

Draft National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary: March 20-21, 2019

Board Members Present:

Chair Ed Schriever (At-Large State Seat)
Vice Chair Chris Moore (MAFMC)
Peter Aarrestad (NEAFWA)
Stan Allen (PSMFC)
Mari-Beth Delucia *for* Alison Bowden (TNC)
Doug Boyd (At-Large Sportfishing Seat)
Chris Cantrell (WAFWA)
Josie Cline *for* Mike Leonard (American Sportfishing Association)

David Hoskins *for* Jim Kurth (USFWS)
Doug Austen *for* Tom Lang (American Fisheries Society)
Bryan Moore *for* Chris Wood (Trout Unlimited)
Doug Nygren (MAFWA)
Christy Plumer (TRCP)
Doug Beard (USGS)
Sam Rauch (NOAA Fisheries)
Dan Shively *for* Rob Harper (USFS)
Bobby Wilson (SEAFWA)

Board Members Absent:

Benita Best-Wong (EPA) and Sean Stone (CCA)

Other Meeting Attendees:

Chris Wood (Trout Unlimited)
Steve Moyer (Trout Unlimited)
Julie Henning (USFWS)
Elsa Haubold (USFWS)
Daniel Wiefrich (USGS)
Melanie Steinkamp (USGS)
Chad Tokowicz (American Sportfishing Association)
Ryan Roberts (AFWA, NFHP Staff)
Gary Whelan (Michigan DNR, NFHP Staff, SDC)
Alex Atkinson (NOAA Fisheries, NFHP Staff)
Eric MacMillan (USFWS NFHP Staff)

Lisa Havel (ACFHP Coordinator)
Steve Perry (EBTJV Coordinator)
Rick Westerhof (Great Lakes Basin FHP Coordinator)
Therese Thompson (WNTI Coordinator)
Pat Montanio (NOAA Fisheries)
Bette Rubin (NOAA Fisheries)
Tim Sartwell (NOAA Fisheries)
Russ Dunn (NOAA Fisheries)
Katie Wagner (NOAA Fisheries)
Emily Farr (NOAA Fisheries)

Future Board Meetings:

- June Board Webinar – June 19, 2019 from 2-4 PM
- October Board Meeting –October 23-24, 2019, hosted by Science and Date Committee in Traverse City, MI

Approved by Motion:

- October Meeting Summary; motion by Bobby Wilson, seconded by Bryan Moore.

Other Actions:

- March Board Meeting Agenda was revised to accommodate speaker schedules (revised agenda included as an appendix to this meeting summary).
- Legislative Committee to meet with NAWCA Board to discuss governance structure.
- Accomplishment report for the NFHP Action Plan review process (Gary Whelan).
- Communications and Legislative Committees to meet to discuss potential events and ways to enhance the public messaging around the 2019 Waters to Watch Campaign.

- Legislative Working group will reconvene to begin working on a transition Roadmap should the legislation pass (present to Board in June)
- Science and Data Committee to look into using Natural Resources Damages Assessment (NRDA) methodology to assess if these methods could be used to assess the value of aquatic habitat and restoration.

Day 1 – March 20, 2019 Notes and Discussion

Welcome, Attendance, Introductions, and Housekeeping

The group was welcomed by Chris Wood, the President and CEO of Trout Unlimited. Chris mentioned how appropriately timed the NFHP Board meeting was given that the first shad were seen in the Potomac three days prior. Chris expressed the importance of partnership-driven initiatives like NFHP and how pleased he is to see these groups work so well together. Ed Schriever informed the Board of his new position as Executive Director of Idaho Fish and Game. He remarked that it's been a very busy time, especially with the record freshman class in Congress, but looks forward to continuing to support the great work of NFHP and expects things to settle down in a couple months. Eric MacMillan was introduced as the new NFHP staff support person at the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Eric previously worked for NOAA Fisheries (Protected Resources and Office of Habitat Conservation) and several Western state agencies doing tech work and completed his Masters degree at MI State University.

