

# National Fish Habitat Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 (9:00 AM – 5:00 PM) EST

Charleston, SC

## Board Members

	Last Name	First Name	Present?
1	Allen	Stan	X
2	Austen	Doug	X
3	Booth/Batten	Austin/Ben	X
4	Boyles	Robert	X
5	Carter	Julie	X
6	Eischeid	Ted	X
7	Gilliland	Gene	X
8	Guertin/ Jacobson	Steve/ Rick	X
9	Conley/ Wilson	Kimberly/ Josh	X
10	Kinsinger	Anne	X
11	Kruse	Carter	X
12	LeCoq	John	X
13	Leonard/ Bevan	Mike/Connor	X
14	Linnell	Karen	-
15	Moore	Chris	X
16	Moore	Bryan	X
17	Perry	Steve	X
18	Plumer/ Nakayama	Christy/ Ian	X
19	Rauch	Sam	X
20	Ringia	Adam	X
21	Rivers	Pat	X
22	Schaeffer	Timothy D.	X
23	Slager	Jake	X
24	Trushenski	Jesse	-

## Other Attendees

- Jason Olive (NFHP Staff)
- Ryan Roberts (NFHP Staff)
- Jonathan Watson (NFHP Staff – on detail)
- Kate Sherman (NFHP Staff)
- Gary Whelan (NFHP Staff)
- Daniel Wieferich (NFHP Staff)
- Christopher Estes (CBE)
- Kelly Hepler (BtP)
- Lori Maloney (EBTJV)
- Therese Thompson (WNTI)
- Celeste Stout (NMFS)
- Doug Nygren (RFHP)
- Joe Nohner (MGLP)
- Melissa Smith (KPFHP)
- Todd Ewing (SARP)
- Holly Steindorf (CAFPF)
- Simen Kaalstad (ACFHP)
- Debbie Hart (SEAKFHP)
- Gordon Smith (HIFHP)
- Stacy Beough (Strategic by Nature)
- Trevor Luna (USFWS)

**Board Actions Approved by Motion:**

- 1. September 12, 2023 NFHP Board meeting summary** (with modifications):  
Motion by: Chris Moore, Second by: Tim Schaeffer
- 2. December 6, 2023 NFHP Board meeting agenda:** Accepted by acclamation
- 3. FHP Operational Funds Cap Adjustment:** Motion by: Stan Allen, Second by Julie Carter
- 4. NFHP Board Bylaws:** Motion by: Doug Austen, Second by Pat Rivers
- 5. Reappointment of Board members:** See [final agenda item](#)

**Meeting Notes:**

12/5 Time (PM ET)	Agenda Item
1:00 – 5:00	<b>Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Workshop.</b> Opening remarks for afternoon session from Robert Boyles (SCDNR and Board Chair, National Fish Habitat Partnership). NFHP FHP Coordinators, NFHP Board Members attend.
5:30 – 7:00	<b>NFHP Social Hour</b>

12/6 Time (ET)	Agenda Item	Board Tab	Lead(s)
9:00 AM	<b>Welcome, Introductions &amp; Attendance</b> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Board action</b> approve December 6 agenda.</li><li><b>Board action</b> approve September 12, 2023 draft meeting summary.</li></ul>	Tab 1	<b>Robert Boyles</b> (AFWA, Board Chair) <b>&amp; Board Staff</b>

Kelsey Dick (Shimano) welcomed the Board and meeting attendees to the facility. Chairman Boyles welcomed the Board and thanked the staff and committee for their work since the past Board meeting. Chairman Boyles recognized Therese Thompson (Western Native Trout Initiative) for her many years of service to NFHP and presented her with a Kudo Board demonstrating her value to many facets of the enterprise. Chairman Boyles noted that the FHP’s are the “secret sauce” of NFHP and expressed his appreciation for all of the hard work of our FHP coordinators. Ted Eischeid recommended that the Board Meeting Summary for September 12, 2023 be amended to reflect his attendance before the group voted to approve the document. Ted also noted the importance of tracking virtual attendance, including late arrivals, at future Board meetings. The Board also approved the meeting agenda and noted those in attendance, including anticipated late arrivals and various Board member surrogates.

