

Draft National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary: April 1, 2020

Board Members Present:

Chair Ed Schriever (At-Large State Seat)
Vice Chair Bobby Wilson (SEAFWA)
Peter Aarrestad (NEAFWA)
Stan Allen (PSMFC)
Alison Bowden (TNC)
Chris Cantrell (WAFWA)
Eric MacMillan for David Hoskins (USFWS)
Kim Dibble (AFS)
Chris Moore (MAFMC)
Bryan Moore *for* Chris Wood (Trout Unlimited)

Doug Nygren (MAFWA)
Doug Boyd (At-Large Sportfishing Seat)
Christy Plumer (TRCP)
Mike Leonard (ASA)
Doug Beard (USGS)
Ron Regan (AFWA)
Sam Rauch (NOAA Fisheries)
Scott Barndt *for* Rob Harper (USFS)
Bobby Wilson (SEAFWA)
John Goodin (EPA)

Other Meeting Attendees:

Carrie Robinson (NOAA Fisheries)
John Lord (AFWA)
Chad Tokowicz (American Sportfishing Association)
Andrew Wilkins (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership)
Richard Mitchell (Environmental Protection Agency)
Gina Hunt (Chesapeake Bay Program)
Moe Nelson (NOAA Fisheries)
Doug Austen (American Fisheries Society)
Mark Humpert (AFWA)
Wesley Daniel (USGS)

Board Staff:

Daniel Wieferich (USGS, NFHP Staff, SDC)
Ryan Roberts (AFWA, NFHP Staff)
Gary Whelan (Michigan DNR, NFHP Staff, SDC)
Alex Atkinson (NOAA Fisheries, NFHP Staff)

FHP & FWS Coordinators:

Branden Bornemann (Kenai Peninsula FHP)
Joan Drinkwin (Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership)
Jessica Graham (Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership)
Heidi Keuler (Fishers and Farmers FHP)
Gordon Smith (Hawaii FHP)
Therese Thompson (WNTI Coordinator)
Jessica Coakley (Atlantic Coastal FHP)
Lisa Havel (Atlantic Coastal FHP)
Jeff Boxrucker (Reservoir FHP)
Joe Nohner (Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership)
Debbie Hart (Southeast Alaska FHP)
Jennifer Graves (Desert FHP)
Alicia Marrs (CA Fish Passage Forum & Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative)
Bill Rice (USFWS)

Future Board Meetings:

- June 24, 2020 Board Webinar from 2- 4 PM ET
- October 19-20 FHP Workshop – hosted by Idaho Department of Fish & Game in Nampa, ID
- October 21-22 Board meeting – hosted by Idaho Department of Fish & Game in Nampa, ID

Approved by Motion:

- January NFHP Board Meeting Summary; motion by Ron Regan, seconded by Stan Allen.
- 2020 Waters to Watch project list; motion by Bobby Wilson, seconded by Doug Boyd.

Notes and Discussion

Attendance, Welcome, & Tribal Board Member (*Ed Schriever, Board Chair*)

The Board Chair, Ed Schriever, remarked on the impressive attendance to this webinar meeting (71 attendees) and thanked everyone for joining this call during these extraordinary times due to the coronavirus. The Board voted to approve the January Board meeting notes. Ed welcomed Adam Ringia, as the new tribal Board representative, on his first Board call and emphasized that the Board has been without tribal representation on the Board for a long while. Adam is the Executive Director of the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission and served as their Vice Chair prior to assuming the role of Director. Adam has 10 years of experience working for and with tribes and looks forward to bringing Indian country into NFHP and finding ways we can support each other. Ed also introduced Scott Barndt, who is representing the USFS while the Fisheries Program finds a replacement for Dan Shively. The Board was reminded of the upcoming meeting schedule – Board webinar June 24, 2020 and in person FHP Workshop and Board Meeting October 19-22, 2020 in Nampa, ID.

