



Board Action: Seeking Board approval of Communications Strategy elements and future work of committee

Communications Strategy and Background

Communications Committee Charge:

Develops guidelines and oversees consistent, effective communication aligned with the NFHP mission and brand. Maintains the brand standards and defines the voice and tone of the organization. This committee acts as the voice of the organization and the messages it sends influences the organization's most important asset: its reputation. Perceptions of its reputation affect the organization's ability to attract funding and enhance its influence.

Communications Committee Activities:

- Establish/review a communications/branding plan with key messages, logo/brand guidelines, communication channels.
- Write the annual NFHP report, e-newsletters, press releases.
- Develop other media/stories as possible.
- Develop graphics/dashboards/etc. that encapsulate NFHP successes for strategic audiences.
- Develop Waters to Watch and other national or regional campaigns.
- Develop talking points for Board members.
- Oversee communications program staff to ensure website and other platforms are accurate, updated, and reflect the organization's communications goals and objectives.

Committee Members: John LeCoq (Chair), Steve Guertin, Pat Rivers, Gene Gilliland, Chris Cantrell

Goal of the Communications Strategy: To raise the level of awareness by multiple partners, including Fish Habitat Partnerships and associated partners, members of the Board and their organizations, Congress and interested members of the public to the conservation projects and benefits of the National Fish Habitat Partnership both regionally and nationally.

The primary purpose of the Communications Committee is as follows:

- **Serve in an advisory capacity to the National Fish Habitat Board and its staff, particularly in identifying outreach opportunities.** Board members of the committee have different levels of expertise in marketing, conservation communications, and familiarity of working with broad partnerships.
- **Advance the work of Fish Habitat Partnerships.** The committee recognizes the value of promoting conservation success stories of Fish Habitat Partnerships. Communications should focus on



communicating conservation outcomes of projects by the the Fish Habitat Partnerships and how local conservation projects directly address National Fish Habitat Action Plan objectives. Input by the Fish Habitat Partnerships will be critical for this function of the committee.

- **Develop communications materials to keep partners informed, foster mutually beneficial relationships, and attract new supporters for NFHP.** The committee will develop communication materials that are cohesive and complementary in message, design, and delivery to have the greatest impact for advancement of the work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.
- **Maintain and fulfill a list of outputs for the work of the communications committee and Fish Habitat Partnerships.** A list of completed communications products will be documented and available for use by FHPs and partners , ex: distribution of materials, website and social media analytics for National Fish Habitat Partnership platforms. Growing the National Fish Habitat Partnership subscriber newsletter will be viewed as an important outcome.
- **Foster partnerships with conservation organizations and conservation-minded businesses.**The committee will work to build mutually beneficial relationships with organizations aimed at enhancing the brand and recognition of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

Communication Channels

National Fish Habitat Partnership communications will target the following primary networks to build awareness, support, engagement, advocacy, and action in various forms. The committee will focus efforts on these audiences to help amplify and leverage outreach of the networks to reach out to their constituencies and local groups.

(Internal):

Internal communications with the Board and FHPs are important to NFHP and paramount to set the tone and ensure consistency in messaging across and throughout the partnership.

National Fish Habitat Board

Communications will promote the Board's leadership, coordination, and facilitation role, and support the Board in serving as ambassadors and influential advocates for the National Fish Habitat Partnership in policy arenas.

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and State Agencies

Communications will support the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in serving as the main conduit for communications with state fish and wildlife agencies. Communications also support the association's role in advocating for resources for Fish Habitat Partnerships. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies serves as a direct connection to State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and other related staff contacts that are critical to inform and seek input from on the work of the Partnership.



Fish Habitat Partnerships

Developing communications that strategically illustrate what the National Fish Habitat Partnership is all about in compelling ways is one of the most important contributions the committee can make. The fish habitat conservation projects are the marketable force for communications, rather than the Action Plan. More visibility and emphasis on Fish Habitat Partnerships through website updates and media outreach will be a key to growing a community of support for future projects and creating sustainable funding for partnerships and their associated aquatic habitat conservation projects.

(External):

Broader visibility through the media will help grow the community of support for the National Fish Habitat Partnership and shine a light on the work of Fish Habitat Partnerships, as well as influence future policy and investments significantly. The "10 Waters to Watch" campaign is the most significant element of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to date to receive media attention. Building upon this attention and coordinating future site visits when possible, with media outlets and policy makers, will help raise awareness of the Partnership and Action Plan, as well as the Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Social Media Audience

The National Fish Habitat Partnership currently has a small social media presence on Facebook and LinkedIn. Working to expand our reach in these mediums could help bring additional partner coalition members into the fold in support of the National Partnership and will at a minimum serve as a forum to relay stories about the good work of the Partnerships under the guidance of the Action Plan. Staying current with these mediums will be important for us to stay on the cutting edge of social media fronts.

Trade Shows/Meeting Exhibits

Maintaining a presence among our constituents, by having displays at Trade shows and meetings across the country, will help advance the work and reach of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Whenever possible we should work to get out in front of these audiences to help grow our community of support.

NFHP Newsletter Subscribers

The Partner Coalition will serve as tool when applicable as an outlet for information sharing as well as spreading the word of NFHP in a grass roots manner.

Communications Tools



WEBSITE

The www.fishhabitat.org webpage is in the process of its second revision and is the most critical component of National Fish Habitat Partnership communications as the main source of information. The website builds upon and houses all of the communications documents for the Partnership. In the technologically savvy world that is a reality today our website needs to be direct and succinct to get our message and is our main vehicle for communication.

There is a need to clarify the working parts of the National Fish Habitat Partnership in an understandable way. The Partnership is built upon the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, which is at the core. The National Fish Habitat Board oversees the work of the Plan and Fish Habitat Partnerships as well as establishing policies for the Partnership. The National Fish Habitat Partnerships are the working units of the National Partnership, striving to make a significant difference through on-the-ground conservation actions that protect, restore and enhance fish habitat at a landscape scale.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS

E-mail newsletters are another source of communication and are the chief outreach tool for maintaining contact with our Partner Coalition. Newsletters are the most succinct way to reach out to this audience and inform them about Fish Habitat Partnership news both locally and nationally.

ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

With the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan*, codified by [Title II of America's Conservation Enhancement Act \(PL 116-188\)](#) (ACE Act) in 2020, the National Fish Habitat Partnership is required to submit a report to Congress Annually in February. This report includes conservation objectives met in the prior year and the progress the Board is making in meeting national conservation priorities in implementing the requirements of the ACE Act.

Future Investment for Communications

The National Fish Habitat Partnership has successfully been awarded a grant beginning in 2023. The grant is for \$176,400.00 and will come from through the Multistate Conservation Grant. Funding in the Multistate Conservation Grant Program comes from Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration funding (WSFR) through the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Funding elements of the grant related to communications are listed below. The communications committee will solicit workgroup members to plan how to best implement these funds to meet our needs collectively through contracting deliverables.

Website Development Contract - \$40,000

Communications templates and fact sheets - \$10,000

ESRI Storymap - \$8,000

Map Development - \$5,000

Video Contract - \$15,000