHP program within the conservation community. Support travel and marketing for the National Fish Habitat Partnership to raise awareness of NFHP projects. Deliverables will also include enhancing the National Fish Habitat Partnership assessment and meeting with partners to expand the reach and input into the assessment.

Update: Between the Science and Data Committee and the Communications Committee representing the Board, we will be presenting at the upcoming meetings of the American Fisheries Society Annual meeting in 2018 and will be providing updates regarding NFHP and the AFWA Annual Meeting. There are also several meetings planned with fishing industry companies at ICast in July. Ryan Roberts also recently provided a presentation on NFHP and the work of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture to the PA Council of Trout Unlimited (new audience) in late February. Gary Whelan, Ryan Roberts and Tom Champeau also provided updates related to the NFHP program at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March.

Task D - Improve the Waters to Watch Campaign for the future.

Work to improve the Waters to Watch campaign and utilize the campaign as a marketing piece to understand and promote additional project needs for FHPs to raise additional resources.

Update: In late February, we sent out a request for nominations for Waters to Watch projects for 2018. We will be working with the FHPs to identify additional needs for these projects that would go beyond the traditional funding established for these projects if necessary in an effort to further enhance project outcomes/deliverables. We will work through the Beyond the Pond Board and present these projects as a fund raising challenge to our Board.

Task E - Monitor National Fish Habitat Legislation. Work with the NFHP legislative affairs team to identify communications needs to advance the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act.

Update: The Government Affairs team met in late January to prepare a strategy for the National Fish Habitat Conservation through Partnerships Act. A white paper has been developed for background on the history of the program and legislative efforts. Efforts to have a House bill introduced are underway. In addition, a revised toolkit is partially completed and will be revised as needed.

Task F- Prepare detailed reports regarding Beyond the Pond for the NFHP Board as Beyond the Pond develops, we will work to keep the National Fish Habitat Board informed of marketing and fundraising developments regarding Beyond the Pond.

Update: An informational update will be provided at in-person Board meetings in 2018.

Title: Beyond the Pond Update

Desired Outcome:

- **Board awareness** of fundraising and marketing progress to date.

Background:

The National Fish Habitat Fund, which was approved by the IRS in June 2015 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, was established to help partnerships seek additional funding for on-the-ground projects and activities. The National Fish Habitat Fund is marketed under the title and logo, Beyond the Pond. In 2016, a website was launched: <http://beyondthepondusa.com/>, along with securing a trademark, developing a fact sheet, and creation of an Amazon Smile account. In 2017 an online page to make donations was developed through Process Donation and several Fish Habitat Partnerships have created their own donation pages through the site.

Update:

RepYourWater

In April 2018, Beyond the Pond launched expanded their marketing partnership with [RepYourWater](#). Beyond the Pond has once again teamed up with [RepYourWater](#) so that hat and habitat fanatics alike can emphatically support the National Fish Habitat Partnership and work of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Partnership and Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Partnership through the purchase of RepYourWater apparel. In order to help the National Fish Habitat Partnership achieve their mission to protect, restore, and enhance our nation’s fish habitat, 3% of all products with designs featuring Maine, Delaware, New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, DC, South Carolina, Georgia, Connecticut and New England will go directly to Beyond the Pond for the Atlantic Coastal and Brook Trout Joint Venture. The new collection can be found [here](#).

Beyond the Pond will be the beneficiary of 3% of sales of all RepYourWater products in this collection, along with Driftless Area designs, a partnership that began in 2017. You will notice that Beyond the Pond is listed on the conservation partners tab of the RepYourWater website and has a [page](#) on the site dedicated to this effort. This partnership provides 10% of sales from selected products to about 15 conservation partners quarterly. This partnership is in addition to the 3% of sales for the Brook Trout/Atlantic Coastal and Driftless Area product lines. The Beyond the Pond Board is planning a one-day strategy meeting in July in Denver, CO.

Financial Update (As of 5/1/18):

Cash in bank	\$239,420.50
<u>Outstanding contracts</u>	
University of Maryland	(143,820.17)
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (ACH)	(735.40)
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (check donation)	(1,034.84)

Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership (ACH)	(105.10)
Unobligated funds in bank	\$41,300.35

Title: Bi-monthly Fish Habitat Partnership Call Update

Desired outcome: Board awareness of Fish Habitat Partnership bi-monthly call activities and updates.

Background:

One of the roles of the NFHP Board is to stay informed on the needs and activities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships. The FHPs have been meeting on a bi-monthly schedule and providing an update to the Board on these meetings will help keep Board members informed on various FHP activities or any emerging needs or issues that may need their attention.

Additional Materials

Tab 8a – Draft call summary notes from May 24th bi-monthly call.

Bi-Monthly FHP Call Update for NFHP Board

General feedback to the NFHP Board regarding Bi-monthly FHP Calls:

- FHPs are meeting on a bi-monthly schedule to learn updates on NFHP items, share FHP updates with each other and work on collective activities. FHPs hope to use these calls to facilitate more communication and coordination with each other and also formulate formal requests for NFHP Board and Beyond the Pond support when needs/opportunities arise.
- FHPs are taking a lead on developing the call agendas and this seems to be working well.
- NFHP Staff are of great assistance in convening the calls, sharing information and distributing follow-up as needed.
- NFHP Board members are invited and encouraged to join in on the calls when they are able.
- Remaining calls for 2018 are scheduled for July 26, September 13 and November 30.

Action items from the most recent call (May 24th):

- Due dates for 2018 Waters to Watch Campaign and FHP evaluations has been extended to June 15th.
- NFHP Board will meet June 27, FHPs will share summary of this call with Board.

Other May 24th Call Highlights

- Partnership Committee Update
 - Multi-State grant update and request for additional information on submission by the American Fisheries Society.
 - Update/discussion on 2018 Waters to Watch Campaign, request for extension.
 - Discussion on FHP evaluation, request for extension.
 - General discussion on plans for the fall workshop in association with the fall Board Meeting.
 - Planning committee is looking for additional participants/Jessica with Mat-Su will join the fall workshop planning committee; committee will review survey results soon
 - Jeff will share an update on progress at the NFHP Board call on June 27th
- Other general NFHP updates via Ryan Roberts and Stan Allen:
 - Next NFHP Board meeting call scheduled for Wednesday, June 27th.
 - Annual Report will be done in the next two weeks.
 - The Beyond the Pond Board is working on scheduling a one-day strategy session in July (TBD) in Denver, CO.; Ryan followed up noting date is set for Monday, July 23rd.
 - Final details regarding October Board meeting will be available after the June 27th Conference Call of the Board.
 - As a result of discussion at the last Partnership Committee meeting a letter was sent to the NFHP Board regarding funding support for SEAKFHP and Lamprey FHP.
- Topical discussion – FHPs discussed ideas for “Finding the NFHP Niche...Filling the Gaps for Aquatic Habitat Conservation.” The goal for this discussion was to continue the dialog that began during the March call to promote the idea that NFHP galvanize around an important theme to help broaden partner funding support for a mutual conservation topic and engage NFHP Board and

Beyond the Pond efforts on a topic that is supportive to all FHP needs (like reconnecting aquatic habitats). Discussion explored common themes of interest and focused on identifying new/creative funding sources and partners. The discussion yielded good ideas, more dialog will continue at next call. Emerging topics include:

- need for more discussion on gaps (habitat needs, partners, connections, funding); general support and interest for galvanized FHP collaborative initiative (? habitat connectivity, other undiscovered gap),
 - recognition of underlying uncertainty among FHPs in long-term stability of NFHP. Regarding this last item FHPs will outreach to FWS director for discussion on general thoughts/concerns regarding FWS communications, NFHP organizational structure, and NFHP funding.
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- FHP Updates: Jeff Boxrucker, (RFHP) shared a brief update on their newly developed online RFP application; group noted they would like more discussion on this at a future opportunity.

