NATIONAL
FISH HABITAT
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Meeting Book for The National Fish Habitat Board

March 7-8, 2018
(Room 107A)
Press Room

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
USDA Whitten Building
1400 Jefferson Drive SW, The Press Room 107a
Washington, D.C.
March 7 - 8, 2018

Agenda and Board Book Tabs

Conference line: 800.768.2983, **Passcode:** 8383462
WebEx link: https://cc.callinfo.com/r/1ecm5px6e819v&eom

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome from USFS		Carl Lucero (*USFS, Director of Landscape Restoration & Ecosystem Services Research*)
9:15 – 9:30	Welcome, Attendance, Introductions, and Housekeeping *Desired outcomes:* • **Board action** to approve the agenda and January meeting summary. • **Board awareness** of future meeting schedule and locations.		Tom Champeau (*Board Chair – Florida FWCC*)
9:30 – 9:45	Update on Letter to Department of Interior *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of the DOI letter and any response.		Tom Champeau (*Board Chair – Florida FWCC*)
9:45 – 10:15	Science & Data Committee Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** and understanding of committee accomplishments as they relate to 2018 Board priorities.	Tab 1	Gary Whelan *(SDC Co-Chair - Board Staff/MI DNR)* & Chris Moore *(Board co-chair/MAFMC*)
10:15 – 10:45	Communications Committee Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of the progress on the committee's 2018 work plan.	Tab 2	Ryan Roberts *(Board Staff/AFWA)*
10:45 – 11:15	Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Update		Tom Champeau (*Board Chair – Florida FWCC*) & Ed Schriever (*Board Member – WAFWA)*

11:15 – 11:30	2018 FHP Review *Desired outcome:* • **Board action** to approve the membership of that review team.	Tab 3	Bryan Moore (*Board Member Proxy/Trout Unlimited)*
11:30 – 12:00	Beyond the Pond Fundraising Action Plan Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of the status of a Beyond the Pond Fundraising Action Plan.	Tab 4	Ryan Roberts *(Board Staff/AFWA)*
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH		
1:00 – 2:30	FHP & Board Engagement *Desired outcome:* • Discuss with and get input from FHPs on topics from the March 2016 Executive Session.	Tab 5	Group discussion facilitated by Tom Champeau (*Board Chair – Florida FWCC*)
2:30 – 3:00	Southeast Alaska FHP Presentation	Tab 6	Debbie Hart (*Coordinator/ Southeast Alaska FHP)*
3:00 – 3:30	EPA Presentation		Doug Norton (*Healthy Watershed Coordinator/EPA*)
3:30 – 4:00	Pacific Lamprey FHP Presentation		Bob Rose (*Co-chair of Conservation Team for FHP/Pacific Lamprey FHP*)
4:00 – 5:00	Restore America's Estuaries		Elsa Schwartz (*Senior Director for Restoration & Administration/Restore America's Estuaries*)
5:00	Adjourn		
5:30	Happy Hour at Scarlet Oak DC 909 New Jersey Ave SE, Washington, DC 20003 (2 blocks from the Navy Yard Ballpark Metro station – Green Line)		

Thursday, March 8, 2018

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome & Housekeeping		Tom Champeau (*Board Chair – Florida FWCC*)
9:15 – 10:15	NOAA Recreational Fisheries *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of recent activities at NOAA Fisheries focused on recreational fisheries.	Tab 7	Tim Sartwell *(NOAA Fisheries - Recreational Fishing)*
10:15 – 10:30	Legislation Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of and **engagement** on the National Fish Habitat Conservation through Partnership Act.	Tab 8	Mike Leonard (*Board Member/Sportfishing)* and Christy Plummer (*Board Member/Sportfishing)*
10:30 – 11:00	Multistate Grant Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of final National Conservation Need supporting NFHP.	Tab 9	Ryan Roberts *(Board Staff/AFWA)*
11:00 – 11:45	AFS/NFHP Award Proposal *Desired outcome:* • **Board action** to determine whether to partner with AFS to launch this new "Fish Habitat Hero" award.	Tab 10	Tom Bigford (*AFS*)
12:00	Adjourn		

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 call on January 16th to brief the Committee on Board actions, funding status, and assessment status. Another call will be scheduled in late March to brief Committee members on the Board Meeting.
- Work will begin shortly to fill the co-Chair vacancy from Peter Ruhl's (USGS) departure as a result of new work assignments.

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.
- Coastal
  - Work has started on the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment using the Board approved assessment direction. The Assessment Steering Committee (Chris Moore, Chair) convened a call on January 11th that provided clear support for the assessment process and lead to the development of three project teams (inshore, offshore, and habitat footprint) to assist in the work. The near term focus will be on developing the scope of the assessment and the role of each of the project teams.
  - The Assessment Framework Document is attached as Appendix 1 and a summary of recommendations from the January 11th meeting is attached as Appendix 2.

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

- No new funding has been received since the last Board update so efforts at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) have been focused on keeping the existing data system alive.
- Kate Sherman (PSMFC) has contacted all FHP coordinators, and met with 16 of 19 FHP coordinators (other 3 still reaching out to), and all of these coordinators have either:

  - discussed a plan for reviewing data and/or are currently 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.
- Ongoing project work:
  - 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.

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 workflows 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 workflows can 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.

Additional Board Book Materials:

- Tab 1a – Northeast Habitat Assessment 2017-2019
- Tab 1b – Habitat Assessment Steering Committee Summary January 11, 2018

Report Prepared By:

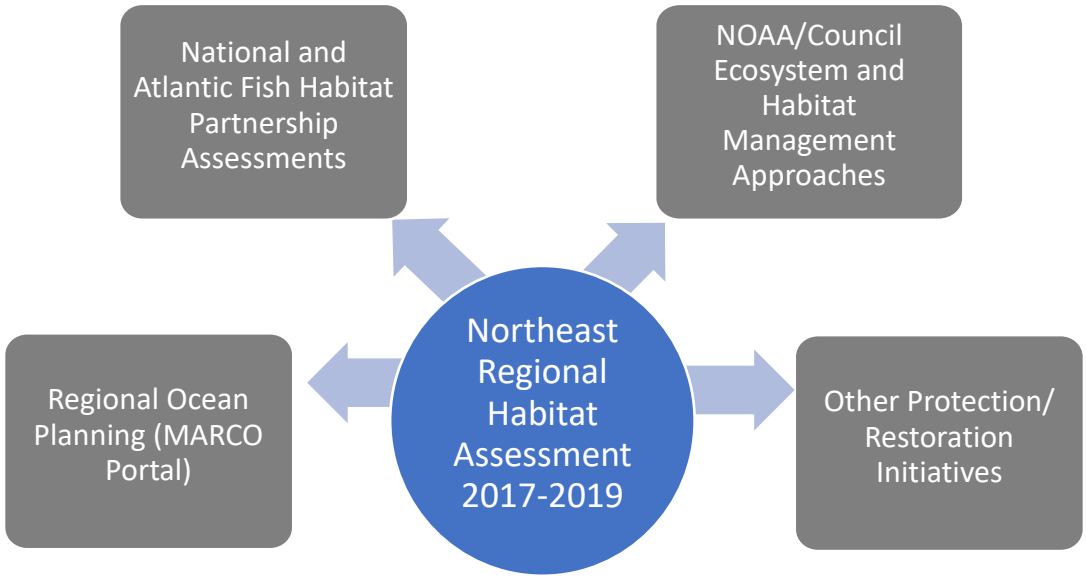
Gary Whelan, MI Department of Natural Resources
February 12, 2018

Draft – 12/01/2017

Regional Habitat Assessment 2017-2019

Purpose: To describe and characterize estuarine, coastal, and offshore fish habitat in the Northeast using a partnership driven approach.

Expected Outcome: This partner driven initiative will develop information and tools to support the National Fish Habitat Assessment[1], provide spatial products that describe fish habitat for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body data portals (MARCO), support the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) essential fish habitat (EFH) and habitat area of particular concern (HAPC) descriptions as well as other ecosystem related management outcomes, and provide tools and information to the region to support other state or regional habitat protection and restoration initiatives.



Geographic scope: The scope will include Northeast US estuarine and marine waters, north of Cape Hatteras, NC. The full scope of the project will be refined by the project steering committee.

Background: As amended in 1997, the Magnuson-Stevens Act states that the purpose of the EFH mandate is to protect and conserve "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity." NOAA Fisheries and the regional fishery management councils work together to update EFH designations for the fish stocks in federal fishery management plans to support the EFH consultation process, an important procedural tool which requires other federal agencies to consult with NOAA Fisheries on projects that may impact fish habitat. More detailed habitat information is also needed to identify Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs), which are specific areas that can be targeted for habitat conservation, protection, or research. The Council has a

[1] National Fish Habitat Partnership, http://www.fishhabitat.org/

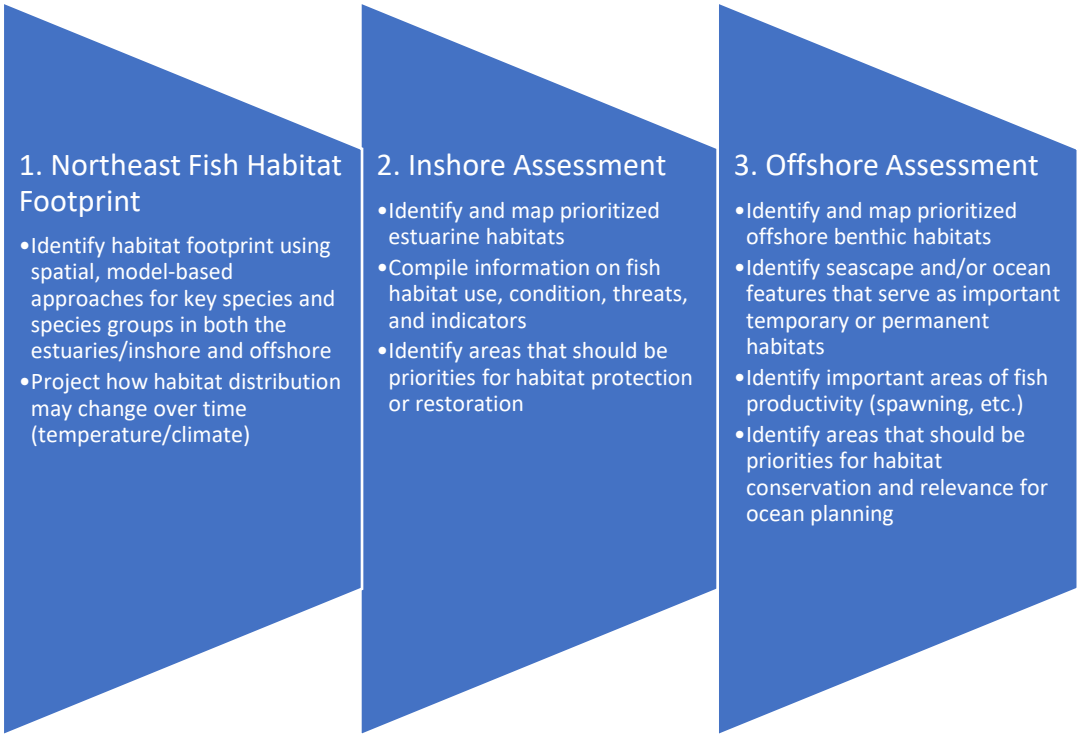
need to meet its regulatory requirements for EFH review while advancing policies set forward in its new Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Guidance Document.[2]

In addition, the National Fish Habitat Assessment (2010 and 2015), has had limited success providing information on coastal fish habitat at the scale needed to support its regional partners such as Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP). Both state agencies and ACFHP, while not subject to the EFH mandate, address coastal zone development impacts on fish habitat and would benefit from consolidated, spatial information on fish habitats within state waters.

There is also a growing commitment to ecosystem-based fisheries management on the part of the Council and NOAA Fisheries. Fish habitat information at appropriate scales is needed to support and advance these activities.

Clearly, new and innovative approaches are needed to integrate information available from a variety of sources throughout the region and develop improved, spatially informative descriptions of habitat to support decisions made by fisheries and habitat managers, as well as decisions related to ecosystem and ocean planning within this region.

Deliverables: An integrative, evaluation of fish habitat in the Northeast.



[2] The Council's EAFM Guidance Document (http://www.mafmc.org/eafm/) states that EFH should be strengthened by considering essential habitat from a multispecies/ecosystem perspective, emphasizing the connectivity between species and life history stages, and inshore and offshore habitats. In addition, it was noted that approaches should be developed that recognize and account for climate change.

1. Identify the footprint of fish habitat and how it is changing.

Using the best available information on fish life history and habitat use in the marine and estuarine environments, model-based approaches[3] will be developed to describe the footprint of fish habitat for key species and species groups that are state and federal fisheries management priorities. Model based approaches will allow the development of longer-term projections into how that habitat may change over time – and allow managers to more directly consider these climate/temperature driven impacts and their implications to habitat and fish in the region.

This tool will specifically support the designation of EFH for the Council, and provide the broad map products and tools needed to trigger EFH consultations with NOAA Fisheries in the region.

2. Conduct an inshore assessment.

This project will compile/review/and inventory information, including maps and spatial data, on important estuarine habitats (e.g., submerged-aquatic vegetation, marine shellfish beds, etc.) based on ACFHP species-habitat matrix[4] for state/federal managed species. Depending on the needs identified by partners, these data products could include physical or biological habitat characteristics, stressors, fish survey data, or other factors as identified by the work plans. Based on knowledge of data resources and need in their region, the steering committee will identify and prioritize the kinds of information to be included in this inshore assessment.

This information will support the identification of HAPCs for the Council, as well as support the work of ACFHP and other state and regional groups focused on nearshore habitat protection and restoration. In addition, this information will be used to support the National Fish Habitat Assessment in 2020.

3. Conduct an offshore assessment.

This project will compile/review/and inventory information, including maps and spatial data, on prioritized benthic habitats for state/federally managed species. In addition, this project will identify areas in the offshore environment that are important to fish productivity, such as spawning areas, seascapes, or other permanent or temporary habitat types that play an important role for state and federally managed species. Additional model-based approaches may be developed as needed. This assessment should also examine the relationship between inshore nursery habitat use and pathways/timing of movements to offshore habitats for important fisheries. Based on knowledge of data resources and need in their region, the steering committee will identify and prioritize the kinds of information to be included in this offshore assessment.

This information will support the identification of HAPCs for the Council, as well as support the need for spatially explicit information for marine spatial planning in the region to identify and prioritize areas that are important to fish and the ecology of the offshore marine environment.

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[3] These could include approaches such as generalized additive modeling, habitat suitability modeling, or other spatially explicit approaches as appropriate.

[4] The matrix summary and publication of the results in the journal BioScience can be found here:
http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/Documents/Species%20Habitat%20Matrix%20Summary%20Report.pdf
https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/66/4/274/2464081/The-Importance-of-Benthic-Habitats-for-Coastal

Steering Committee: The steering committee will be comprised of experts from the major habitat conservation, restoration, and science partners in the region, and its coordination will be supported by staff from the Council. Members[5] should include:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Chair)
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership
Monmouth University
National Fish Habitat Partnership
New England Fishery Management Council
NOAA Fisheries Offices of Habitat Conservation (Headquarters and Region)
NOAA Fisheries Offices of Science and Technology (Ecosystems and Monitoring)
NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center
NOAA NCCOS Marine Spatial Ecology Division
The Nature Conservancy
Other needed membership as identified by the steering committee

The steering committee will provide oversight for the regional habitat assessment. The committee will identify project team(s) that will develop a detailed regional work plan to be reviewed and approved by the steering committee. This plan will identify specific products and delivery dates, any financial commitments, and participant responsibilities in completing the regional assessment.

The project team(s) will carry out the work plan, providing updates and delivering the products to the steering committee, as well as all the involved partners.

[5] Suggested membership – will depend on identification of member by agencies/entities.

Regional Habitat Steering Committee Call
Webinar held January 11, 2018 (≈1:30-2:40pm)
Summary of Recommendations

On January 11, 2018 the habitat steering committee held a call/webinar to discuss the potential development of a Northeast regional habitat assessment. The group discussed the overall proposal for work, process, participation/membership and structure of work teams, and other next steps.

Participants (Steering committee and others): Bob Beal, Julia Beaty, Steve Brown, Pat Campfield, Lou Chiarella, Jessica Coakley, Lisa Havel, Tony Macdonald, Tony Marshak, Kara Meckley, Mark Monaco, Chris Moore, Tom Nies, Tom Noji, Gary Whelan, Kate Wilke

Overall Recommendations

- Steering committee members were supportive of the proposal for an assessment and agreed that the products would be valuable for partner organizations.
- While the proposed timeline is ambitious, much of the relevant work is already occurring and can be incorporated into this assessment.
- The assessment is not intended to duplicate existing products but instead to identify what is available and identify gaps in that information.
- Members agreed it's important to identify who the products are being developed for, and how the existing information and new products can support them upfront.
- 3 project teams were recommended (inshore, offshore, habitat footprint), to develop work plans for the different component of the assessment.
- The scope of the assessment and the role of project teams should be more clearly defined.
- Overall, the assessment should compile information on the quantity and quality of habitat in our region, with a focus on specific habitat types.
- A small working group or subgroup of steering committee members should meet to develop specific guidance for the project teams on their role, and the temporal and spatial scales of the products.
- An additional steering committee member should be added (Pat Halpin).

Additional Considerations

- Many of the proposed products will align with needs for partners in the region.
    - The Mid-Atlantic Council essential fish habitat "Redo" aligns with many of the pieces in the proposed assessment.
    - Need to more clearly define what products will support the partners.
- Project teams: These will need to be well organized and coordinated.

- There are 3 teams, but redundancy is needed for some members on all 3 teams to ensure coordination and prevent team activities from overlapping too much.
- Teams need to be structured/organized to ensure feedback across teams and with the steering committee.
- Membership may be persons capable of doing the work, (have expertise) but the project teams are intended to identify what has been done and needs to be done in the work plans.
- GIS expertise should be included on each team.

❖ Scale: Depending on what is to be accomplished, may need to work on multiple scales to create base maps and products.
- The issue of scale should be addressed upfront in this process.
- Important to develop a coherent spatial framework for the products.
- Data management will be very important.
- May need to use a nested approach to developing products at different scales to support differing partner needs.
- NCCOS and others have experience dealing with these kinds of spatial data that should be considered.
- There are 3 habitat assessments being conducted on the west coast – perhaps there is information to be gleaned from how they handled scale and setting up their spatial frameworks?

❖ Some early thoughts on project teams.
- ACFHP and ASMFC very interested in inshore project and suggests Roger Pugliese may be useful on a team.
- NCCOS staff Suzanne Skelley and John Christianson may also be useful on a team.

❖ Chris Moore has agreed to chair the steering committee with Council staff providing logistics support, but is open to taking on a vice-chair, co-chair, or accepting other support from groups for logistics.

Next Steps

❖ Convene the subgroup to develop advice on the scale and scope of project, and to define the role of project teams.
❖ Reach out to the additional steering committee member identified (Pat Halpin, Duke).
❖ Identify membership for all 3 project teams.

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 February/March, we will be supporting our partnership with Rep Your Water, by adding logos and partnership descriptions on both the fishhabitat.org webpage and the beyondthepondusa.com 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.

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 at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and the AFWA Annual Meeting. 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.

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 will also be revised for use by the FHPs including background of the partnership efforts and legislation.

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: Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Evaluation

Desired outcome(s):

- **Board approval** of 2018 Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Evaluation Team

2018 Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Evaluation Team:

- Stan Allen – *Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission*
- Bryan Moore – *Trout Unlimited*
- Doug Nygren – *Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies*
- Tom Lang – *Texas Parks & Wildlife Department*
- Alex Atkinson – *NFHP Board Staff (NOAA contractor)*

Background:

To uphold the high standards set by the Action Plan, the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) adopted a set of ten measures aimed at evaluating Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) performance levels for core operational functions (i.e., coordination, scientific assessment, strategic planning, data management, project administration, communications, and outreach). At its July 2012 meeting, the Board voted to begin the first "formal" performance evaluation of FHPs in January 2015, covering a 3-year period (2012-2014), and to repeat this process every 3 years thereafter. Following the 2015 performance evaluation process, the following recommendations were adopted by the Board:

1. The 2015 FHP Evaluation Team recommends that this evaluation process be improved and repeated in 2018.
2. The Partnership Committee should include interested FHP Coordinators and Review Team members to consider and recommend improvements to the performance measure wording and overall evaluation process for Board consideration during 2016.