9:20 AM	<b>Board Reminders &amp; Board Member Terms</b> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Board planning</b> for 2024 NFHP calendar.</li> <li>• <b>Board awareness</b> of upcoming expiring Board terms and calendar for future Board member recruitment.</li> </ul>	Tab 2	<b>Robert Boyles</b> (AFWA, Board Chair) <b>&amp; Board Staff</b>
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Chairman Boyles reviewed the proposed dates for the NFHP Board meetings in calendar year 2024. Proposed dates include: February 6 (virtual), April 30 – May 1 (In-person, likely in D.C.), July 31 – Aug 1 (In-person, location TBD). The Fall meeting date is in development and will be virtual.

Chairman Boyles also reviewed the upcoming expiring Board terms and the plan and timing for new Board member recruitment. He noted that nine Board member terms expire at the end of February next year and notified the board that three existing Board members (John LeCoq, Christy Plumer, Ted Eischeid) have indicated that they do not wish to serve another term. He also notified the Board that Amy Singler resigned from the Habitat Conservation seat due to changing job duties. The Board Staff will advertise vacant seats in the coming month and Chairman Boyles requested that Board members help to spread the word once the announcement goes out.

9:40 AM	<b>Beyond the Pond Report Findings</b> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Board awareness</b> Beyond the Pond Report Findings</li> <li>• <b>Board discussion</b> on recommendation of future plans for Beyond the Pond</li> </ul>	Tab 3	<b>Stacy Beaugh</b> (Strategic by Nature) <b>Kelly Hepler</b> (Beyond the Pond)
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Kelly Hepler, the Board Chair for Beyond the Pond (BtP), opened the presentation reminding the Board that they had previously prompted him to present a clear vision for BtP to the NFHP Board. He then introduced Stacy Beaugh and thanked her for her efforts to develop the report. Stacey surveyed 38 members of the NFHP community and asked them about their perception of the Purpose, Leadership, Organization and Resources of BtP. The overarching finding was that FHPs have little capacity to fundraise and BtP could be leveraged to serve in this role. At the end of the presentation, Stacy provided several recommendations for BtP, including: (1) Invest in board-championed plan of action for BtP that illustrates key strategies; (2) Develop a diverse and active BtP Board; and (3) Hire a dedicated staff person to take on board development, fundraising, and other priorities. Further findings were presented and are detailed in the report. Finally, potential milestones and metric recommendations were presented in a figure.

During the discussion, Carter Kruse asked about next steps. Kelly reiterated that BtP needs to implement a plan and resume in-person meetings to revamp the board. Doug Austen asked about the potential to access and focus on funds from federal programs. Stacey noted that BtP could help FHPs aggregate projects, but reminded the Board that the report findings highlight a need for non-federal match and coordination efforts with FHPs. She acknowledged that BtP could have a number of initiatives, but recommend that BtP be judicious with the capacity they build because it takes time to build either function and different pathways

require different organizational structure and staff capabilities. Julie Carter asked about the resources required to create a paid position. Stacy reminded everyone that the first priorities are to establish a BtP Board action plan and further develop the Board to understand priorities and noted that there may currently be limited funds available for part time position. Bryan Moore noted that some federal funds do not require 1:1 non-federal match and suggested that while some FHPs cannot access federal funds directly, BtP could be a vehicle. He also requested that BtP come to the board with a specific operations plan. Tim Shaefer concluded the discussion section by recommending that NFHP should be open minded about the future for BtP.

10:20 AM

**Science and Data Committee Update**

Tab 4

**Gary Whelan**  
(MI DNR, Retired)

*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of options for National Fish Habitat Assessment
- **Board awareness** of project tracking database progress

