

 NATIONAL
FISH HABITAT
PARTNERSHIP



Conference Call of the National Fish Habitat Board

Meeting Book for The
National Fish Habitat Board

June 28, 2017

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
(via conference call and webinar)
June 28, 2017 Draft Agenda and Board Book Tabs

Conference line: 800.768.2983 **Passcode:** 8383462

Web link: <https://cc.callinfo.com/r/1s2iv2qetnzd&eom>

1:00-1:20	<u>Welcome, Introductions, and Housekeeping</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board action to approve draft agenda and draft March meeting summary • Board awareness of October Board Meeting dates and location 	Tab 1	Tom Champeau (Board Chair – FWCC)
1:20-1:30	<u>Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board understanding of ELT National Fish Habitat Board member decisions 	Tab 2	Sam Rauch (Board Member -NMFS)
1:30 – 1:50	<u>Partnerships Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approval of the revised Document of Interdependence 	Tab 3	Stan Allen (Board Member - PSMFC) and Bryan Moore (Board Member - TU)
1:50-2:30	<u>Science and Data Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board understanding of further developed implementation options • Board awareness of additional information from Fish Habitat Partnerships and Councils • Board approval of a Habitat Assessment implementation option 	Tab 4	Gary Whelan and Peter Ruhl (Board Science and Data Committee Co-Chairs)
2:30-2:45	<u>Legislative Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of the National Fish Habitat Partnership legislation status • Board awareness of new outreach materials 		Mike Leonard (Board Member – ASA)
2:45-3:00	<u>Budget and Finance Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of 2017 Multistate Conservation Grant process and timeline 	Tab 5	Ryan Roberts (NFHP Staff, AWFA)
3:00 – 3:20	<u>Forest Service Fisheries Plan</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approval of working group comments 	Tab 6	Tom Champeau (Board Chair – FWCC)

3:20-3:50	<u>Communications Committee Update</u> <i>Desired outcome:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of Communications Committee activities and timelines• Demonstration of NFHP story map	Tab 7	Ryan Roberts (<i>NFHP Staff -AFWA</i>)
3:50 – 4:00	<u>Meeting wrap-up</u>		Tom Champeau (<i>Board Chair, FWCC</i>)

Additional Informational updates included in the Board Book:

- USFWS-NFHP FY17 Funding Allocations
- Tab 8

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

Members present:

Peter Aarrestad (NEAFA)	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)

National Fish Habitat Board Meetings 2017-2018

Year	Date	Location	Comments
2017	June 28 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	
	Summer	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members.
	October 18 – 19 (Wed-Thurs)	Rapid City, South Dakota	Location: South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks @ SD Outdoor Campus (West) Lodging: The Rushmore Hotel Field Trip: Pactola Reservoir, Rapid Creek
2018	January 17 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	Annual budget & priorities
	March 6-7 (Tues-Wed)	Washington, DC Area	Reserve room at TNC HQ
	June 27 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	
	Summer	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members.
	October 17-18 (Wed-Thurs)	Texas (tentative)	

Record of Past Board Meetings 2006-2016

Year	Date	Location	Facility
2006	September 22	Aspen, Colorado	Hotel
	November 16	Washington, DC	Hall of States
2007	January 16	Teleconference	
	March 1-2	Washington, DC	Environmental Protection Agency
	June 6-7	Washington, DC	Commerce Department
	October 2-3	Arlington, VA	Hotel
2008	February 20-21	St. Petersburg, FL	Tampa Bay Watch
	May 13-14	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	October 7-8	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
2009	March 4-5	Harrisburg, PA	Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
	June 25, 2009	Leesburg, VA	National Conference Center
	October 7-8	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
2010	January 15	Teleconference	
	March 3-4	Memphis, TN	Ducks Unlimited
	June 9-10	Silver Spring, MD	NOAA headquarters

