

Draft National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary: March 21, 2017

Members present:

Peter Aarrestad (NEAFWA)	David Miko <i>for</i> Jim Kurth (USFWS)
Stan Allen (PSMFC)	Bryan Moore <i>for</i> Chris Wood (TU)
Benita Best-Wong (EPA)	Chris Moore (MAFMC)
Tom Bigford (AFS)	Christy Plumer (TRCP)
Doug Boyd (SBPC)	Sam Rauch (NOAA Fisheries)
Tom Champeau (At-Large State Seat)	Ron Regan (AFWA)
Rob Harper (USFS)	Ed Schriever (WAFWA)
Mike Leonard (ASA)	David Sikorski (CCA) <i>for</i> Sean Stone
Ross Melinchuk (SEAFWA)	

Members absent:

Mike Andrews (TNC), Doug Beard (USGS), Jim Leach (MAFWA)

Approved by consensus:

- January Board WebEx summary was approved with one revision to include Peter Aarrestad as present.

Approved by motion:

- March Board meeting agenda; motion by Chris Moore, seconded by Bryan Moore.
- New administration transition document [*A Vision for Habitat Conservation for the Future of our Fisheries*]; motion by Bryan Moore, seconded by Chris Moore. Federal members exclude themselves from the vote.
- NFHP Assessment revised Vision: A comprehensive, comparable, and connected assessment of the nation's fish habitats that include the freshwater systems and coastal waters; motion by Sam Rauch, seconded by Chris Moore.
- NFHP Assessment revised Purpose: To support the conservation, rehabilitation, and improvement of fish habitat by providing 1) the partnerships with national and regional data sets and analytical procedures that assess the nation's fish habitat using the best available data; and 2) the NFHP Board and stakeholders with communications products to highlight the condition and importance of the nation's fish habitat; motion by Chris Moore, seconded by Sam Rauch. Includes a friendly amendment to better match the Action Plan.

Updates and discussions:

- Welcome – Chris Wood, CEO of Trout Unlimited (TU), welcomed everyone and spoke about the work of the organization, its growth, and the role of partnerships.
- Executive Leadership Team Update – It was noted that Fred Matt will be serving in the Tribal seat through July of 2018, as approved by the Executive Leadership Team. Members whose terms are up for review in July of 2017 (noted in Tab 2a of the Board Book) were asked to send a note to Ron Regan and Emily Greene noting if they are interested in being considered for another 3-year term.
- Legislative Update – The legislative team is currently working to identify sponsors for the National Fish Habitat Legislation. A grassroots campaign involving Fish Habitat Partnerships writing letters to the Hill and a new fact sheet geared towards local farmers and ranchers was noted as an initiative that would be helpful to the legislative team. Other helpful actions noted included social media, pictures and videos of on-the-ground examples, and field visits. It was noted that revisions to the transition document had been made, and approval of the document from non-federal members of the Board was requested. It was noted that the document would be useful not only for the new administration but as part of the legislative team strategy.

