



Back to The Future

Revisiting the NFHP Vision

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Presentation requested by the National Fish Habitat Board
(Original version presented to the National Fish Habitat Board Dec. 6, 2023, Charleston, SC)



Twenty-Four Years: 2000-2024

- Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council
- National Fish Habitat Initiative/Core Work Group
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan 2006 Highlights
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan 2012 Highlights
- Federal Caucus Highlights (2006 & 2012 NFHAP editions)
- PL 116-188, Title II (2020)
 - Interagency Operational Plan (IOP)
 - Scientific & Technical Support
- Reflections
- Toolbox Recaps
- Questions

Goal: Compensate for...

- Losses of institutional history
- Losses of institutional knowledge*

* Might be other perspectives, lots of turnover past 24-years



WHY NFHP FORMED?



National Problem

Significant declines in quantity & quality of aquatic habitats required to sustain productivity of fish & aquatic organisms (freshwater, estuarine & marine) **nationwide**

(highlighted by the Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council in early 2000s)



National Problem (continued)

Despite thousands of governmental, non-governmental, private, & other watershed/aquatic habitat conservation programs/initiatives/actions supported by billion plus annual funding, **unable** to effectively keep pace with population growth/development to prevent & reverse habitat degradation across boundaries & jurisdictions



Solutions Approach

Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) hosts nationwide stakeholder meetings to better define scope of problems & pathway to solutions (~2002-2004)

SFBPC STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS RESULTS

Identified silo dilemma characterized by insufficient multi-jurisdictional coordination/awareness combined with redundancies for implementing aquatic/fish habitat based conservation programs & actions with existing dollars (watershed/landscape/species range/habitat types, etc.):

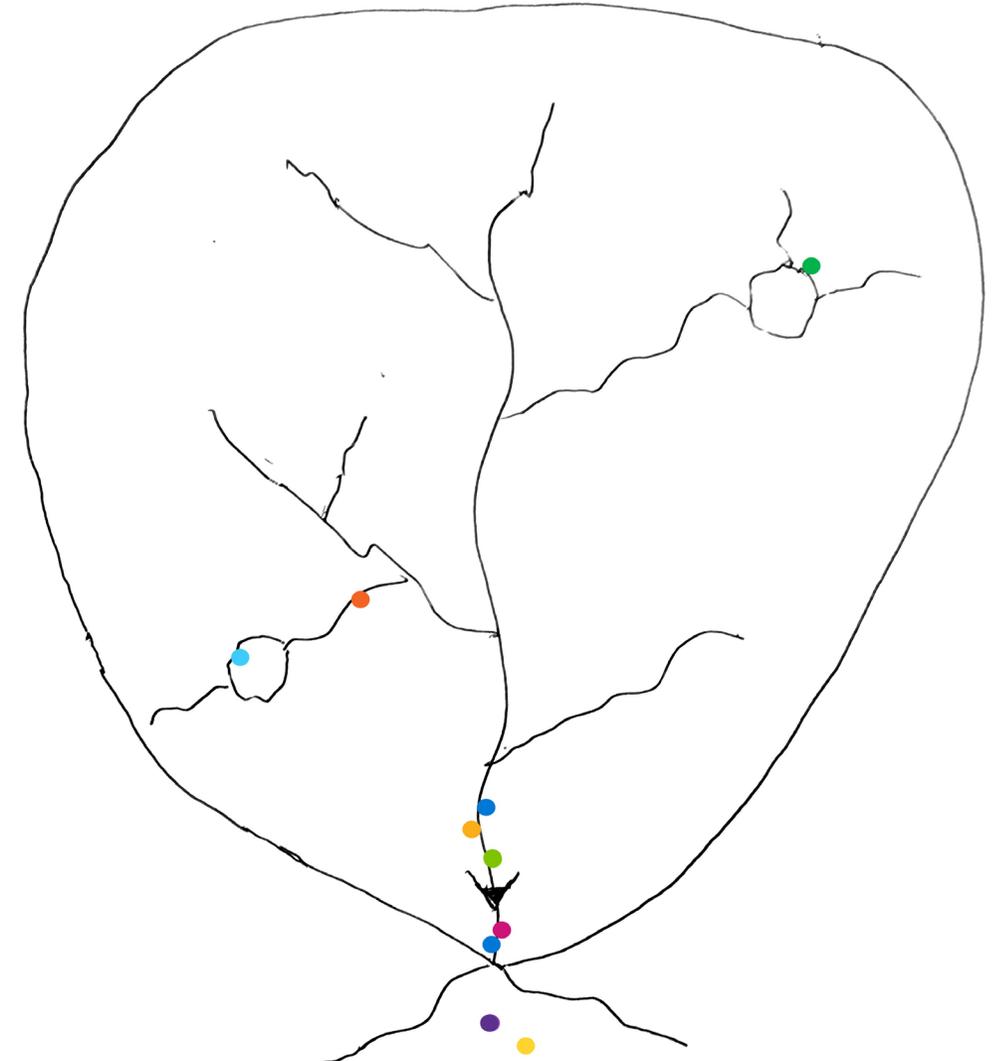
- National, regional, & local scales
- Federal, state, tribal, local, other governmental, non-governmental, private, academic, & other stakeholders
- Within same entity