	August 25	Teleconference	
	October 12-14	Portland, OR	Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission
2011	January 13	Teleconference	
	March 11	Teleconference	
	April 12-13	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	July 26-27	Madison, WI	Hotel
	October 19-20	Albuquerque, NM	FWS Regional Office
2012	January 12	Teleconference	
	March 1	Teleconference	
	April 17-18	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	July 10-11	Portland, ME	Hotel
	October 16-17	Ridgedale, MO	Big Cedar Lodge
2013	January 16	Teleconference	
	February 26-27	Arlington, VA	FWS headquarters
	April 15	Teleconference	
	June 25-26	Salt Lake City, UT	Utah State Capitol
	October 22-23	Charleston, SC	SC DNR
2014	January 15	Teleconference	
	March 9-10	Denver, CO	
	June 25	Tele/web conference	
	November 8-9	National Harbor, MD	Held in conjunction w/ RAE Summit
2015	January 14	Tele/web conference	
	March 3-4	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	June 24	Tele/web conference	
	September 22	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members and interested individuals.
	October 20-21	Sacramento, CA	Hotel
2016	January 20	Tele/web conference	
	March 8-9	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	June 29	Tele/web conference	
	October 26-27	Panama City, FL	
2017	January 18	Tele/web conference	
	March 21	Rosslyn, VA	Trout Unlimited Offices

Total: 47 meetings (in-person and teleconference) held to date

Title: Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Update

Desired outcome(s): Board understanding of ELT National Fish Habitat Board member decisions

Background:

Members of the Executive Leadership Team met via conference call on June 12, 2017 to discuss National Fish Habitat Board Membership. The following individuals were reappointed:

Doug Boyd (Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council)

Christy Plumer (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership)

Sean Stone (Coastal Conservation Association)

Chris Wood (Trout Unlimited)

An introductory conference call will be held later this summer for new Board members. This will include interested reappointed members and Board members who were newly appointed earlier in 2017.

Briefing Book Materials:

Tab 2b Board Member List and Terms

NFHP Board Membership (June 2017)

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Representing	Next Review
Aarrestad	Peter	CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	State Agency - NEAFWA	July 2018
Allen	Stan	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	At large- Commercial fishing	June 2019
Andrews	Michael	The Nature Conservancy	At large - Conservation	June 2019
Beard	Doug	US Geological Survey	Federal Agency	July 2018
Best-Wong	Benita	US Environmental Protection Agency	Federal Agency	June 2019
Bigford	Tom	American Fisheries Society	American Fisheries Society	July 2018
Boyd	Douglass	Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council	At large- Sportfishing	July 2020
Champeau	Tom	FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	State Agency	July 2018
Harper	Rob	USDA Forest Service	Federal Agency	July 2018
Leach	Jim	MN Department of Natural Resources	State Agency - MAFWA	July 2018
Leonard	Mike	American Sportfishing Association	At large-Sportfishing	June 2019
Matt	Fred	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	Tribal	July 2018
Melinchuk	Ross	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	State Agency - SEAFWA	July 2018
Moore	Chris	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	At large- Commercial fishing	October 2019
Plumer	Christy	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership	At large- Sportfishing	July 2020
Schriever	Ed	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	State Agency - WAFWA	July 2018
Stone	Sean	Coastal Conservation Association	At large - Sportfishing	July 2020
Wood	Chris	Trout Unlimited	At large - Conservation	July 2020
NA		National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	July 2015
Board members serving by virtue of their offices				
Kurth	Jim	US Fish and Wildlife Service (Acting Director)	Federal Agency	
Rauch	Sam	NOAA Fisheries Service (Acting Assistant Administrator)	Federal Agency	
Regan	Ron	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	AFWA – Executive Director	

Title: Partnerships Committee Update

Desired outcomes:

- **Board approval** of the revised Document of Interdependence.

Background:

The Partnerships Committee serves as a forum for preliminary discussions, fact-finding, and formulating recommendations for Board actions that affect Fish Habitat Partnerships and is made-up of FHP and Board members.