**Daniel Wieferich**  
(USGS)

**Kate Sherman**  
(PSMFC)

Gary presented the three options for the approach to the National Fish Habitat Assessment and request Board member feedback. The three prospectuses were finalized and sent to the Board for review on November 27. They outlined specific tasks and the costs associated with those tasks and requested Board direction in December 2023. During the discussion, Gary verified that the base assessment will address known gaps including grazing intensity, timber harvest, hydrology, and socioeconomics. Tim Schaffer asked whether the lack of a formal definition of socioeconomic considerations in the ACE Act was a challenge and noted that it may be worth defining that element of these analyses more explicitly in reauthorization efforts. Julie Carter noted that, in the West, the 2015 habitat rankings were not always representative of actual condition. She suggested adding in drought, water withdrawal, wildfires, and other stressors to this analysis and noted that entities like the National Fire Center may have data easily available. Anne Kinsinger agreed with Julie's point and noted that drought will be very difficult to include due to long-term nature of that stressor and the lack of reference data. Anne also suggested that the Committee work to better understand the purpose and audience for the socioeconomic analyses. She pointed out that there are two lenses for socioeconomic analysis – the value of the investments to the community and to the ecosystem. Carter Kruse asked how this assessment might approach reservoir data, acknowledging that dams impact riverine systems but impoundments can provide fishing opportunities for other species. Gary replied that there may be some value judgements from the Board as the assessment is developed. Carter also asked whether we could work with other entities to reduce costs and/or increase expertise. Gary noted that as an action item. Adam Ringia circled back to the concept of socioeconomics and asked whether there is an opportunity to better define socioeconomic benefits. He noted that social justice is a national focus and an increased emphasis on that specific topic may be well-received by congress during discussions around ACE Act reauthorization. He requested that the SDC consider better defining the socioeconomic analyses in this work. Gary indicated that they will consider EPA EJ Screen and other similar tools as they further develop the assessment methodology. Ted Eischeid noted that climate is of particular interest. For example, he described the importance of springs as thermal refugia for salmon in Alaska. He suggested that adding climate to this assessment could allow for greater strategic conservation actions and requested that it be included as an addendum to the overall effort, if possible. Chris Moore asked where funding would come from. Gary suggested most likely through project funds. Chairman Boyles asked the Board to provide a sense of which option to pursue and whether they would like to voice any opposition. The Board discussed the options at hand and the consensus approach was termed "Option 1.5", which will expand on the Base Case (Option 1) with available data for focal macrohabitats (lakes, reservoirs, impoundments, and inshore habitat).

Kate and Daniel provided an update on the recent progress of the NFHP project tracking database development. Kate noted that migrating old data to the new system required an extensive QA/QC effort that had started but would continue in the coming months. She also described efforts to add Board-level projects to the database. Finally, she noted that this is an internal dashboard managed mainly by the Partnerships. The Board can log-in and access the data using the log-in information (provided separately) and reminded the Board that this database is currently for internal use only.

Daniel shared a word-cloud graphic ([attached](#) to meeting summary) created using the information in the database and noted that this information can be easily queried to create graphics for use by Partnerships and others. Daniel concluded with Project Tracking System next steps with the top priority of releasing a public facing dashboard. Tim Schaeffer noted that we should add functionality to query data by congressional district for reporting purposes.

11:05 AM	<b>Report out from FHP Coordinator Workshop</b> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Board awareness</b> of FHP Workshop accomplishments and recommendations</li></ul>	Tab 5	<b>Joan Drinkwin</b> <i>(Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership)</i>
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Joan opened the presentation by thanking Ryan Roberts and Stacy Beaugh for their help developing and facilitating the workshop. She noted participation by 12 of 20 FHPs and at least five Board members along with all Board staff during this workshop. Joan offered several key takeaways. She noted the diversity among the partnerships – goals, approaches, and coordinator roles all vary substantially across the FHPs. Joan also thanked the Board for their support and noted the value of the FHP Report Card and the ACE Act to their continued operations. She offered several recommendations on behalf of the FHPs to the Board ahead ACE Act reauthorization. First, she requested that the 1:1 non-federal match requirement be adjusted such that it can be met programmatically across NFHP as a whole to allow greater operational flexibility, noting that on-the-ground projects often exceed this requirement. Second, she requested that the March 31 submission deadline requirement for the ranked project list be adjusted to reduce the lag between submission and funding. Third, she recommended that the Board work to reauthorize and amplify the NFHP Action Plan. On the final point, Gary Whelan noted that efforts were underway to update the Action Plan ahead of ACE Act authorization.