Update:

- During the summer of 2017, a FHP Performance Evaluation Work Group was formed to consider and recommend improvements to the performance measure wording and overall evaluation process for 2018. The working group was made up of FHP coordinators, members of the 2015 FHP Performance Evaluation Review Team, and the Partnerships Committee Tri-chairs.
- The FHP Evaluation Work Group met via conference call four times during 2017: September 6, September 18, October 25, and December 13 to discuss revisions to the FHP Performance Evaluation measures.
- The Work Group focused its efforts on comments collected by staff during the 2015 Performance Review process. Some comments could be addressed with fairly minor edits, while others required more significant revisions. A progress update was provided to the Board in October 2017.
- Upon agreeing to proposed revisions to the performance measures and the addition of one new additional measure, the Work Group made the revised FHP Performance Evaluation document and supporting spreadsheet available to the FHPs for their review. The comments received are included as additional Board Book materials. The Work Group did not make changes to the performance measures based on the comments received, however it does recommend that comments received by

the California Fish Passage Forum be considered for future FHP presentations to the Board. The Work Group also recommends that the comments received by Southwest Alaska FHP be considered as part of a broader discussion, at a later date.

- The performance measures document and supporting spreadsheet were then made available to the Partnerships Committee for final approval. Based on a concern raised during this final Partnerships Committee review period, the Tri-chairs determined that the new measure – measure 5 - should be treated as a 'pilot' measure in the 2018 Performance Evaluation. Because this is a 'pilot' measure, it will not be formally scored by the Board, but FHPs are encouraged to complete the question and self-score themselves. The Board will consider the results of the 2018 FHP Performance Evaluation and determine whether to include this measure for formal scoring in a future performance evaluation process.

Timeline:

- The 2018 performance measures and timeline were approved at the January 2018 NFHP Board meeting.
- The 2018 FHP Performance Evaluation process will be initiated by the chair of the Board no later than January 31st.
- Opportunity for Review Team to meet with FHPs at March Board meeting to go over questions and/or Review Team members available to talk to FHPs as needed before the review process starts
- FHP reports will be due back to Review Team May 18, 2018
- Review Team will score each FHP and then meet with FHP leadership to discuss score/further explanation
- Draft report by Review Team to the NFHP Board at October 2018 Board meeting
- NFHP Board approves final report by Review Team at January 2019 Board meeting

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.

Update:

RepYourWater

In September 2017, Beyond the Pond launched a marketing partnership with RepYourWater. Beyond the Pond will be the beneficiary of 1% of sales of all RepYourWater products with Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Driftless Area designs. 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. In January, RepYourWater increased their conservation giving to 3% for 2018 after surpassing a company goal of $50,000.00 raised for conservation partners in 2017. We are also exploring a partnership with RepYourWater to benefit the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership through the sale of striped bass hats and merchandise in 2018.

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

Cash in bank	$237,359.50
Outstanding contracts	
Sage Lion Media	(3,875.00)
University of Maryland	(154,963.17)
Fishers & Farmers Partnership	(36,363.64)
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	**$40,282.35**

Partnership Needs Campaign
Southeast Alaska FHP Campaign

Over this last year the Southeast Alaska FHP has been working to leverage financial resources to help implement the partnership's first fish passage project initiative - **The Tongass Top 5**. The goal: leverage resources to design fish passage sites to a 'shovel ready' state and ultimately develop a plan to restore these remaining high priority sites for improved fish passage.

Earlier this year SEAKFHP received a $100K NFWF grant to help support our effort and our partners (USFS, USFWS, TNC and TU) all stepped up to contribute additional funds to help match this grant. In addition, the USFS and USFWS are actively working now to utilize these funds to develop 5 fish passage designs on the Tongass.

As part of the NFWF grant award SEAKFHP committed to soliciting an additional $40K in match funds for this effort, to be used for additional designs or assistance with implementation. We are using the NFHP Beyond the Pond non-profit, and our associated chapter status to help raise these funds. As a result of this collaboration we can raise these funds and provide a tax deductible incentive for any donations received for this project.

Donations can be made directly to the initiative at:

https://secure.processdonation.org/beyondthepondusa/Donation.aspx?causeid=821

2018 Beyond the Pond Fundraising efforts:

Fundraising support letters to sponsor FHP workshop (October 2018)

FHP project needs for funding

Title: Fish Habitat Partnership & Board Engagement Session

Desired outcome: NFH Board and FHP members discuss high level topics from the March 2016 Board Executive Session.

Background: During the March 2016 NFH Board Meeting, the Board had an Executive Session during which a range of topics were discussed. Topics included: NFHP Board (mission, purpose, membership, committees, and staff), NFHP legislation, and FHPs (purpose, role, and relationship with the Board). Notes from those discussions are below along with action and parking lot items highlighted in red. However, the Board has not yet had an opportunity to discuss these topics with the Fish Habitat Partnerships.

The Board would like to utilize this interactive session during the March Board meeting to engage FHP staff and Board members in a two-way discussion on some high level topics (& any other suggested topics) from this Executive Session. The Board would like to hear FHP feedback and input on the following topics:

- NFHP staffing
- NFHP legislation
- Goals and objectives of NFHP
- Future of NFHP
- Relationship between FHPs and the Board (Document of Interdependence)

Materials provided: March 2016 Executive Session Meeting notes (below)

NFH Board Meeting 2016-03-08 Executive Session – Compiled Notes

Part 1 – General Board Function and Operation

Topic 1: National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) mission.

Background: What is the current NFHP Mission and what was it developed to address?
Discussion: Is the current NFHP mission still relevant today? If not, why not, and how should the mission be amended?

Major Discussion Points:

- "foster fish habitat conservation" is a bit limiting. Perhaps we need to broaden to include something like "and aquatic health" to include water quality.
- Shorten the statement to "foster fish habitat." Or "partnerships conserving fish habitat".
- We need to make marine environment explicit, not implicit. Marine environment need more emphasis in goals or strategies (e.g. Make it clear that this includes all habitats from mountain top to shelf; maybe add to first and second goals)
- It is noted that "fish" seems to include both.

- Much prior effort has gone into crafting the current version. But we need to be careful, seemingly minor things can have impact (e.g. on the Hill "protect" can be a loaded term).
- NFHP was modeled after the wetlands NAWCA (National Wetlands Conservation Act)/Joint Ventures.

Action Item: edit mission statement to make FW, estuarine, marine explicit

Topic 2: Board Purpose.

Background: What was the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board (Board) originally charged with? Why does it exist?
Discussion: Given the NFHP mission (and its accompanying goals and objectives), what is the Board's purpose over the next 10 years?

Major Discussion Points:

- Bigger funding expected and Board would help to manage.
- Private funding to generate stature and to show what we can do.
- In 2007 or 2008 national goals and objectives were established, quantitative. They turned out to be unrealistic.
- Wouldn't goals and objectives be more relevant at Partnership level? FHP goals would roll up into conservation goals.
- We also have national conservation strategies (2013)

Parking Lot: Discussion of national conservation goals and objectives

Topic 3: Board Membership.

Background: Who makes up the Board? How are members appointed and how long do they serve? What are their responsibilities?
***Discussion*:** Does the current membership support accomplishing the Board's purpose? Does the current Member appointment process and terms result in an effective Board? If not, what changes should be made?

Skipped Board Membership, how members are appointed, and how long they serve due to time constraints. Staff presented Board Member Roles and Expectations and Board members appear to be comfortable with their role.

Topic 4: Board Committees and Working Groups.

***Background*:** What Board committees and working groups are in existence and what is their purpose?
***Discussion*:** Are the committees and working groups fulfilling their purpose? Are they still relevant? If not, what changes should be made?

Major Discussion Points:

- There were questions about how/what the Federal Caucus is, whether it is being used, and whether the calls and interactions are useful. There was a question about whether there regularly-scheduled calls and who participates.

- It was noted that the Federal caucus [historically] met quarterly. There's been a lot of discussion about what the purpose of that group really is - why is it here, what is it supposed to do? Caucus would like the Board to give them direction.
- There was a question about what the NFHP Coalition is and how it works. It was noted that it is groups with interest. There is a list of 500 entities that originally supported the Action Plan in the Appendix. They constituted the "coalition". This list has slowly been replaced by a contact database.
- There was a question about how committees are formed. The answer was volunteering or the Chair makes requests to individuals. It was also noted that Science and Data Committee has a Terms of Reference, and that this should be considered for other committees.
- It was noted that there isn't tremendous Board representation [on Committees]; the Chair urged Board members to get involved and noted that a finance committee should be formed.
- It was also noted that the FHP Evaluation team currently cycles every 3 years. We discussed ongoing and annual approach to this process. This would allow for continual improvement.

Parking Lot:

- **Purpose, participants, and work (e.g. meeting tasks/charge) of the Federal Caucus**
- **Board discussion on development of a Finance/ Budget Committee**

Action Items:

- **Circulate Committee rosters and purpose [this was included in the Board Book]**
- **Circulate list of Fed Caucus members and call schedule (Cecilia)**
- **Review committees; identify ones that should include members of the Board.**

Topic 5: Board Staff.

Background: What was the original Board staffing plan and what is it now? What does the Board require from its staff?

***Discussion*:** Is the current Board staff meeting the needs of the Board and the Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs)? If not, what changes are needed?

Major Discussion Points:

- Original vs current Staffing: Fewer people, more responsibilities than original plan. It was noted that we likely need new resources and prioritizing. It was suggested that NGOs could assist with internships and staffing and that the Federal Caucus could be chaired by others.
- FWS is looking at how to use Regional Coordinators more effectively for coordination and timing of funding.
- It was noted that we don't really have a staff coordinator, executive director role for staff. In general we tend to leave too many decisions to the Board level. How can we put decision-making at the right level/place?
- There was a question of whether the AFWA staff person is overloaded with finance and communications? It was noted that in early days there was another AFWA staff, a bit more bandwidth was available and coordination was good because they were co-located.

Parking Lot: Discuss decision-making process; clarify which decisions can be made at other levels (ie. not by the Board)

Action Items:

- **NGO internships for Board staff**
- **Staff coordinator needed**
- **Finances person needed to help AFWA staff**

Topic 6: Board Funding.

Background: How is the Board funded? How has that funding been allocated over the past 10 years?
Discussion: What fiscal resources does the Board need to conduct its business? Are current funding sources sufficient? If not, where can additional funding be obtained? If no additional funding is obtained, how should funds be allocated?

Major Discussion Points:

- There was a question about who is using the project tracking database. It was noted that it isn't being used because it's still being populated, but it would be used by Congress. It was suggested that if we can identify who is using it, then we can talk with those people for funding.
- It was noted that we have passed the hat in the past, and that we need a sustainable way to allow work to progress. A funding subcommittee was noted.
- It was noted that USGS focuses on doing science for management purposes. If we could show this connection we could make a much stronger case within USGS. If we can make better tie between things like national assessment and USGS science program we could probably get better support.
- There was a question about why NRCS isn't part of this process, noting that this is where the real money comes from. It was noted that they have been invited to be on Board but have declined, however they are involved with FHPs. It was suggested that we need to identify the right person.
- It was noted that expanding funding beyond federal agencies would be extremely helpful and is necessary. This problem can't be solved on the backs of Federal agencies.
- A question was asked about whether the 501c3 will be linked or used as source of funding? It was noted that this money is almost always donor-driven and these sorts of things are almost never funded by donors.

Action Items:

- **Identify the users of Board products**
- **Connect Board Science products to management decisions**
- **Identify the right person and invite NRCS**
- **Not just Feds should be providing funding**

PART II: Legislation (10:00 – 10:30A)

Topic 7: New NFHP legislation

***Background*:** What is in the current National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act, particularly with respect to Board function? What is the status of the legislation? What are its future prospects?
Discussion: How will the new legislation help achieve the NFHP mission? How will it affect the Board? How will it affect federal agencies or other specific Board members?

Major Discussion Points:

- The history of the NFHP legislation is that it has made it through Committee 3 times in Senate. It is now in a bigger package, the Sportman's Bill (this is the more controversial package). It underwent a lot of red lining by champions of the legislation: Senators Cardon, Crapo, and Chris Carter

(Murkowski staff – really helped). Sportsman's Bill has been approved by House Committee on Environment and Public Works.

- A summary of the substance of the legislation is as follows:
  - Partnerships are the essence
  - Board has roles: set conservation priorities/goals; establish/select Partnerships; and approving/recommending projects to DOI.
  - Agriculture and Industry reps are on the Board
  - $7.2 million authorized
  - Money for technical assistance for entities committee has jurisdiction over
  - Can pay for land acquisition and water acquisition
- FWS has 2 major concerns about legislation:
  - FWS has established scoring criteria and process for allocating funds. FWS reads leg as shifting that responsibility to the Board. If FWS rejects, must provide explanation to Board. Would largely over-ride FWS process.
  - 5% cap for USFWS staffing and administration, which equates to 360K per year. 160K to MSU, would only leave 200K to headquarters. This would be a big reduction in funding available to FWS (approximately $2 million reduction). Not enough money to support Regional Coordinators. Practical result will be that FWS tech assistance will go away (currently $3 million goes to the field for coordination).
- It was noted that 5% is pretty good to get for supporting bureaucrats. And there ought to be a way to replace the lost FWS funding. There are other habitat programs that could be used to support. However, FWS notes that it is strictly limited by "NFHP budget" allocation. NFHP max will be drastically reduced and cannot ask for more when Congress has allocated X amount and specified that FWS should only get 5% of that (max).
- It was noted that other Agencies get some money (500K) also (e.g. USGS, NOAA, etc.).
  - NOAA has found other funds internally without any appropriation. NOAA might use $500K support funds for Habitat Assessment and potential FHP coordination for coastal work.
  - USGS is providing in-kind support and legislative funds would enhancement capabilities
  - EPA currently has no line item support and using in-kind
- Board may need to assist USFWS to find funds to fill hole; maybe have other agencies to step up. If/when the legislation passes this will be something for the Federal Caucus to take up.
- It was also noted that we need to think about how Partnership coordinator positions are funded. Some of those are FWS employees. To better inform Board on what proposed language means to FHPs we need to ask FHPs
- There was a question about how the 501c3 might affect this. It was noted that FWS cannot be funded by 501c3 dollars.

Parking Lot:

- **Impact of legislation on FWS.**
- **Federal Caucus Role in determining (potentially) how to use appropriated funds.**
- **Involvement of other Fed/non-Fed entitites.**

Action Items:

- **Address the "now what" question of the Legislation**
- **Ask the FHPs [about the potential impacts of the legislation].**

Break (10:30 – 10:40A)

PART III: The Board and the FHPs

(10:40A – 12:00P)

Topic 8: Purpose and role of FHPs.

Background: What is the purpose of the FHPs? What roles are the FHPs fulfilling in the conservation community?
Discussion: How are the Partnerships performing in the conservation community?

Major Discussion Points:

- The FHPs are leveraging funding 3:1, but a missing role may be raising money. FHPs are not likely raising significant private funding, though they are probably in best position to do so (and they may not know it).

Action Items:

- **Define the role of Partnerships in raising money. If it's fund raising, then train them in this (talk to WNTI)**
- **Identify the private FHP partners.**

Topic 9: Relationship between Board and FHPs.

***Background*:** What is the current relationship between the Board and the FHPs? What commitments has the Board made to the FHPs? What commitments have the FHPs made to the Board?
***Discussion*:** Is the current Board/FHP relationship achieving the NFHP mission? Is each side fulfilling its commitments? If not, what changes should be made?

Major Discussion Points:

- Need to ask the partnerships if the Board is performing/what action they need from the Board, through another survey. It was noted that the last Board survey by FHPs showed funding as a need.
- It was noted that the roles, expectations have never been thoroughly discussed and explicitly defined/agreed to.
- It was noted that the Partnership committee is understaffed.

Parking Lot: Solidify how the Board supports the FHPs; define commitments from the Board to the FHPs and vice versa.
Action Item: Ask the FHPs if the Board is performing

Topic 10: New FHPs.

***Background*:** How many FHPs are there and how did we get to that number? What are the requirements and process for becoming a FHP? What new FHPs are being proposed?
Discussion: What are the consequences of a growing number of FHPs? Do additional FHPs help achieve the NFHP mission? How should the Board and Board staff respond to inquiries about forming new FHPs?

Major Discussion Points:

- USFWS has frozen number eligible for FWS funding at 18, it is not treated as an obligation to give funding to new FHPs. Southeast Alaska does not receive any FWS funding. Lamprey group is still moving forward with their application and have been warned about funding issue.
- It was suggested that candidate partnerships Salmon in the City and Salmon Stronghold should be removed.

- It was noted that all 18 FHPs are getting 75K for base operational funding. It was however noted that as partnerships mature funding needs to change. Some don't really need coordination dollars as much, whereas for new FHPs it's a critical need. Seven coordinators are USFWS employees.
- It was noted that early on we had major gaps, but now it seems geographic coverage is good, so why would we support more FHPs?
- On the flip side, it was noted that it seems there's benefits even if you don't get FWS funding. Why limit the numbers when more partners can translate into more support from a Congress person, for example.
- There was a caution against diluting the Brand and using 501c3 as benefits.
- A question of whether there is a baseline of performance was asked; do we ever take a look at the partnerships that are performing less well? It was noted that the USFWS funding allocation process looks back at the last 3-5 years (6 criteria), and two criteria are prospective. 15 of 18 FHPs have received project based support at some level.

Action Items:

- **Remove Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, Salmon in the City, and North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership**
- **Determine which FHPs have a FWS coordinator**

Parking Lot:

- **Should acceptance of new FHPS cease?**
  - **If not, how should new FHPs be handled**
  - **Timeframe (need to develop a 5-year perspective on how to approach this issue)**
- **Approaching the candidate partners (need to come to closure on pending applications)**

Topic 11: The NFHP 501(c)(3).

Background: What is the 501(c)(3) and what is its purpose? What is the relationship between the 501(c)(3), the Board, and the FHPs?
Question: Does the current relationship between the Board, the 501(c)(3), and the FHPs support the NFHP mission?

Major Discussion Points:

- It was noted that the key to this is for FHPs to be the money raisers. Local issues, local funding. They need to learn how. So far this has not born much fruit.
- Marketing needs to happen - web site should launch this month and material is being prepared to give to potential donors.

Action Item:

- **Advance the skills of the FHPs in fundraising**

Topic 12: Marketing and Branding.

Background: What is the current branding and marketing direction? How important is branding and marketing to the Board and the FHPs?
Question: Has the current branding and marketing direction been effective? Does it need adjustment?

Major Discussion Points:

- It was noted that confusion on what NFHP is still exists.

- It was also noted that the FHPs think this is important, but want to maintain individuality. They want to link to the NFHP - they defended/fought for that name - now they should use it.
- It was noted that more coordination between FHPs is now seen - there is lots of coordination between FHPs on the west coast, and to a certain extent on the east coast, but less so in the mid-West. On the flip side, however it was noted that the FHPs still operate as distinct businesses and that there needs to be a clear link between FHPs.

Parking Lot:

- **Still lack of awareness of NFHAP – even within fisheries community – need to promote awareness.**
- **FHPs still appear/operate as distinct, unrelated entities; their relation to national network is not clear.**

Final Discussion Topic - What do the next 10 years look like?

- In 1-3 words:
  - Dynamic
  - Corporate investment
  - More protection
  - Growing
  - Explicit use of National Assessment
  - $30K to be a player as a FHP
  - Money
  - Bigger
  - Relevance
  - Relatable to groups
  - Profile
  - Governance involving FHPs
  - Recognized
  - Fund raising
  - Well defined
  - Adaptive
  - Alignment
  - More fun

SEAKFHP FISH HABITAT CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN 2017-2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership (SEAKFHP) works to support collaborative fish[1] habitat conservation in freshwater and coastal ecosystems across the southern panhandle of Alaska (southeast). Covering nearly 17 million acres of this region is the Tongass National Forest, the largest national forest in the US, and a key producer of salmon. This region is comprised of over 13,000 miles of anadromous fish habitat with numerous watersheds supporting a variety of salmon and other commercially and culturally important fish and aquatic species[2]. Freshwater and coastal habitats abound, including over 20,000 lakes and ponds, more than 18,000 miles of shoreline, over 12,000 estuaries, and countless streams and rivers in excess of 35,000 miles of fluvial habitat. The region is defined by rainforests, glacial fiords, rivers and streams, estuaries, mountains, and glaciers and ranks as one of the largest, most complex, and intact estuarine and temperate rainforest systems on earth.