- Science and Data Committee Update – A summary of the recent committee activities, with respect to the Board’s 2017 priorities was provided, including: 2015 Assessment outreach, refinements, and responding to requests; improving the NFHP Data System; and assessment planning. Follow-up discussion included the workload involved in responding to requests, the value of the webinars, the role of fish data in the assessment, data ownership, sea level rise, and the scale of the estuarine assessment. A summary of the results of Board, FHP, and SDC surveys and a draft vision and purpose document for future assessment work was presented to the Board. Major discussion centered around the utility of the assessment, primary and tertiary audiences, and national versus regional focus. The vision statement was revised to be more geographically inclusive, and the purpose statement was revised to reflect the dual purpose and key audiences of the assessment. A summary of four implementation options, varying in analytical approach in terms of geographic focus, Fish Habitat Partnership role, and estuarine assessment lead were presented. Major follow-up discussion included Science and Data Committee implementation option feedback and initial feedback from Board members, the need for more information from Fishery Management Councils and FHPs, and funding. The Science and Data Committee was charged with further developing implementation option 3, with the caveat that options 2 and 4 are not off the table.
- Communications Committee and Beyond the Pond Update – Discussion centered around the donation page that had recently been added to the Beyond the Pond website and efforts towards securing staff for Beyond the Pond.
- Partnerships Committee Update – A summary of the committee’s recent activities, with respect to the Board’s 2017 priorities was provided including: additions and revisions to the document of interdependence; review of the 2018 Multistate Grant NCN; review of USFWS FY17 FHP submissions and follow-up conversations; and initial discussion with the Budget and Finance Committee to find funding outside USFWS. Feedback on the document of interdependence is requested from the Partnerships Committee, states, FHPs, and others after the meeting. Approval from the Board will be sought in June.
- Fish Habitat Partnership Presentation –TU representative, Keith Curley, provided an overview of the work that the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, a Fish Habitat Partnership, has conducted including: project planning and contractor workshops; volunteer work days; development of decision support tools; and implementation of an annual symposium including riparian and watershed sessions. An increasing trend in miles restored and funding since 2005 was highlighted, as well as the economic impact. Follow-up discussion centered on where their work primarily occurs (ie. private versus public land), fishing access, and funding.
- US Forest Service –Dan Shively gave a history of the Services’ role in fisheries habitat management and research was provided and the current effort to update their Fisheries Strategy, which contains six goals and seeks to align with the Forest Service Strategic Plan. The Service is engaging with partners and is seeking feedback from the Board. Major follow-up discussion included the importance of coordination with states and the recreational fishing community.
- USFWS FY17 Funding Update – It was noted that this year’s process has gone smoothly and that coordinators have made their recommendations to the ARDs. The Service is under a continuing resolution until April 28, and a funding commitment cannot be made until this time.
- Budget and Finance Committee – It was noted that Board’s main unfunded needs are for the FHP workshop and the Project Tracking Database. On a separate but related note, a brief summary of the 2018 Multistate Conservation Grant process was provided, including initial interest from FHPs to apply collectively for funds. Staff was asked to work with the Partnerships Committee to determine the pros and cons of this approach [to consider in future year cycles].
- Secretarial MOU Update – It was noted that USFWS, NMFS, and USFS staff are reviewing the existing MOU and will make any needed refinements or updates, but will not be moving forward with agency clearances until political leadership is in place and staff can engage with the new leadership. The agencies will continue to operate under the spirit of the MOU in the interim.

- Blue Ribbon Panel Update – Sean Saville, of AFWA, provided an overview of recent Blue Ribbon Panel activities, including webinars with stakeholder organizations to give feedback on the strategies and campaign moving forward.

Action items:

- Members whose terms are up for review in July of 2017 (noted in Tab 2a of the Board Book), should send a note to Ron Regan (rregan@fishwildlife.org) and Emily Greene (emily.greene@noaa.gov) noting if they are interested in being considered for another 3-year term.
- Communications Committee and Partnerships Committee should assist with implementing helpful actions noted by the Legislative Team.
- The Science and Data Committee should further developing implementation option 3, with the caveat that options 2 and 4 are not off the table. Additional information is needed from Councils and Fish Habitat Partnerships.
- Feedback on the Document of Interdependence is requested from the Partnerships Committee, FHPs, states, and others.
- Staff will work with the Partnerships Committee to determine the pros and cons of the approach in which FHPs apply collectively for Multistate Grant Program funds on a three year timeframe.

Future Board meetings (2017):

- Summer Introductory Call for new members (Date TBD)
- June 28 WebEx
- October 18-19 (South Dakota)

Board approved documents:

- January Board Webex summary
- *A Vision for Habitat Conservation for the Future of our Fisheries* (offered by the non-Federal members of the National Fish Habitat Board)

Additional attendees:

Jeff Boxrucker (RFHP)

Stephanie Carman (BLM)

Chris Carlson (USFS)

Emily Greene (Board Staff – NOAA contract)

Elsa Haubold (LCC Network)

Lisa Havel (ACFHP)

Julie Henning (USFWS)

Ian Kroll (USFWS)

Cecilia Lewis (Board Staff – USFWS)

Chris Meaney (NOAA-NMFS)

Pat Montanio (NOAA-NMFS)

David Moe Nelson (NOAA-NOS)

John Netto (USFWS)

Steve Perry (EBTJV)

Ryan Roberts (Board Staff - AFWA)

John Rothlisberger (USFS)

Peter Ruhl (SDC Co-Chair USGS)

John Schmerfeld (USFWS)

Dan Shively (USFS)

Gary Whelan (SDC Co-Chair MI DNR)

Daniel Wieferich (USGS)

By Phone: Joe Nohner (MGLP), Therese Thompson (WNTI), Doug Norton (EPA), Karen Eldridge (USFWS)