11:20 AM	<b>Back to the Future: Remembering the NFHP Vision</b> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Board awareness</b> of the history of NFHP, the original vision, its evolution and recommendations from a “founder”</li></ul>		<b>Christopher Estes</b> <i>(Chalk Board Enterprises, LLC)</i>
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Jason Olive opened and introduced Christopher Estes. He noted Christopher retired from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and had served as ADF&G’s Chief of the Statewide Resources Coordination Unit and a Fisheries Scientist. He is currently an Aquatic Resources & Habitat Scientist with Chalk Board Enterprises and also serves as the Director at Large of the Instream Flow Council. Jason noted Christopher’s many years of service to further the NFHP vision and his contributions to instream flow and water level conservation. Christopher’s NFHP contributions included working on detail to AFWA (through the ADF&G) as AFWA’s National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) Core Work Group Coordinator. The Core Work Group was charged with crafting the National Fish Habitat Action Plan from 2004 to 2006.

Christopher's subsequent roles included representing AFWA on the Board Staff from 2006 to 2010, later serving as an editor of the 2012 NFHAP edition update, and serving on the Science and Data Committee since its formation. Form Board Chair Ed Schriever referred to Christopher as the "conscience of NFHP". Christopher also contributed to the language in the NFHAP enabling legislation beginning with the initial version.

Christopher began his presentation by framing the historical impetus for the creation of the 2006 Action Plan, which included a broadly-agreed need to more cost effectively coordinate non-regulatory science-based aquatic habitat conservation programs and activities at local, regional, and national scales including representation by those impacted by outcomes (governmental, non-governmental, academic, private, corporate, etc.). He noted the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) framework was used to guide the creation of the 2006 Action Plan and stressed the continuing relevance of the original Action Plan. Christopher described the 2012 Action Plan edition as a supplemental update to the 2006 Action Plan. He also noted the 2012 edition included an inter-agency MOU between the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture which expanded upon and further emphasized the roles of the Federal Caucus. He added the 2012 edition included an update summarizing supporting functions of each federal agency participating in the Caucus. He urged attendees to read both the 2006 and 2012 editions for purposes of context and intent. He also explained the nexus between the NFHAP editions and various elements of PL 116-188, Title II that codified the 2006 & 2012 editions and the links between the Federal Caucus and the Interagency Operational Plan. Christopher concluded the presentation with a series of reflections on the past and future of NFHP and his recommendations for further improving its implementation.

During the discussion, Tim Schaeffer voiced appreciation on behalf of AFWA and noted that AFWA would work to ensure that NFHP has renewed visibility among the regional associations and the national level. Doug Austen voiced his appreciation for the presentation and requested that we work to broaden this message through a webinar provided to the FHPs and other partners. Chairman Boyles noted the importance of reflecting and committed to continued consultation of the original purpose of NFHP included in the original Action Plan. Christopher was invited to coordinate with the staff and Board to provide a repeat future webinar version of his presentation that will also be uploaded to YouTube.

12:00 PM

**LUNCH**

1:00 PM

**Facilitated Session on Achieving the NFHP Purpose and Vision**

**Stacy Beough**  
*(Strategic by Nature)*

Stacy opened the session by asking the Board to reflect on the NFHP vision and discuss how well we are collectively achieving the original intent of the program. Adam Ringia noted that we could better work to enhance the diversity of representation on the Board and ensure that the benefits of these efforts reach everyone equitably. Bryan Moore asked for greater information about the annual accomplishments of the FHPs and their coordinators. Carter Kruse noted that we should be working to take full advantage of all available funding opportunities to increase the reach and impact of NFHP. Doug Austen noted that there may be multiple visions for NFHP and suggested that finding greater alignment may lead to more effective outcomes. Anne Kinsinger described NFHP as "the best program no one ever heard of" and echoed the need for unified direction.