as illustrated in the next slide.

Stakeholders Meetings Summary (continued)

Conceptual Watershed to Illustrate Coordination

Issues/Challenges: Colored dots represent different entities* who independently collect the same or different data; execute conservation actions within different, or the same portions of freshwater, estuarine, & marine habitats. Activities are typically limited by an entity's legal/administrative jurisdictions, its land ownership boundaries, priorities, & funding sources, etc. (without internal & external coordination). Approach rarely includes comprehensive system needs assessments/actions. RESULTS: redundancies, cost inefficiencies, & limited beneficial habitat data & science-based conservation outcomes at landscape scales.



*Can also apply in-house within an entity

PROPOSED REMEDY

Develop/implement a national fish habitat action plan by mimicking the successful 1980s North American Waterfowl Management Plan model & resulting North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) to conserve waterfowl habitat & populations through coordinated actions*

*Shout out to Gary Myers, former Exec. Dir. TN Wildlife Resources Agency, for his assistance related to NAWCA lessons learned

Resulting Actions (Highlights)

- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Fisheries & Water Resources Policy Committee (FWRPC) established the **National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) Core Workgroup** to take lead crafting a *National Fish Habitat Action Plan, NFHAP* (2004)
 - See pages Exhibit 5, pp. 26 & 27 *NFHAP* (2006 edition) for primary contributors
https://www.fishhabitat.org/files/uploads/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan_2006.pdf
- Multistate conservation grant projects acquired to fund plan development by the NFHI Core Workgroup & to support pilot on-the-ground habitat conservation projects (~\$2 million, 2004, 2005).



Related Actions (examples)

- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, in partnership with Bass Pro Shops, pledge funds & align grant-making support for NFHAP development (emphasizing on-the-ground science-based coordinated innovative fish habitat conservation action priorities & approaches)



Related Actions (examples continued)

- Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council collaborates with a variety of industry, governmental & non-governmental groups, & other stakeholders to establish & expand a **partnership coalition** (300+)* to support NFHAP development & implementation
 - See pages 13-17, *NFHAP* (2006 edition)
https://www.fishhabitat.org/files/uploads/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan_2006.pdf

(*note: ~1500 partners today)



Related Actions (examples continued)

Regional landscape based fish habitat partnerships begin to emerge & develop comprehensive habitat plans

- Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
- Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
- Western Native Trout Initiative
- Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership
- Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership



Related Actions (examples continued)

Additional financial/in-kind support provided by federal partners:

- USFWS
- USGS
- NOAA
- USFS
- BLM
- others

Related Actions (examples continued)

19 Federal agencies, headed by the USFWS, formed the **Federal Caucus** (basis the Interagency Operational Plan, IOP*) to coordinate federal efforts to support development & implementation of the *NFHAP* & *achieve more cost effective implementation of related federal programs & improved outcomes*. Applies to multiple agencies & within an agency.