USFWS Update (*Eric MacMillan for David Hoskins, USFWS*)

Eric MacMillan shared that the USFWS is on schedule with the allocation of NFHP funding. The Board was reminded of the four Board members (Kim Dibble, Chris Cantrell, Pete Aarrestad, and Richard Mitchell) who participated in this year's review of FHP work plans. FHP work plans were reviewed with Board input by FWS NFHP regional coordinators, and their recommendations were put forward to the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Assistant Regional Directors and the Assistant Director. It is anticipated that funding will be provided to the regions soon to distribute for FHP projects and operations. For FY20, the USFWS will reduce the amount of funding they retain by an additional \$160k. The USFWS will provide \$1.7M in operating funds to FHPs and \$2.6M for FHP projects this year. Eric, having recently transitioned to the new Branch Chief of Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation, notified the Board that the Service is making progress to backfill his prior position and anticipates a new person working in that capacity in the next few months.

NOAA Fisheries Update (*Samuel Rauch, NOAA Fisheries*)

Sam Rauch introduced the NFHP Board to NOAA's new Office of Habitat Conservation Director, Carrie Robinson, who is taking over for Pat Montanio who retired at the end of February. Carrie, who has been working with NOAA Fisheries for many years, is looking forward to getting to know the NFHP Board at future meetings and will fill in for Sam when needed. Sam announced that NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation and the Recreational Fishing Initiative is in the second year of offering an informal collaborative funding opportunity to Coastal FHP projects that restore habitats and engage the recreational fishing community. This year, NOAA received 11 proposals and will fund 4 of them including; Atlantic Coastal FHP for collaborative oyster reef restoration with anglers in the Lynnhaven River, VA, Southeast Alaska FHP for engaging recreational fishing community in stream bank plantings after 2 fish migration barrier removals in Haines, AK, Western Native Trout Initiative for collecting Coastal Cutthroat Trout genetic samples and completing habitat restoration with recreational anglers in WA, and Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership for working with recreational anglers to restore eelgrass in Newport Bay, CA. Sam would like to continue supporting this opportunity in future years, budgets permitting. More information on the funded projects can be [found here](#).

Waters to Watch Overview (*Ryan Roberts, NFHP Board Staff*)

Ryan Roberts updated the Board on the 2020 Waters to Watch campaign. After the 2019 October Board meeting, a small working group was formed to implement Board recommendations to modify the campaign. The 2020 campaign added retrospective projects; allowing projects that were previously highlighted as a Water to Watch to be nominated and their status updated. There were 10 nominations this year, half from retrospective projects and representing a range of fresh and saltwater projects from different areas. Each Water to Watch will be provided a fact sheet template to develop their own outreach materials. Originally, NFHP was going to announce the 2020

Waters to Watch in coordination with World Fish Migration Day in May, however, World Fish Migration Day has been postponed until October. The 2020 Waters to Watch will still be announced in May. The Board voted to endorse the 2020 Waters to Watch list.

NFHP Legislative Team Update (*Christy Plumer, TRCP, Andrew Wilkins, TRCP, Chad Tokocwicz, ASA, Mike Leonard, ASA*)

The NFHP Legislative Team provided an update to the Board about the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act (NFHCTPA). Christy Plumer shared that this Congress has been the first Congress where we've seen NFHP legislation introduced in both the House and Senate. The Senate approved a package of bills that includes the NFHCTPA (HR 925) which was amended and sent back to the House for a House vote in early January. That is status of the legislation at this point.

Andrew Wilkins reported that the coronavirus has impacted the pace of activity on the Hill including the progress of NFHCTPA. The House and Senate are not planning to return before April 20 and upon their return will be focused on developing stimulus packages – with the “stimulus 4” package currently in development. These stimulus packages may have significant investments in infrastructure (including parks and managed lands) among other things to stimulate the economy and get people back to work amidst this crisis. Although the stimulus packages will not likely include any authorizations (NFHCTPA) or reauthorizations (North American Wetland Conservation Act), the NFHP Legislative team is viewing the NFHP legislation as a vote-ready bill that could move quickly once the Hill resumes normal business.

Additionally, Christy highlighted that there is an opportunity to shape the “stimulus 4” package which could include increasing funding for existing programs, like NFHP, that support on-the-ground work such as installation of natural infrastructure and focus on community resilience which are important job creators and economic stimulators. The Legislative team is also pushing for aquatic connectivity and migration crossings to be included in the Highway Bill that is being considered by the Senate EPW Committee.