Stacy next asked the Board to consider how they might leverage existing networks the better serve NFHP. One participant noted that NFHP can better embrace its vision and develop more effective branding to ensure broad awareness among stakeholders. Ted Eischeid reminded the Board that the ACE Act is recent

history with many NFHP Board members and partnerships predating its implementation. He suggested that the Board work to better understand the operations of the FHPs and develop a unified vision through dialog and mutual understanding. Doug Austen noted that the Partnerships could be a vehicle for more effective conservation action and suggested that we need to work to better compete for available funding. Tim Schaeffer noted the need to re-engage with regional AFWA's and committed to engage with regional directors. Sam Rauch noted that the NFHP enterprise has worked tirelessly to meet the vision with an overarching strategy and reminded the Board that they play a key role in this strategic investment. Steve Perry suggested that the Board should work to ensure that the FHPs are self-sufficient. Kimberly Conley suggested that everyone look for efficiencies across the entire enterprise to ensure effectiveness, including the highest and best use of the Board members. Ian Nakayama agreed with the Board diversity goal previously stated and suggested that the board leverage partners as needed to increase engagement. Connor Bevan suggested that the Board craft a message that distinguishes NFHP from other restoration initiatives. Josh Wilson (USFS Assistant Director for Aquatic and Water Resources) noted that aquatic habitat conservation is a key focus of the Forest Service and will continue to be an agency priority. Stan Allen noted that between the FHPs and the connections of the Board, NFHP has an expansive network and remarked that many are working "behind the scenes" to make connections that benefit aquatic habitats. Pat Rivers suggested that enhancing our communications strategies could ensure awareness of NFHP among partners and the public. Christopher Estes stressed that NFHP should maintain major focus on environmental flows. Joe Nohner highlighted the lack of involvement from several federal agencies not represented on the Board and noted the availability of other funding sources such as the Farm Bill and CWA Section 319. Adam Ringia echoed the interest in enhancing communications strategies and suggested that NFHP better engage with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to expand the network. Tim Schaeffer expressed that we should communicate restoration successes to their local audiences to enhance public awareness of NFHP. Gary Whelan noted appreciation for existing NFHP staff and suggested obtaining permanent staff with Kelly Hepler suggesting the possibility of adding an Executive Director to the Board. Jason Olive noted the importance of the FHP coordinators as conduits between the Board and their FHP network. Bryan Moore highlighted the importance of the FHPs as communicators to their respective communities and suggested that community foundations could be a suitable source for smaller amounts of FHP funding. Doug Nygren suggested adding the Bureau of Reclamation to the list of potential Federal partners and mentioned their Title 28 granting program.

Stacy presented the final question – how might Board members support the efforts we have discussed? Anne Kinsinger indicated that she would work to ensure that regional staff are aware of opportunities to engage with the FHPs. Jake Slager suggested partnerships with universities to support needed research work and engagement with equity-focused groups to ensure diverse engagement. Stacy concluded the session by suggesting that an annual board action plan might help ensure development of these discussion items.

2:00 PM

#### **Policy Committee Update**

**Tim Schaeffer**  
(NEAFWA)

*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of Policy Committee activities.
- **Board awareness** of Federal Agency contributions to NFHP in accordance with ACE Act (Section 212).
- **Board awareness** of budget discussions for ACE Act re-authorization.

Tim opened the presentation by placing a call for new members and noted that Doug Nygren recently joined the committee as the FHP representative. He then went on to notify the Board that conversations are beginning about ACE Act reauthorization and encouraged Board members to accompany the Policy Committee during Hill visits planned in conjunction with the Spring 2024 meeting. There was a discussion of pairing implemented projects with congressional members and staff to enhance understanding. Tim also noted that the request for a contribution summary was submitted to the agencies and a response is requested by the end of January 2024 to support ACE Act reauthorization. Tim circled back to ACE Act reauthorization and noted that the Policy Committee plans to present information about the extent of unfunded projects in the context of what future funding amount could be used through NFHP with the intent to ramp up to NAWCA funding levels. He also stressed the importance for FHPs to connect with state legislators to ensure awareness of NFHP ahead of ACE Act authorization. Talking points will be drafted to assist with these legislative communities.

2:20 PM

**NOAA Recreational Fishing Grant Program**

**Sam Rauch**

(NOAA)

- **Board awareness** of NOAA Rec Fish granting program and current opportunity.