Our partners include a diverse set of stakeholders who share a common interest to conserve and sustain the region's abundant and intact fish habitat, fisheries-based economy and culture, and quality of life these fish and aquatic resources bring to local communities. To achieve the broad mission of the partnership, partners have developed a strategic action plan that includes two focal Fish Habitat Conservation Strategies, one that focus on freshwater systems and a second that focuses on coastal areas of southeast. To bring context and support to those strategies the SEAKFHP Operational Strategy and Business Plan for 2017-2021 was developed and lays out the partnership's organizational and service strategies and shares the partnership's fiscal needs and goals.

In March of 2014, SEAKFHP became the 19th recognized National Fish Habitat Partnership and follows the guidelines outlined in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP, www.fishhabitat.org). Our conservation goals and proposed partnership actions are closely tied to this national plan and were first identified in the partnership's initial strategic action plan (SEAKFHP Strategic Action Plan for 2014-2016) which remains an important resource for the partnership as it provides the history of the partnership and the foundational conservation actions achieved in the region.

The intent of this revised plan is to share a blueprint on the actions the partnership will engage in over the next five years (2017-2021). Current expertise and focus of SEAKFHP partners are the habitats of resident and anadromous salmonid species in freshwater and coastal environments. In addition, this revised plan builds upon efforts achieved by the partnership from 2012-2017; strengthening the partnership's focus on facilitating restoration efforts in freshwater areas in the region and beginning to gather needed resources to bring emphasis to coastal fish habitat areas in the near future.

This plan is a living document and revised versions will be pursued to capture continued growth of the partnership in future years. In addition to guidance offered through this plan, success of the partnership relies on continued collaboration and support of regional partners including federal, state, local and tribal governments, academic and research institutions, industry, nonprofit organizations, and citizens.

[1] The Magnuson-Stevens Act, serves as a guiding document for the SEAKFHP and as such defines fish broadly as: "finfish, mollusks, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animal and plant life other than marine mammals and birds."

[2] Albert, D. and J. Schoen. 2007. "A Conservation Assessment for the Coastal Forests and Mountains Ecoregion of Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest." In the Coastal Forests and Mountains Ecoregion in Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest, edited by J. Schoen and E. Dovichin, chap. 2.1: 1–46. Anchorage, AK: Audubon Alaska and The Nature Conservancy.

SEAFKHP's VISION

Partners of the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership share a common vision to ensure healthy, thriving habitats that support all life stages of resident, anadromous, estuarine, and marine-dependent fishes across their historical range in Southeast Alaska.

SEAKFHP's MISSION

The mission of the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership is to support cooperative fish habitat conservation, restoration, and management across Southeast Alaska with consideration of the economic, social, and cultural interests of local communities in our endeavors.

SEAKFHP's 3-PART STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

SEAKFHP's strategic action plan includes three components – a two-part conservation strategy and a business plan outlining the partnerships organization structure, activities and funding strategy. Here is a brief history to its development as well as some guidance for how to use and assess these components.

The partnerships initial conservation strategy reflected both overarching principles of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and a thorough review of existing fish habitat conservation strategies at the local level in Southeast Alaska. Close attention was given to a conservation strategy[2] developed by Audubon Alaska and The Nature Conservancy and an interagency effort to develop priorities for the State of Alaska's Sustainable Salmon Fund[3]. In addition, the partnership's conservation strategy was developed as a result of pre-work performed by members of the SEAKFHP Steering Committee and other interested regional stakeholders through the use of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and initial elements of a Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process. As part of those efforts a list of risks to fish habitat and associated stressors were identified and used to develop associated conservation actions, this list has been updated and is included in Appendix 1 to reflect the unique aspects of freshwater and coastal areas in southeast and serve as a long-term planning guide as conservation efforts progress in this region.

In 2016, the SEAKFHP Steering Committee began to update the partnership's conservation strategy using two planning efforts, one focused on revising the existing conservation actions which primarily focused on freshwater systems across southeast and a separate effort focused specifically on coastal areas including estuaries and nearshore habitats. In addition, a bulk of actions by the partnership are characterized as services to partners to facilitate communication and convene partners to identify shared interests and leverage resources to produce conservation outcomes. Those efforts continue to be a core function for the partnership and are now characterized in the partnership's business plan, which fulfills the third leg of the partnership's strategic action plan.

As a result, the plan is laid out in three parts, that together make up the strategic action plan for the partnership for the next five years, 2017-2021. It includes SEAKFHP's two focal fish habitat conservation strategies, a **Freshwater Fish Habitat Conservation Strategy** and a **Coastal Fish Habitat Conservation Strategy,** that together make up the bulk of this document. The partnership's organizational and service strategies are captured in the **SEAKFHP Operational Strategy and Business Plan** that stands alone outside

[3] Skilbred, Amy, editor. 2003. Sustainable Salmon Strategy for Southeast Alaska – 2002: An Interagency Strategy to Determine Priorities for Southeast Sustainable Salmon Funds and Other Initiatives. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. 03-07, Anchorage.

this document to help convey organizational and funding capacity needed for the partnership. Together these components serve as a blueprint for the partnership to meet its mission with measurable objectives and actions that partners and others can use to gauge progress and success in advancing shared conservation actions. It is envisioned that by fostering regional conservation strategies, strengthening partner collaboration, elevating work accomplished and planned by partners, incorporating science-based information, and articulating key priorities shared across mixed-ownership watersheds and coastal areas throughout southeast, the partnership will achieve improved on-the-ground fish habitat conservation outcomes across the region.

It is important to understand a few of the nuances in the development of our conservation strategies. First, the **freshwater strategy** relies heavily on previous partnership efforts and takes advantage of more abundant freshwater assessment information resources and partnership engagement. This revised strategy has expanded to include four conservation goals with specific objectives and conservation actions. Also, actions proposed under this strategy take two forms: broad actions that have general partnership support; and specific time-bound actions that the partnership itself will undertake or lead. The reason for this is that during the planning effort partners discovered needed actions that may be outside the partnership scope but are perceived as important actions in general. Partners want those actions captured in a regional planning effort. For the **coastal strategy,** four conservation goals are also identified and due to the emerging focus for these habitats early actions have been identified rather than the more thorough objective/action process developed for the freshwater strategy. In addition, those actions are focused on partnership led actions and are anticipated to expand during a future planning effort.

SEAFKHP's conservation goals are as follows:

Freshwater fish habitat conservation goals:

- Protect fish habitats in freshwater systems in Southeast Alaska,
- Maintain water quality and quantity in those areas, and
- Restore and enhance fragmented and degraded fish habitats in impacted areas.
- Foster and support assessment and monitoring that informs fish habitat and restoration science.

Coastal fish habitat conservation goals:

- Strengthen coastal policies to maintain productive fish habitat in Southeast Alaska.
- Foster effective and sustainable assessment and monitoring networks for fisheries habitat along Southeast Alaska's coastal margin
- Identify and protect critical coastal fish habitat areas that must be sustained long-term.
- Identify degraded coastal fish habitat that can be prioritized and restored.

SEAKFHP's FRESHWATER FISH HABIAT CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Southeast Alaska's Freshwater Landscape

Southeast Alaska is a complex geography with more than 1000 islands sitting adjacent to the highest coastal mountain range in the world. The Coast Range supports some of the largest glaciers and extensive ice fields in North America. Rivers that drain these glaciated slopes play an important role providing minerals and nutrients that fertilize bays and estuaries across the region. Interactions between the land and water are strong, southeast rivers discharge about 90 cubic miles of freshwater annually and carry

nutrients from the land to nearby marine waters producing hotspots for primary productivity and create feeding areas for fish, marine mammals and birds. In addition, freshwater habitats across the region provide vital functions for fish, serving to provide needed habitat for spawning, rearing and wintering for anadromous fish species. The landscape of southeast is predominately forest and the ability to maintain habitats for fish is tied to the condition and integrity of the forests and watersheds around them. Salmon are an essential part of the region's ecology[4], they rely on the region's freshwater landscape and play a major role in transporting marine and freshwater nutrients to the forest ecosystem. Nine anadromous fish species are abundant in the region: king salmon (Chinook, *Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*), red salmon (sockeye, *O. nerka*), silver salmon (coho, *O. kisutch*), pink salmon (humpy, *O. gorbushcha*), chum salmon (dog, *O. keta*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*), cutthroat trout (*O. clarki*) and eulachon (hooligan, *Thaleichthys pacificus*).

SEAKFHP's Freshwater Fish Habitat Conservation Strategy 2017-2021

SEAKFHP's freshwater fish habitat conservation strategy was developed with consideration of nationwide strategies developed through NFHP and thorough review of existing aquatic resource assessments[5],[6] and conservation strategies[2,3] used by federal and state agencies and other entities working directly on fish habitat conservation in Southeast Alaska. Through those efforts it is clear productive freshwater fish habitat in this landscape is a product of interactions and connections among the stream, floodplain, riparian area and uplands. As part of the 2007 Conservation Assessment and Resource Synthesis (Schoen and Dovichin 2007[2]) the condition and management status were evaluated across 22 bioecological provinces in the region. An estimated 20% of floodplain forests associated with anadromous fish habitat have been logged since 1954. Regionwide 52% of anadromous floodplain forests are within non-development designations, with 38% in watershed-scale reserves. This conservation strategy looks to maintain this existing reserve network and build up additional habitat protections to preserve fish habitat for the long-term. The strategy also relies on the USFS Watershed Condition Assessment[5] to assess watershed condition on Tongass National Forest lands and identify priority areas that have been impacted through previous forest practice activities. This revised plan builds upon efforts achieved by the partnership from 2012-2017; strengthening the partnership's focus on facilitating restoration efforts in freshwater areas in the region leveraging resources to improve on the ground freshwater habitat conditions. It is also understood fish face additional challenges resulting from urbanization, mining, fishing and aquaculture practices, and changing climate conditions. As such, **SEAKFHP's freshwater fish habitat conservation strategy focuses in on four specific goals:**

- **Protect fish habitats in freshwater systems in Southeast Alaska,**
- **Maintain water quality and quantity in those areas,**
- **Restore and enhance fragmented and degraded fish habitats, and**
- **Foster and support assessment and monitoring that informs fish habitat and restoration science**

The following outlines each of these goals in more detail including background information to reference the current condition of the landscape, and provides a list of actions the partnership can support either directly through partnership activity or indirectly through partner support. Time bound actions represent priorities and will be elevated in annual work plans for the partnership.

[4] Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska 2016 http://ak.audubon.org/conservation/tongass-national-forest

[5] US Forest Service. 2011. Watershed Condition Classification Technical Assessment and associated watershed condition class rating and high priority assessment program for the Tongass (http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/,

[6] Albert, D., L. Baker, S. Howell, K. V. Koski, and R. Bosworth. 2008. A Framework for Setting Watershed-Scale Priorities for Forest and Freshwater Restoration on Prince of Wales Island. Juneau, AK: The Nature Conservancy.

GOAL FCS1: Protect fish habitat in freshwater systems areas in Southeast Alaska.

Objective FCS1-1. Support progressive and consistent plans, policy, regulation, outreach and management practices necessary to maintain and protect aquatic habitats in watersheds throughout Southeast Alaska and the Tongass National Forest.

Background: Watershed protection within Southeast Alaska varies by scales, jurisdictions, and landownership. It is recognized that ecological integrity and the resilience of fish and their habitats in Southeast Alaska will depend in part on balancing urban and industrial development with sound conservation measures. This includes supporting existing management approaches and potentially expanding a watershed scale reserve network system for the region that preserves and maintains productive and diverse fish habitat (Schoen and Dovichin 2007[2], National Fish Habitat Action Plan 2010[7], Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska 2016[4]).

To achieve this goal, Audubon and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) reviewed and analyzed existing resource information for Southeast Alaska and the Tongass National Forest. This included developing a process for ranking individual watersheds within 22 biogeographical provinces distributed across the region. A representative set of focal metrics were used for this conservation assessment including anadromous fish habitat. A Conservation Area Design for Southeast Alaska emerged from this effort which included identification of "Conservation Priority" watersheds with the highest concentrations of ecological values. The authors of the assessment outlined a selection of conservation measures including focal actions such as maintaining and expanding the existing conservation reserve network, applying best management practices as is included in the US Forest Service's Tongass Land Management Plan, and extending additional critical habitat areas surrounding state lands and waters that include high value or sensitive fish habitats. An additional outcome from this assessment was the development of the Tongass 77 (T77), a proposal developed by Trout Unlimited (TU) and other stakeholders in the region, to designate key watersheds in Southeast Alaska for permanent protection to safeguard important salmon habitat across the Tongass National Forest. Maps of the watersheds comprising the conservation reserve network for Southeast Alaska include land use maps showing the legislatively protected areas currently set aside through federal designation and the conservation and restoration priority areas identified under the Conservation Area Design effort. The T77 watersheds can be found in the Human Uses section of the 2016 Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska[4].

In 2016, the Tongass National Forest amended the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan[8], incorporating recommendations to cease old-growth timber harvest in TU's T77 watersheds and conservation priority areas identified by TNC and Audubon Alaska. Under the 2016 Plan[9] young-growth timber harvest is allowed in these areas; the Forest Service would conduct an internal scientific review in collaboration with a forest collaborative and other stakeholders to determine likely impacts to fish and wildlife habitat from young-growth timber projects that intersect with the 19 "modified" Tongass 77 watersheds. Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other measures to protect water quality and fish habitat are incorporated into the Forest Plan and implemented during all ground-disturbing activities in the Tongass National Forest. An annual monitoring program evaluates the implementation and

[7] National Fish Habitat Partnerships National Fish Habitat Action Plan

[8] US Forest Service 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan

[9] US Forest Service 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan, note at the time of this publication there is threat the 2016 rule may be removed via Congressional action.

effectiveness of these measures.

Watershed condition on non-federal lands of Southeast Alaska are managed through a variety of municipal ordinances and comprehensive plans, Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Area Management Plans, Alaska Department Fish and Game (ADF&G) Special Area Plans, and specific State statutory authorities granted to ADF&G, ADNR and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). BMPs as prescribed under the State of Alaska Forest Resources Practices Act[10] are designed to protect fish habitat and water quality on non-federal lands. In addition, ADF&G has the statutory responsibility for protecting freshwater anadromous fish habitat and providing free passage for anadromous and resident fish in fresh water bodies (AS 16.05.841-871). Any activity or project that is conducted below the ordinary high-water mark of an anadromous stream requires a Fish Habitat Permit, which is the tool used to safeguard freshwater anadromous fish habitat. Municipal waterbody protections exist in the form of anadromous stream setbacks in Juneau and Haines, and most other communities have localized watershed management plans for drinking water protection.

Mechanisms for additional habitat protection beyond local, state, or federal management are more limited. Non-governmental organizations, such as the Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEAL Trust), The Conservation Fund (TCF), and TNC have protected portions of watersheds, shorelines, wetlands, and riparian corridors in limited areas of Southeast Alaska through fee simple acquisition and conservation easements. In addition, SEAL Trust and TCF are wetland mitigation sponsors under agreements with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) governed by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Through SEAL Trust and TCF's In-Lieu Fee Programs, the organizations receive mitigation funds from private and public developers who are required to pay a "fee in-lieu" of mitigation under the Corps permitting program. All mitigation funds are used for preservation of wetlands, other aquatic resources, and important adjacent upland buffers. SEAL Trust uses all of its mitigation funds in Southeast Alaska, while TCF is statewide. These tools are largely applied at the parcel scale, and in aggregate have protected roughly 6,000 acres over the past 20+ years. Additionally, the In-Lieu Fee Program[11] proposal from the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), a SEAKFHP partner, was approved in September of 2017 by the Corps.

Future Need: SEAKFHP partners recognize habitat protection processes are legislative, regulatory, or attained in other means beyond the scope of the partnership. However, maintaining and preserving intact habitat is critical to maintaining sustainable fish populations across the region. On federal lands, the Tongass National Forest Plan includes goals to "maintain ecosystems capable of supporting the full range of native and desired non-native species and ecological processes" and to "maintain or restore the natural range and frequency of aquatic habitat conditions on the Tongass National Forest to sustain the diversity and production of fish and other freshwater organisms." The State of Alaska, through a legislative process can nominate Conservation Areas on state lands, which collectively includes Critical Habitat Areas (CHAs), State Game Areas, State Game Refuges, and Wildlife Sanctuaries, and has designated 32 of these around the state to protect particularly rich fish and wildlife habitats that possess significant fish and wildlife recreational opportunities. The legislature has the ability to expand and refine the Conservation Area system on an annual basis. Currently at play in Southeast Alaska is possible transfer of lands both from the Federal Government to the State of Alaska and also to Tribal entities in the region. As such, SEAKFHP Partners support collaborative planning strategies among all land owners that can afford continued habitat protections and associated Best Management Practices to conserve fish habitat across the region.

[10] State of Alaska Forest Resources Practices Act

[11] Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition Aquatic Resource Mitigation

On private lands, SEAKFHP will support habitat protection opportunities through non-governmental organizations to permanently protect wetlands and productive fish habitat throughout Southeast Alaska, with a goal of increasing protected acreage up to 10,000 acres over the next five years.

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS1-1.1.** Continue to identify under represented audiences and elevate assessment work and conservation strategy recommendations completed as part of *The Coastal Forests and Mountains Ecoregion in Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest*, edited by J. Schoen and E. Dovichin in 2007.
- **Action FCS1-1.2.** Continue to identify under represented audiences and raise awareness and understanding of current habitat protection initiatives such as the Tongass 77 initiative developed by Trout Unlimited.
- **Action FCS1-1.3.** By 2019, convene regional discussions and activities among regional land owners that consider establishing additional aquatic habitat protection areas that include high-value fish habitats in Southeast Alaska (such as Critical Habitat Areas surrounding state lands, and adoption of conservation easements through local land trust organizations)

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS1-1.4.** Support awareness of and participation in the Tongass National Forest Best Management Plan monitoring program.
- **Action FCS1-1.5.** Support awareness and information sharing about impacts of climate change on fish habitats. Engage broad partner participation in the development of vulnerability assessments and developing adaptation measures to inform protection of resilient freshwater fish populations.
- **Action FCS1-1.6.** Support evaluations of the habitat permitting process overseen by the State of Alaska that maintain the statutory responsibility to protect freshwater anadromous fish habitat.
- **Action FCS1-1.7.** Support efforts to more fully characterize the economic contribution of intact fish and wildlife habitat, pristine areas for recreation and ecosystem services provided to adjacent communities by undeveloped lands.
- **Action FCS1-1.8.** Support creation and implementation of financial mechanisms to support habitat protection opportunities through non-governmental organizations (such as land trusts) as part of a larger watershed restoration/protection strategy, including the development and implementation of high quality compensatory mitigation strategies for aquatic habitat restoration and protection (i.e. mitigation banks, In-Lieu Fee programs, and carbon market credits).

Objective FCS1-2. Foster regional support necessary to ensure that additional anadromous fish habitat in Southeast Alaska is included in the Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC), and thus is eligible for basic protections afforded under state law.

Background: The Southeast Alaska landscape is home to an incredible amount of freshwater habitat that supports millions of anadromous fish. The habitat comes in the form of streams, rivers, and lakes and the numerous other finer distinctions inherent therein. Estimates of known anadromous habitat as identified from the Anadromous Waters Catalog (2017) include over 6,300 streams and rivers encompassing approximately 12,500 km. Over 1,200 lakes covering 35,000 ha also provide habitat to anadromous fish. Most of this stream, river, and lake anadromous habitat that is known to host anadromous fish is in good to pristine condition, due in part to protections afforded through Alaska Statute. Other protection measures are similarly afforded through Tongass National Forest and state of Alaska provisions.

Although Alaska Statute provides protection to known anadromous waterbodies (as reflected by inclusion in the AWC), it is widely assumed that a significant amount of anadromous habitat in Southeast Alaska is not yet officially listed in the AWC and afforded the same protection. Several other ways in which the AWC is known to be lacking involve species- and life stage-specific accounting; although a waterbody in the AWC might accurately identify the upper extent of anadromous habitat for one species, other species extents might be truncated (or extended too far). Another example is related to identifying the entire spawning or rearing habitat extent for individual species, as opposed to just a species being noted as present.

Estimates of the remaining unmapped anadromous habitat in the region are significant. Numerous evaluations suggest at least 50% more anadromous habitat exists on the landscape. This could amount to another 6,000 streams and rivers and over 1,000 lakes included in the AWC. Based on these numbers the total estimated anadromous habitat in Southeast Alaska likely encompasses over 12,000 streams and rivers and more than 2,000 lakes.

Every year there are significant efforts to document and inventory additional anadromous habitats for inclusion into the AWC. These efforts are absolutely critical if additional anadromous habitat is to be afforded basic protection under state law.

AWC Survey Prioritization: There is no single, all-encompassing and agreed upon prioritization strategy or final listing of watersheds in which AWC surveys could be implemented resulting in the most efficient and effective use of resources and ultimately, inclusion into the AWC. However, a number of strategies using similar data sources have been used for the same end desire for different areas across Southeast Alaska.

