

**An Assessment of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture's Project
Ranking Criteria Alignment with the National Fish Habitat Board's
Minimum Benchmark Set of Project Prioritization Criteria**



Eastern Brook Trout
JOINT VENTURE
A Fish Habitat Partnership

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Background

The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) adopted a minimum benchmark set of fish habitat conservation project prioritization criteria at their February, 2013 meeting. These criteria are intended to ensure core tenets of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are considered by Fish Habitat Partnership when ranking projects for funding.

To ensure criteria the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) uses to rank proposed fish habitat conservation projects are strongly aligned with the Board's minimum benchmark set of project prioritization criteria, an assessment was undertaken and what follows is the outcome of that assessment.

Assessment Outcome

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #1: Direct linkages of project to specific Fish Habitat Partnership strategic plan/framework priorities and/or National Fish Habitat Partnership action plan (2nd edition)/priority conservation strategies.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process fully addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under sections III C-F.

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #2: Project alignment/compatibility with other conservation plans (e.g. State Wildlife Plans; Biological Opinions, Land Management Plans).

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process partially addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under sections III G and H.

Recommendation: The EBTJV can strengthen its linkage to this criterion by adding another component to Section IV - Project Planning and Success that focuses more specifically on determining if the project proposal is also aligned with other conservation plans; a project would receive additional points if it addresses the EBTJV Conservation Strategy and other formally recognized plans (see examples in Appendix I).

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #3: Project identification of specific measures of success and performance targets that are observable and amenable to pre- and post-project monitoring and include social, economic and biological benefits such as enhanced recreational, commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities, increased public visitation, or innovative project designs that address specific fish conservation challenges.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process partially addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under sections IV D and V A-B.

Recommendation: The EBTJV can strengthen its linkage to this criterion by including another component under Section IV - Project Planning and Success that rates the specificity/clarity of the proposed project's description of its success measures and performance targets (see examples in Appendix I). Also consider adding another section under Section Management Assets.

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #4: Capabilities/experience of project proponents to complete what is proposed.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process partially addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under section II A.

Recommendation: The EBTJV can strengthen its linkage to this criterion by adding another component to Section II - Technical Design/Methods that assesses the capabilities and experience of the proposed project's applicant(s) (see examples in Appendix I).

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #5: Well-defined budget linked to clear deliverables and outcomes.

- The EBTJV's current project scoring process doesn't address the caliber of the proposed projects budget and/or its linkage to the project's deliverables and outcomes.

Recommendation: Add a component to Section IV - Project Planning and Success that rates how well the proposed project's budget is defined and is linked to its deliverables and outcomes (see examples in Appendix I).

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #6: Leveraging of funds.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process fully addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under section I A.

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #7: Project protects aquatic habitat or addresses the causes and processes behind aquatic habitat decline.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process fully addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under sections III A-B and IV C.

Board Minimum Benchmark Criteria #8: Project has an outreach/education component in the local community.

- The EBTJV's habitat project scoring process fully addresses this minimum benchmark criterion under section V C.

Appendix I. Examples of project scoring criteria that would strengthen the linkage of the EBTJV's eastern brook trout project scoring process with the Board's minimum benchmark set of fish habitat conservation project prioritization criteria.

Board Criteria #2: Project alignment/compatibility with other conservation plans (e.g. State Wildlife Plans; Biological Opinions, Land Management Plans).

- Does the project support habitat conservation goals of State Conservation Management Plans or other site specific management plans? (Adapted from SARP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in a conservation plan = 5 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in more than one conservation plan = 10 points

- Does the project support habitat conservation goals of a State Wildlife Action Plan or similar strategic plans (e.g., Joint Ventures, local watershed plan)? (Adapted from MGLP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in a conservation plan = 5 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in more than one conservation plan = 10 points

- Does the project address, support or build upon existing action plan(s) (e.g. state fish & wildlife, watershed protection, water quality improvement, land or water-use plan(s), or other regional plan(s)? (Adapted from RFHP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in a conservation plan = 5 points

Yes, the project supports at least one goal in more than one conservation plan = 10 points

Board Criteria #3: Project identification of specific measures of success and performance targets that are observable and amenable to pre- and post-project monitoring and include social, economic and biological benefits such as enhanced recreational, commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities, increased public visitation, or innovative project designs that address specific fish conservation challenges.

- Does the project include a monitoring and maintenance plan with clear objectives for evaluating the success and goals of the project? (Adapted from DFHP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project includes a monitoring and maintenance plan but the objectives for evaluating the success and goals of the project are not clear = 5 points

Yes, the project includes a monitoring and maintenance plan with clear objectives for evaluating the success and goals of the project = 10 points

- Does the project include a description of measurable outcomes (e.g. biologic, chemical, physical), with a clear description of how they will be quantified and reported? (Adapted from WNTI's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project includes a description of measurable outcomes but does not describe how they will be quantified and reported = 5 points

Yes, the project includes a description of measurable outcomes and clearly describes how they will be quantified and reported = 10 points

- Do the project outcomes lead to improvements in water quality from human health, recreational use, or ecological service perspectives? (Adapted from RFHP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes = 5 points

Board Criteria #4: Capabilities/experience of project proponents to complete what is proposed.

- Does the project applicant(s) have the technical capacity/knowledge to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed project? (Adapted from ACFHP's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the project applicant(s) has the technical capacity/knowledge to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed project = 5 points

Board Criteria #5: Well-defined budget linked to clear deliverables and outcomes.

- Are all major budget items justified in relation to the project's objectives and are they clearly explained in the narrative description? (Adapted from Mat-Su's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the major budget items are clearly described and justified = 5 points

- Are the budget narrative and budget tables clear, concise, and complete? (Adapted from Mat-Su's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the budget narrative and budget tables are clear, concise, and complete = 5 points

- Are the in-kind matches clearly described and allowable? (Adapted from SWAK's Project Scoring Criteria)

No = 0 points

Yes, the in-kind matches are clearly described and allowable = 5 points