- See inside cover letter, pages 8, 10, 22-35, *NFHAP* (2006 edition)
https://www.fishhabitat.org/files/uploads/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan_2006.pdf

*PL 116-188, Title II, Section 208

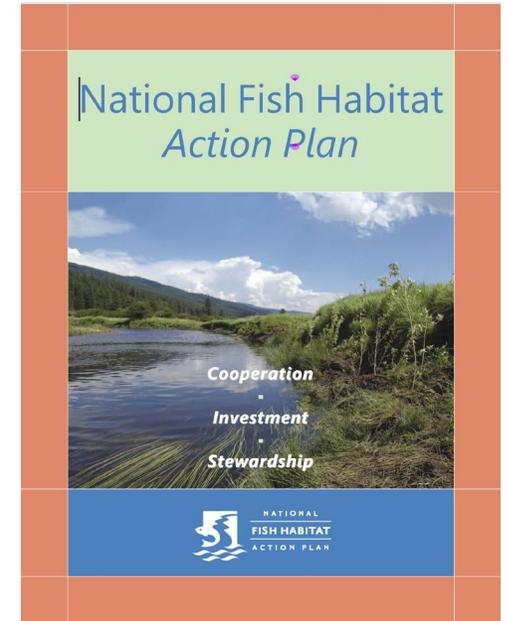


Related Actions (examples continued)

Website formed, www.fishhabitat.org, as initial communication tool for communicating among everyone collaborating on plan development activities

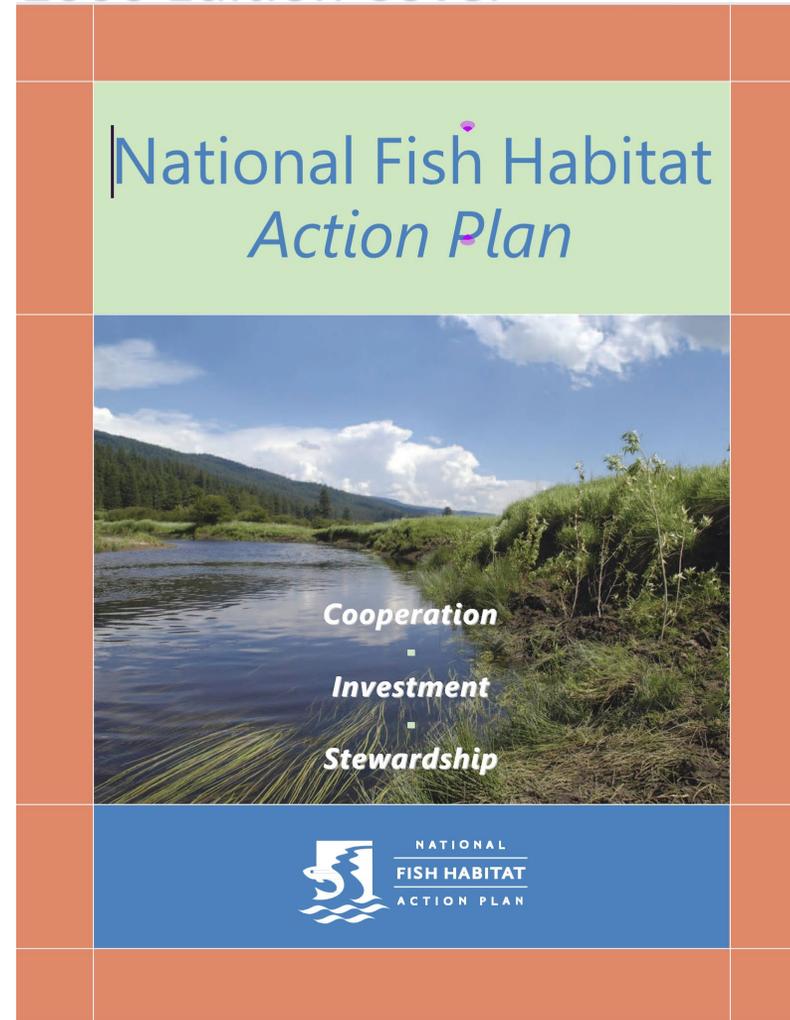


Related Actions (examples continued)



- NFHAP completed by Core Work Group (early 2006)
- NFHAP approved for implementation by AFWA (March 24, 2006)
- NFHAP formerly endorsed (April 24, 2006)
 - AFWA President, John Cooper
 - AFWA Executive Vice President, John Baughman
 - Acting Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett
 - Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez

2006 Edition Cover



2006 NFHAP Endorsement Letter



April 24, 2006

The United States is blessed with a remarkable abundance and diversity of waterways and fisheries. Their health is vital to our well-being as individuals and as a nation. Unfortunately, our collective efforts to conserve aquatic habitats have not kept pace with their decline. Without prompt and effective conservation action, our waters will continue to suffer, as will the opportunities they provide.