The National Fish Habitat Partnership's 2017 Priority I is to complete the Document of Interdependence. At the October 2016 Board meeting a draft Document of Interdependence was presented to the Board. Revisions were suggested at that time, which were subsequently made by the Partnerships Committee.

The Document of Interdependence is an informational document that was developed by the Partnerships Committee at the request of the FHPs. The purpose of the document is to acknowledge the interdependence of the major components that make-up NFHP. It is a non-obligatory, non-official document intended for an internal audience. This document should be used as supplemental material to assist with implementation of official documents such as the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. However, it in no way supersedes official documents such as the Policies and Guidance for FHPs. It describes and clarifies the current roles, responsibilities, and relationships among the major components of the NFHP. The document is intended to reflect current relationships; it does not articulate desired or anticipated roles, responsibilities, or relationships. It is a living document that will be updated when official documents are updated, as appropriate.

Update:

In March of 2017 the draft document was made available for review by FHPs, State and Federal agencies, and other interested parties. Feedback was provided by the USFWS, NEAFA, and a member of the Board's Science and Data Committee. Some suggestions were editorial in nature, while other suggestions were more substantial. Examples of more substantial suggestions included, clarifying the commitments of Federal agencies, the relationship between this document and existing guidance documents, and the distinction between Themes 7, 8, and 9 and the roles of NFHP entities pertaining to these themes. Many of these revisions were incorporated into the document.

Briefing Book Materials:

Tab 3b Document of Interdependence

NFHP Document of Interdependence

Introduction

The [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) (NFHP) consists of four distinct components: the National Fish Habitat Board, the (20) individual Fish Habitat Partnerships, the National Fish Habitat Fund (NFHP's official non-profit partner) and the NFHP partners which includes federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, academia, non-governmental organizations, and public and private entities and individuals (including business), who contribute to implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. While each of these distinct components has the freedom to act independently of one another, the actions of one affects the actions of another. In this way the success of any one of these components is dependent upon the success of the other three – they are in fact -- interdependent. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of these relationships.

Purpose

This informational document was developed at the request of the FHPs with the purpose of acknowledging the interdependence of the major components that make-up NFHP. It is a non-obligatory, non-official document intended for an internal audience. This document should be used as supplemental material to assist with implementation of official documents such as the [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#). However, it in no way supersedes official documents such as the [Policies and Guidance for FHPs](#). It describes and clarifies the current roles, responsibilities, and relationships among the major components of the NFHP. The document is intended to reflect current relationships; it does not articulate desired or anticipated roles, responsibilities, or relationships. It is a living document that will be updated when official documents are updated, as appropriate.

Definitions

National Fish Habitat Board –Also referred to as the "Board", is the governing body established to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#). A list of committees that support the Board can be found in the appendix.

Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) -- National Fish Habitat Board approved groups of state, federal, local, nonprofit, Native American Tribes, private individuals, or entities that coordinate to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. They are self-identified, self-organized, and self-directed communities of interest formed around geographic areas, keystone species, or system types (e.g. rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and marine). Fish habitat conservation projects proposed by many of these FHPs are eligible for funding as NFHP projects through a competitive proposal process. FHPs have governance structures that reflect the range of all partners and promote joint strategic planning and decision-making by the partnership.

Partner -- An individual or entity that engages with the NFHP or a FHP to promote its mission (e.g. Federal, state, and local agencies, Tribes, academia, non-government organizations, and public and private entities and individuals (including business)). Examples of ways to engage include but are not limited to: provision of funding, participation in a project, participation on a committee or working group, etc.

Federal agency -- Department, bureau, service, division, representative, or other component of the Federal Government that has direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation. The results of effective conservation contribute to the health and social and economic well-being of the American public that they serve.

State agency -- The fish and wildlife agency of a State; any department or division of a department or agency of a State that manages in the public trust the inland or marine fishery resources or sustains the habitat for those fishery resources of the State pursuant to State law or the constitution of the State.