Sam presented information about the NOAA Recreational Fisheries Funding Opportunity, which has been coordinated through NFHP for the past several years. He highlighted recently funded projects, including one project completed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Marine Resources Division which connected school-aged children in a local underserved community with estuarine habitat restoration efforts and taught them angling skills. Finally, Sam highlighted the current opportunity, which closes in April 2024. Pat Rivers asked whether these funds could be applied to projects in the Great Lakes and Sam indicated that it likely would, but suggested verifying with Alex McOwen who helps to run the program on behalf of NOAA Fisheries.

2:35 PM

**BREAK**

2:50 PM

**Partnerships Committee Update**

Tab 6

**Stan Allen (PSMFC)**

*Desired outcomes:*

**Joe Nohner**

(MI DNR)

- **Board awareness** of next steps for implementation of Board Buddies program.
- **Board vote** on increasing the cap on FHP operational funding.

Joe Nohner opened the presentation by reminding the Board that the Board Buddies program survey was sent out to Board members following the September Board meeting. Of the 26 Board members, 14 responded with interest in participating, and many included interest in buddying with several FHPs. Carter Kruse asked whether the Board could cover travel expenses for Board members to engage with FHPs. Doug Austen noted that several FHPs have several interested board members and asked that staff work to ensure relatively equal participation across FHPs.

Stan Allen then presented the Board with a proposal to increase the FHP operational funding cap. He noted that this follows a presentation/discussion at the September Board meeting. The existing cap (\$85k) has been stationary since 2018. The Partnerships Committee has determined that increasing this cap will allow for better coordinator compensation, coordination, and education efforts. However, operational



funds come out of the overall FHP awarded allocation, so if an FHP requests additional operational funding, it will come at the expense of the budget available for project implementation. Stan Allen made a motion to bring the vote to the floor for discussion with a second by Julie Carter. There was a discussion about the FHP capacity for a different business model, though concerns about increasing complexity and eligibility for Federal funding were raised. Ted Eischeid voiced strong support for this proposal. It was clarified that this change would apply to FY 2025 funds. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

3:00 PM                      **Fish Habitat Partnership Congressional Designation Update**                      Tab 7                      **Stan Allen (PSMFC)**  
**Bryan Moore (Trout Unlimited)**  
*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of submission and review process for FHP Congressional Designation

Bryan Moore presented a reminder to the Board regarding the process for FHP congressional designation and stated that the intent of this exercise is to meet the letter of the ACE Act. He presented the timeline for Board review and submission. He then asked for volunteers to serve on the review team. Steve Perry, Pat Rivers, Adam Ringia, and Julie Carter volunteered. There was a note that an additional review from a representative on the Policy Committee would be requested.

3:10 PM                      **Communications Committee Update**                      Tab 8                      **Johnny LeCoq (Fishpond)**  
*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of 2024 Communications Deliverables

Johnny LeCoq started by noting that Debbie Hart is joining the committee and requested participation from an additional Board Member following the departure of Chris Cantrell. Ryan Roberts then reminded the FHP coordinators to add their upcoming meetings and relevant planned events to the [NFHP Canva Calendar](#) for awareness. Finally, Ryan and Chairman Boyles both expressed gratitude for Johnny's service on the Board and Communications Committee. Johnny suggested he would be available for future assistance.

3:20 PM                      **Governance Committee Update**                      **Doug Austen (American Fisheries Society)**  
*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of development of committee procedures

Doug Austen opened this session by reminding the Board of the six main tasks of the Governance Committee, including the establishment of Board Bylaws. He also noted that there should be a push to formalize committee bylaws across Board committees, for those who have not done so already.

3:25 PM                      **National Fish Habitat Board Bylaws**                      **Doug Austen (American Fisheries Society)**  
*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness and discussion** of key elements of the proposed Bylaws.
- **Board vote** on adoption of proposed Bylaws.

Doug began this session by describing the review and development process for the recently-drafted Board Bylaws. The development of procedures is required by the ACE Act Section 203(e). Bylaws were based on the ACE Act and other non-profit board experience. For example, one question that was raised was what level of approval was needed for each item of Board business. The Governance Committee determined that a quorum (14 Board members) was needed for normal business of the board and recommendations require an 18-vote majority. Doug made a motion to bring the current draft of the Board Bylaws to the floor for discussion and a vote, with second by Pat Rivers. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

3:50 PM

**Interagency Operational Plan Progress Report**

**Jason Olive (USFWS)**

*Desired outcomes:*

- **Board awareness** of progress being made on development of the IOP by federal agencies as required by the ACE Act.