AWC Survey Protocols: Similar to the lack of a single, all-encompassing prioritization strategy, there is no standard reference for how to conduct an AWC survey, although one Division of Habitat Technical Report[12] is published and readily available and contains valuable information and methodology which could assist future efforts. The ADF&G website contains an AWC page that describes the minimum criteria needed to submit a nomination to the AWC, this website provides helpful suggestions regarding survey protocols[13].

Future Need: SEAKFHP supports development of prioritization strategies and utilization of consistent survey methodologies to update and expand the AWC in order to represent the diversity and extent of anadromous fish habitats across the region. Efforts to catalog anadromous fish habitat should also identify and document non-anadromous fish habitat and distribution patterns with a focus on rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden. Such information should be used to populate ADF&G's Alaska Freshwater Fish Inventory (AFFI) database and associated mapping interface (Fish Resource Monitor).

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS1-2.1.** Annually facilitate communication among SEAKFHP partners to develop AWC prioritization strategies that considers current and future development or land management activities placing anadromous waters at risk.
- **Action FCS1-2.2.** By 2019, facilitate a final review of watersheds in Southeast Alaska where AWC surveys would provide the most significant expansion (or correction) of the AWC.

[12] ADF&G, 2007; Division of Habitat Technical Report: Fish distribution database project

[13] ADF&G AWC Website: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/SARR/AWC/index.cfm?ADFG=noms.guidelines

- **Action FCS1-2.3.** By 2021 leverage funding opportunities to host training opportunities and share methods necessary for producing AWC nominations.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS1-2.4.** Support implementation of AWC surveys in the specific areas or streams WITHIN the 5 highest priority watersheds (identified via Action C1-2.2) associated with individual communities or areas where AWC surveys would be conducted.
- **Action FCS1-2.5** Support ADF&G to update relevant AWC nominations reporting associated with their Collection Permits process for all fish sampling applicants.

Objective FCS1-3. Support coordination and collaboration efforts directed at the prevention, early detection, response, and control of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Southeast Alaska.

Background: An invasive species is defined as a species that is non-native to a particular ecosystem and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health (Presidential Executive Order 13112[14]). The annual cost of invasive species to the U.S. economy is estimated at $120 billion. Invasive species represent an increasing threat to Alaska's economy and environment as nonnative plants, animals, and pathogens invade aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, either through accidental or intentional introductions.

Pathways for invasive species introductions to Southeast Alaska have not been studied, but likely mirror those common in other parts of the world. Typical pathways include transportation (e.g. goods, equipment, ballast water) and the accidental or intentional release of nonnative species (e.g. pets, aquatic farm biota, nursery plants). Nonnative invasive species that live in water or the riparian zone have the greatest potential for impacting fish and fish habitat.

Although few freshwater aquatic invasive species are known to occur in Southeast Alaska, these species, as well as those that may invade or get introduced in the future, pose a serious threat to fish and fish habitat. Invasive plants, animals, and other organisms can harm fish-dependent economies and ecosystems by outcompeting and displacing native fish and their prey, or by altering or degrading native riparian and aquatic habitats that sustain fish populations. Waterweed (*Elodea spp.*) is not native to Alaska, and it is the first invasive freshwater aquatic plant known to occur in the state. It has the potential to impact freshwater resources and fish habitat statewide but has yet to be found in Southeast Alaska. Reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Bohemian knotweed (a hybrid of Japanese knotweed, *Fallopia japonica* and Giant knotweed*, Fallopia sachalinensis*) are highly invasive plants intentionally introduced to Southeast Alaska. These plants are widely distributed in the region and thrive in both aquatic and riparian habitat. Infestations can alter stream flow and sediment transport, and dense monocultures in riparian zones can impact ecological functions that support fish and fish habitat.

The red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), the only freshwater aquatic invasive animal known from the region, was intentionally released on Chichagof Island in the early 1980s. Adult red-legged frogs are known to prey on three-spine stickleback and the herbivorous tadpoles can potentially alter aquatic food webs that support fish.

State and federal agencies, along with non-profit and other organizations are actively involved in efforts

[14] Presidential Executive Order 13112 https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/laws/execorder.shtml

to document and manage invasive species in Southeast Alaska. ADF&G produced the *Alaska Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan* to address the threat of invasive species on aquatic ecosystems in the state. The plan identifies actions to prevent the introduction and spread of these species. Invasive plant management plans have been developed for several communities in Southeast Alaska and the USFS is currently developing an invasive plant management plan for the northern Tongass National Forest. Individual USFS Ranger Districts in the southern part of the Forest have developed invasive plant management plans. The Takshanuk Watershed Council leads a cooperative weed management area for the northern Lynn Canal area. The National Park Service conducts invasive plant surveys and actively manages priority infestations on their park lands and properties in Southeast Alaska. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska is developing an invasive plant program. USFWS and its partners have conducted invasive plant surveys and treatments in the City and Borough of Juneau.

Future Need: Preventing new introductions and managing existing infestations in a strategic manner is key to protecting fish and fish habitat from aquatic invasive species. Prevention is most likely to succeed by proactively identifying those species most likely to be introduced and the potential pathways for their introduction. Once identified, invasion pathways can be eliminated or managed through outreach and education to increase awareness and change practices or through existing or new regulations/policies. Monitoring efforts are necessary to detect aquatic invasive species as early as possible followed by rapid control efforts if warranted to ensure eradication. Some of the species that could invade freshwater aquatic habitats in Southeast Alaska include Atlantic salmon, Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife, and Elodea. Finally, understanding the current distribution and abundance of aquatic invasive species relative to the most vulnerable and productive fish habitat is necessary to develop management plans that use limited resources most effectively.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS1-3.1.** Support activities that complement invasive species programs administered by ADF&G, USFWS, NOAA-NMFS, and implemented on smaller scales by local and tribal government or non-government entities.
- **Action FCS1-3.2.** Support current and future pathway analyses that identify vectors contributing to the introduction and spread of AIS in Southeast Alaska.
- **Action FCS1-3.3.** Support activities that identify target audiences; increase target audience awareness about the species, pathways of concern, and impacts imposed by AIS; and result in behavior changes (e.g., reporting AIS sightings to the State of Alaska, following BMPs to prevent introduction and spread of AIS).

Objective FCS1-4. Facilitate regional support and funding for evaluation of potential effects to fish and their habitats from development projects in transboundary watersheds.

Background: Southeast Alaska shares the Taku, Stikine, Unuk, Alsek and several smaller rivers within British Columbia and the Yukon Territory; these are commonly referred to as transboundary rivers. Within the Canadian headwaters of these watersheds, more than 10 large-scale mining projects are in various phases of operation and development. These types of operations have the potential to harm fish and fish habitat in these systems through direct and indirect impacts. Protecting productive and intact habitats throughout these transboundary river systems is necessary to ensure healthy freshwater and anadromous fish communities. Current efforts are underway at various levels to work collaboratively with British Columbia and Canadian governments to ensure the necessary regulatory and policy frameworks are in place to protect Southeast Alaska from downstream impacts:

- Memorandum of Understanding and Statement of Cooperation between the State of Alaska and the

Province of British Columbia which convenes the Bilateral Transboundary Working Group and the Transboundary Technical Working Group[15]

- Formation of the United Tribal Transboundary Mining Working Group – a consortium of 15 federally recognized Indian Tribes that reside in Southeast Alaska and live along theses rivers
- Salmon Beyond Borders a campaign driven by sport and commercial fishermen, community leaders, tourism and recreation business owners and concerned citizens, in collaboration with Tribes and First Nations, united across the Alaska/British Columbia border to defend and sustain transboundary rivers, jobs and way of life.

In addition, numerous SEAKFHP partners are involved in habitat assessment and water quality monitoring efforts of these river systems, these include Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska water quality monitoring on the Taku, Stikine and Unuk; ADEC AKMAP sampling planned for 2017-2020 in Southeast Alaska lakes, rivers and coast including transboundary river systems and ADEC/SEACC Inside Passage Waterkeeper joint project to inventory and aggregate water quality data across Southeast Alaska. Additionally, support from the Alaska Congressional Delegation may include funding for baseline data collection in the near future. Support for these efforts can be seen through a recent study by the McDowell Group[16] completed in 2016 highlighting the economic impact to Southeast Alaska as a result of the productivity provided to the region by transboundary rivers and by 2017 Alaska State Legislature – House Joint Resolution No. 9 addressing these concerns through the state legislature resolution process[17].

Future need: To maintain habitat quality for transboundary rivers entering into Southeast Alaska a transboundary land use framework is needed that ensures equal representation across the international boundary, amongst governing entities, including Tribes and First Nations, provincial, state and federal jurisdictions. To be effective, this framework must include a scientific assessment of impact and risk with respect to water quality and fish production and include land use protection mechanisms to ensure fish habitat quality is maintained, connectivity from headwaters to marine waters are maintained and water quality standards are developed and maintained.

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS1-4.1.** Continue to foster awareness of transboundary river development projects proposed adjacent to Southeast Alaska and support cross border collaboration and regional discussions on potential impacts to fish habitats. Encourage land use protection mechanism opportunities as part of these dialogs; for reference see the land use plan created for the Atlin Taku region of northwestern British Columbia, Canada[18].
- **Action FCS1-4.2.** By 2019, coordinate and disseminate fish habitat distribution maps for the Taku, Stikine, Unuk and other transboundary rivers in Southeast Alaska and British Columbia.
- **Action FCS1-4.3.** By 2019, coordinate a summary of reservations of water adjudications for Southeast Alaska transboundary river systems and associated tributaries.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS1-4.4.** Support cross border participation and financial support for the State of Alaska Technical Transboundary Working Group and others to collaboratively assess and develop baseline fish habitat and water quality parameters for transboundary rivers. By 2019 facilitate a convening role

[15] Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the State of Alaska and the Province of British Columbia, November 2015
[16] Economic Impact Analysis: Southeast Alaska Transboundary Watersheds, McDowell Group, October 2016
[17] 2017 Alaska State Legislature – House Joint Resolution No. 9 (HJR9)
[18] Atlin-Taku Land Use Plan and Government-to-Government Agreement http://trtfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/press-release-lup-g2g.pdf

among the stakeholders involved with the collection of transboundary water quality/fish/wildlife data - these groups may include the bilateral Technical Working Group on Monitoring, including universities on both sides of the border, NGOs, bilateral federal and state agencies, tribes, etc.

- **Action FCS1-4.5.** Support funding opportunities for baseline evaluation of potential effects for transboundary development projects, including baseline hydrography, water quality, fish and wildlife data, etc. and include understanding for cumulative effects.

GOAL FCS2: Maintain water quality and quantity in freshwater systems in Southeast Alaska.

Objective FCS2-1. Support water quality monitoring programs to track and manage changes occurring in freshwater aquatic systems across Southeast Alaska.

Background: The ADEC Division of Water has the responsibility to report and identify causes and sources of water quality impairment by "characterizing all the waters in Alaska" but funding and capacity limit the ability for robust water quality monitoring across the region. One way the division works to monitor and report on water quality is through the Alaska Monitoring & Assessment Program (AKMAP), although partners recognize this inadequately tracks changes within individual water bodies and does not provide the level of monitoring to adequately track effects of mining, restoration or other land cover changes in the region. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) in the mid-1990s to survey the environmental condition of the Nation's water resources. AKMAP is part of this nationwide effort and is responsible for surveying Alaska's water resources. This effort is now part of EPA's National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS). No similar probabilistic sampling surveys are currently providing regional, ecological information on such a large scale within Alaska. The EMAP implementation strategy is ADEC's plan to sample and report monitoring data for large regions of Alaska in the near future.

The AKMAP has sampled coastal and fresh waters in Alaska since 2002. Additional information and links to interactive maps can be found here: http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wqsar/monitoring/AKMAP.htm. AKMAP is planning to conduct aquatic resource surveys in Southeast Alaska over the course of the next 4 to 5 years. AKMAP partners with NARS to complete this work. NARS are statistical surveys designed to assess the status of and changes in quality of the nation's coastal waters, lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands. Using survey sites selected at random, they provide a snapshot of overall condition of the nation's waters. AKMAP applies NARS methodology, adapting methods to fit Alaska's large size and often remote nature. AKMAP will be conducting these surveys in Southeast Alaska, beginning with a lakes survey in 2017, a rivers and streams survey in 2018 or 2019, and a coastal survey in 2020. A similar coastal survey was completed for Southeast Alaska in 2004, details can be found here: http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wqsar/monitoring/2004Southeast.htm.

Additionally, local municipalities, tribes and non-profit groups have become increasingly engaged in water quality monitoring in the region. A few examples include the Southeast Alaska Stream Temperature Monitoring Network, a collaborative group of agencies and stakeholders developing protocols and data streams to track temperature changes in freshwater systems across the region; the Inside Passage Waterkeeper, a small, grassroots group who cares for, protects, and restores its local water bodies, and who are compiling and archiving regional water quality data and monitoring information for the region in partnership with the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC); and Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) who are collecting baseline water quality information in transboundary watersheds as part of a three-year study funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. An emerging interest is growing regarding the importance of nutrient transfer and how this may impact water quality. Local

researchers at the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station are engaging in important studies across the region on associated topics.

Future Need: SEAKFHP desires robust water quality monitoring across the region to maintain aquatic habitat necessary for sustainable fish populations across the region.

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS2-1.1.** In 2018, work with SEACC and other SEAKFHP partners to support development of a data archive for making available and sharing regional water quality information across Southeast Alaska.
- **Action FCS2-1.2.** In 2019, elevate awareness of CCTHITA water quality sampling work in transboundary areas in the region and support leveraging partner resources for this work to connect to long-term monitoring in the region, including with the AKMAP.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS2-1.3.** Work proactively with ADEC to encourage partner participation and engagement with the AKMAP to leverage in kind and fiscal resources for water quality sampling in lakes, rivers and coastal areas of Southeast Alaska. Support a regional workshop to elevate the findings from the Southeast assessment.
- **Action FCS2-1.4.** Support the Southeast Alaska Stream Temperature Monitoring Network to leverage resources needed for monitoring stream temperatures at key locations across Southeast Alaska. Support a regional workshop to elevate awareness of outcomes.
- **Action FCS2-1.5.** Support ADEC through the Alaska Clean Water Actions program and AKMAP to leverage fiscal and other needed resources to promote development of a long-term water quality monitoring and tracking program for Southeast Alaska that includes guidelines and protocols to standardize water quality data collection in the region.

Objective FCS2-2. Secure Reservations of Water (ROW) on important salmon, trout, and steelhead-producing systems.

Background: According to ADF&G's anadromous waters catalog, over 19,000 stream rivers or lakes have been specified as supporting anadromous fish populations in Alaska (Johnson and Litchfield 2016)[19]. These waterbodies are all potentially subject to water withdrawals and modification of their natural streamflow. Most waterbodies in the state are currently not subject to withdrawals, diversions, or impoundments of water and remain free flowing at this time. It is important to protect these unallocated streamflows before competition over the water arises.

An appropriation of water that remains within its waterbody is legally defined under Alaska law (AS 46.15.145) and regulations (11 AAC 93.970) as a reservation of water (ROW). To reserve water, an application with supporting data and analyses must be submitted to the ADNR. A minimum of 5 years of mean daily streamflow data is recommended to quantify instream flow. Priority dates for ROW applications are based on the date they are accepted by ADNR. Alaska water law is based on the doctrine of prior appropriation, also known as "first in time first in right." The legal process of determining the validity and amount of a water right is called an adjudication.

[19] Johnson, J., and V. Litchfield. 2016. Catalog of waters important for spawning, rearing, or migration of anadromous fishes – Southeastern Region, Effective June 1, 2016. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. 16-04, Anchorage.

In 2001, ADF&G started a project supported by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund to collect the data necessary and to file ROWs on priority waterbodies in Southeast Alaska. Since that time ADF&G has filed ROWs on 110 reaches, three lakes, adjudicated 52 reaches, and collected streamflow data at 60 stations. Currently ADF&G is operating stream gages at Peterson Creek, Windfall Creek, multiple sites in the Thorne River drainage, and Eva Creek. Klein 2016[20], provides a full list of ROWs that ADF&G has filed and adjudicated.

Future Need: A lack of streamflow data on Southeast Alaska waterbodies will severely limit the future filing of additional ROWs and potentially leaves thousands of stream reaches without adequate protection of instream flows. In Southeast Alaska there remains only 15 stream reaches with sufficient streamflow data to file a ROW. ADF&G will continue to file ROWs on these waterbodies, including: Thorne River, Blossom River, Alsek River (downstream of Alsek Lake), Chilkat River (near Klukwan), Salmon River (Gustavus), Eva Creek, Hatchery Creek (POW), and Ahrnklin River (Yakutat).

To ensure that ROWs can be filed in the future, ADF&G will continue to operate existing stream gages and investigate installing new stations on priority waterbodies. Future potential ADF&G stream gage locations include streams on the Prince of Wales road system (Eagle Creek, Control Creek, Logjam Creek), Hoonah road system streams, Davies Creek (Cowee Creek near Juneau), and Steep Creek (near Juneau). The USGS has recently begun and will continue to operate new stream gages on Salmon Creek (Gustavus) and Hatchery Creek (POW). Alaska HydroScience, Inc. operates a stream gage on the Ahrnklin River and will have five years of streamflow data in November of 2018. Takshanuk Watershed Council in Haines maintains a gage at Sarah Creek, five years of data collection will conclude in 2018. Cooperative projects to collect streamflow data with the USGS, USFS, consultants, and local watershed councils will also continue to be explored. In 2017, ADF&G anticipates beginning the adjudication process with ADNR on the Lost River (5 reaches), Hamilton River, Kadashan River (4 reaches), and Maybeso Creek (5 reaches).

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS2-2.1** By 2021, increase awareness of the current status and the process used to prepare and file ROWs in the following ways:
    - Support public meetings/partner updates on current state of ROWs in Southeast Alaska
    - Provide training opportunities in the process and data requirements to file ROWs
    - Increase awareness of ADF&G Instream Flow Protection Annual report and Interactive Mapper http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mapguide/wr_intro.cfm

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS2-2.2** Support projects that prepare, file, and adjudicate ROW for instream use applications including the collection of water quantity and quality data to obtain five years of record.
- **Action FCS2-2.3** Support projects that collect the streamflow data necessary to file ROWs through supporting training needs, equipment purchases, and travel costs necessary to install and operate stream gages

Objective FCS2-3. Increase awareness of the adverse impacts of urban stormwater runoff on fish and fish habitat and support efforts to improve water quality and aquatic health.

Background: Stormwater runoff is rainwater or meltwater (from snow and ice) that flows off of impervious or partially impervious surfaces in developed landscapes like urban environments. Runoff

[20] Klein, J. 2016. Instream flow protection in Alaska, 2015. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. 16-09, Anchorage.

rates from these areas are typically much higher due to lower infiltration and storage rates. Elevated runoff rates can physically alter fish habitat by scouring the streambed and eroding banks. Stormwater from urbanized landscapes frequently contains petroleum hydrocarbons, heavy metals, sediment, fecal coliforms, and other pollutants. Upon entering water bodies, these pollutants can impair fish habitat (i.e. elevated turbidity, sedimentation) and have chronic and acute effects on fish and other aquatic organisms.

Several urban anadromous streams in Southeast Alaska have been designated as impaired water bodies by ADEC because they do not meet one or more state water quality standards. For each impaired water body, ADEC establishes a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for each pollutant impacting water quality. The TMDL establishes a daily limit on the amount of the pollutant that can enter the stream to ensure compliance with state water quality standards. Most TMDLs for impaired streams in Southeast Alaska identify stormwater as the source of one or more pollutants. There are likely other urban fish streams in the region that should be evaluated for potential stormwater impacts to water and habitat quality.

Watershed restoration and action plans have been produced for several Southeast Alaska streams on the state list of impaired water bodies. These plans often recommend best management practices for specific sites that address stormwater. Regional watershed councils, ADEC, and USFWS are working with landowners and other partners to map stormwater systems and manage stormwater in several urban watersheds. The City and Borough of Juneau has produced a manual of stormwater best management practices.

Future Need: SEAKFHP partners envision a future where local communities have greater access to resources, including regionally-appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), to better protect aquatic communities from poor water quality conditions associated with urban settings.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS2-3.1.** Support work with ADEC, ADF&G, and local communities to identify where stormwater is likely impacting fish and fish habitat and support development of associated action plans and watershed restoration projects.
- **Action FCS2-3.2.** Support efforts to map stormwater runoff, identify and prioritize stormwater management projects, and implement and monitor stormwater BMPs.
- **Action FCS2-3.3.** Work with communities to develop stormwater management requirements for new development and redevelopment to maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat.
- **Action FCS2-3.4.** Support public outreach efforts that communicate the benefits of stormwater management practices and stream buffers and result in increased public support for those activities.