Galvanized into action by the threat of aquatic habitat losses, an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies and industry leaders forged the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The plan's principal aim is to better protect, restore and enhance fish habitat through partnerships that foster conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

The plan encompasses all of the nation's waters that provide fish habitat. It is science-based, voluntary and non-regulatory and offers a carefully wrought nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise and existing partnerships of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, foundations and others. It recognizes that in aquatic systems across the country, fisheries professionals and their partners propose to build on these and other model efforts through a network of Fish Habitat Partnerships to focus energy, skill and dollars on key fish habitats as never before.

The plan is a rallying point for a wide range of fish and aquatic habitat interest groups. It contains extensive input from numerous partners and stakeholders. It is endorsed by state fish and wildlife agency leaders, and 19 federal agencies have formed a caucus to better coordinate their activities in support of the plan. With its strong base of support, its focus on the use of existing and emerging science, and its emphasis on the importance of partnerships, the plan presents a historic opportunity to launch a new era in fisheries conservation.

We enthusiastically endorse the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and commit to playing an active role in its implementation.


Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior


President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies


Secretary, Department of Commerce


Executive Vice President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



NFHAP Endorsement Letter Highlights

Improve Habitat Conservation & Quality of Life

Galvanized into action by the threat of aquatic habitat losses, an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies and industry leaders forged the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The plan's principal aim is to better protect, restore and enhance fish habitat through partnerships that foster conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.



Letter Highlights (examples continued)

Science-based, non-regulatory, voluntary national fish habitat conservation strategy

The plan encompasses all of the nation's waters that provide fish habitat. It is science-based, voluntary and non-regulatory and offers a carefully wrought nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise and existing partnerships of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, foundations and others. It recognizes that in aquatic systems across the country, fisheries professionals and their partners propose to build on these and other model efforts through a network of Fish Habitat Partnerships to focus energy, skill and dollars on key fish habitats as never before.



Letter Highlights (examples continued)

Endorsement by partners & stakeholders (including state fish & wildlife agencies, & federal caucus comprised of 19 federal agencies) to improve coordination to support plan implementation

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NFHAP 2006 VISION

Healthy habitats, healthy fish, healthy people, & healthy economies will be achieved through cooperation, investment, & stewardship resulting in local actions that yield measurable social, economic, and ecological benefits & more fish!