 - FHPs expressed an interest in having an in-person conversation with the USFWS to highlight successes and accomplishments in FHPs as well as discuss FWS support and communication.

Landscape Conservation Collaboration

A White Paper

March 2018



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Working Group Members: Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (Chair); Dave Smith, Intermountain West Joint Venture; Tony Wasley, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Ed Schriever, Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri Department of Conservation; Kelley Meyers, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Kenny Dinan, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Ed Carter, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; Greg Wathen, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; Thomas Eason, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Ken Elowe, US Fish and Wildlife Service; David Whitehurst, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries; Elsa Haubold, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Keith Sexson, Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism; Bill Moritz, Wildlife Management Institute; Mike Carter, Playa Lakes Joint Venture; Mark Humpert, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (staff)

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States and around the world, conservation organizations approach urgent conservation issues using a collaborative, cross-boundary approach. While some efforts have been in place for decades, the use of this approach has rapidly accelerated in the last decade. The approach has come to be called landscape conservation, large landscape conservation, or landscape level conservation. According to the [Network for Landscape Conservation](#), landscape initiatives are generally characterized by: 1) conservation of connected, healthy ecological systems; 2) use of science-based and culturally sensitive conservation planning; 3) collaborative network structure (formal or informal); and 4) meaningful multi-sector stakeholder engagement.

It has long been recognized that landscape conservation is needed because most fish and wildlife species occur and complete their life requirements in ecological systems that cross administrative boundaries. However, working at larger scales requires broader stakeholder engagement, effective communication, transparency and accountability. The best decisions about species or habitats occur when diverse stakeholders contribute to the understanding of the issues and actions taken.

Nationally, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has supported landscape conservation principally through the Migratory Bird Joint Venture (JV) program, National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC)s. Successful implementation of these partnerships has been challenging due to inadequate funding and other issues. More recently, regional fish and wildlife associations have emerged as conveners of landscape conservation through partnerships such as the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (Southeast), the Regional Conservation Needs program (Northeast), the Mid-America Monarch Strategy (Midwest) and the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (West).

Regional Associations have also engaged in landscape conservation to respond to proposed listings under the Endangered Species Act for species such as the New England Cottontail, Gopher Tortoise, Lesser Prairie Chicken and Greater Sage Grouse. Landscape conservation processes have been used to improve conservation for other species ranging from anadromous fish to large ungulates. State fish and wildlife agencies routinely use landscape conservation approaches within their state boundaries.

This white paper stemmed from a December 2017 joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the Directorate of the FWS that met to discuss landscape conservation and other issues related to the authorities and relationship between the states and the FWS. The discussion raised questions about the future of landscape conservation and the respective roles of states and the FWS in delivering landscape conservation.

During the meeting, Greg Sheehan, Principal Deputy Director of the FWS, asked the group to consider “what successful landscape conservation looks like” to help guide what approaches are needed and to overcome challenges to successful landscape conservation. Following the meeting, AFWA’s Wildlife

Resource Policy Committee was asked to form a working group that was charged to “examine existing landscape partnerships and review their governance structure, commonalities of success, approaches, partner roles, and other attributes and synthesize the information into a white paper that identifies key challenges and lessons learned”.

Individuals with diverse experience working on landscape conservation were asked to participate on the working group. Working group members agreed that the need for landscape conservation is great but that there are real challenges to successful implementation. Rather than focusing on defining landscape conservation, the working group agreed to identify the *challenges* and *elements of successful collaboration* through a review of regional landscape conservation partnerships. This white paper summarizes what was learned from those reviews.

REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Overview of the Northeast Region

The Northeast region includes thirteen states, the District of Columbia and seventeen federally recognized tribes. The region contains ecological and geographical diversity including pine barrens, forested wetlands, northern hardwood and conifer forests, high elevation spruce-fir forests, large bays, estuaries, beaches, coastal islands, salt marshes and major river systems like the Connecticut, Hudson, and Delaware rivers. These diverse ecosystems and habitat types support an equally diverse array of fish and wildlife resources. The region’s history is built around its rivers, streams, lakes and coast, and watersheds that help define the region’s landscapes.

The resources sustaining these species also provide essential benefits like clean water to the tens of millions of people who make their home in the Northeast. It is the most densely populated region in the country, yet it is a place where people and natural resources have long coexisted. The Northeast is a mosaic of communities, agricultural and forestry working lands, open spaces and protected habitats. Over 90 percent of the lands are in private ownership.

The Northeast states, FWS, and conservation organizations have a long history of working collaboratively. Over four decades ago, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) created technical committees focused on deer, furbearers, bear, game birds, habitat and wildlife diversity to collaborate on addressing regional-scale conservation challenges. After the completion of State Wildlife Action Plans in 2005, states in the Northeast pooled 4 percent of their state’s annual State Wildlife Grant apportionment to address information gaps and develop tools to benefit multiple states across the region as part of the Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) program. This program allowed states to share the cost of large-scale conservation to reduce duplication of effort. LCCs became an extension of this approach in the Northeast.

The RCN program, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV), New England Cottontail collaborative and North Atlantic and Appalachian LCCs were reviewed to identify challenges and successes to collaboration in

the Northeast. In addition, NEAFWA hosted a meeting for Directors and representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on February 22, 2018, to discuss successes, strengths, weaknesses and obstacles to landscape collaboration to help inform the review of Northeast partnerships.

Key Drivers for Landscape Collaboration

Key drivers for collaborative conservation in the Northeast range from issues concerning migratory species spanning multiple jurisdictions (i.e. ACJV), the desire to preclude listing under the Endangered Species Act (i.e. New England Cottontail), cooperatively developing and sharing information and approaches on similar species and management challenges (i.e. Regional Conservation Need program) and developing a regional approach and tools for landscape-scale conservation for multiple scales and species such as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (i.e. LCCs). These collaborations have been effective because they:

- drive collaborations for species that range across the region;
- provide opportunities to save money and staff time;
- allow the development of consistent approaches and information sharing; and
- address joint challenges that each or several states are facing.