Non-Government Organization -- A non-profit, tax-exempt entity established under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. NGOs commonly serve as catalysts to bring together projects, funding for projects and partnerships, and advocate for the legislation and administrative policies which help Partnerships.

Beyond the Pond (also referred to as “the National Fish Habitat Fund” or “the Fund”) -- a tax exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code that was created to support the mission and goals of the NFHP.

Conservation action -- Activities that protect, sustain, and, where appropriate, restore, and enhance populations of fish, wildlife, or plant life or habitat required to sustain fish, wildlife, or plant life or its productivity. Common examples include stream, lake, reservoir, and riparian restoration projects.

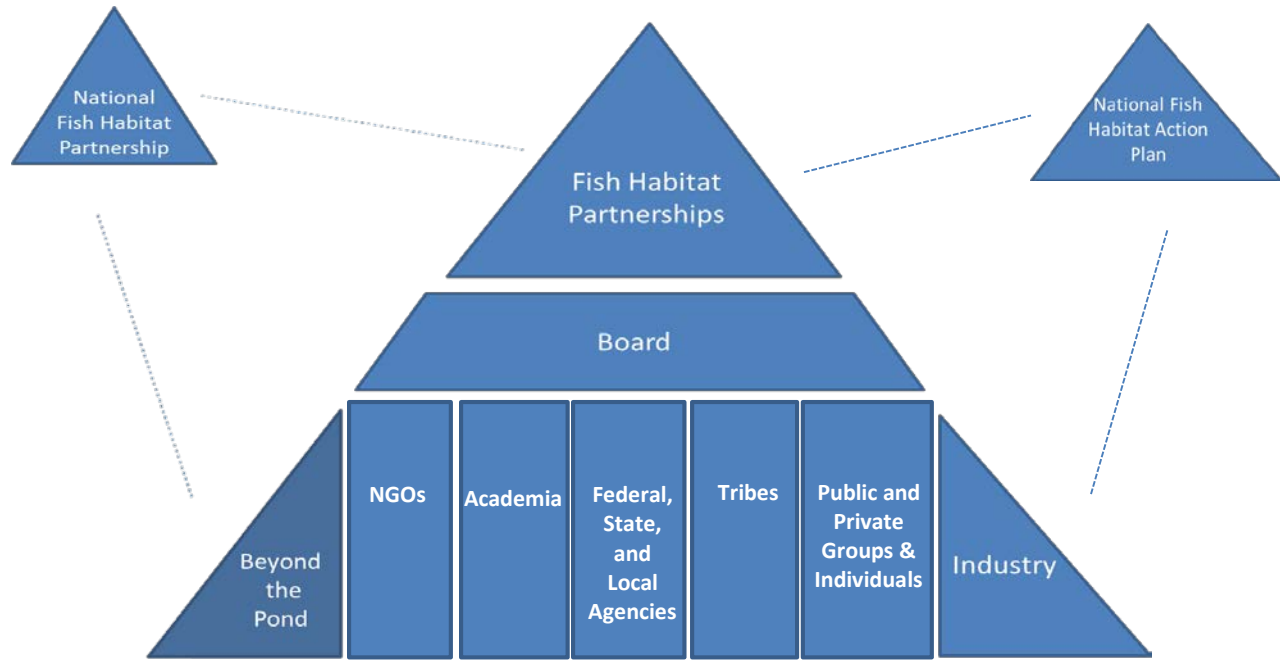


Figure 1. NFHP is made up of several different components (i.e. partners) that collectively form a solid foundation supporting the FHPs. Therefore, each component (i.e. partner) has an important role in supporting and facilitating implementation of the Action Plan.

Commitments

1 Habitat Assessments

1.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- The Board shall solicit information from the Science and Data Committee and incorporate that information, and other appropriate information, into the strategies and goals developed by the Board.
- The Board will support the Science and Data Team by providing necessary staff, funding, data and other resources needed to complete the national assessments and reports called for in the Plan.