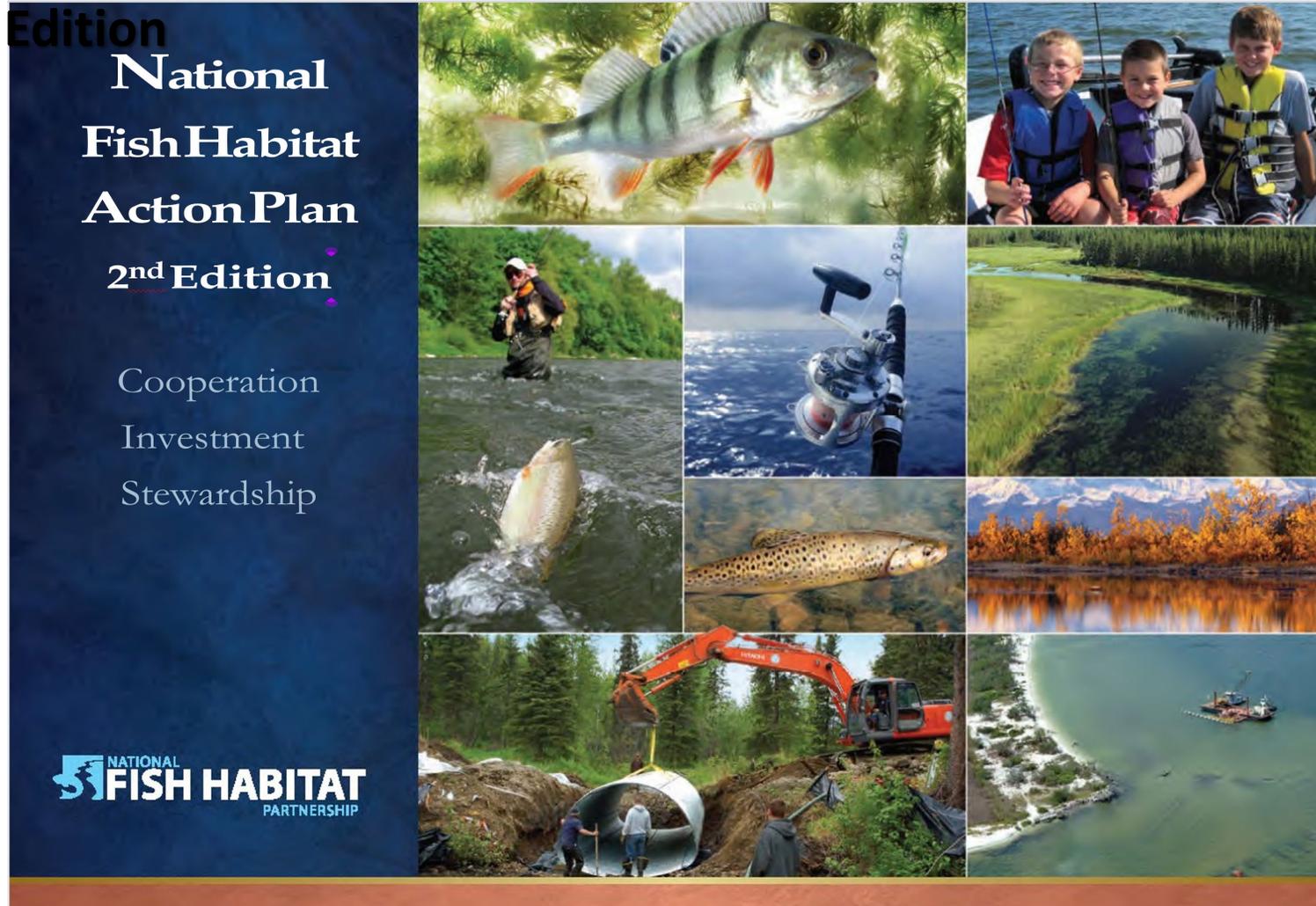


Post NFHAP Endorsement (highlights)

- National Fish Habitat Board established spring/summer 2006
- Board Staff supplied by AFWA, USFWS, NOAA, USGS
- Inaugural Board Meeting September 2006
- Charter
- 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships
- Through the Fishes Eye, 2010 & 2015 (Science & Data Assessment)
- NFHAP 2nd Edition (2012)
- Multiple efforts to pass enabling legislation 2005 to 2020, success in 2020, PL 116-188, Title II. 2020 Act is currently in the midst of reauthorization process
- Other efforts to pass Executive Order (abandoned after initial efforts)

Post NFHAP 2006 Endorsement Highlights (continued)

2012 NFHAP Edition Completed – Supplements 2006



2012 NFHAP Edition:

SUPPLEMENT to 2006 Original Edition - NOT a Substitute & Stand Alone Version !

- Includes post 2006 updates to NFHAP Implementation post the endorsement of the 2006 edition
- Includes *Memorandum of Understanding: U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration with updated Federal Caucus Matrix* (See pages 15,25-29, 35, 37, 41, 42 NFHAP (2012 edition))

https://www.fishhabitat.org/files/uploads/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan_2012.pdf

Federal Caucus (Displays NFHAP 2012 edition updated 2006 member examples)

Strategies and Resources Contributed by Federal Agencies to the National Fish Habitat Partnership									
2012 Federal Caucus member agencies	Leadership	Funding	Data sharing / database development	Education	Recruiting partners	Monitoring/ evaluation	Strategic planning	Technical expertise	Projects on federal lands
Department of Commerce									
NOAA Fisheries Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
National Ocean Service			●					●	
Department of the Interior									
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
U.S. Geological Survey	●		●		●		●	●	
Bureau of Land Management	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Office of Surface Mining		●		●	●	●		●	
National Park Service			●	●	●	●		●	●
Bureau of Reclamation	●				●			●	
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management			●	●	●	●		●	●
Department of Agriculture									
Forest Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Natural Resources Conservation Service		●		●	●		●	●	
Farm Service Agency					●			●	
Environmental Protection Agency		●	●	●	●			●	
Department of Defense (DoD)									
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	●	●	●		●			●	
DoD Natural Resources Program								●	●
Department of Transportation									
Federal Highway Administration		●		●	●			●	
Department of Homeland Security									
Federal Emergency Management Agency		●		●	●				