Multistate Conservation Grant Update

Ryan Roberts shared that the NFHP Board operating budget is delayed for FY19 and will be shared once the staff has it (there was not a detailed budget review during this meeting). Ryan reviewed that the Multistate Conservation Grants (\$6M in total- \$3M for wildlife & \$3M for fisheries, NFHP typically requests ~\$250k) have been used to support unmet Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) needs since 2008 and has also been used for Board support. All 17 National Conservation Needs (NCNs) submitted to the AFWA Grants Committee for the 2020 cycle of grants were accepted. However, the NFHP NCN scored low with the feedback that it was too broad. Letters of Intent are due to the National Grants Committee by April 12. This year, FHPs have elected to submit projects under the theme of communications and outreach in order to narrow the focus of the NFHP application to the Multistate Conservation Grants. Therese Thompson, Branden Bornemann, and Jeff Boxrucker will work with Ryan to assemble the FHP needs into one cohesive NFHP Letter of Intent, which the Board will get a chance to briefly review before submission.

Update from the Fish & Wildlife Service

David Hoskins shared NFHP budget tables from FY18 with the Board for awareness. In FY18, despite level funding from Congress for the NFHP program, USFWS made significant increases in the amount of funding provided to FHPs. Compared to previous years, an additional \$794,000 was provided to FHPs in FY18 for on the ground work and for two additional FHPs' operational support. For FY19, Congress appropriated level funding at \$6.64M, consistent with previous years. This year's FY19 allocation process has been delayed due to the government shutdown, Congress not passing a budget until early 2019, and the consideration of the NFHP Board's request to transfer \$1M of competitive projects funds to FHP base operational support. David suggested that the performance report template will likely be sent to FHPs in April, will likely reflect a change to criteria #4, and that FHPs will have adequate time to complete and submit their reports.

Update on the NFHP Board Letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Ed Schriever shared with the Board that he had a short discussion with Margaret Everson at the North American Meeting in early March about the Board's request via letter to the Service to consider increasing

the amount of base operational funding for FHPs. She confirmed she received the letter and was open to having the conversation about the request.

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Presentation

Lisa Havel presented background information, newly developed guidance documents for the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), recent scientific efforts, and a new ACFHP website that debuted in December 2018. ACFHP developed a Conservation Strategic Plan, an Action Plan and is in the process of developing a business plan. These guidance documents contain objectives, strategies, and related actions that can be accomplished over a 2-year period. The Partnership plans to develop regional cover pages for the Business Plan to enhance the plan's local appeal to potential new partners and funders across the FHP. ACFHP is currently seeking nominations (closing April 20, 2019) for the [Melissa Laser Habitat Conservation Award](#). ACFHP is involved in a number of communications and outreach efforts including attending conferences and trade shows, distributing a newsletter, updating fact sheets, workshops and presentations to the ASMFC. ACFHP launched a new website in December 2018. The FHP is involved in the NE Coastal Assessment and maintains the species habitat matrix tool.

World Fish Migration Day

Herman Wannigen from the [World Fish Migration Foundation](#) discussed World Fish Migration Day and his recent film premier, *Love Flows*, which can be viewed next at the 2019 American Fisheries Society meeting in Reno, Nevada before a more broad release. The next World Fish Migration Day is May 16, 2020 and the goal is to generate excitement about opening up rivers around the world. Herman encouraged the Board, FHPs, and their partners to plan an event to contribute to this worldwide event. In 2018, there were 570 events from all over the world ranging from river cleanups, educational workshops, to fish counts. These events can be something that your organization already does each year or is already planning. Herman is particularly interested in planning an event in Hawaii in order to wrap up their world tour.

Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Update

Steve Perry presented to the Board the about the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV), one of NFHP's original 5 pilot FHPs. The FHP was formally recognized by the Board in 2007. Steve presented EBTJV's new Roadmap to Conservation which outlines the threats facing Brook Trout as well as conservation goals and objectives. In 2006, the EBTJV completed a range-wide assessment of wild Brook Trout distribution and status. A follow up range-wide assessment was completed in 2015 at a finer scale in order to identify a more workable set of wild Brook Trout conservation strategies. Since their founding, EBTJV has had 88 projects funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service with 241 partners at the local level (5:1 funding). Based on a US Fish and Wildlife publication on the value of acres, miles restored, the EBTJV estimates their FHP's work has resulted in >\$317M in socioeconomic benefits.

Partnerships Committee Update

Stan Allen, co-chair of the Partnerships Committee, updated the Board on the Committee's completed and planned activities. The Committee completed the 2018 FHP Evaluation Process and drafted a report for the Board's review. All 20 FHPs participated in the review process and scores overall were higher than the 2015 evaluation (average 37.9 out of 44). The 2018 Evaluation included a pilot criteria (#5) which the Committee is seeking feedback on from the FHPs. The Evaluation Review Team had follow up conversations with FHPs after scores were distributed in September and many FHP scores were adjusted based on those follow up conversations and additional materials that were submitted. The Partnerships Committee will look for feedback on the evaluation process in order to improve it for the 2021 evaluation. In 2019, the Committee will be reviewing the NFHP Document of Interdependence, begin planning for a 2020 FHP Workshop, and assist with the Multistate Conservation Grant application approach.

FHP Engagement Session

During this session, FHPs and the Board were open to share any concerns or discussion topics that remained from the October Workshop or Board meeting or other new topics they'd like to raise. The Board and FHPs discussed the FHP Evaluation and the criteria that FHPs struggled with most - #10 and #11; these will need to be honed for the 2021 evaluation. The Board also discussed the best way to demonstrate the value of FHP operational funds, possibility of checking in with the FHPs 6 months after the funding was allocated to see how that operational funding was used or measuring the percentage of funding going to projects that comes from outside sources. The group also discussed how to make the NFHP funding allocation process more efficient. It was discussed that FHPs could potentially submit sections 1 and 2 of the Accomplishments Report early (operation and accomplishments) in order to front-load the process.

Legislative Committee Update

Christy Plumer reported to the Board on current legislative activity. This is the Committee's 12th attempt to advance the progress of the NFHP legislation and for the first time, both a House (HR 1747) and Senate (S 754) bill have been introduced – both versions are very similar. On the House side, the Bill was introduced by Wittman (VA) and Veazy (TX) and on the Senate side, the Bill was introduced by Sens. Crapo (ID) and Cardin (MD). The National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act (NFHCTPA) did have 2 key changes from previous versions of the Act: the US Forest Service was added to the list of Federal agencies who will be provided \$400k for scientific and technical assistance funds and the project decision notification period was revised from 180 days to 90 days. The Committee is also tracking the ACCESS Act and the Help for Wildlife Act. At this stage, the non-federal Board members and FHPs are encouraged to spread awareness and raise support for the Act among your representatives using the toolkit that NFHP developed in 2018. Christy also discussed an upcoming highway bill (2020) – the Committee would like to see increased funding to the US Forest Service through the Federal road program and there will be a request for a new Aquatic Connectivity and Migration Crossings Grant program. The Board discussed a need to pin down talking points for Board members and FHP coordinators and Christy will be setting up a call in the near future for those who are interested.

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Briefing

Ryan Roberts updated the Board on the March 13 Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation briefing on Capitol Hill. Overall, the event went very well with an attendance of 30-40 people including three Board members (Mike Leonard, Christy Plumer, and Doug Nygren). In addition to Congressional speakers Rep. Rob Wittman and Sen. John Boozeman, Doug Nygren also spoke about the inner-workings of NFHP and specifically how the Reservoir Partnership works with states and partners on the ground. Christy Plumer spoke about the NFHP program at a national level and about the importance of the NFHCTPA. Mike Leonard shared the socioeconomic values of recreational fishing which were derived from the NFHP Project Tracking Database. The NFHP infographic was distributed and referenced by Rep. Wittman in his remarks.