1.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Develop appropriate local or regional habitat evaluation and assessment measures and criteria that are compatible with national habitat condition measures.

- Coordinate and compile scientific assessment information on fish habitats within their partnership areas to help determine and monitor the FHP's conservation goals and objectives.
- Provide this scientific assessment information to the national Science and Data Committee to support national assessments of fish habitats.

1.3 Federal Agency¹

- Collect, manage, analyze and share data and contribute information technology expertise to build or integrate databases to assess aquatic communities, habitat conditions and outcomes of projects.
- Coordinate and contribute technical assistance, services or funds for the science and data initiatives of the National Fish Habitat Board.

1.4 State Agency (as resources allow)

- Participate in FHP Science Teams and the NFHP Science and Data Committee to contribute technical expertise and assistance in the design, review, and application (e.g., priority setting) of regional and national fish habitat assessments.
- Share state-based survey and monitoring datasets with the relevant FHP Science Teams and NFHP Science and Data Committee to inform regional and national habitat assessments.
- Provide to FHPs, upon request, relevant state species management or conservation plans in which habitat limitations and/or priority conservation actions are identified.
- Review habitat assessment documents and any proposed restoration priorities/projects to ensure consistency with established agency objectives.

1.5 Non-Government Organization

- Assist in the review of habitat assessment data and provide constructive input to the process. Where beneficial, an NGO may also provide additional externally collected and reviewed scientific habitat data for consideration for inclusion.

1.6 Beyond the Pond

- Raise outside funding from corporations, individuals, and foundations to supplement Fish Habitat Partnership and National Fish Habitat Board projects and priorities.

2 Communications and Outreach

2.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Communicate with the Fish Habitat Partnerships regarding all policies and decisions made by the Board.
- Where appropriate and when possible, the Board should utilize its network to communicate potential opportunities for advancement of national (NFHP) and FHP objectives to the FHPs so that the FHPs can take advantage of these opportunities.

¹ Each of the component agencies, bureaus, and offices of the Departments [Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce] with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation, protection and restoration, shall as appropriate, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, and in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations:

2.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Engage local and regional communities to build support for fish habitat conservation.
- Involve diverse groups of public and private partners.
- Develop regular newsletters, project overviews, and social media messaging including websites and e-news clips.

2.3 Federal Agency¹

- Contribute to the development of informational materials for stakeholders and the general public to raise awareness of the values of aquatic habitat and the Action Plan.
- Federal agencies will do their part to promote NFHP within own agency with news articles, presentations, webinars, awards, and promoting more collaboration or funding opportunities.
- Communicate across programs within own agency and to other related federal agencies.
- Communicate with the Federal Caucus.

2.4 State Agency (as resources allow)

- Contribute to the development of informational materials for stakeholders and the general public to raise awareness of the values of aquatic habitat.
- Promote the contributions of NFHP and the FHPs in supporting aquatic habitat conservation in their respective states.
- Advocate locally for NFHP and recruit grassroots partners to contribute to implementation of the Action Plan (e.g., recruit and foster grassroots partners).
- Promote public awareness of habitat limitations, enhancement opportunities, or completed restoration projects through a variety of media and social media outlets; not necessarily tied to NFHP-related funding, but consistent with NFHP and FHP messaging.

2.5 Non-Government Organization

- Provide outreach, education and engagement opportunities to local communities
- Increase overall public knowledge and awareness regarding the role of the NFHP as related to resource protection and enhancement.

2.6 Beyond the Pond

- Provide a platform for promoting Fish Habitat Partnership conservation success stories and act as a resource for potential donors.

3 Coordination

3.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Coordinate agency and stakeholder involvement at the national level
- Establish national partnerships that provide funding and other resources to the Partnerships and other efforts of the Plan.
- Coordinate with the broadest possible range of stakeholders and other interested parties, through its Partners Coalition, to increase involvement and support for coordinated fish habitat conservation at national and regional scales.