Basis for the Interagency Operational Plan: PL 116-188, Title II, Section 208



Interagency Operational Plan, IOP*

(Established by PL 116-188, Title II, Section 208)

- USFWS Director (lead). Core agency representation/participants include NOAA, USEPA, USGS, and USFS & includes other appropriate federal partner entities (see also federal caucus background)
- Intended to establish coordination plan among relevant federal agencies to support & facilitate implementation of NFHP
- Initial IOP version produced 2021, updates required every 5 years

*based on Federal Caucus within NFHAP 2006 & 2012 editions

Reflections - Primary NFHP Challenge: Know its Origins & Past:



- NFHP is still in its Infancy (~24-years of history, evolution, & still maturing).
- NFHP 2020 enabling legislation (PL 116-118, Title, II) is only 4-years old.
- Like everything else, NFHP is subject to passage of time that can result in losses of institutional history & knowledge.
- As noted by Robert Boyles, NFHP Chair, NFHAP & the ACE Act are respectively analogous to the constitution & resulting laws.
- There are no substitutes for carefully reading the 2006 & 2012 NFHAP editions & PL 116-188, Title II.
- NFHP was never intended for those with an assembly line mentality, or for those who support working in silos.
- Improve the wheel – don't reinvent it.
- Periodically assess & clarify NFHP related roles, expectations, & capacities of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies & Regional Associations.
- Periodically assess & clarify NFHP related roles, expectations, & capacities of the FHPs, Board, & Partners (not just FHPs).
- Periodically assess NFHP performance by, & contributions from, all NFHP participants, not just FHPs.
- Facilitate improved NFHP networking and the capacity (providing adequate resources) to do so.
- Fully implement the Federal Caucus, aka the IOP, as envisioned in both NFHAP editions. This concept is universal.
- Fully implement NFHP scientific & technical support provisions using the \$2 million authorization (Section 206, ACE Act).
- Rationale for Alaska and Lower 48 states Tribal Board seats.
- Water conservation elements rationale.
- Recognition of NFHP founders & other past contributors at 20th Anniversary of the 2006 NFHAP?
- REMINDER: NFHP was created to facilitate & support improved cost-effective coordination of ALL relevant governmental (federal, state, local, tribal), NGO, private, etc. habitat conservation programs/actions (at local, regional, & national scales) augmented by NFHP administered FHP habitat science-based landscape voluntary conservation habitat actions.
- There are no NFHP implementation silver bullets and short cuts, or there would be no need for NFHP.
- Why participate? Personally rewarding – making a difference.