Each of these responsibilities, opportunities and challenges drive the need to collaborate, and also can define the form of collaboration that is necessary.

Challenges to Collaboration

Defining boundaries for landscape conservation partnerships that don't reflect the goals of the collaboration can serve as a barrier to success. The initial boundaries drawn for LCCs in the Northeast cut across states, creating operational hurdles to participation. The North Atlantic LCC overcame this challenge early on by centering its work on the entire Northeast region.

Inviting a large number of diverse partners to the collaboration table can result in "dilution of purpose". Partners can enter a partnership with differing expectations, needs, authorities and resources, which can hinder a collaborative effort. In addition, all partners do not share equally in their authorities and responsibilities. The states and the FWS have unique authorities and responsibilities designated in law that separate them from other partners. A strong peer-to-peer relationship between the states and FWS is important to ensuring the right priorities and approaches are pursued and that states see relevancy in the partnership. Another challenge in the Northeast is the difficulty in developing conservation tools that are equally useful to all states since needs and capacities differ.

Large geographies and multiple political jurisdictions can make communication challenging. Keeping State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors well informed and supportive of landscape conservation efforts can be difficult and the communication loop between partnership staff, state agency staff and state Directors is hard to sustain. Despite considerable effort, some leaders felt that their voice was not always heard, which limited their support for some landscape conservation partnerships.

Meeting fatigue was also a challenge in the Northeast. Although, regular meetings are paramount to sharing information and developing tools, participants often wanted to “get going” with on-the-ground conservation. On-the-ground conservation was not part of the purpose of LCCs, yet conservation delivery can help sustain long-term collaboration. The states play a central role in implementation of conservation actions, so respecting agency responsibilities and authorities for implementation as well as planning is critical. Structuring partnerships that can address the relationship between planning at the regional scale and implementation by participants can be a challenge.

Successes and Strengths of Collaboration

The long history of collaboration in the Northeast set the stage for and made the transition to landscape conservation collaboration easier and more successful. Over 35 state, federal, tribal, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) partners regularly participate in Northeast partnerships. For example, the work that the North Atlantic LCC took on complemented and added capacity to the established RCN program. The LCC supported the RCN program by contributing science and combining habitat information for regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). This allowed State Wildlife Action Plans to be seamlessly knit together across the Northeast region, the only region to date that has done that. The LCC partnership supported work by the US Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to downscale climate information and conduct species climate vulnerability assessments for the region. The LCC also developed a region-wide conservation design approach with states that connected species priorities, the best habitats, and resilience.

The added capacity provided by partnerships for modeling, information collection and sharing and development of tools would have been difficult and expensive for any individual state fish and wildlife agency to take on themselves. A single-state approach could also result in gaps or inconsistencies that would not allow for that work to be used across the region. Landscape conservation partnerships have developed a set of comprehensive habitat, species and climate data and modeling tools that are available to all states, federal agencies and conservation partners and can align conservation priorities across organizations and the region.

The regional focus and responsibilities of the FWS allows it to facilitate a regional approach that benefits states in the Northeast and meshes with the responsibilities of NEAFWA. A strong relationship between the states, FWS and the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) allowed WMI to play a key role that improved efficiency and assured accountability.

Collaboratives in the Northeast have worked to connect each state’s Wildlife Action Plan by species, habitats and focus areas across the entire region. In addition, the Northeast has worked across state lines to improve connectivity by addressing hydrologic and aquatic barriers.

Sound processes and strong governance structures are a key to success in the Northeast. The ACJV is driven by consensus and stakeholder buy-in. Partners from across the ACJV feel well-represented and engaged and there is a strong sense of ownership of the process and priorities which allows the ACJV to engage in policy work and address technical issues. A dedicated coordinating body and sustainable

funding through the FWS is essential to the success of the ACJV, something partners do not have capacity to do on their own.

Summary and Conclusions

When done correctly, landscape conservation initiatives are an important tool in conserving fish and wildlife in the Northeast. They can make significant contributions to the science of fish and wildlife conservation, which can benefit fish and wildlife agencies and stakeholders. NEAFWA is committed to continuing the use of landscape conservation as an appropriate model for large-scale, complex, inter-jurisdictional management actions to achieve regional conservation objectives. This approach is also appropriate at even larger, multi-region or national scales.

In all the partnerships that were reviewed, federal and state fish and wildlife agencies were key stakeholders along with certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For this reason, it is vital when a landscape conservation partnership is being considered, that those key stakeholders be involved at the earliest conceptual stage. The failure to include state fish and wildlife agencies in the development of LCCs was a flaw, and is a prime example of how not to initiate landscape conservation.

Policy-level participation needs to include directors of state fish and wildlife agencies since in most cases they have the legal authority to implement management actions. Successful landscape conservation includes a strong and effective policy-level governance structure with technical/management staff who can help implement conservation. An effective and continuous feedback loop from top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top is important.

State fish and wildlife agency policy-makers need to ensure that management staff are actively engaged in the design and implementation of management actions to ensure a strong commitment to success. Landscape conservation is most effective when very specific conservation objectives are identified (e.g. secure populations of New England Cottontail) and is less effective when the objectives are overly broad.

Strong coordination of landscape conservation initiatives is essential. This means dedicated personnel within one or more of the collaborating entities must be assigned to lead planning, communication, evaluation and implementation. In the case of LCCs and JVs, the assignment of FWS staff to a coordinating role has been invaluable and was appreciated by the states. The inclusion of a third party (i.e. WMI) served a vital role in the success of the RCN and New England Cottontail Project. NEAFWA is on record supporting the on-going science capacity and funding of LCCs but acknowledges that changes are needed to make this partnership stronger in the future.

During the review of landscape conservation partnerships, eight best practices were identified that are incumbent to successful landscape conservation in the Northeast. The best practices draw a distinction between key collaborators (i.e. state fish and wildlife agencies and federal agencies) and appropriate cooperators such as NGOs.

Best Practices for Landscape Conservation in the Northeast

1. Key collaborators, state fish and wildlife agencies and federal agencies must be considered as equal partners at the earliest stages of landscape conservation planning.
2. Appropriate cooperators, NGOs and others should be brought into the planning process only after the key collaborators with management authority have agreed on a preliminary framework for landscape conservation.
3. Specific conservation outcomes/objectives must be agreed to and remain the focus of landscape conservation. Every effort should be made to be as clear and specific as practical when these objectives are identified. To the degree possible, outcomes should be measurable.
4. Achieving on-the-ground conservation is critical to the success of any landscape conservation effort. Implementation needs to be considered and planned from the outset.
5. Landscape conservation by its very nature is large and complex. To that end, a centralized coordination function is required. Key roles for coordination include communication, implementation of conservation actions and evaluation. Those coordinating staff could be placed within appropriate federal agencies, a state fish and wildlife agency, or a non-governmental partner, as appropriate.
6. A strong governance model is required, with a policy-level “steering committee” or board that includes the directors of state fish and wildlife agencies and leaders of federal agencies, and the assignment of technical/management personnel to implement conservation actions. Communication from top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top must be continuous.
7. Large and complex landscape conservation efforts may need to periodically focus, or scale back, their scope in order to achieve priority objectives.
8. Reassessment must be mandatory and regularly scheduled. There must be a regular process to assess the effectiveness of landscape conservation, and when inefficiencies or mission creep are identified, this must be corrected. In some cases, a thorough “re-boot” may be appropriate and encouraged by the management authorities. No landscape conservation initiative should be considered as a permanent, on-going entity.