Legislative Working Group Update

Bryan Moore, lead of the Legislative Working Group, shared an update on the group's activities since its formation in October 2018. Members of that group include: Bryan Moore, Alison Bowden, Bobby Wilson, Ed Schriever, Christy Plumer, Mike Leonard, Peter Aarestad, Gary Whelan, and Ryan Roberts. The group has met three times since October to look more closely at the NFHCTPA and its potential impacts. Bryan highlighted there are an additional 8 Board member seats outlined in the legislation which will be selected by the other Board members – there does not appear to be a future role for the NFHP Executive Leadership Team. Under the legislation, Congress has the authority to designate or modify a Partnership and all existing partnerships will be reviewed by Congress. The Board will also be required to submit an annual report to

Congress. Should the legislation be enacted, the Board will put forward a list of recommended projects for funding to the Secretary of the Interior no later than July 1. The Board raised questions about administrative funds and how NFHP should structure that allocation. Christy Plumer suggested meeting with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Board so the NFHP Board can get a sense for how that program is run. Lisa Havel summarized FHP survey results (14 responses) where FHPs outlined the many variety of ways they receive support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (including but not limited to: writing and administering NFHP funded project agreements, NEPA and permitting, development of project proposals, technical and monitoring support, FHP steering or executive committees, and outreach and partner development). The Board will need to develop a plan to transfer these services should the legislation pass.

Day 2 – March 21, 2019 Notes and Discussion

Communication Committee Update

Ryan Roberts updated the Board on NFHP communications. Ryan is preparing to send guidance to FHPs about the 2019 Waters to Watch campaign. Since 2007, the Waters to Watch campaign has highlighted over 110 NFHP projects. The goal is to get a better balance of marine and inland projects this year. There was some discussion on how to make the campaign more effective and potentially increase the push for fundraising via Beyond the Pond through the campaign. The Board discussed having a more thoughtful and strategic rollout surrounding the Waters to Watch campaign, especially given the current legislative momentum on the Hill. The group also discussed combining efforts of the Legislative Committee and the Communications Committee in order to raise the visibility of NFHP. Activities such as site visits, visits with Congressional members, Committee staff, and OMB would be good ways to educate about NFHP that we could be seeking out more proactively.

Beyond the Pond Update

Ryan Roberts reviewed the original intent for creating Beyond the Pond; as a 501c3 where FHPs and the Board can route raised funds, and as a fundraiser for national FHP needs. Beyond the Pond has worked well for the 501c3 purpose, however, fundraising has been a challenge. Beyond the Pond opted not to hire a part time staff person and would like to hire a full time Development Director, but does not currently have the funding to do that. Ryan emphasized the Amazon Smile account which allows 0.5% of select items purchased on Amazon to go to support Beyond the Pond.

NFHP Action Plan

Gary Whelan presented to the Board about the NFHP Action Plan which is revised every 6 years. The mission and goals have not changed since 2006. The Board was presented with three options as to how the revision could be approached and is leaning towards option #2. The Board will develop an accomplishments report to inform the Board in October 2019 and progress will be updated at the June Board call. The Board will then decide on an approach for revision of the NFHP Action Plan. This approach would need to be re-evaluated if the NFHP legislation were enacted.

Science and Data Committee Update

Gary Whelan, co-chair of the Science and Data Committee, presented to the Board about the Science and Data Committee's recent and upcoming activities. Daniel Wiefriech (USGS) will be the new Science and Data Committee co-chair. Gary is working to update the SDC membership and is interested in getting more marine membership on the Committee. The lack of funding has been a challenge for the inland assessment, however, progress is being made on the marine assessment. Gary proposed adding training on USGS

hydrology modeling to the Multistate Conservation Grant proposal (~\$70k). The NFHP Project Tracking database continues to progress and has been useful for 13/20 FHPs for auto-generating reports.