Multistate Conservation (*Ryan Roberts, NFHP Board Staff & John Lord, AFWA Chief Operations Officer*)

Ryan Roberts provided an update on upcoming changes to the Multistate Conservation Grant (MSCG) process. He reminded the Board that over the past 10 years, NFHP has been successful applying for MSCG funds through AFWA, but was unsuccessful in 2019 for a variety of reasons. AFWA is developing a new strategic plan that will be effective later this year and is revising the MSCG program in coordination with this process. The 2021 application year for MSCG funds will be a transition year.

John Lord, AFWA Chief Operations Officer, joined the call to inform the Board in more detail about the expected changes to the MSCG process. He outlined that the National Conservation Need (NCN) process will no longer be used. Instead of NCNs, AFWA will identify priority areas that fit within their strategic plan to guide the MSCG process (1st priority: conservation and science, 2nd priority: large landscapes and species). AFWA plans to use a survey of state science needs to create more specific bins in which to sort applications under the larger priority areas. In April, AFWA staff will revise application guidance documents and circulate broadly to partners for feedback. The Board Chair recommended NFHP form a small working group to provide feedback on this guidance – Allison Bowden and Adam Ringia volunteered for this team with potentially more members to be added later. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is being developed and will be posted in May. The Board will plan to include FHP coordinators in the process of providing feedback to AFWA by participating on their April FHP call.

NFHP Action Plan Revisions (*Gary Whelan, Science & Data Committee Co-Chair*)

Gary Whelan presented on the status of the NFHP Action Plan revisions and shared an updated schedule for the revisions. The small team revising the Action Plan is working to get the Board a copy of the Action Plan to review and provide written comments very soon after the April Board meeting. Key changes in the Action Plan include: substantial shortening of the document, revision of goals, and consolidation of objectives. Gary highlighted that Board members should focus their review on the revised objectives and pay close attention to word choice (e.g. 'protect' vs. 'conserve' throughout the document). Gary thanked FHP coordinators who have provided updated information and images with which to create new FHP vignettes for the Action Plan and beyond in other outreach and communications materials. The Board will also be developing a work plan to help advance the objectives of the Action Plan. The Board agreed with the revised Action Plan schedule as presented.

NFHP Work Plan Development (*Alex Atkinson, NFHP Board Staff*)

Alex Atkinson reminded the Board about the work plan approach that was outlined in the 2012 Action Plan. She presented a plan to develop a work plan to advance the objectives within the NFHP Action Plan. The Action Plan writing team recommends that the Board develop a biennial work plan with 1-2 SMART tasks under each of the four Action Plan objectives to help the Board advance Action Plan items. These tasks should be Board-level tasks that support the Board, its committees, and most importantly, the FHPs. This work plan can also provide the basis for the 'Around the Room' updates that Board members provide at the in-person Board meetings. The work plan can incorporate and build on existing Committee tasks and can add other key Board items. Adam Ringia and Stan Allen volunteered to assist the Action Plan writing team to draft this work plan for sharing with the Board in June and finalization by the Board in October 2020. There was a question about whether the USFWS allocation process/criteria could be altered to align with the NFHP Action Plan objectives and work plan tasks. Eric MacMillan will relay this message back to David Hoskins for consideration.

Beyond the Pond Discussion (*Ed Schriever, NFHP Board Chair*)

Ed Schriever reminded the Board of their recent discussions about a need to assess the status of Beyond the Pond and decide its future. Although previously the Board Chair anticipated being at a decision point at this meeting, we are not at that decision point at this time. The outcome of the legislation does impact these discussions and the Board will resume the discussion about whether to maintain, dissolve, or invest in Beyond the Pond to make it effective at the October Board meeting. There was some discussion about the effectiveness of general versus project-specific fundraising and the role Beyond the Pond could play in those arenas.

NFHP Memorandum Of Understanding (*Ed Schriever, NFHP Board Chair*)

Ed Schriever reminded the Board that NFHP had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the federal agencies (Department of Interior, Department of Commerce, and Department of Agriculture) that outlined their roles and the way they worked together to support NFHP. The MOU has been expired since 2017 when there was uncertainty about renewing the MOU with the status of the NFHP legislation. The NFHP legislation calls for the federal agencies to develop a similar operating plan outlining roles and responsibilities of federal agencies in support of NFHP. In October, the Board will likely engage in either a renewal of the MOU, if the legislation does not pass, or the development of an operational plan, if the legislation passes.