GOAL FCS3: Restore and enhance fragmented and degraded fish habitats in southeast Alaska.

Objective FCS3-1. Foster activities that maintain and restore fish habitat connectivity at road/stream crossings in Southeast Alaska

Background: Interagency efforts in Southeast Alaska to inventory, assess, prioritize, develop design methods, and restore aquatic habitat connectivity at road/stream crossings have been ongoing with varying levels of intensity since 1997.

Early efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ADF&G and USFS focused on inventory and

assessment on Tongass National Forest (TNF) system roads, culminating in the only regionally comprehensive publication to date, Tongass Road Condition Survey (ADFG, 2000)[21]. TNF staff continued an intensive assessment program through 2005 and developed a comprehensive GIS, an Upstream Habitat Assessment protocol, an estimate of barrier severity, a biological significance index, and various prioritization schemas to inform remediation efforts. Although less intense, assessment work continues today and includes capture of previously missed road segments, filling in of data gaps, and updates to previously identified road/stream crossings. As of 2016, the TNF has surveyed 3,668 fish stream road crossings along 5,000 miles of road. Of the 2,019 crossings that are culverts, approximately 34% of these crossings do not meet current standard for fish passage. Between 1998 and 2016, the TNF reinstalled, retrofitted, or removed approximately 516 non-compliant crossings. Since 2013, approximately 10 crossings per year have been reconstructed and a total of 44 crossings were removed from roads (TNF, 2015 Monitoring and Evaluation Report)[22].

Formal fish passage assessment on Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) and municipal roads trailed behind the TNF efforts. Localized assessments were conducted by ADF&G Habitat Division in the Klawock watershed in 2002, by Takshanuk Watershed Council along the Haines Borough road system in 2010, and by Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Division of Forestry on State and private forest lands in 2009. Since 2011, the ADFG Sportfish Division Fish Passage Improvement Program has conducted formal inventories of ADOT and local municipal roads across Southeast. As of 2016, ADFG has assessed 625 culverts along these roads at fish streams; of these 254 were classified red (not passing fish), 151 gray (partial passage of fish), 187 green (passing fish) and 33 black (unclassified). ADFG will complete the remaining ADOT assessment in late 2017 and also has a draft prioritization schema in development. ADFG maintains its data, photos, and mapping information on a publicly accessible website/mapper.

Fish passage barrier restoration on non-federal ownerships in Southeast has largely been conducted by ADOT as part of road reconstruction projects and occasional maintenance or special projects. ADOT projects have occurred on almost all of their road systems, and 26 fish culvert replacements are currently in a planning and design phase as part of ongoing Haines Highway improvements. Various non-governmental organizations and watershed councils have collaborated on site-based fish passage restorations, and the USFWS Fish Passage Program has partnered with these entities, as well as local governments, on approximately 48 culvert replacements or removals since 2003.

Quantitative monitoring of the physical habitat metrics of replaced culverts has been part of the Tongass National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Program, and is the only ongoing formal monitoring of its type in the region.

Future Need: SEAKFHP desires no new barriers constructed on new development or as part of existing road re-construction. This will require increased awareness, training opportunities and consistent application of policy, regulation and minimum design guidelines. We recognize the benefit in developing a regional fish passage mapper across land ownerships. We strive to leverage SEAKFHP partnerships to remove or restore 50 fish passage barriers over the next five years and commit to annually tracking fish passage remediation accomplishments in the region.

[21] Flanders, I. and J. Carillo, 2007. Tongass Road Condition Survey Report. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Habitat, Technical Report No. 00-7, Anchorage

[22] US Forest Service 2015 Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS3-1.1.** Annually support interagency cooperation and policy to improve fish habitat connectivity and prevent the installation of new barriers.
    - Support interagency cooperative agreements related to fish passage, for example the recent Tongass Top 5 fish passage design initiative.
    - Encourage periodic review, updates and adoption of fish passage design guidelines among agencies and municipal entities.
    - Foster awareness to and within agencies and landowners of guidance and cooperation for fish friendly ORV road-stream crossing structure design and evaluation.
    - Support training and utilization of USFS upstream fish habitat assessment protocol on state and private land road-stream crossings to inform prioritizing crossings for remediation.
    - Support regional fish passage restoration prioritization efforts.
- **Action FCS3-1.2.** By 2018 support completion of fish passage barrier inventory on ADOT road/stream crossings.
- **Action FCS3-1.3.** By 2020 support development of unified interagency (USFS, ADF&G, DNR) fish passage inventory mapper and database for Southeast Alaska ownerships.
- **Action FCS3-1.4.** By 2018, convene fish passage design workshop for Southeast Alaska.
- **Action FCS3-1.5**. By 2021 support SEAKFHP partners to remove or restore 50 fish passage barriers across all ownerships.

Objective FCS3-2. Restore and enhance fish habitat function and complexity and inform future restoration activities through adaptive management.

Background: The commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries for salmon in Southeast Alaska are world renowned and provide high-value economic returns to local communities; the health of Southeast Alaska fish stocks depends on functioning aquatic habitat. The USFS Tongass Watershed Condition Assessment (2015) found that most of the 900 watersheds within the TNF are in near natural condition (Condition Class I). Less than 7% of these watersheds may be “at risk” for maintaining ecological function due to past management practices and likely have restoration needs. Degraded watershed condition in the TNF primarily results from timber harvest and road building between 1950 and 1979. More restrictive measures to protect watershed condition and salmon habitat were included in the Tongass Timber Reform Act (1990) and subsequent TNF Plans (1997, 2008, 2016). Per the 2016 Tongass Forest Plan Amendment, old growth timber harvest is not allowed in Trout Unlimited’s “Tongass 77” watersheds.

Following a review by USFS staff and stakeholders, “Priority Watersheds” were established in the TNF, focusing restoration plans and activities. Restoration projects include road storage and decommissioning, removal and remediation of fish barriers at road-stream crossings, wildlife habitat improvements in young-growth forests, riparian young-growth forest treatments, and large wood placement to restore floodplain and stream functions that provide freshwater spawning and rearing habitat features critical to salmon life stages.

Large and small-scale stream restoration manipulations have been undertaken on a number of streams throughout the TNF since the 1990’s. The TNF continues restoration work on Priority Watersheds and At-risk watersheds identified in their assessment activities. The Fisheries and Watershed Programs on the TNF have committed substantial funds toward continued identification, design, implementation, and monitoring of watershed restoration work. Essential restoration has been completed in Harris River and

Twelvemile Creek on Prince of Wales Island and Sitkoh River and Sitkoh Creek on Chichagof Island. The National Fish Habitat Partnership recognized Twelvemile Creek as one of ten "Waters to Watch" in 2014[23].

New collaboratives are forming across the region to leverage multiple landowners and improve salmon habitat. For example, the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership, a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funded "all-lands" collaboration of private landowners including Tribes, state and federal agencies, and conservation organizations seeks to improve watershed condition to benefit the community of Hoonah. This is a new model beginning in the region and other communities are watching closely to see how this process may help them to engage more effectively in restoration work.

Future Need: Through a combination of natural recovery and active management, SEAKFHP partners work cooperatively to restore watersheds and aquatic habitat adversely affected by past management actions. As a result, functioning habitats and diversity of fish stocks will be retained, benefitting all user groups. Partnerships increase our ability to provide these opportunities in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

Ongoing partnerships support restoration that will soon be completed in the Tongass National Forest: Shelikof (Iris Meadows), Saginaw, Staney and Luck Creek watersheds. Additional TNF Priority Watersheds will be identified to help focus strategic restoration plans in the next five years.

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS3-2-1.** Support utilization of the Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework, climate change projections, other analytical tools and emerging on-the-ground resource assessments (examples: Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis and the resource inventory in Hoonah) to identify long-term watershed restoration and resiliency opportunities and priorities.
    - Annually review and facilitate outreach of partner out-year restoration plans
- **Action FCS3-2-2**. By 2019, convene regional restoration symposium to share projects, innovations, and outcomes.
- **Action FCS3-2-3.** By 2021 host interagency meeting to review draft U.S. Forest Service Tongass National Forest Watershed Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring (WREM) work products and reports.

General Supportive Actions:

- **Action FCS3-2.4.** Support further development and dissemination of reference watershed condition data that informs establishment of quantitative restoration and enhancement objectives.
- **Action FCS3-2-5.** Review effectiveness of on-going mitigation and restoration projects to identify opportunities to employ adaptive management leading to improve practices.
    - Support fish habitat utilization investigations in response to bank stabilization techniques (e.g. rip rap, large woody debris placements).
    - Support further development of physical / geomorphic response monitoring protocols for in-stream restoration/enhancement activities.
    - Evaluate efficacy of fish production response models/tools/protocols for in-stream restoration/enhancement activities.
- **Action FCS3-2-6.** Support training opportunities for conducting smaller scale hand-crew stream restoration work across all land ownerships that can be planned and implemented with minimal impact.

[23] NFHP Waters to Watch: Twelve-mile Creek Watershed; NFHP 2014 Waters to Watch

GOAL FCS4. Foster and support assessment and data collection that informs fish habitat and restoration science.

Background: Southeast Alaska is often termed "Alaska's Salmon Forest," due to the complex make-up and interaction of the terrestrial and aquatic environments in this region and how coupled together they produce robust and abundant fish populations. Advancements in soil science, forest ecology, localized hydrology, and food web dynamics are informing us of the region's landscapes and how aquatic systems interact and transfer energy for the production of fish. More work in these and associated fields are needed and are supported by the partnership.

A tremendous amount of information and data resources are available for freshwater systems in Southeast Alaska; however, more research and continued data collection are needed to better understand the region's anadromous and resident freshwater fish species and associated habitats that sustain them, including climate change across the region. There are many archives and sources for these types of information, a few are highlighted here:

- Localized fisheries information for fish stocks in Southeast Alaska can be found on the ADF&G website including life history information and annual fish stock assessment data,
- Federal, state and local land managers and other interested stakeholders periodically assess and monitor fish habitat conditions in the region; a summary for some of this information is located on the SEAKFHP website: http://www.seakfhp.org/resources/,
- The National Fish Habitat Assessment has localized habitat degradation information for Southeast Alaska,
- Resource agencies and the science community continue to conduct research in the region and produce a variety of informational resources important for understanding local fish species and their habitats; a few sources are included here:
- US Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
- US Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station
- NOAA's Habitat Restoration Center
- ADF&G Habitat Division
- Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center
- UAS GIS Library
- Sitka Conservation Society,
- In 2016, a regional climate workshop was held in Southeast Alaska that focused on impacts to local freshwater fisheries; numerous research projects were noted and resources provided, these can be found here: http://www.seakfhp.org/2016-climate-change-workshop-resources-page/.

Future Needs: The implications of future forest and land management, human population distribution, and climate change on fish habitat suitability in this region are difficult to predict. Climatically, Southeast Alaska is projected to experience changes in precipitation, temperature, associated snow melt and impacts to flow regimes for freshwater systems. Recent work regarding increased freshwater temperatures and periods of hypoxia offer insights to potential changes to local aquatic systems. More work in these and associated areas will help managers better prepare for changing anthropogenic and environmental conditions in the region.

Priority Actions:

- **Action FCS4-1.1.** By 2019, SEAKFHP will facilitate a regional dialog to develop a collective list of

information and research gaps in the region.

General Actions:

- **Action FCS4-1.2.** In general, the partnership is supportive of research studies and data collection efforts that support the following:
    - Refine baseline hydrology in the region and across the state,
    - Map fish-habitat communities and assemblages in the region,
    - Support comprehensive surface and groundwater studies, or other habitat changes associated with climate change or other forms of habitat alteration,
    - Examine effects of partial fish passage on salmon movements and populations,
    - Characterize salmon movement within watersheds to inform and improve fish passage models and structure design,

SEAKFHP's COASTAL FISH HABIAT CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Southeast Alaska's Coastal Landscape

Southeast Alaska, a unique landscape encompassing more than 18,000 miles (29,000 km) of shoreline, collectively supports a variety of fishery habitats including over 12,000 individual estuaries that serve as important nursery areas for a variety of fish and invertebrate species (Albert and Schoen 2007; Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska 2016). In addition to estuaries, Southeast Alaska's coastal landscape is characterized by extensive nearshore areas connecting over 5,000 islands spread across the Alexander Archipelago including intertidal and beach habitat and other wetland features. Within these rich ecosystems aquatic resources abound and include diverse and abundant populations of commercially and culturally important fish and shellfish species, such as Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus* sp.), herring (*Clupea pallasii*), blackcod (*Anoplopoma fimbria*), Pacific cod (*Gadus microcephalus*), halibut (*Hyppoglossus stenolepis*), king crab (*Paralithodes* sp.), dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*), geoducks (*Panopea generosa*) and many others. This region is also home to 74,000 people dispersed across 34 communities, all of which occur along the shoreline and tidelands. Fishery and other aquatic resources critical to these communities are robust and flourishing yet potentially at risk as human activities increase due to urbanization and through dispersed activities, such as marine related ship traffic and residual impacts from historical land-use practices (Baker et al. 2011; TNC Coastal-GIS Human Activities Database 2011). In addition, they face additional challenges linked to emerging changes in climate and ocean conditions. These changes not only threaten important fish populations in the region, but they also alter the ways in which these resources need to be considered to ensure resilient ecosystems foster healthy communities and indigenous cultures in the future.

Coastal Definitions

To support development of conservation strategies for Southeast Alaska's coastal fish habitat, SEAKFHP partners focused on the coastal areas most used by humans and vital to the rearing and development of local fish species. In general, these coastal areas are referred to in this document as coastal zone, coastal interface and coastal margin, used interchangeably to reflect the language used to describe this area by regional partners. To further assist in structuring focus for this effort functional definitions for both estuaries and nearshore areas were also defined (Appendix 2). As such, estuarine and coastal wetlands

and the nearshore sub-tidal zone out to approximately 5 meters below the low tide line, including key attributes such as habitat structure and function, water quality, sediment regime and ecological interactions, are the primary foci for the partnership.

Southeast Alaska Coastal Fish Habitat Conservation Strategy 2017-2021

The coastal fish habitat conservation strategy SEAKFHP partners embrace over the next five years (2017-2021) includes a mixture of collaborative actions that support monitoring and science needs for the region, activities and actions partners have some control over through mechanisms of sound policy development and decision making, and investment in landscape stewardship that conserves resources for long-term sustained use.

Partners recognize that the current ecological status of coastal areas is relatively strong in Southeast Alaska, threats are relatively localized, and foremost, existing coastal areas must be maintained to ensure productive fish populations and resilient coastal communities and indigenous cultures thrive into the future.

In addition to maintaining healthy coastal fish habitats our partners recognize that the larger issue of coastal resilience in our region depends on a suite of factors which local communities are uniquely positioned to maintain and support.

Strategy development relied heavily on previous assessment activities in the region including *A Conservation Assessment and Resource Synthesis for the Coastal Forests & Mountains Ecoregion in Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest* (Conservation Assessment; Schoen and Dovichin 2007[24]) and *A Conservation Action Plan for Estuarine Ecosystems of Southeast Alaska* (Baker 2011[25]).

As such **SEAKFHP's coastal fish habitat conservation strategy focuses in on four specific goals:**

- **Strengthen coastal policies to maintain productive fish habitat in Southeast Alaska.**
- **Foster effective and sustainable assessment and monitoring networks for fisheries habitat along Southeast Alaska's coastal margin.**
- **Identify and protect critical coastal fish habitat areas that must be sustained long-term.**
- **Identify degraded coastal fish habitat that can be prioritized and restored.**

The following outlines each of these goals in more detail including background information to help establish reference to the current condition of the landscape, and provide a list of actions the partnership can support either directly through partnership directed activity or indirectly through partner support.

[24] Albert, D., and J. Schoen. 2007. A conservation assessment for the coastal forests and mountains ecoregion of southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest. in Schoen and Dovichin eds. A conservation assessment and resource synthesis for the coastal forests and mountains ecoregion in southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest. The Nature Conservancy and Audubon Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska http://www.conserveonline.org/workspaces/akcfm

[25] Baker, L., K. V. Koski, D. Albert, and N. Cohen. 2011. A conservation action plan for estuarine ecosystems of southeast Alaska. The Nature Conservancy. http://www.seakfhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/estuaries_cap_final_03_30_11.pdf

Time bound actions represent priorities and will be elevated in annual work plans for the partnership. These actions are also subject to SEAKFHP partner engagement and active participation.

Goal CCS1. Foster interagency and Southeast Alaska Community communication and collaboration to strengthen coastal development policies and maintain productive fish habitat in Southeast Alaska.

Background: In the 2011 *Conservation Action Plan for Estuarine Ecosystems of Southeast Alaska*, authors provide a detailed summary of Alaska's coastal management approach including description of the management resources and authorities (federal, state, local) for coastal activities in Alaska. One significant change since that publication is the closure of the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP). This program operated for over 30 years and in 2011, the Legislature and the governor failed to agree on conditions for extending the coastal program and the program expired. Now, Alaska is the only coastal state without a coastal management program. Perceived benefits of the program included:

- Empowers local input in federal decisions that impact coastal activities and development
- Helps applicants navigate the permitting process by coordinating local, state and federal processes. By bringing federal, state and local governments together with developers, the coastal program facilitates communication and resolves disputes
- Gives communities an effective voice in balancing competing demands on coastal resources.
- A coastal management program gives coastal communities the opportunity to develop policies for the coastal resources important to the people of the community. This gives communities an active and effective voice, but not a veto power, in the decisions that may affect their area.

Future Needs: SEAKFHP partners encourage a strong communication and collaboration structure among coastal resource management agencies and Southeast Alaska communities that promote effective coastal policies that provide for sustainable aquatic resources across the region.

Priority Actions:

- By 2019, communicate lessons learned and benefits of Coastal Zone Management programs taking place in other parts of the country with state, municipal, and tribal leaders.
- By 2020, support a management gap analysis and associated document for Southeast Alaska, to identify which coastal resources are being effectively conserved and managed and which need further conservation actions (examples: habitat protection standards, policies and guidelines, best management practices, and implementation of effective mitigation opportunities).
- By 2021, facilitate improvements to coastal management in Southeast Alaska that arise as options garnered in the management gap analysis (examples associated opportunities to maintain and protect salt marsh and eelgrass bed habitats in the region).

Goal CCS2. Foster effective and sustainable assessment and monitoring networks for fisheries habitat along Southeast Alaska's coastal margin.

Background: In 2016, Audubon Alaska published the *2016 Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska*[26], this document brings together a wealth of regional information synthesizing a variety of datasets, scientific papers and reports as well as spatial analysis for Southeast Alaska. This publication strongly draws upon work completed a decade ago when Audubon and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) partnered on *A Conservation Assessment and Resource Synthesis for the Coastal Forests & Mountains Ecoregion in Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest* (Conservation Assessment; Schoen and Dovichin 2007[24]). That multi-year project collected, analyzed, and synthesized extensive biological data, resulting in a comprehensive Conservation Area Design for Southeast Alaska. Associated with that work, TNC completed a conservation action plan for estuarine ecosystems of southeastern Alaska (Baker, 2011[25]) as well as created a database mapping human activity within these areas (TNC Coastal-GIS Human Activities Database and Report, 2011[27]). Other important regional monitoring and research information exists and links to these resources are archived on the SEAKFHP website under a page for developing the partnership's coastal fish habitat conservation strategy. Briefly these additional resources include:

- University of Alaska GIS Library Coastal Resource Module, an on-line GIS database with information helpful to planners, researchers, NGO's, students, consultants, recreationalists, conservation planners and anyone who is involved in land or resource management. The resource module includes a variety of mapping resources, habitat information, and geospatial data of all types.
- ShoreZone, a close-up inventory of the biology and geology of North America's Pacific coast from Alaska to Oregon.
- Classification design for Southeast Alaska estuaries[28].
- Nearshore Fish Atlas of Alaska, including fish distribution information for Southeast Alaska.

From these resources we have a good understanding of the spatial extent of estuaries and coastal nearshore areas in Southeast Alaska. We know these areas provide vital rearing habitat to a variety of fish species, including salmon. These areas are sensitive to complex hydrologic processes including inputs from the terrestrial environment and also intricate processes occurring in the Gulf of Alaska.