Overview of the Southeast Region

The Southeast region includes 15 states and the Caribbean territories of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. It is home to approximately 129 million people, and is the fastest growing region of the United States. By 2060, growth is projected to increase to 163 million people.

Ecologically, the Southeast is rich in biodiversity. A total of 6,682 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) have been identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. Currently, over 300 species are being evaluated by the FWS for possible listing under the Endangered Species Act. A large percentage of SGCN and at-risk species are aquatic. The Southeast is considered to be a global hotspot for aquatic biodiversity. Over 1,800 species of fishes, freshwater mussels, freshwater snails, turtles and crayfish can

be found in Southeastern watersheds. More than 500 of these are endemic to these states or in individual watersheds within them. More than 70 major river basins in the region link with the South Atlantic-Gulf of Mexico coastline to nourish and support rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, reservoirs and the bulk of the country's wetlands. The drainage basin for the Gulf of Mexico, which includes the area drained by the Mississippi River, includes almost 60 percent of the land in the Continental US. Over 50 percent of coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states are found in the region.

The Southeast is home to important forest resources, including longleaf and shortleaf pine, coastal forests, bottomland hardwoods, upland and mixed hardwood forests and high elevation montane forests. These forest systems support a broad diversity of plant and animal life, provide critical protection to surface drinking water and support a thriving timber products industry. The majority of the forestlands in the 13 Southeastern states are privately owned, with two thirds owned by families or individuals. In the last 20 years, the forest products industry has divested more than three fourths of its forestland holdings, with timberland investment management organizations and real estate investment trusts acquiring the majority of these lands. An important landscape conservation issue for the future is how these lands will be managed, and how future land transactions will affect not only the forest products industry, but wildlife conservation as well. It's projected that by 2060 up to twenty-three million acres of forestlands (the size of the state of South Carolina) could be lost as a result of forestland conversion to urban and non-forested land uses.

The Southeast has 2,942 miles of coastline, including both the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico. NOAA estimates that Southeastern states have more than 35,000 miles of tidal shorelines. These coastal resources are a source of great ecological and recreational value for American citizens. They are also severely threatened by anthropomorphic pressures such as overdevelopment and energy extraction, which has resulted in enormous loss of coastal natural features, such as tidal marshes, coastal lakes, and beaches and dunes. The Southeastern coastlands are also threatened by sea level rise, and increasingly strong hurricanes and tropical storms.

Southeastern grasslands, including prairies, savannahs, barrens, and other grassland ecotypes, have suffered major habitat losses in the last 50 years. These losses are correlated with accompanying declines of grassland-dependent wildlife species. Iconic game species such as the Northern bobwhite have experienced population declines exceeding 90 percent in many Southeastern states, and nearly one-third of all rare Southeastern land vertebrates require or prefer grasslands.

The Southeast has a rich culture of hunting, fishing, wildlife watching and many other outdoor-related activities, including boating, camping, kayaking, sailing, hiking, etc. These outdoor recreational pursuits strengthen the region's economy, generating billions of dollars in expenditures on an annual basis, and supporting state and local government operations through various tax revenues. In addition, commercial harvest of fish and other marine species in coastal and marine environments is an important economic driver for both the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.

The Southeast is also important for national security. The Department of Defense (DOD) operates numerous military installations across the region, where training of our nation's military forces occurs. For many of these installations, training needs go beyond the installation boundaries, and issues of urban encroachment on training grounds, including aerial training routes at night, have become a pressing need. To mitigate these pressures, DOD has worked with conservation organizations to implement programs to conserve landscape features outside of military installations. Approximately 50 installations in the Southeast have participated in DOD's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, conserving hundreds of thousands of acres. Three of the seven nationally recognized Sentinel Landscapes are located in the Southeast (NC, GA, and FL). These landscape conservation programs provide win-win outcomes for both fish and wildlife conservation and our country's national security needs.

Five partnerships were reviewed for this white paper including the ACJV, Appalachian LCC, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Longleaf Alliance, and Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy, to identify drivers, challenges and successes.

Key Drivers for Landscape Conservation

We recognize four over-arching drivers that should be addressed through multiple scales of landscape conservation partnerships. The expansion of the urban footprint of the Southeast is projected to more than double by 2060. Urbanization will not occur evenly across the region, but instead will be concentrated around existing metropolitan and suburban areas. Habitat fragmentation and loss of habitat connectivity will be major consequences of continued urbanization and incidences of human-wildlife conflicts will likely increase.

The availability of water, and its potential reallocation to meet the needs of growing human populations, urban environments, industrial and agricultural uses, is a concern for the conservation of the region's aquatic resources, many of which are at risk or imperiled. Water allocation and management in the Southeast is complicated by the multi-state jurisdictions over major river systems and the fact that state fish and wildlife agencies do not have the authority to manage stream flows or water usage.

According to the Southern Forest Futures Project, it is projected that 23 million acres of forests could be lost by 2060 due to increasing human populations and urbanization. These forest losses will impact forest species of conservation concern, especially in the coastal plains and the Appalachian-Cumberland sub-regions. Additionally, increased carbon emissions, decreased ability to protect freshwater supplies, a longer and more intense wildfire season, and additional stresses to other forest resources, are anticipated over the next 40 years. Population growth in the south will also put greater recreational demands on existing public forestlands.

Sea level rise is impacting and will continue to impact coastal areas along the Atlantic and Gulf Coast regions in the Southeast. In Louisiana, sea level rise combined with coastal subsidence, is resulting in massive losses of coastal marshes and wetlands. As sea levels rise, coastal wetlands will migrate inland,

causing flooding and increased storm hazards for coastal communities. The USGS has developed predictive models on where coastal wetlands are likely to migrate, and The Nature Conservancy is working with conservation partners and coastal communities to mitigate these impacts through more effective natural landscape protections in flood prone areas.

Challenges to Collaboration

In the Southeast, ensuring that all relevant organizations are invited and contributing to a partnership can be challenging. Active participation and buy-in by state fish and wildlife agencies and federal land management partners is a primary key to success, but can be difficult to achieve and maintain. Likewise, it is important that there is an understanding by all partners that these agencies have unique responsibilities and authorities, which make it essential for them to be at the table and contributing. Turf issues and personality conflicts can jeopardize partnerships and be difficult to overcome.