NOAA Recreational Fisheries Update

Tim Sartwell and Russ Dunn from NOAA Sustainable Fisheries presented an update to the NFHP Board since their presentation at the March 2018 meeting. Tim presented on the 2018 recreational fishing summit, regional engagement plans, and Sam Rauch announced several FHP projects that combine habitat restoration with recreational community engagement that NOAA will be funding in FY19. The Recreational Fishing Summit had a theme of improving opportunity and stability in recreational fisheries and aimed to identify direct suite of challenges to make progress on. The summit had 140 participants and received very positive feedback. Regional engagement plans will be released in May 2019 and will address how recreational fishermen can interact more with the agency. NOAA Fisheries recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Marine Sanctuaries, AFWA, American Sportfishing Association and others promoting long term sustainable fishing and boating opportunities – it will provide a funding vehicle for those agencies to collaborate on projects. Sam announced that NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation will be funding an ACFHP project at Morris Landing which will involve outreach to the Spanish-speaking recreational community (\$25k), a SARP oyster reef restoration project which will engage local CCA chapters and utilize a restaurant shell recycling program (\$42k), and a Kenai Peninsula project which will expand the StreamWatch program to engage guides and anglers (\$42k).

Fisheries Economics Discussion

Chris Moore led a discussion with the Board about how NFHP can best utilize fisheries economics data to tell our story. The Southwick Associations Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing 2019 Report was included as part of the Board's meeting materials and served as a starting point for the discussion. NOAA and USFS both utilize economics data to communicate the value of fisheries and recreational fishing. The Board discussed that although there are limitations to combining economic data resulting from different methodologies, there is still utility in making the connection between the economics of fisheries and habitat. NOAA offered to discuss at a future meeting how NOAA is trying to link restoration dollars to economic impacts and fishery productivity.

AFS/NFHP Award Update

Doug Austen shared the update about the AFS/NFHP award. The first award will be awarded to Stan Moberly at the plenary session of the upcoming AFS Meeting in September 2019 in Reno, NV. A small team has been working collaboratively to develop the award and ensure that this new award is not duplicative of other habitat-focused awards. The Stan Moberly award will be given on an annual basis paired with a young professional award and will be managed by the AFS Habitat section along with the NFHP Board. The nomination period is open for the 2019 young professional award.

Board Visioning Discussion

Board visioning began with discussions regarding the FY19 NFHP funding allocation from the USFWS. Ed Schriever will be having a follow up conversation with Margaret Everson at USFWS regarding the allocation of base operational funds to the FHPs. Discussion shifted to Beyond the Pond and how the Board has not seen much success with fundraising. Kelly Hepler, the Beyond the Pond Board Chair, would like to invest and hire a Development Director. Ed invited Kelly to the June NFHP Board call to discuss this. The next challenge would be to identify a funding source for a Development Director. There was also discussion about better defining the roles of the respective Boards. There are many challenges to raising funds for such a diverse program with 20 FHPs who cover a range of issues, habitats, and species across a diversity of geographies.

The point was raised that most investors want to give money to projects happening in their own backyard and see the impact of their donation.

The Board discussed potential changes in governance if the NFHP legislation were to pass. There was interest in hearing how the Federal agencies foresee using the \$400k for scientific and technical assistance should the legislation pass, however, it is difficult for the agencies to discuss this hypothetical and would like to hear what the Board wants. NOAA Fisheries raised a caution when interpreting the funding language within the legislation. It's important that the Board not view the funding amounts as certain from year to year since appropriators can authorize *up to an amount*. It is also important that the Board recognize there is a chance that appropriators would choose to not authorize new/additional money to the agencies to fund NFHP engagement (e.g., the \$400k for scientific and technical assistance that could be appropriated may not be new funding for agencies, but could be redirected funding when compared with previous years' budgets). One idea of having liaisons from the agencies to the Board was discussed. It was suggested that the Board develop a Roadmap to outline what these changes will look like for NFHP and how the governance will change. However, it is difficult for the Board to envision where they are in 2-3 years given the uncertainty with the legislation. It was decided that the Legislation Working Group will focus on development of this Roadmap so the Board can be proactive about the introduced legislation. This group will closely consider all the feedback from the FHP survey regarding USFWS support.