Future Need: SEAKFHP partners envision an engaged network working collaboratively together to identify priority needs for assessment and monitoring in support of conservation and management of fisheries habitat along Southeast Alaska's coastal margin. Partnership efforts will focus on collaborative ways to address assessment and monitoring gaps in the region and implement efforts to leverage fiscal and other resources leading to filling these gaps.

Priority Actions:

- **Objective CCS2-1. Cultivate a connective and dynamic network focused on priority coastal margin habitat assessment and monitoring needs for Southeast Alaska.**

[26] Ecological Atlas of Southeast Alaska 2016 http://ak.audubon.org/conservation/tongass-national-forest
[27] TNC Coastal-GIS Human Activities Database and Report 2011 http://www.seakfhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Coastal-GIS_Human_Activites_Final_Report.pdf
[28] Schoch et al. 2013 Estuaries and Coasts. An Estuarine Habitat Classification for a Complex Fjordal Island Archipelago http://www.seakfhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Schoch_etal_2013_Estuaries_and_Coasts.pdf

- By 2018, convene existing forums to develop a more connected network where regional scientists, fishery managers and others can convene regularly to collaboratively address assessment needs on priority coastal margin habitats through identification of collaborative actions and available funding opportunities.
- Support the SEABANK initiative and assist in growing the hub of scientific and economic information showcasing Southeast Alaska and the natural capital that drives a sustainable marketplace built around the regions abundant aquatic resources (www.seabank.org).

- **Objective CCS2-2. Engage diverse stakeholders in identifying key assessment and monitoring priorities at the coastal margin for Southeast Alaskan communities.**
  - By 2019, host regional workshop to engage stakeholders, inventory fish habitat data available for the coastal interface of Southeast Alaska, and identify and prioritize associated assessment and monitoring gaps. Some initial gaps identified in developing this strategy include:
    - Advancing knowledge of the freshwater runoff and nutrient/sediment transport to the marine environment in Southeast Alaska (Coastal Rainforest Research Network).
    - Assessment and monitoring of species-habitat relationships, including the distribution, abundance, and growth of nearshore species along environmental gradients.
    - Food web interaction studies working in the coastal interface of Southeast Alaska.
    - Assessment and monitoring efforts that examine cumulative impacts from multiple sources, including emerging impacts from changing environmental conditions such as ocean acidification, harmful algal blooms, and other impacts that affect fish health in the coastal interface of Southeast Alaska.
- **Objective CCS2-3. Foster a robust and sustainable network of coastal margin monitoring efforts around Southeast Alaska.**
  - By 2019, support identification of marine water monitoring needs for the region (water quality, toxicology, pollution vectors, and terrestrial influence/sedimentation/nutrient transfer /log transfer facilities, boat harbors and marine infrastructure sites, heavily used transportation corridor sites) and share with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) as they begin to develop plans for nearshore monitoring efforts in 2020. Include local communities, Tribes and citizen science groups in outreach for this effort.
  - By 2021, work with SEAKFHP partners to establish a network for Southeast Alaska that supports coastal community-based monitoring and climate change adaptation planning and implementation by building the technical and social support network necessary for success. Includes supporting existing monitoring work ongoing through the Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Monitoring Research Network.
- **Objective CCS2-4. Become a central location for publicly accessible information regarding assessment and monitoring efforts.**
  - By 2018, link the SEAKFHP website to the UAS GIS Coastal Module and annually update as progress with SEAKFHP coastal fish habitat strategy develops.

- By 2021, communicate what we learn from this goal to the broader public through community outreach, media stories, reports, enhanced website resources stressing the importance of estuaries and nearshore habitat to regional fisheries.

Goal CCS3. Work with SEAKFHP partners and other regional entities, to identify and protect critical coastal fish habitat that must be maintained long-term.

Background: The Conservation Area Design recommendations made in the 2007 Audubon-TNC Conservation Assessment[24] can be used to identify intact coastal habitat and develop long-term plans for sustaining these areas into the future. Under Goal 2, SEAKFHP and partners will work to support the existing conservation mechanisms in the region, while recognizing that designated national parks and wilderness areas also provide some level of resource protection to nearshore areas.

SEAKFHP recognizes that in addition to federal and state designations of parks or wilderness areas, there are other protection mechanisms being implemented at the local level by municipal governments and non-governmental organizations to protect nearshore habitat. Under Goal 2, SEAKFHP will support and amplify these local efforts to preserve nearshore habitat.

At the municipal government level, local land management processes and tools can be employed that minimize potential pollutant inputs to estuarine and nearshore areas such as establishing stream buffers, building set-backs and other nonpoint source regulations. Non-governmental organizations, such as the Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEAL Trust) and the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), also offer protection mechanisms. For example, SEAL Trust directly protects nearshore habitat by holding conservation easements or through fee-ownership of land. In addition, SEAL Trust is a wetland mitigation sponsor under an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) governed by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Through the SEAL Trust In-Lieu Fee Program, SEAL Trust receives mitigation funds from private and public developers who are required to pay a "fee in-lieu" of mitigation under the Corps permitting program. SEAL Trust uses all mitigation funds it receives for preservation of wetlands, other aquatic resources, and important adjacent upland buffers in Southeast Alaska. Similarly, SAWC's newly approved Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program, allows focus on stream and wetland restoration in the region.

Future Need: The SEAKFHP Conservation Strategy seeks to both maintain the existing conservation reserve network and to protect additional nearshore habitat from degradation within the next five years. Partnership efforts will focus on sharing information that helps guide partner organizations leverage funding and other sources to increase protection for coastal habitat in the region.

Priority Actions:

- **Objective CC3-1. Identify priority estuarine and nearshore areas across Southeast Alaska for conservation action at multiple levels.**
  - At the workshop planned for 2019, facilitate a session on developing a collaborative regional prioritization process for the protection of high value coastal habitats.

- By 2020, work with local communities to help identify overlapping priority estuarine and nearshore areas for conservation as part of their municipal land management processes and partner with entities like the Southeast Alaska Land Trust to provide permanent protection options.
- By 2021, facilitate the development and maintenance of a regional list of coastal areas in Southeast Alaska that have high priority fish habitat identified for protective conservation actions.

- **Objective CCS3-2. Engage a diverse group of stakeholders to support conservation implementation, including fostering funding support.**
  - By 2020, facilitate a pilot project to support habitat protection opportunities through local land trusts and others by identifying and prioritizing high value nearshore land protection projects and applicable funding sources.

Goal CCS4. Work with SEAKFHP partners and other regional entities, to identify degraded fish habitat in the coastal interface areas of Southeast Alaska that can be prioritized and restored.

Background: While Southeast Alaska's estuarine and nearshore ecosystems are generally intact, activities associated with urban development, historical land-use practices and dispersed activities such as marine ship traffic have all created disturbed habitat and can have impacts to aquatic communities (Albert and Schoen 2007). There are legacy disturbed areas in the region such as log transfer facilities, abandoned mining areas, and abandoned docks and canneries. We do not have a prioritized list as to which ones to clean up first to derive the most ecological benefit or address community needs including meeting traditional use needs expressed by Southeast Alaska tribes. In *A Conservation Action Plan for Estuarine Ecosystems of Southeast Alaska* (Baker, 2011), authors document agency responsibilities and landownership which is helpful in understanding the complex mosaic of overlapping management interest across the region. In 2011, TNC completed a project to map human activities in the estuarine and nearshore marine ecosystems in Southeast Alaska (TNC Coastal-GIS Human Activities Database and Report, 2011). This project included compilation of best available spatial datasets and a cumulative index to inform future conservation, management and research opportunities. This project includes coastal, marine and land-based activities that can be useful in identifying fish habitat in coastal areas of Southeast Alaska that can be targeted for restoration.

Marine debris and other materials impacting fish, such as derelict fishing gear, are also a concern in the region. Debris washing up upon the shore can destroy habitat critical to fish and aquatic organism survival. Additionally, marine debris, especially large or heavy pieces, can scour, smother, and disrupt both marine and shoreline habitat. Coastal cleanup efforts are routinely implemented across the region and NOAA maintains an active program[29] to address these needs across the state, as such we recognize this as an issue but have not specifically addressed actions the partnership will engage in, rather we will point partners to the NOAA efforts. This may become a focal topic for the partnership in the future and

[29] NOAA marine debris program https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/alaska

so is identified here to be archived in our planning process and potentially addressed more specifically in future years.

Future Need: Within the next five years, develop a regional tool that is used by governments and nonprofits to prioritize fish habitat restoration opportunities in coastal interface areas of Southeast Alaska. Additionally, complete a high-profile fish habitat restoration project within the coastal margin through a SEAKFHP partner

Priority Actions:

- **Objective CCS4-1. Identify and prioritize degraded fish habitat that could be restored.**
    - By 2018, coordinate the identification of sites along Southeast Alaska's coastal margin where restoration activities could improve fish habitat. Part of this action recommends working with local communities to help identify overlapping priority estuarine and nearshore areas suitable for restoration as part of their municipal land management processes and partner with others to implement restoration actions. An anticipated outcome from this action is to create a tool for communities to use in identifying key coastal areas that need conservation or require some form of restoration.
    - At the workshop planned for 2019, facilitate a session on restoring degraded coastal habitats.
- **Objective CCS4-2. Identify willing partners and funding mechanisms to facilitate coastal restoration activities.**
    - By 2020, coordinate among conservation partners to engage in coastal habitat restoration activities and seek associated funding resources.
- **Objective CCS4-3. Work with SEAKFHP Partners and others develop best management practices for maintaining resilient shoreline.**
    - At the workshop planned for 2019, bring together diverse stakeholders including the development sector to discuss fish friendly shoreline development/green infrastructure approaches applicable to Southeast Alaska.

Appendix 1. Recognized risks and associated stressors to fish habitat in Southeast Alaska identified as part of SEAKFHP's strategic planning effort, this list will be refined and used in future efforts to refine the partnership's conservation strategies.

Risks and associated stressors to fish habitat	Addressed in Freshwater Strategy		Addressed in Coastal Strategy	
Changing Environmental Conditions				
global climate change	Yes		Yes	
ocean acidification	No		Yes	
catastrophic events	No		No	
marine debris	No		Yes	
Habitat Loss				
urban/community development	Yes		Yes	
shoreline modifications	Yes		Yes	
Loss of Habitat Connectivity and Complexity				
timber harvest and logging practices	Yes		Yes	
energy development via hydro or tidal projects	Yes		No	
road/stream crossings	Yes		Yes	
Degraded Water Quality and/or Quantity				
mining development	Yes		No	
contaminated sites	Yes		Yes	
marine vessel contaminants	No		Yes	
mixing zone contaminants	No		Yes	
alteration of hydrology	Yes		Yes	
Ecosystem Imbalance				
introduction and persistence of invasive species	Yes		Yes	
algal blooms	No		Yes	
Fishing/Harvest	No		No	
Mariculture/Hatcheries	No		No	

Appendix 2. Definitions used in developing SEAKFHP's Coastal Fish Habitat Conservation Strategy.

Estuary (Estuarine Wetland): A mixed terrestrial/aquatic area of varying salinity created by a perennial stream entering the marine environment.

- The stream must have moved enough material to significantly change the shoreline and local bathymetry since the glaciers receded. (even without a stream layer, you could identify it on a topographic/bathometric map)
- The stream bed must currently have a slope that allows for deposition of fine material. At least 100 meters of length with less than .05% slope.
- Stream channel shifts back in forth over whole area within a century.
- 10 + hectares area exists between the MHW and MLW (matches TNC map cutoff)
  Three subsections of estuaries.
  1. Fresh Water Marsh (Riverine–Lower Perennial): This area is dominated by fresh water and is a deposition zone for the stream. On a monthly basis there is some salt water inundation and soils are salty.
     - Area from the HAT (High Astronomical Tide) to the MHW.
  2. Brackish Classic Estuary (Estuarine–Intertidal): Large daily swings in salinity, usually protected from heavy surf, and generally highly biologically productive.
     - Area from the MHW to MLW
     - Often a long flat valley just above mean sea level
  3. Estuary Fringe (Estuarine–Subtidal): Submerged in saltwater to a significant depth every day. Area which normally has a salinity similar to seawater at depth, but with bottom substrate, temperature and clarity influence by the perennial stream.
     - MTL to LAT (Low Astronomic tide) submerged to a significant depth every day or always submerged.
     - Estuary fringe may be considered Nearshore Habitat.

Nearshore Habitat (Marine –Subtidal and Intertidal): An area that provides significantly different (better) habitat for a suite of fish species (especially juvenile life stages) compared to deep open water. Habitat improvement can be from: 1) cover created by submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV); 2) greater variety of food sources; 3) cover provide by uneven bottom or coral 4) greater amounts of light increasing primary productivity.

- This generally extend from MTL line to the 5 M below Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT)(tends to be 10 M below MLW)
- If the landscapes transitions from HAT to LAT in less than 10 m this narrow strip does not count as nearshore for SEAKFHP (So narrow and steep that it's value as habitat is much reduced)
  Subsections are divided by predominant physical/biological bottom features. (Each section of coastline gets only one designation)
  1. Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (Marine – Subtidal – aquatic bed – rooted vascular):
     - Dominated by submerged aquatic vegetation (canopy kelp, seagrass beds or similar)
     - A section of shoreline is counted as SAV even if some area is too shallow for SAV and some too deep.

2. Coral (Marine –Subtidal – Reef):
   - Oceanic conditions exist to facilitate coral growth.
   - A section is counted as Coral/reef even if only 1/3 of the total sea floor area is coral.
3. Rocky substrate (Marine – Subtidal – rock bottom):
   - Dominated by bottom surface with areas for juvenile fish to hide from predation.
   - May contain small areas of SAV or cobble or sand.
4. Smooth Bottom Benthic Marine Habitat (Marine – Subtidal – unconsolidated bottom):
   - Mud, silt, sand or gravel bottom with very little cover
   - This is similar to “estuary fringe” but could exist without a perennial stream.

Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership Operational Strategy and Business Plan 2017-2021.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In the past decade as we have come to better understand the impacts of human development on fish and aquatic habitats, conservation and habitat restoration practices have evolved substantially. In Southeast Alaska, state and federal agencies have increased efforts in assessment, planning, and habitat restoration project implementation and non-governmental and community organizations have strengthened their ability to work cooperatively together. To aid these incipient partnerships, a diverse group of restoration and conservation practitioners from Southeast Alaska began meeting informally in 2009 to explore opportunities for improving communications, ways to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative efforts, and bolster on-the-ground results in the region.

This working group determined that the model shared under the National Fish Habitat Partnership Action Plan (NFHAP; **www.fishhabitat.org**) provided a sound template for meeting those challenges. NFHAP was developed to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through a network of regional partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation for the benefit of the public. Through this lens, the **Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership (SEAKFHP)** was formally initiated in 2010 to bring together local communities, non-profit organizations, tribes, state and federal agencies, and residents to conserve fish habitat across Southeast Alaska using coordinated strategies and local partnership actions. The SEAKFHP was recognized by the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board as a candidate Fish Habitat Partnership in the fall of 2011, and was fully recognized in the spring of 2014 as the 19th Fish Habitat Partnership in the nation.

SEAKFHP partners share in the mission "*to support cooperative fish habitat conservation work"* with stated goals to protect fish habitat in freshwater systems and coastal interface areas in Southeast Alaska, maintain water quality and quantity in those areas, and restore and enhance fragmented and degraded fish habitats in impacted areas. To achieve these goals the partnership maintains four core functions:

1. Build organizational diversity and capacity of the partnership
2. Develop organizational strength and perseverance of the partnership
3. Provide services to SEAKFHP Partners and Southeast Alaska communities
4. Develop regionally relevant fish habitat conservation strategies

These core functions were developed and outlined in the partnership's founding Strategic Action Plan (see **SEAKFHP Strategic Action Plan 2014 – 2016**) and are updated in **SEAKFHP's Fish Habitat Conservation Action Plan for 2017-2021.** These documents provide an archive of the historical development of the partnership as well as important information for planning future partnership activities to help the partnership be successful.

SEAKFHP Structure and Accomplishments

From an initial group of 9 organizations, the SEAKFHP is now a network of 34 partner groups with a 12-member steering committee that meets 6 times per year and operates under established by-laws. Governance documents and an annual work plan are available on the Partnership's website at: www.seakfhp.org. The work of the Partnership is guided by a Partnership Coordinator who has been under contract with SEAKFHP since 2012. Highlights of Partnership work thus far include:

- Hosting annual webinar/meetings detailing grant opportunities in the region, which connected potential applicants with other potential collaborators and grant program administrators.
- Sponsoring and conducting topical workshops such as the 2014 Fish Passage in Alaska training and the 2015 Interagency Fish Passage workshop which brought together various government agency personnel in the region to discuss common goals, challenges, and priorities.
- Assisting with the planning and implementation of the American Fisheries Society/American Water Resources Association Alaska Chapters Joint Annual Meeting (Fall of 2014/Juneau) including convening two, first-of-their-kind, Fish Film Festivals.
- Establishing a standing Science and Data Committee, which reviews regional habitat conservation proposals and provides feedback and endorsement to proponents.
- Compiling and maintaining an extensive online library of regionally relevant fish habitat conservation studies, literature, and symposia presentations on the SEAKFHP website.
- Facilitating regional input to national initiatives such as the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Watershed Condition Framework used to prioritize watersheds on the Tongass National Forest and the National Fish Habitat Assessment used to characterize the status of fish habitats across the US.

What's at Stake?

The geographic area covered by the SEAKFHP extends along the coast from the southern boundary of Alaska's Inside Passage north to Icy Bay in the Gulf of Alaska. Habitat modeling indicates this vast area encompasses over 18,000 linear miles of anadromous fish habitat, which supports sustainably managed salmon fisheries contributing roughly 30% of both the commercial and sport salmon harvest for the state of Alaska annually. Fisheries in Southeast Alaska generate over $1 billion of economic activity annually and create more than 10% of all jobs in the region. Quite simply, these economic benefits cannot be realized without healthy fish populations and the instream and near-shore marine habitats they depend on.

The watersheds of Southeast Alaska sustain five species of Pacific salmon, steelhead/rainbow trout, Dolly Varden char, coastal cutthroat trout, and eulachon. The estuaries and near-shore waters associated with these watersheds support Pacific halibut, black cod, Pacific herring, Dungeness, tanner, and king crab, and a variety of other important fish species.

Some 80% of the land area in Southeast Alaska, roughly 17 million acres, is managed by the USFS (a SEAKFHP Partner organization) as the Tongass National Forest, the nation's largest national forest. Although many areas are largely pristine, about 65 Tongass watersheds have been identified as areas in

need of fish habitat restoration. There are also many privately-owned lands in the region that would benefit from habitat restoration. Additionally, increased interest in mining activities and associated development is occurring in the Canadian headwaters to major salmon producing transboundary rivers, raising concern for the long-term maintenance of water quality in the region.

SEAKFHP WORK NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

SEAKFHP has built upon previous regional efforts to increase benefits as partners come together to share resources, raise collective awareness, and work collaboratively to improve fish habitat conservation efforts in the region. Through the actions and services of the SEAKFHP, our partners use this framework for improved information sharing, funding coordination, and partner cooperation. Benefits include:

- Improved partner and stakeholder coordination, including communication of priorities and management directions.
- Improved public awareness regarding the value of habitat protection, management, and restoration.
- Improved understanding of regulatory processes that affect fish and their habitat.
- Improved funding opportunities.
- Improved planning and implementation of on-the-ground projects that lead to maintaining and improving habitats.

In the Figure 1. below we have outlined how our work has changed over time and provide vision as to where our work will move into the future.

From 2010 through 2014, Partnership activities focused on developing the organizational structure, developing a set of shared conservation goals, and successfully meeting requirements for formal recognition by the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board. From 2014 – 2016, partnership activities focused on implementing its core functions: enhancing regional stakeholder communication, facilitating regional information resources, and hosting information-sharing events. Beginning in 2016, the partnership began to revise its conservation strategies to meet long-range project assessment and on-the-ground project needs. The partnership plans to more actively engage in assessment and on-the-ground project activities, such as advancing fish passage projects in the region. The chart below forecasts incremental changes in the work flow of the partnership from 2018 with an outlook to 2021, balancing regional coordination activities with service activities, and increasing assessment and on-the-ground project activities as project demand and associated funding support is made available in 2017 and beyond.