Partnerships that did not share a common vision struggled until a shared vision was agreed upon. Deciding on scale of a landscape conservation issue and how to scale up and down when needed and who the right partners are is also a challenge. Challenges stemming from participation such as partner fatigue (i.e., too many stakeholder initiatives and not enough staff resources to participate) were also cited as important. All the case studies acknowledged that working across partnerships was important but sometimes occurred minimally or was prohibited due to lack of staff capacity.

Formal performance metrics and strong evaluation processes were recognized as important elements of successful partnerships, but are challenging to develop, and not always a priority in the beginning stages of a collaborative effort. Partnerships should spend adequate time developing appropriate performance measures, agreed to by the partners so that progress can be measured and communicated.

Adequate and sustained funding is a challenge to forming and sustaining strong partnerships. Funding sources must be identified, advocated for and developed to implement conservation strategies. Ideally, funding should come from diverse sources, and should include in-kind resources. All partners should contribute and be recognized for their contributions including but not limited to expertise, office space, funding, or staff coordination capacity. Partnerships without diverse funding had greater challenges in maintaining viability and enthusiasm.

Successes and Strengths of Collaboration

Dedicated support staff and an effective governance structure serve as the “backbone” of a functional partnership. A coordinator and dedicated staff are essential to maintaining the viability and smooth operation of partnerships. All five Southeast case studies identified this as a critical component of their partnership’s success.

Effective partnerships also need a governance structure that is inclusive of state, federal and NGO partners but also recognizes the authorities of the partners. Effective partnerships do not seek to go beyond partners’ explicit authorities, but instead finds common ground where partners can work

together in a collaborative framework. Being adaptive and having strong partnerships and state-based engagement are keys to success. Sharing a common vision, purpose or strategic focus is also viewed as essential to a successful partnership.

Other elements that are important to the success of large-scale collaborative partnerships include coordination with existing partnerships, creation of a common and accessible comprehensive data management system, a performance evaluation framework and communication of successes and benefits of the partnership to internal and external audiences. The use of human dimensions and communication planning can incorporate more rigorous and scientific strategies into outreach.

Although working across large landscape scales is challenging, establishing priorities and a shared vision helped overcome that challenge. Related to having a shared vision, all the cases cited “shared planning” as essential. No single entity within the partnership should conduct planning in isolation.

For landscape scale conservation, good science is considered to be essential to effective decision-making and filling gaps. Rather than a one-off list of research studies, the most useful approach was found when the guiding body directed systematic and sequential science and tool development that incorporated stakeholder input and met important needs.

Summary/Conclusions

The challenges of conservation in the 21st century require collaborative approaches to be successful. The partnerships we consulted all recognized that the issues they work on transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and require a multi-organizational conservation approach to be successful. Most of the major landscapes and aquatic habitat systems in the Southeast cross state lines, making it necessary to develop multi-state strategies to achieve common conservation goals and landscape sustainability. Each partnership was made up of organizations from multiple state and federal agencies and NGOs.

The Southeast has numerous partnerships dedicated to conservation. Most have restrictive reaches, either geographically, taxonomically, or temporally. While this is not necessarily a good or bad thing, recognition of the scale of the partnership’s mission and vision is an important prerequisite to effective outcomes. In at least one case (i.e. Atlantic Coast Joint Venture), the focus of the partnership was narrowed to a limited number of species and one habitat system.

The “backbone” to a successful partnership is coordination. Partnerships examined in the Southeast universally agreed that having a coordinator was essential to maintaining the partnership and ensuring its success. SECAS was the only partnership reviewed that provides an overarching approach to landscape conservation in the Southeast. The partnerships we reviewed are each effective in their own right, and it is important to recognize geographic and taxonomic scale in evaluating the success or lack thereof of a specific partnership. We see SECAS as an overarching framework that can both incorporate the objectives of more narrowly focused conservation partnerships, and provide a larger context for

those partnerships to align their objectives and goals.

One particular challenge to maintaining the viability of SECAS will be restructuring its organizational framework. To date, SECAS has relied on LCCs and the Southeast Climate Science Center for funding, science capabilities and partnership forums. However, under new direction from the Department of Interior (DOI), LCCs are transitioning into new arrangements or are disassembling. During this uncertain time period, it is challenging to determine how best to provide the components of an effective partnership to sustain the vision of SECAS. In the Southeast, the FWS is exploring avenues of continuing their participation in SECAS by working more directly with the states to help integrate State Wildlife Action Plans across state jurisdictions and with the SECAS Blueprint. As a state-led initiative, SECAS provides a unifying framework for aligning conservation actions with state priorities, as well as incorporating FWS, DOI, and other federal interests through the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group.

Overview of the Midwest Region

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, three Canadian provinces, and all or parts of FWS Regions 3, 4, and 6. The land formations and ecoregions vary from grasslands and prairies to forests and major lake and river systems. As the heart of the Corn Belt, the majority of the land is in private ownership and is used for agriculture and livestock production. Silvicultural and energy production are other important landuses. Outdoor recreation tourism is important recreationally and economically.

A wide diversity of fish and wildlife, including migratory species, are found in the Midwest. Since there is a relatively small percentage of dedicated conservation land, most of the land has been converted to intensively managed and cultivated landscapes, impacting habitat for resident and migratory species. The conservation of fish and wildlife is largely dependent upon the support and participation by private landowners in partnerships with state, federal and local organizations. Collaboration across geo-political boundaries, industry sectors and interests is important to aligning conservation where it is feasible.

Four partnerships were reviewed in the Midwest. The Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy is a coalition of states and other organizations working to benefit monarch butterflies across their range. This partnership is governed by a board made up of state fish and wildlife agencies and several ex officio members. The Missouri Comprehensive Conservation Strategy is a process that informs decision-making by identifying areas that offer the greatest opportunities for sustainable conservation within Missouri. The Sandhills Task Force is a local organization governed by ranchers, livestock organizations, state and federal agencies and NGOs that discusses issues and concerns in Nebraska's Sandhill region and promotes projects that help sustain livestock and wildlife. The Upper Mississippi River Restoration Project is a partnership led by the Army Corps of Engineers and USGS to meet legislatively mandated habitat and navigation goals and inform management.

Although numerous other landscape-level partnerships exist in the Midwest, such as LCCs, JVs, and NFHPs, the review was limited to collaborations unique to the region and to specific scales and systems. The Great Lakes Commission was discussed but was not formally reviewed.

Key Drivers for Landscape Conservation

The review of partnerships revealed that there were several primary drivers that led to landscape collaboration in the Midwest. The principal driver for creation of the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy was the need to respond to a potential federal Endangered Species Act listing. The partners aligned around the goal of identifying and/or providing voluntary conservation to avoid the need to list. Funding prioritization and project identification were the genesis for the Missouri Comprehensive Conservation Strategy and the need for conflict resolution, trust building and project prioritization led to the formation of the Sandhills Task Force.