NFHP Toolbox Recaps

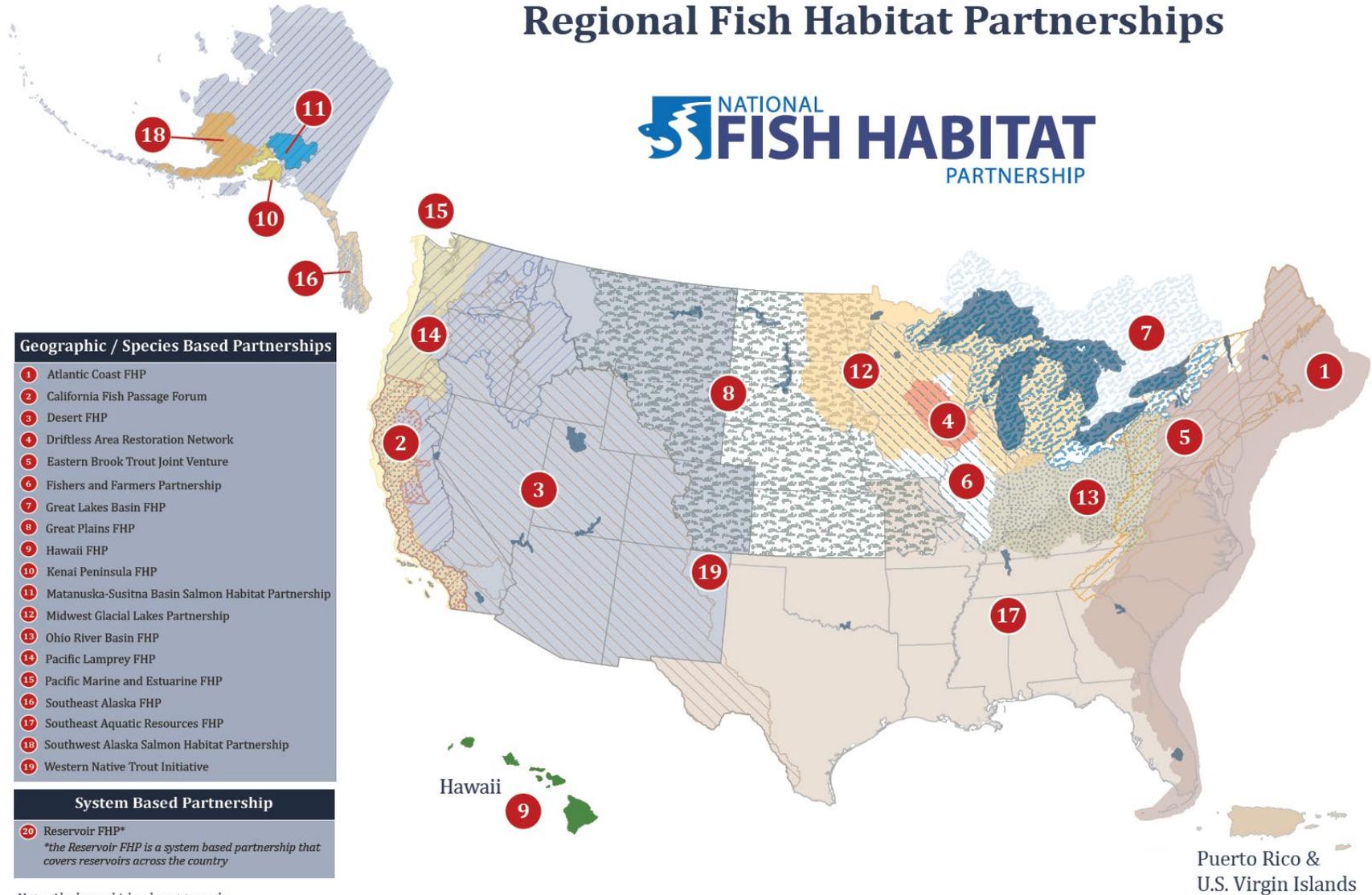
NFHAP; PL 116-188 Title II; NFHP Board; Board Staff; Fish Habitat Partnerships; & Partners



Explore www.fishhabitat.org !

Recaps (continued)

Regional Fish Habitat Partnerships



Geographic / Species Based Partnerships

- 1 Atlantic Coast FHP
- 2 California Fish Passage Forum
- 3 Desert FHP
- 4 Driftless Area Restoration Network
- 5 Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
- 6 Fishers and Farmers Partnership
- 7 Great Lakes Basin FHP
- 8 Great Plains FHP
- 9 Hawaii FHP
- 10 Kenai Peninsula FHP
- 11 Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
- 12 Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership
- 13 Ohio River Basin FHP
- 14 Pacific Lamprey FHP
- 15 Pacific Marine and Estuarine FHP
- 16 Southeast Alaska FHP
- 17 Southeast Aquatic Resources FHP
- 18 Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership
- 19 Western Native Trout Initiative

System Based Partnership

- 20 Reservoir FHP*
**the Reservoir FHP is a system based partnership that covers reservoirs across the country*

*Note: Alaska and islands not to scale
Includes current fish habitat partnerships, approved by the NFHP Board, June 2016.*

Recaps (continued)



Mission:

Protect, restore, & enhance the nation's **fish & aquatic communities** through **20 partnerships** that foster fish habitat conservation & improve the quality of life for the American people

- ***Implements voluntary & non-regulatory*** landscape-scale fisheries **conservation** using the **best science**
- ***Leverages*** federal & privately raised **funds to build partnerships**
- ***Partner Coalition*** of **1500+** agencies & **organizations**



THANKS to the NFHP Board, Staff, & Fish Habitat Partnerships, & Partners, NFHP Science/Data Committee, including all past Founders, Staff, Board Members, FHP Coordinators, FHP Steering Committee Members & Partners !



Questions ?

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www.fishhabitat.org