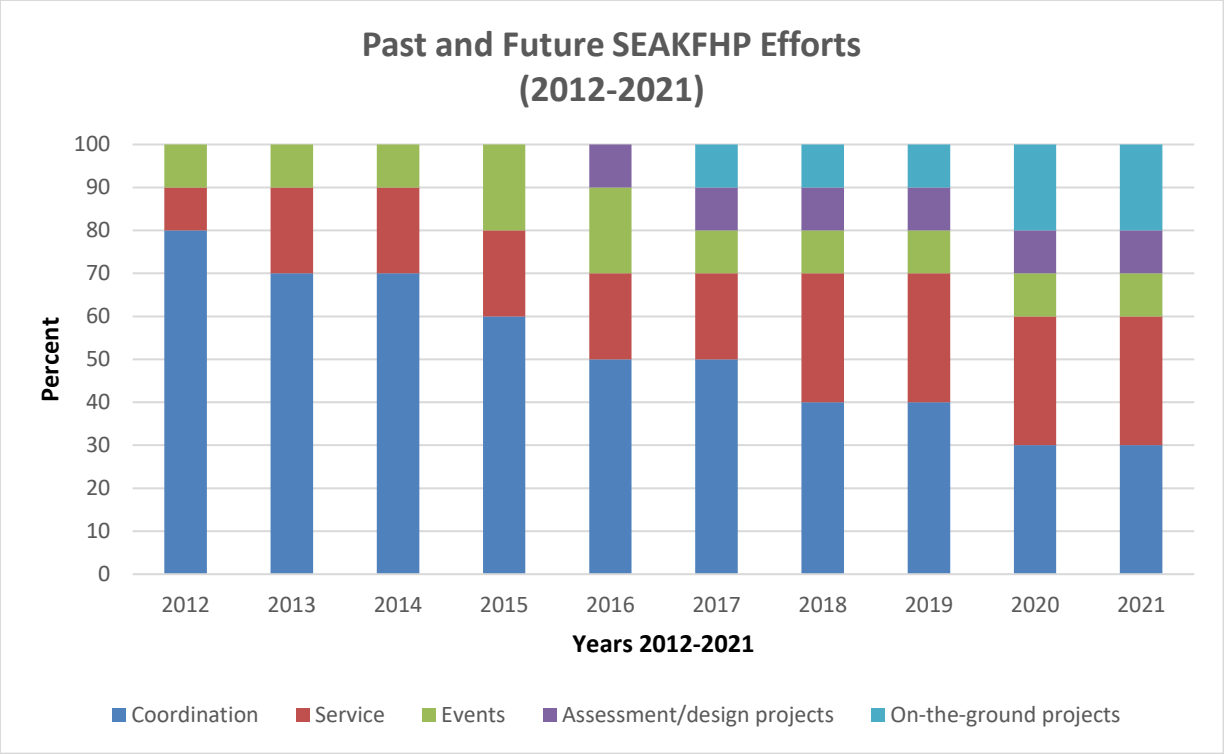


Figure 1 Past and future efforts for the partnership. Showing years 2012 through 2021.

PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

SEAKFHP's Strategic Action Plan provides guidance for SEAKFHP partners and others to pursue organizational and service strategies, referenced as 'Partnership Strategies', which directly contribute to meeting the partnership's mission and to reaching shared conservation goals in the region. Guidance identified in the strategic plan instills stakeholder and community ownership and encourages partners to focus on the highest priorities and conduct conservation activities with the best methods and protocols. Some strategies recommend coordination and interagency participation, but in no way bind affected agencies or partners to implement these strategies or relinquish any mandated or delegated authority. This document revises the initial organizational strategies, recognizing that the partnership has advanced over the last few years to now one that has secured a place within the region serving its partners. The strategies listed below are long term and serve to provide operational guidance as the partnership advances to the next stage in its development, one of persistence and focus on on-the-ground projects supporting protection and restoration of fish habitat across the region.

PARTNERSHIP GROWTH AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

- Ensure SEAKFHP composition represents landowners and stakeholders of Southeast Alaska.
- Routinely assess stakeholder gaps in partnership participation and identify other collaborators working in Southeast Alaska to ensure the partnership does not duplicate services or actions.
- Regularly inform the public on the governance and activities of the SEAKFHP using both print and digital media.

- Routinely collect and share stories and accomplishments of SEAKFHP partners.
- Maintain actively involved SEAKFHP Steering Committee that represents the organizational diversity of SEAKFHP partner members.
- Annually maintain an organizational framework document that clearly articulates the operations for the partnership and outlines the composition of the SEAKFHP Steering Committee and any appointed sub-committees.

PARTNERSHIP STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE STRATEGY

- Ensure sufficient funding resources to meet SEAKFHP mission and strategic priorities.
- Foster standing cooperative agreements through federal/state agencies to support efforts of the partnership.
- Identify local and national corporate partners that are interested in providing financial support to the partnership.
- Leverage partner assets to ensure SEAKFHP Committee members and Coordinator have appropriate communication tools, technology and equipment, meeting space, and other available funding to support SEAKFHP mission and goals.
- Ensure partnership has sufficient management systems and structures in place to meet SEAKFHP mission and strategic priorities.
- Promote strong constituent relationships in Southeast Alaska, regionally, and nationally, for broad support of the partnership.
- Regularly communicate with municipal, regional, and legislative entities, adjacent FHPs, and others to share accomplishments of the partnership and elevate conservation needs in the region.
- Annually host broad public outreach events to share accomplishments of the partnership and identify fiscal needs of conservation efforts in the region.

PARTNER SERVICE STRATEGY

Early strategic planning efforts signaled the need for a regional entity that could facilitate coordination and communication among resource agencies and interested stakeholders across Southeast Alaska. As a result, a core function of the SEAKFHP is to provide direct and tangible services to SEAKFHP partners and regional stakeholders. The following actions outline long-term partner services of the SEAKFHP.

Communication and Coordination

- Facilitate communication and interagency coordination of fish habitat conservation activities among natural resource practitioners and stakeholders in Southeast Alaska.
- Annually coordinate regional meetings and events that increase the awareness and coordination of regional assessment, protection, and restoration methods, prioritizations, and activities.
- Annually host or co-host fish habitat conservation symposium and/or thematic workshops.
- Identify, aggregate, and archive regional assessments, prioritization methods, and other applicable information on the SEAKFHP website **www.seakfhp.org**.
- Facilitate fish passage interagency coordination meetings and associated trainings.

- Produce outreach materials to raise awareness of fish habitat conservation efforts occurring across Southeast Alaska, including the value restoration projects provide the region.
- Communicate funding opportunities for regional fish habitat conservation and coordinate proposal development; facilitate regional dialogs and webinars on applicable funding programs (e.g., Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Alaska Fund, NOAA Community Based Restoration Program, Nation Forest Foundation, Alaska Clean Water Actions Program).
- Maintain a SEAKFHP project endorsement process, including a timeline for facilitation of SEAKFHP reviews on project proposals

Regional Data/Resource Facilitator

- Serve as regional information/resource facilitator.
- Maintain an active website with robust archive of fish habitat conservation information for Southeast Alaska.
- Regularly coordinate with the NFHP Science and Data Committee on updates relevant to data and resources available for Southeast Alaska.

Project Funding Provider

- Develop a viable plan for the SEAKFHP to be able to fund regional fish habitat projects.
- Work with the National Fish Habitat Partnership framework to secure on-the-ground project funding consistent with the other NHPs in Alaska and nationally.
- Work with local, regional, and national SEAKFHP partners for securing on-the-ground project funding.
- Develop request for proposal and evaluation criteria processes and materials the SEAKFHP can use to distribute on-the-ground project funding to potential proposers.

BUSINESS PLAN

SEAKFHP Funding Background

At the 'candidate' partnership stage of development, SEAKFHP was initially funded by a contribution from Trout Unlimited, which was used to leverage additional funding from an Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund grant. These funds were largely devoted to recruiting the Partnership Coordinator and conducting plans, tasks, and services necessary to apply for and attain formal recognition from the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board.

Additional funding during the ensuing years has been provided through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Coastal Program and successful application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund, which has allowed the Partnership to expand the suite of services it provides to partners, covers contractor travel costs, and compensates sub-contractors for web design and other services. SEAKFHP has also received modest financial support from NOAA, and has leveraged significant in-kind support from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game-Sportfish Division, USFS, University of Alaska, Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited.

SEAKFHP was formalized shortly after a moratorium (see copy here) on the funding of new fish habitat partnerships was enacted by the Director of the USFWS; consequently, unlike previously recognized partnerships, SEAKFHP does not receive financial support from the NFHP (which receives its funding largely from USFWS). We have been informed that this funding moratorium will be lifted at such time that the U.S. Congress provides additional funding to the NFHP. The founding SEAKFHP partners were cognizant of this moratorium prior to submitting our request for partnership status.

Although successful in self-funding the Partnership to date, the SEAKFHP in essence competes with our own partners for grant awards and consumes substantial coordinator time pursuing these funds—both to the detriment of providing additional services to partners and facilitating collaborations which result in conservation gains on the ground. It is the long-term goal of the partnership to develop a fiscal plan that provides for successful coordination of partnership services as well as improve fiscal investments to better support opportunities for on-the-ground projects that support the conservation needs of the region.

Funding Going Forward

Moving forward, SEAKFHP partners have laid out four funding strategies to support the partnership into the future:

- Funding Strategy 1: Combination of USFWS Coastal Program and NFWF Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund
- Funding Strategy 2: Shared SEAKFHP Federal Partner Sponsorship
- Funding Strategy 3: Targeted Non-federal Funding Campaign
- Funding Strategy 4: NFHP Secured Funding

These strategies are articulated in the narrative below and in the accompanying figures, which break out the funding plans separately for coordination support of the partnership (Figure 2) and funding needed to pursue assessment and on-the-ground project activities (Figure 3).

A rough estimate of funding needs for the partnership are shared here for perspective:

- Coordination support (annual coordinator service contract, website maintenance and upgrades, limited travel and supplies budget) - $75,000/yr
- Service support (annual workshop/conference costs, publication and other technical service costs) - $10,000/yr
- On-the-ground project budget $150,000 funding amounts for on-the-grounds projects are subject to the types of projects supported by the partnership in the future

Strategy 1

This strategy, will be a main focus for the near-term, supports SEAKFHP basic operations and the contractual partnership coordinator by soliciting the USFWS Coastal Program and the NFWF Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund. In addition, on alternate years the partnership will solicit on-the-ground project requests through the NFWF Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund with the support of matching funds shared from in-kind partner support. As part of this strategy, SEAKFHP will also begin a funding campaign to raise matching funds to help meet the matching fund requirement for the NFWF grant.

Strategy 2

This strategy addresses a mid-term funding plan for coordination support for the partnership through fiscal contribution shared among the federal partners. To date, coordination support is secured through USFWS funding; this approach could be augmented if other agencies share in the burden. Over the course of the next few years (2017-2020), the other federal partners (USFS and NOAA) will be approached to help support SEAKFHP coordination sponsorship on an equal, fractional basis. To support this strategy, SEAKFHP will rely on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the

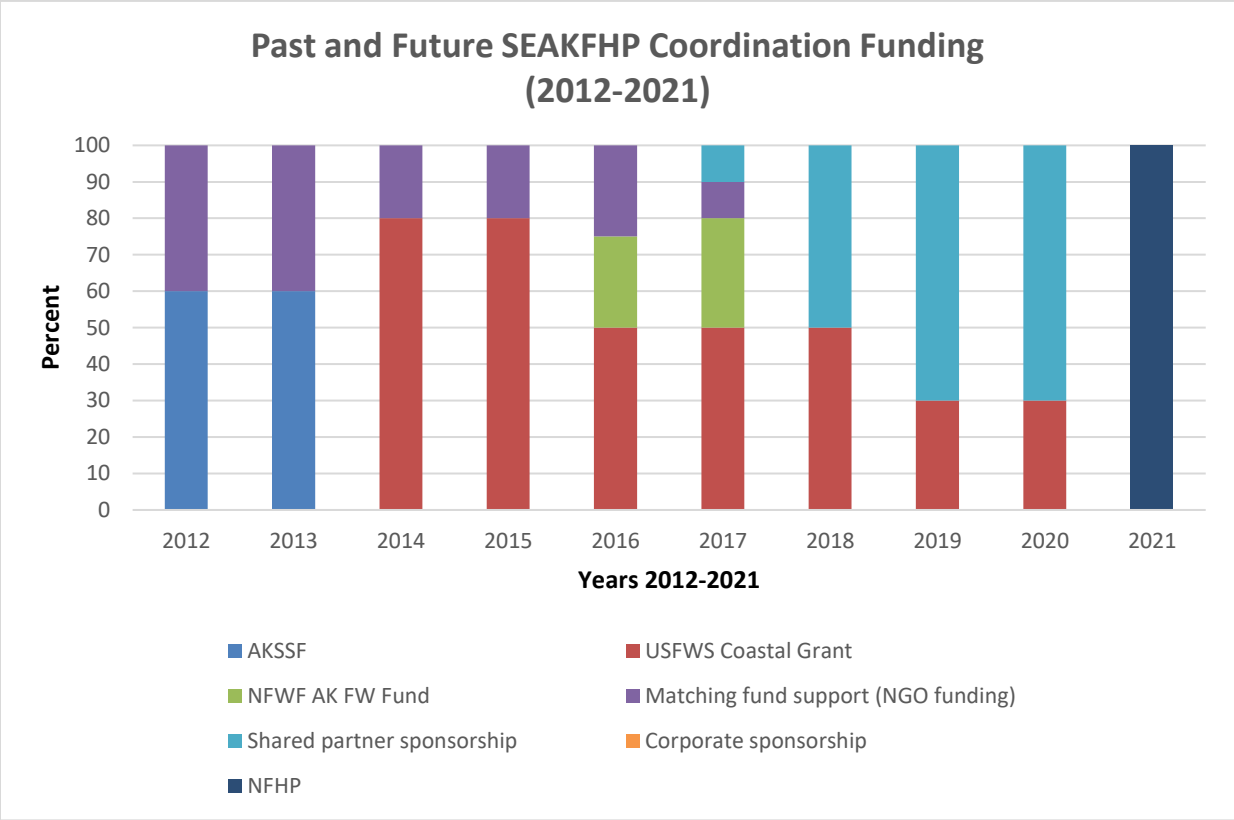


Figure 2. Past and future funding for coordination services of the partnership. Showing years 2012-2021.

Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, which provided expressed interagency support for NFHP. A copy of this MOU is archived here.

Strategy 3:

This strategy is a targeted funding campaign for the partnership. For this strategy, the SEAKFHP will engage with the newly formed NFHP non-profit entity Beyond the Pond, http://beyondthepondusa.com/. The NFHP has recently attained 501c3 status and as a recognized partner, this status is now extended to the SEAKFHP. It is the intent of the Partnership to solicit donations from corporate entities wishing to support conservation work in the region while realizing tax benefits in return. These funds will provide SEAKFHP with an invaluable opportunity to leverage federal grant funds, and as such will be targeted towards the assessment and on-the-grounds project activities for the partnership. Under this strategy, the partnership will also investigate opportunities to aggregate

non-federal funding into an endowment pool that could then be used annually (pending investment returns) to support non-federal match funding needs. Donations from private entities can generally be counted upon to leverage between 1 to 3 times the donated amount and can be dedicated to a particular project, specific service, or other area of SEAKFHP focus.

Strategy 4:

As a forth strategy, and for longer term fiscal planning, SEAKFHP will continue to pursue NFHP-based coordination and on-the-ground project funds as new Congressional funding becomes available, or changes to the USFWS moratorium occur. In addition, SEAKFHP will continue to actively engage with our state and federal partners to encourage the NFHP National Board to explore new funding options for our high performing partnership.

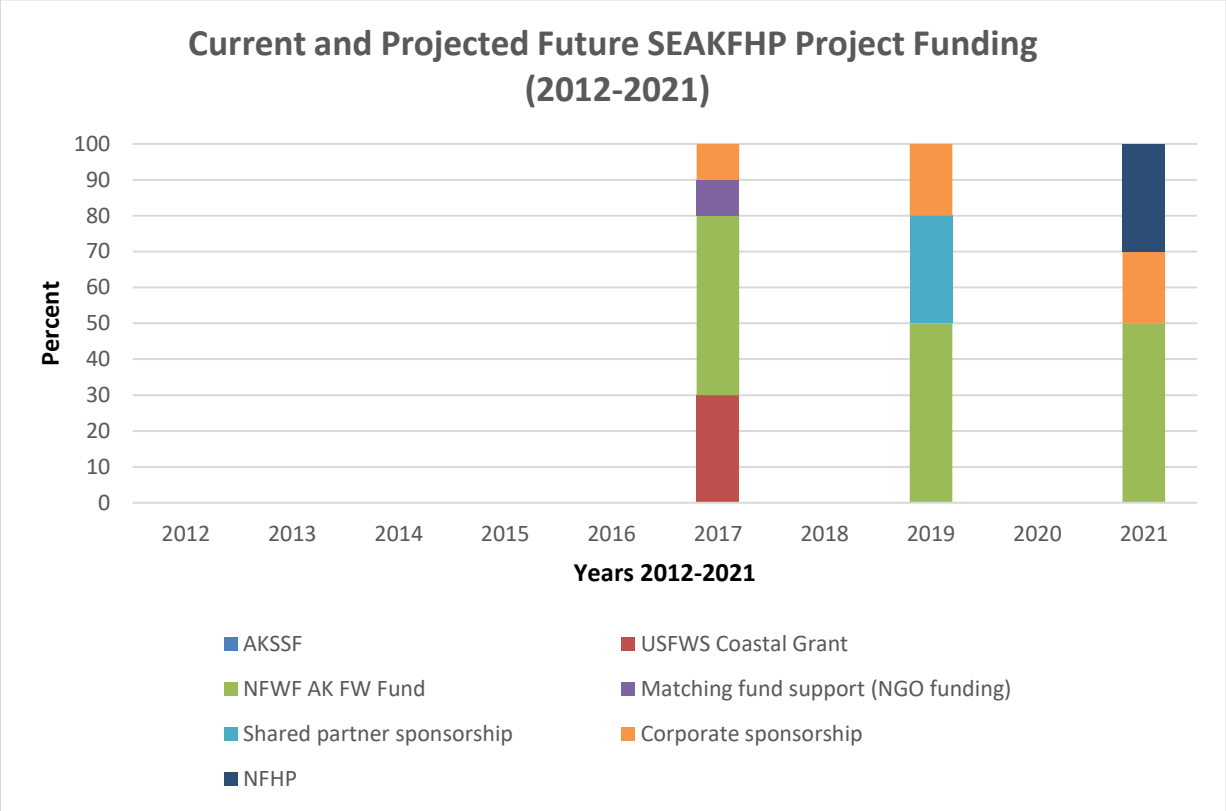


Figure 3. Current and projected future funding for projects supported by the partnership. Showing years 2012 through 2021.

Why Invest In SEAKFHP?

As SEAKFHP embraces a more formal business plan, it is important to communicate why it is important to continue to invest in the partnership. This is the message we share:

Fisheries drive our regional economy directly and they also benefit a host of businesses, charities, and municipalities indirectly. The more than 5,000 streams, rivers, and lakes that support salmon and trout in the region function as a large and diverse portfolio of investments: in years when one system produces fewer fish, another produces more, helping to ensure consistent returns and yield over time.

Intact, functioning habitat sustains strong fisheries that in turn sustain strong communities here in Southeast Alaska. Supporting SEAKFHP protects this invaluable habitat by improving communications between organizations involved in habitat conservation and restoration and coordinating on-the-ground restoration projects.

To invest your time and resources into SEAKFHP, please contact our SEAKFHP Partnership Coordinator at coodinator@sealaksafishhabitat.org.

Title: Update on NOAA Fisheries Recreational Fisheries Initiative

Desired outcome(s):

- Update the Board on recent activities at NOAA Fisheries focused on recreational fisheries and explore any potential areas for collaboration with NFHP.
- Discuss relationships with recreational fishing community and identify potential opportunity's to conserve habitat that benefit fish species important to marine recreational fishermen.
- Get feedback from the Board on how to best use NOAA Fisheries and other partners to collaborate with the recreational community to enhance fish habitat.

Background: NOAA Fisheries released the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy in 2015 and a National Implementation Plan for the policy followed a few months later. In the first two years of the four-year Implementation Plan, NOAA Fisheries has made substantial progress on or completed more than 80 percent of the identified projects, with another 16 percent of projects in early phases. Habitat specific projects highlighted in the update include construction of an artificial oyster reef alongside the Bill Burton Fishing Pier in the Chesapeake Bay and providing funds in support of the Carver Cotton Gin Dam Removal and Satucket River Restoration Project in Massachusetts. Despite real progress in rebuilding overfished stocks, recreational fishermen and managers still face numerous challenges.

This presentation will highlight the 2017 Recreational Roundtables, progress on the National Recreational Policy Implementation Plan and the upcoming 2018 National Recreational Fisheries Summit.