Challenges to Collaboration

Several challenges to successful landscape conservation collaboration were identified in the Midwest. Foremost was the challenge that some impacts to fish and wildlife are so big or outside the control of the conservation community that finding a solution or common ground is not possible. Conflict among partners or individuals is an important challenge that can prevent collaboration from happening or cause collaborators to withdraw or cease participation if it goes unresolved. Insufficient or reduction in funding for landscape conservation is another key challenge in the Midwest. Heavy workloads and lack of time by key stakeholders can lead to “meeting fatigue”. Uncommon interests by partners is another barrier to collaboration in the Midwest.

Successes and Strengths of Collaboration

One key element of success is a shared vision or agreement by a partnership that a problem exists and can or needs to be solved. A shared vision, mission and goals can orient a group in a common direction and result in a shared purpose. If there is confusion on direction or if there are rapidly changing goals, partners will fall away from the process, impeding work and promoting apathy.

Agreeing on a set of priorities, particularly if they are informed by State Wildlife Action Plans or other conservation plans, like the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, is important to the success of a partnership. The Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy relied on the plans of individual states but was also informed by science from the FWS and USGS. The Sandhills Task Force created its own strategic plan but utilized the Nebraska State Wildlife Action Plan, FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Strategic Plan, North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Rainwater Basin JV implementation plans to help establish priorities.

Agreement on science needs and questions is also a key to success. In some cases, existing science was available, in other cases the partnership acquired the science. The ability to secure funding through grants or partner contributions was critical. In the case of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program, the greatest need was long-term research and monitoring. In Missouri, the partnership is

working to develop a landscape health index through rapid assessments to monitor progress in achieving a future desired condition.

Thoughtful consideration of partnership boundaries is another key to success. In the case of the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy, the boundary was based on the range of a species. Boundaries used for the Missouri Comprehensive Conservation Strategy were based on ranking criteria and GIS analysis that included many factors. The Sandhills Task Force established its boundary based on ecoregion and landform. The boundary of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Project was established legislatively.

A clear point of contact and coordination is an ingredient of successful partnerships. Landscape scale work is complex, requires the involvement of many partners and organizations, and must have a coordinator. A coordinator can help participants see progress, be an arbitrator when disagreements arise and steer the ship when course corrections are needed as priorities or conditions change. Under poor coordination, factions can form, leading to work diversion and distraction that can compromise the goals of the partnership. When this happens, partners will disengage, leading to work disruption.

A sound organizational structure with the right people and processes in place is essential to achieving goals and defining roles. When roles are well-defined, engagement by partners is higher, teams function well, tasks are accomplished and disagreements are overcome. An organizational structure can guide who has the appropriate authority to make timely decisions and manage teams so those with the right skill sets are doing the work. The partnership organization must be seen as credible. For example, the Sandhills Task Force was well known and respected both within and outside the geography in which it works.

Two other keys to success include access to the participant's time and reliable funding. Both are needed to accomplish goals, fill data gaps and employ adaptive management. When time and financial resources are scarce, interest and participation in the partnership can wane. In addition, successful partnerships clearly define outcomes, measure progress and show success. The use of metrics can be important to communicate how partners are contributing and how credible the partnership is. In the absence of well-defined outcomes and progress, support by partnership leaders will diminish.

Summary and Conclusions

There are large-scale challenges to healthy fish and wildlife in the Midwest that no one single state can tackle alone. Landscape conservation collaboratives provide space to convene, discuss, plan and implement work to meet shared priorities. Fear and opportunity often bring people to the table and landscape conservation can serve as a means to resolve conflict but also provides a forum to bring diverse partners (e.g. agriculture and energy sectors) together to collaborate.

Despite the many challenges of working at landscape scales (e.g. partner fatigue, conflict, lack of funding and capacity, etc.) we can point to successes. When there is common purpose such as preventing the

listing of the monarch butterfly or shared priorities such as implementing State Wildlife Action Plans, partnerships can take root and flourish. Partnership boundaries can be relatively small (i.e. Nebraska Sandhills region) or expansive (i.e. Upper Mississippi River Restoration Project), but critical factors such as agreeing upfront on those boundaries and considering capacity for coordination, funding and organizational structure at the onset of partnership development, can help ensure success.

Overview of the Western Region

The Western region is the largest of the four geographic areas being evaluated in this white paper, and includes nineteen states, three Canadian provinces and one Canadian Territory. It is characterized by expansive landscapes that fall under a myriad of ownerships and jurisdictional authorities. Some western states are comprised of almost entirely federally-administered lands while others are nearly all private in ownership. Most western states also contain some smaller proportions of land owned by the state or administered under tribal authorities. Although similarities exist between some, there is no standard model of land ownership or jurisdictional authority that shapes collaboration in landscape conservation efforts throughout the Western region.

Ecologically the Western region is diverse and includes, but is not limited to marine environments, coastal rain forests, deserts, riverine systems, coniferous forests, sagebrush steppes and alpine mountain tops. The Western region is immense in size and ecological diversity. The plant and animals species occupying the Western region vary considerably in their ecological distributions and requirements. Home range size, distribution, density, and life history of plants and animals vary considerably and are important factors in determining landscape conservation collaboration in this region.

The unique combination of highly diverse ecosystems and vast landscapes, coupled with complex and different jurisdictional authorities, highlights the importance of scale. Collaborative conservation efforts in large landscapes often contain a broad range of stakeholders who, across large geographies and sparsely populated areas, struggle to find efficient and effective engagement opportunities that do not require extensive travel and time. The multiple-use mandate of some federal land management agencies can further exacerbate the challenges of adequate stakeholder representation as the numerous issues naturally invite many and varied perspectives.

The Western region's geographic, demographic, political, and ecological uniqueness is evident in the elements of collaboration challenges as well as in the elements of collaboration successes. Thirteen landscape conservation partnerships were assessed, including two LCCs, two JVs, and nine state-led or state-engaged partnerships.

Key Drivers for Landscape Conservation

Drivers provide the catalyzing energy for landscape conservation. A principal driver in the West is threats from new or potential federal Endangered Species Act listing and the need to collaborate on recovery of species that have already been listed. Other drivers include desired regulatory certainty for

industry, land or water use conflicts, the health of fish and wildlife and economic sustainability of rural communities. These drivers are not independent of one another and multiple related drivers often serve as the basis for collaboration.

Challenges to Collaboration

Landscape conservation collaboration challenges are numerous and appear to have a multiplicative effect as they can cascade when present in a partnership effort. Many existing partnerships can reference a small number of key challenges that previously or presently existed. Partnerships in which several key challenges remain without successful resolution will at best be ineffectual and at worst fail and disband.