Jason started by reminding the Board that Section 208 of the ACE Act requires that the Federal agencies develop a formal Interagency Operation Plan. He indicated that efforts are underway and that representatives from each participating Federal agency met to discuss previous IOP-like documents (2006, 2012) and identify a pathway for developing an updated version. Jason also described a Federal Fisheries Summit that convened in Winter 2023 which brought together all federal agencies that touch fisheries. The recommendations from the resulting included establishing a consensus of gaps and overlap in focal areas. He noted that many of the issues identified will be solved with a robust IOP. Finally, Jason highlighted that this will be a useful resource for anyone working in aquatic habitat conservation and restoration. Jason outlined the IOP content which include: (1) Introduction (legislation and NFHP history); (2) Existing federal resources for fish habitat; (3) Benefits of NFHP to federal agencies; (4) Federal agencies commitments to NFHP and FHPs and reporting; (5) Federal agency collaboration mechanisms and structure; and (6) MOUs and other agreements. During the discussion, Pat Rivers suggested that this effort be completed prior to January 2025. Doug Austen suggested having a draft by the end of April 2024. Anne Kinsinger noted that sending the draft up to DOI and other Departments early would likely help to speed the final approval process, since the previous versions were signed at the Department level. Pat Rivers asked if we can set a tentative date completion date of Oct 2024 to ensure timely delivery.

4:05 PM

**USFWS Update**

**Steve Guertin (USFWS)**

Jason Olive provided this update on behalf of Steve Guertin. Jason announced that Dave Miko was selected as the new Assistant Director of Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation. Dave Miko had been serving in that role in an acting capacity for the past 1.5 years. Jason also noted that the current markup of the President's Budget has NFHP set at 7.164M, which is flat from the last few years. During discussion, Byran Moore suggest that Dave Miko come address the Board and Jason agreed to request that presentation.

4:20 PM

**Board Vote on Reappointment of Members**

**Robert Boyles (AFWA, Board Chair)**

- Executive Session for discussion
- Votes held in open session

Ahead of the Board vote on reappointment, the Board moved into Executive session. The motion was brought to the floor by Adam Ringia and seconded by Bran Moore. The Board made a motion to come out of executive session, noting no actions were taken during that period.

Six Board members were reappointed as follows:

- Stan Allen (Councils/Commissions) – Motion: Bryan Moore, Second: Doug Austen. Passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Stan Allen).
- Doug Austen (Science Based Fisheries Organization Representative) – Motion: Carter Kruse, Second: Bryan Moore. Passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Doug Austen).
- Carter Kruse (National Private Landowner Representative) – Motion: Pat Rivers, Second: Jake Slager. Motion passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Carter Kruse)
- Chris Moore (Commercial Fishing Representative) – Motion: Doug Austen, Second: Stan Allen. Passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Chris Moore).
- Steve Perry (Landowner Representative of an active Fish Habitat Partnership) – Motion: Julie Carter, Second: Pat Rivers. Passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Steve Perry).
- Jesse Trushenski (Agricultural Production) – Motion: Adam Ringia, Second: Doug Austen. Passed by unanimous consent with one recusal (Jesse Trushenski).

Following the completion of voting, Sam Rauch reminded the Board that there are now four Board vacancies and he encouraged others to take diversity into consideration in new appointments. Ryan Roberts reminded the Board of the general process and timeline for submission and appointment. Regarding the Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) seat, Ryan reminded the Board that the SFBPC is in the process of re-forming and suggested that the Board contact them in Spring 2024. Finally Doug Austen noted that the NFHP Board has the opportunity to appoint a vice chair and recommended that vote be put on the agenda for the February Board meeting.

**Wrap-Up and Thursday Field Trip Plans**

**Robert Boyles**  
(AFWA, Board Chair)

5:00 PM

**ADJOURN**