We recommend continued dialogue and cooperation with NFHP to advance the National Recreational Fisheries Policy and complete habitat-focused projects to benefit recreational anglers.

Additional reference material*:*

- Tab 7a - National Implementation Plan Update

NOAA FISHERIES
Recreational Fisheries

Progress Update: National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan


Photo: R. Yamada

It is the policy of NOAA Fisheries to foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation.

National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy Goals

1. Support and maintain sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources
2. Promote saltwater recreational fishing for the benefit of the nation
3. Enable enduring participation in, and enjoyment of, saltwater recreational fisheries through science-based conservation and management.

Commitment and Dedication

NOAA Fisheries is committed to forging an ever-stronger partnership with the saltwater recreational fishing community. We remain dedicated to fostering, supporting, and enhancing a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation.

Achieving this vision, crafted in collaboration with the recreational fishing community and affirmed in the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy, takes more than words; it takes planning, hard work, and perseverance. The 2015-2018 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy Implementation Plan was NOAA's first step under the Policy to develop recreational fisheries as a key agency focus, and serves as a project roadmap. This document highlights some of NOAA Fisheries' work to fulfill the commitments made in the Implementation Plan. In addition, extensive agency activities are taking place outside of the Implementation Plan that benefit recreational species and anglers.

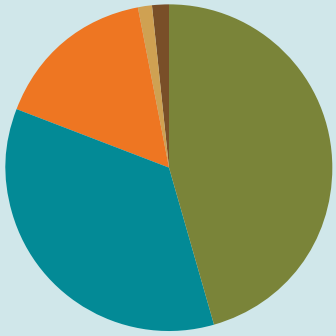
Fulfilling Commitments

In the first two years of the four-year Implementation Plan, NOAA Fisheries has made substantial progress on or completed more than 80 percent of the identified projects, with another 16 percent of projects in early phases. Despite real progress in rebuilding overfished stocks, recreational fishermen and managers still face numerous challenges. The progress documented in this status update demonstrates that we are working hard to deliver on our commitments, and that recreational fisheries are and will remain a priority for NOAA Fisheries.

National Guiding Principles

1. Support ecosystem conservation and enhancement
2. Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities
3. Coordinate with state and federal management entities
4. Advance innovative solutions to evolving science, management, and environmental challenges
5. Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and ecological information
6. Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public

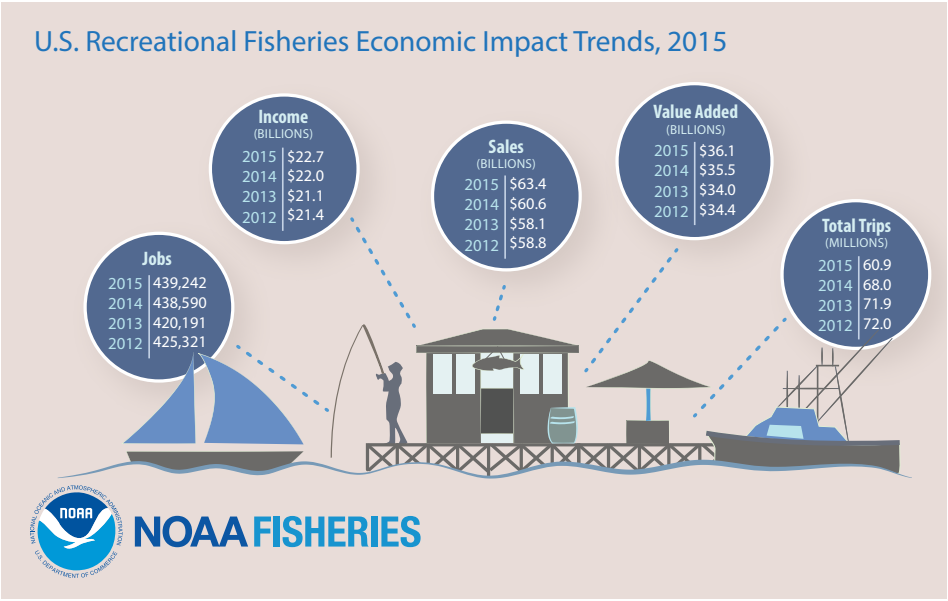
National Implementation Plan Progress



- Completed / Permanent Activity
- Substantial / Tangible Progress
- Initiated
- No Progress
- No Longer Applicable

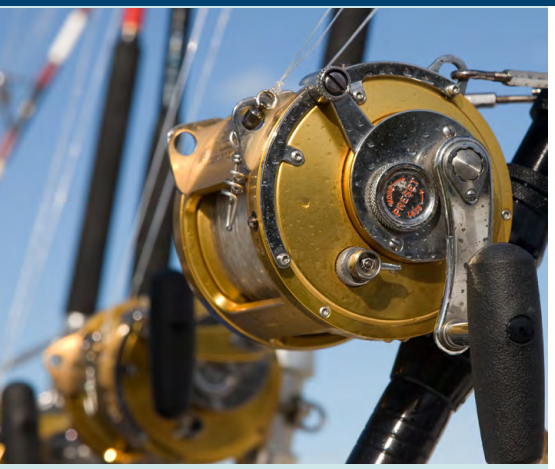
Importance of Saltwater Recreational Fishing

NOAA Fisheries recognizes that saltwater recreational fishing is integral to the culture and economic vitality of coastal communities. In 2015, an estimated 8.9 million saltwater anglers took approximately 61 million fishing trips, spending more than $29 billion on trips and durable fishing equipment. The economic impacts of this activity supported 439,000 jobs, generated more than $63 billion in sales impacts, and contributed $36 billion to the national gross domestic product.



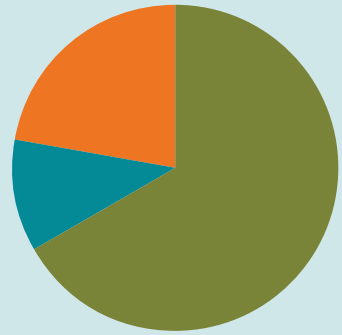
Structure and Content

The National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy established three overarching goals supported by six guiding principles, detailed at left. The National Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan identified 68 specific projects and actions, which are nested within the six guiding principles. This update discusses the status of specific implementation projects by guiding principle in an effort to convey the scope of work accomplished by NOAA Fisheries. Though much is included, the work detailed here is just a portion carried out by NOAA Fisheries in support of the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Initiative.



Guiding Principle 1 Project Status

Support ecosystem conservation and enhancement



Guiding Principle 2 Project Status

Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities

Support Ecosystem Conservation and Enhancement

Recreational anglers know that healthy marine ecosystems are the foundation of vibrant saltwater recreational fisheries. Achieving high-quality recreational fisheries requires a thoughtful, science-based approach to conserve heathy fish stocks and improve conditions where needed.

Implementation Highlights

Advance adoption of release survival techniques and best practices to reduce impacts of recreational fisheries • Status: Permanent Activity

In support of the ecosystem conservation and enhancement principle, NOAA Fisheries has distributed thousands of fish descending devices to anglers, both directly and through grants to states and Marine Fisheries Commission partners. In addition, the agency has prioritized and funded release mortality science internally and externally through various grant programs, published a Release Mortality Science Plan in 2016, and hosted recreational fisheries release mortality symposia at both the 2016 American Fisheries Society meeting and the 2017 World Recreational Fisheries Conference.

Host a workshop to assess the current state of the science, best practices, and potential benefits of artificial reefs • Status: Completed

NOAA Fisheries partnered with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to host the National Artificial Reef Workshop in 2016. More than 75 state and federal partners, academics, and fishermen participated in the workshop. Participants found the workshop timing helpful in understanding the current state of artificial reef science as well as regional differences in using artificial reefs to increase fishing access and satisfaction, especially with NOAA and the Deepwater Horizon trustees identifying sites offshore of Texas, Mississippi, and Florida for potential artificial reef deployment.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Provide federal grants to investigate bycatch and release mortality.
- Advance adoption of release survival techniques by communicating research findings.
- Support research to improve knowledge of ecosystem linkages between inshore habitats and offshore production of recreationally important fisheries.

Promote public access to quality recreational fishing opportunities

The opportunity to pursue fish with a reasonable likelihood of catching fish is a fundamental tenet of recreational fishing. Promoting and supporting access to quality fishing opportunities can take many forms. From ensuring healthy, abundant fish stocks to adjusting and streamlining regulatory mechanisms, each is important in its own way and all are integral to keeping anglers on the water and contributing to coastal economies.

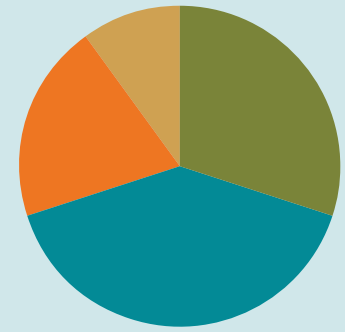
Implementation Highlights

Issue final guidance on fishery quota allocation review and analysis • Status: Completed

In 2016, working with regional fishery management council partners, NOAA Fisheries established the first-ever policy to ensure relevancy of fishery quota allocations with evolving fishery conditions by requiring periodic evaluations. The policy responded to longstanding concerns that the quota allocation review process was unresponsive to changing fishery conditions.

Guiding Principle 3 Project Status

Coordinate with state and federal management entities



Engage the recreational fishing community in habitat restoration projects to preserve and enhance fishing opportunities and improve ecosystem health • Status: Permanent Activity

In 2016, NOAA Fisheries—along with project partners the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources—finished construction of an artificial oyster reef alongside the Bill Burton Fishing Pier, improving fishing opportunities for fishermen and enhancing local habitat.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Engage the recreational community in habitat restoration, habitat focus areas, and others to preserve and enhance fishing opportunities.
- Foster additional fishing opportunities by presenting information on conservation gains to fishery managers.

Coordinate with state and federal management partners

The complexity of managing our nation's coastal and ocean resources and facilitating public access to them requires coordination and cooperation between state and federal managers. From maintaining abundant natural resources to establishing consistent regulations, close coordination brings greater benefits to anglers.

Implementation Highlights

Engage state and federal agencies to identify shared habitat objectives and execution strategies benefiting recreationally important species • Status: Substantial Progress

In 2016, NOAA provided more than $200,000 in federal grants to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game in support of the Carver Cotton Gin Dam Removal and Satucket River Restoration Project, and provided $1 million to partners in Maryland to remove the Bloede Dam. Both of these projects will benefit recreationally important species and improve fishing opportunities for anglers.

Enhance coordination with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), including in identifying of potential Sanctuary Advisory Council nominees and focused outreach to recreational fishing interests to increase angler participation in the Sanctuary management process • Status: Permanent Activity

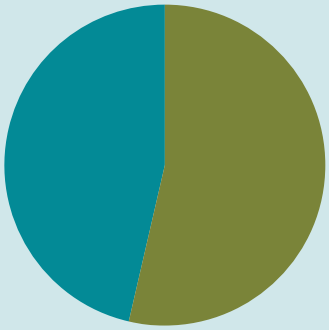
Beyond helping to identify recreational fisheries nominees for the Sanctuary Advisory Councils, NOAA Fisheries partnered with ONMS to host a constituent-driven workshop discussing recreational fishing within the national marine sanctuaries system. The workshop resulted in a list of priorities and concerns from the recreational fishing community and initial actions ONMS will address.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Conserve forage fish through targeted habitat restoration projects and by working with partners to provide passage for diadromous forage fish at hydropower dams.
- Support research to improve knowledge of ecosystem linkages between inshore habitats.
- Develop materials addressing fisheries science and management issues important for recreational fisheries to support improved understanding by federal fisheries management council members.

Guiding Principle 4 Project Status

Advance innovative solutions to evolving science, management, and environmental challenges



Guiding Principle 5 Project Status

Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and biological data

Advance innovative solutions to evolving science management and environmental challenges

Challenges to maintaining healthy fish stocks and reliable access to them regularly arise and evolve over time. Identifying and meeting the challenges—before they become crises—is only possible through collaboration between fishermen, managers, and scientists.

Implementation Highlights

Investigate alternative management approaches to evaluate suitability for improved recreational fisheries management, specifically including fishing mortality rate methods • Status: Substantial Progress

In addition to revising the National Standard 1 guidelines, which provided fishery managers with additional flexibility to address concerns of the recreational fishing community, NOAA Fisheries provided federal grant support for and participated in the 2016 Alternative Management for Recreational Fisheries Workshop hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and the American Sportfishing Association. The agency also participated in the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative, and supported formulation of a special Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel in the Gulf of Mexico to help develop lasting solutions to ongoing management challenges.

Develop Marine Recreational Information Program certified methods for electronic trip reporting in "for-hire" fisheries through pilot projects • Status: Substantial Progress

In partnership with for-hire vessel operators, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, and the Gulf Fisheries Information Network, NOAA Fisheries expects to certify jointly developed electronic for-hire reporting projects in late 2017. Partners completing projects leading to MRIP certification include Alaska Department of Fish and Game, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

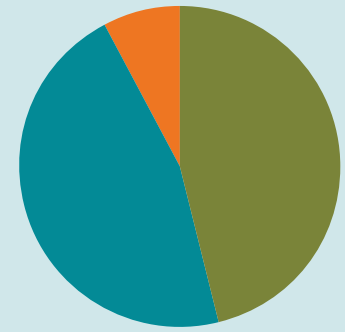
- Pursue electronic reporting through implementation of regionally-based electronic-monitoring and reporting plans.
- Develop and implement a Bio-economic Length Structured Angler Simulation Tool to assess the effects of management actions on angler participation in West Coast recreational fisheries.
- Execute an economic study of Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fishing tournaments to improve understanding of their economic impacts and for consideration in management.

Provide scientifically sound and trusted social, cultural, economic, and biological information

Scientifically sound, trusted information from many disciplines is essential for effective management of natural resources. From routine economic expenditure surveys, to daily dockside catch surveys, NOAA Fisheries and our partners have developed some of the most advanced data collection systems in the world to support recreational fishing.

Guiding Principle 6 Project Status

Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public



Implementation Highlights

Initiate a National Research Academies of Science (NAS) review of the Marine Recreational Information Program to evaluate current recreational fisheries catch and effort data • Status: Completed

The NAS released a comprehensive review of the MRIP program in January 2017. The review found that NOAA Fisheries made "major improvements to the statistical soundness of survey designs" and "impressive progress in providing more reliable catch data to fishery managers." NOAA Fisheries will finalize a strategic framework to address the NAS' recommendations for additional improvements in the near future.

Execute a fishing trip expenditure survey in all coastal states to refine understanding of socioeconomic impacts of saltwater recreational fishing • Status: Substantial Progress

NOAA Fisheries completed expenditure surveys in the Gulf states and along the Pacific Coast in 2016 and is conducting those surveys from Maine to Georgia and in Hawaii in 2017. The data will be used to estimate expenditures and economic impacts associated with saltwater recreational fishing trips, ultimately providing important information about the societal impacts of saltwater recreational fishing in the United States.

Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Execute an economic study of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) fishing tournaments to improve understanding of their economic impacts and for consideration in management.
- Execute directed projects to improve recreational catch and effort data for pulse and other rare event fisheries, including Gulf of Mexico red snapper and Atlantic HMS.
- Complete and distribute the Main Hawaiian component of the National Angler Attitudes and Perspectives Survey.

Communicate and engage with the recreational fishing public

NOAA Fisheries understands that the best path to improving management of our coastal and ocean resources is to foster a well-informed and engaged fishing public.

Implementation Highlights

Work with stakeholders to host roundtable discussions in each region to strengthen relationships and share information • Status: Completed

NOAA Fisheries hosted nine regional recreational fisheries–focused dialogues in late 2016 and early 2017. We worked with fishermen to identify discussion topics, and the meetings expanded our network of engaged anglers, reinforced communications pathways, and identified region-specific challenges.

Partner with fishery management councils, and states to create recreational fishing data communications teams in each region • Status: Substantial Progress

NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is creating external communications working groups in NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic and Southeast regions. Representatives from the councils, Fisheries Information Networks (representing state partners), and Sea Grant will join NOAA Fisheries' staff to improve the two-way flow of information.

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Related commitments completed or with substantial progress:

- Provide relevant information efficiently and on a regular basis.
- Use the full suite of available tools to provide opportunities for all who wish to engage.
- Test and implement mobile platforms as a way to communicate fishery regulations.

On the Horizon

NOAA Fisheries is proud of our work to date following through on commitments made in the 2015 Recreational Fisheries Policy Implementation Plan. This progress was only possible through collaboration with anglers, the states, commissions, and councils.

While much has been accomplished and is underway, additional work remains. As we continue to execute the Implementation Plan in 2017 and 2018, we are already looking ahead.

Based upon constituent feedback and information provided during the 2017 Regional Recreational Fisheries Roundtables, NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will convene a National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit in spring 2018. This event will focus on identifying solutions to challenges identified by the saltwater recreational fishing community.

We look forward to our continued work with all of our partners to collectively improve our nation's saltwater recreational fisheries.

For more detailed information on the NOAA Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Initiative, please visit: **http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/**

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: 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 9– 2019 AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and Ocean Resources Policy Committee National Conservation Need (NCN) below.

Proposed NCN

Title: Broadening Conservation Partnerships through the National Fish Habitat Partnership (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:

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

Title – New "Fish Habitat Hero" Award

Desired outcome – To gauge NFHP Board interest in partnering with AFS to launch this award.

Background – The AFS Fish Habitat Section is hosting discussions about a new, tiered award. The top honor, reserved for lifetime achievement, or perhaps the entire award program could be named in honor of Stan Moberly, former AFS President (1987-88), charter member of the NFHP Board (2007-2014), and long-time fish habitat aficionado. Stan conceived the idea of a habitat award about a decade ago but has retired and entrusted the idea with Tom Bigford, the immediate past President of the AFS Fish Habitat Section (2015-2017) and AFS delegate to the NFHP Board during that same span. The AFS Fish Habitat Section proposes to build on Stan's idea with a range of award categories beginning with students and young professionals and culminating in the career award. Current AFS FHS President and AFS representative to the NFHP Board, Tom Lang, and the FHS officers envision awards to recognize individuals, groups, and projects for outstanding accomplishments in a fish habitat field. The option of naming the highest career award after Stan is a fitting recognition for his lifetime of achievements. Note – naming any portion of this award for Stan was added to this proposal after Stan shifted this idea to Tom Bigford.

AFS would like to discuss the possibility of partnering with NFHP to implement a national effort to honor individuals and groups who through policy, management, research, education, project implementation, communications and outreach, or some other endeavor achieved significant success in a fish habitat field. Stan developed an initial list of 145 individual candidates for a career recognition; several dozen more could be added since he developed the list about a decade ago. The number would grow further if we consider groups, successful projects, young professionals, and/or students, for example.

This effort would require significant planning prior to launch. The NFHP Board would help to lead the effort to develop nomination criteria, an application process, a review process or body, generate interest in nominations, and refine our options for varying levels of recognition and many other details. AFS would like to discuss this opportunity with an eye toward announcing the award at a major event such as the AFS annual meeting in August 2018 (Atlantic City) or NFHP Board meeting in October 2018 (Texas) and recognizing the first class of Stan Moberly Fish Habitat Heroes at the 2019 AFS meeting (Reno) or NFHP fall meeting in 2019.

At least four existing awards are worth investigating as we consider this new recognition:

1. NOAA Nancy Foster Habitat Conservation Award given to up to three individuals on a biennial basis for work in marine systems.
2. NFHP Habitat Conservation Award given biennially to several individuals working in freshwater.
3. Steve Berkeley Marine Conservation Award ($10,000) given annually to one graduate student and AFS member.

4. The AFS Fisheries Management Section's Hall of Excellence that honors one fisheries management professional annually who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of fisheries management.

This effort should also be compared to the AFS Fellow recognition for Society members for their career accomplishments. That award opened with about 75 individuals in 2015 and adds about five each year.

Similarly, we should review the procedures established by existing awards to ensure a fair and equal process, including:

1. Other awards by AFS and NFHP.
2. The scientific and management awards presented by the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation.
3. The Nancy Foster Habitat Conservation Award mentioned above.

This Fish Habitat Award could be designed to offer tiered recognition for:

- Outstanding lifetime achievement – the highest honor
- Successful protection or restoration projects
- Successful group efforts
- Noteworthy student accomplishments

AFS invites NFHP input on the prize for each category. Awardees could receive framed certificates and fish-related art and as permitted by available funds. After selection, AFS and NFHP would work with the recipients to identify an appropriate venue for presentation. Agency awardees might be honored at a meeting of leading officials. Successful projects could be showcased at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Graduate students could be honored on campus. Such flexibility would help to control costs.

Materials provided – No additional materials for this stage of conversation.