Challenges to initiating landscape conservation can include the lack of a clear catalyst to bring people together, lack of inclusion of all affected or interested stakeholders and political resistance from key people with heightened and imbalanced influence or authority. Partnerships that can address these issues early on are much more likely to be successful. The lack of involvement by states in directing LCC design and roll out led to initial mistrust and concerns by states about capacity going towards FWS-led efforts rather than those of the states further diminished support.

Maintaining an effective partnership relies on overcoming a different set of challenges such as resistance to alternative perspectives, lack of structure or coordination, lack of funding, lack of co-produced and co-supported actionable science, lack of clear objectives and lack of a strategy and meaningful actionable tasks. These challenges can be exacerbated by high rates of personnel turnover, intermittent partner engagement, disproportionate levels of responsibilities which can foster resentment, and selection of an inappropriate scale for the collaborative. Scale must match species attributes, jurisdictional authorities and interests of stakeholders while simultaneously having the appropriate scope to achieve identified objectives. Furthermore, partners must commit to and trust the collaborative will of the partnership.

Conservation delivery through a landscape conservation collaborative can also have challenges. A lack of monitoring or monitoring the wrong things can limit opportunities to evaluate success or determine failure and limits the ability to use adaptive management. Not unrelated to the challenge of inadequate or inappropriate monitoring is the challenge of stakeholder unwillingness to own outcomes, particularly when immediate success is not demonstrated.

Successes and Strengths of Collaboration

The West is characterized by multiple land use mandates, diverse stakeholders, and a strong commitment to State rights. As such, landscape conservation partnerships in the West, perhaps more so than in other regions, must bring together diverse perspectives and forge a shared vision. Partnerships with fish and wildlife management objectives must involve leadership by state fish and wildlife agencies and participation by key stakeholders such as federal agencies, NGOs, private landowners and industry. The success of the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) and Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) grew

out of a high level of initial involvement and investment by state fish and wildlife agencies. This played a key role in the formation, maturation, and evolution of the partnerships. Likewise, the Western Native Trout Initiative and Lesser Prairie Chicken Range-wide Conservation Plan were built through early involvement and support by state fish and wildlife agency leaders through WAFWA.

These and other successful landscape conservation collaborations in the West share a set of unique elements. Although one or more elements of success may be absent from a successful partnership, these shortcomings can be offset by other elements. A key determinant of success is the willingness of individual partners to find common ground and form strong and resilient relationships. Successful partnerships, while created to address challenging natural resource issues, often spawned lasting personal friendships built on trust and honesty. Although difficult to quantify, the importance of human relationships should not be underestimated. Successful landscape conservation partnerships in the West share a clear and compelling need, vision, shared priorities, catalyst, sense of urgency, reasonable timeline, inclusiveness and political support from key influencers or authorities.

Maintaining an effective collaborative partnership relies on a different set of elements that includes group evolution toward a shared motivating value and unifying theme, clear and transparently defined roles and responsibilities with assignments matching appropriate levels of authority or expertise, financial support, co-produced and co-supported actionable science, well-identified objectives, clear strategy to achieve objectives, and meaningful actionable tasks. Other important elements include consistency in leadership or an issue champion, consistent participation, shared and equitable levels of responsibilities and selection of an appropriate scale for the collaborative. Scale must be matched to species attributes as well as jurisdictional authorities and interests of stakeholders, as noted in the challenges above.

Successful conservation delivery through a landscape conservation collaboration should include monitoring to evaluate success or determine failure with appropriate management and decision-making in response. In successful partnerships there also appears to be a high degree of willingness to own the outcome, whatever that may be. Successful landscape conservation partnerships transparently monitor progress toward clearly defined objectives and are willing to accept and own outcomes.

Summary and Conclusions

It is likely that the single most important factor affecting the success or failure of the thirteen landscape conservation partnership we evaluated lies neither in the words “landscape” or “conservation” but rather “partnership”. Challenges and successes can all be addressed through structures, gestures and actions focused on building or strengthening relationships. The elements that most effectively build trust and collaboration are clearly some of the most essential in landscape conservation partnerships. Critical to trust and relationship building is the need to be inclusive and involve scale-appropriate groups that represent affected or interested stakeholders. Other elements include trust-facilitated group evolution towards unifying themes, clear expectations through well-defined objectives, co-production of actionable science, shared implementation through leveraged responsibilities, persistent political and

financial support, consistency of engaged personnel, an issue champion, joint and equitable ownership of actions and outcomes and appropriate monitoring and adaptive responses. Successful partnerships evolve out of a clear need, shared vision, and a strong commitment by partners to coordination, communication, and lasting relationships. The take home message in the West is that future successful landscape conservation collaboration will be built on a continued focus on effective relationships.

DISCUSSION

The approaches to landscape conservation varied substantially among the four regions. In the Northeast, long-established relationships and participation in regional planning for species and habitats made the assimilation of LCCs easier and more successful. LCCs in the Northeast complemented and supported region-wide planning and conservation delivery and built a foundation for LCC leadership in building a shared, multi-species, regional conservation design. Landscape conservation in the Northeast was not without challenges. A willingness to be flexible (e.g. realign LCC boundaries to NEAFWA boundaries), use the capacity of partners like the Wildlife Management Institute to provide capacity for the RCN and the ability to refocus and narrow priorities (i.e. ACJV) were important adaptations that help make landscape conservation collaboration successful.

In the Southeast, SEAFWA has been the convener of region-wide planning aimed at developing a shared future desired condition for the landscape that partners can implement through their delivery mechanisms and authorities. The Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy provides the larger context for partners to align their goals and objectives. Coordination, capacity and funding from the LCCs and Climate Science Centers provided critical science and forums for collaboration that contributed to the initial success of SECAS. However, future budget uncertainties are creating new challenges that could threaten the sustainability of the initiative.

In the Midwest, a shared vision to take action to conserve the monarch butterfly catalyzed MAFWA to collaborate with the FWS and other partners to develop a landscape conservation strategy. Key to this effort was funding for staff capacity from the FWS and partners and the appointment of FWS personnel with a strong understanding of and relationship with state fish and wildlife agency leaders. Expansion of this collaborative approach to address other challenges in the Midwest could be a natural next step.

In the West, landscapes are expansive, where single states are larger than some entire regions of the US. In addition, a high percentage of federal ownership and complex endangered species issues presents unique challenges and approaches to landscape conservation. WAFWA has taken a prominent role in planning and conservation for iconic species such as Lesser Prairie Chickens and Sage Grouse. Unlike in other geographically smaller regions, FWS-led efforts like LCCs were not universally seen as relevant or needed to meet state priorities.

Drivers are the catalysts that initiate landscape partnerships. The principal drivers cited in the regional reviews included federal Endangered Species Act listing, conflict resolution and largescale threats to fish

and wildlife like habitat loss, water availability, climate change and sea level rise. The need for project prioritization and industry regulatory certainty were also cited as drivers. Drivers can spur action that is reactive or proactive to an issue.

Drivers may initiate the development of a landscape conservation collaborative, but other factors such as the desire for capacity often enhance the need. These capacities include the need for science, information collection and sharing, modeling, tool and database development, coordination and communication strategies. Many of these would be unattainable or overly burdensome for a single agency or partner to do on their own.

The nature of landscape conservation demands collaboration and coordination over a large scale. There can be inherent complexities such as land ownership that is heavily weighted towards federal or private ownership, multiple jurisdictions of authority, vast and ecologically diverse landscapes, complex land use and rapidly changing demographics.

The three most frequently cited challenges to landscape conservation were boundaries, funding and meeting fatigue. When key stakeholders are not involved early in the process to designate and establish boundaries and a shared vision, participation in and support for the partnership can be compromised. External funding or funding from partners to support coordination and science capacity is key to getting a partnership started and sustaining it. Current budget uncertainties with FWS Science Applications are causing some LCC partnerships to pause or dismantle. The demands on the time of state fish and wildlife agency Directors and their staff make it difficult to commit to partnership requests because of heavy workloads and insufficient staff capacity. This is also true for federal agencies and partners and impacts the ability of for engagement with all key players.

Having too many partners at the table can lead to issue dilution and can increase the rate of partner turnover. Treating all parties as equal voices when authorities and responsibilities differ can impact the success of a partnership. Partnerships where the states and FWS are seen as trusted peers with due recognition with their respected authorities tend to have greater participation, success and support by the states.

Turf issues and personality conflicts were also cited as impediments to partnership development as were the lack of effective internal and external communication. Other issues that were identified as impeding partnerships include a lack of coordination, no clear purpose, poor governance structure and a lack of adequate performance measures.

There was broader agreement on the elements of successful collaboration. Having relevant, engaged and contributing partners was cited by three regions as a key to success in landscape conservation partnerships. Recognition of the unique role and responsibility of state and federal agencies participating in those partnerships was also seen as important, as was having strong governance structures. Sustained funding and conducting work that is supportive or complementary to State Wildlife

Action Plans and other state priorities was cited by three regions as important. Other strengths or elements of success that were included in more than one region were the need for a single point of contact or coordinator, having shared vision/goals/priorities, dedicated science capacity, effective communication, performance measures and agreement when developing partnership boundaries.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

State fish and wildlife agencies have provided critical leadership over the last 40 years in the development of collaborative, landscape-scale conservation initiatives. Examples of this leadership include work with partners like the FWS, Ducks Unlimited and others to develop the North American Waterfowl Management Plan which led to the establishment of JVs. These early efforts were followed by similar continental-scale plans to address the needs of all bird taxa, and a North American Fish Habitat Plan, which gave rise to Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Although a more exhaustive review of regional partnerships was not possible because of the short timeline to complete this white paper, the partnerships that were reviewed provided valuable insight into the challenges of landscape conservation and many of the key drivers for and elements of successful collaboration. One common theme across all regions is the necessity of continuing collaborative landscape conservation. This is consistent with the National Academy of Sciences 2015 report that stated “the nation needs a landscape approach to conservation”. State fish and wildlife agencies can and should continue to provide the leadership needed to forge 21st century landscape conservation partnerships, much in the way that they have led previous efforts.

While states and their partners have a track record of success for conserving fish and wildlife, the threats facing fish and wildlife today and the challenges of the future will require thoughtful, effective, and well-coordinated and well-funded collaborative partnerships that work at landscape scales. The urgency in assembling this white paper was driven in part by impending decisions by DOI and Congress on funding LCCs through the Science Applications program within the FWS. These decisions will have a bearing on existing landscape conservation collaboration across the country. From this report, it's evident that LCCs provide important leadership and capacity for landscape conservation partnerships in some regions but they were not universally seen as effective at addressing the most important priorities of all states.

Members of this working group, AFWA and the regional fish and wildlife associations, stand ready to assist DOI and Congress in developing a vision, approach and policies to advance future collaboration on landscape conservation. The juxtaposition in time of this white paper and the uncertainty of funding for LCCs does give opportunity to ponder potential opportunities and next steps to sustain existing landscape collaboration and to advance future efforts in the near term.

There is an opportunity for investment in the development of a nationwide habitat assessment tool. Several regions have assessment tools, most based in or linked to geospatial applications that distill data into functioning models, analytics, etc. We think of Nature's Network in the Northeast, SECAS in the

Southeast and the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool in the West as great examples. Depending on budgets, there may also be federal and state financial resources to fund decision support and science needs identified by DOI and partners. Is there opportunity to evaluate existing systems and determine how to develop new and integrate existing systems? Is there a way to provide access to common habitat/species data layers and decision support tools?

An opportunity for leadership exists for AFWA and its regional associations to continue to develop convening and leadership structures for emerging issues within their respective geographic areas. Improvement of collaborative efforts among AFWA states and DOI agencies will be critical to successful implementation of landscape conservation. The FWS currently has resources available through Science Applications staff, pending budget appropriations, to facilitate science-based landscape level planning. There may be an opportunity to distribute funds and staff resources in new or aggregated ways, improving capacity to meet the needs and priorities of landscape partnerships.

We see an opportunity for expanded use of landscape conservation principles across the country. The need and opportunities for landscape conservation are growing and flexibility, adaptability, shared priorities and respect for management authorities will be essential to success. Is there value in allocating some resources to agencies with primary responsibility for fish and wildlife to work proactively on issues while retaining some capacity for flexible ad hoc organization around emerging or pressing issues?

There is an opportunity to better inform partners and stakeholders on the measurement of performance and success. We found that there is not a well-developed performance evaluation framework for large scale collaborative efforts. The LCC Network began working on this type of framework as a result of the National Academy of Sciences review. This work could be piloted and modified to help state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, NGOs, and others involved in large scale conservation to report on their successes in a consistent way that resonates with policy makers.

The charge of the Landscape Conservation Working Group that assembled this white paper was not to make concrete recommendations on how landscape conservation should be conducted in the future. To do that would require more time and broader input from states, federal agencies and conservation partners. However, we do make the following recommendations to help advance the concept and practice of landscape conservation.

1. Establish a Working Group between AFWA and FWS leadership to identify immediate opportunities to continue and expand work on shared landscape conservation priorities through state-led partnerships. Investments in leadership, collaborative approaches, decision-support tools, science, and agency capacity are critically needed.
2. The charter of the Landscape Conservation Working Group should be extended to continue the dialogue and develop additional resources that can be used by policy-makers in the coming year to assess and provide direction on landscape conservation. Alternatively AFWA could engage a

partner like the Wildlife Management Institute to coordinate such an effort.

3. Expand on the best practices developed in the Northeast to include all regions of the US.
4. Host a forum to gather input from broader audiences including NGOs to seek input on the direction and approach to landscape conservation and develop specific policy recommendations related to funding needs and other challenges identified in this report.