- Coordinate with the broadest possible range of Federal agencies through the Federal Caucus, a partnership of Federal agencies organized to coordinate Federal participation in the implementation of the Action Plan, and make every attempt to expand the Federal Caucus to include all Federal agencies involved with fish habitat.

3.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Seek and encourage involvement by State fish and wildlife agencies, Native American governments and federal agencies that manage fish resources within their partnership areas, non-government organizations and businesses, and document these efforts. Commitment may be demonstrated through endorsement by regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies or similar entities, memoranda of understanding among jurisdictions, letters of support from agency directors, or other written evidence.
- As members of the grassroots NFHP, FHPs should generally be present at Board meetings (in person or on the phone) and participate in discussions where appropriate.
- Work with other regional habitat conservation efforts to promote cooperation and coordination to enhance fish and fish habitats.
- Collaborate with FHPs Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and other large landscape-scale collaborations where appropriate to carry out responsibilities.

3.3 Federal Agency

- The Board shall include up to five federal agency representatives. These shall include the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Chief, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who shall serve by virtue of their office
- Promote collaborative, science-based conservation by ensuring that the component agencies, bureaus, and offices of Federal agencies with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation, protection, and restoration, support efforts to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations and subject to the availability of funds.
- Ensure their actions, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, and in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations, are consistent with and support the priorities of the Action Plan. In so doing, the Departments can improve the efficiency of Federal Government organizations and ensure effective coordination with state, tribal, and local agencies, non-government organizations, businesses, and individuals. Participate as members of the Federal Caucus at policy and technical levels to coordinate Federal participation in implementation of the Action Plan in support of state agency-led efforts to achieve the goals of the Action Plan.
- Coordinate activities in support of the Action Plan with other interagency efforts, including but not limited to America's Great Outdoors, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Coral Reef Task Force, the National Action Plan for Freshwater Resources, the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan, and the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy.¹

- Coordinate its activities with states, territories, tribes, and local governments to meet the goals of the Action Plan.¹
- Encourage and support affiliated efforts by non-Federal partners to implement the Action Plan, including fulfillment of the Federal trust responsibilities to Native American governments.¹

3.4 State Agency (as resources allow)

- Communicate relevant state agency objectives, management plans, and habitat enhancement priorities to FHPs.
- Where compatible with state agency objectives and resources, participate in FHP steering committees, science teams, and other working groups.
- Coordinate with the FHPs and partners on the planning, progress, and outcomes of NFHP-supported projects in their respective states.
- Coordinate with FHPs on state-supported fish habitat restoration, enhancement, and protection projects that contribute to implementation of the Action Plan (NOTE: many states are heavily engaged in fish habitat conservation efforts not directly supported by NFHP, but that contribute to the goals and objectives of the Action Plan).

3.5 Non-Government Organization

- Non-profit land and aquatic resource conservation organizations are appointed to the Board to ensure a balance of governmental and non-governmental organizations, and a balance of freshwater and marine interests. Non-profit conservation organizations support and compliment the interests and direction of the Board through on-the-ground organizing and partnerships, and in some cases through actions the Board and governmental organizations may not undertake.
- Build support with other partners with an interest in a particular project.

3.6 Beyond the Pond

- Coordinate fundraising support with the National Fish Habitat Board and with the FHP. Fundraising support with the National Fish Habitat Board is coordinated through two primary avenues: one, a representative of the Board of Directors for Beyond the Pond provides regular reports to the National Fish Habitat Board, and two, through overlapping membership of the two Boards (they must share three members).
- Coordinate fundraising support to the FHPs through a chapter relationship defined in the Notice of Responsibility and Expectations of Chapters of the National Fish Habitat Fund. Generally, Beyond the Pond pursues high-level donors and the FHPs pursue local-level donors. Communication between FHPs and with Beyond the Pond regarding these efforts is encouraged.

4 Strategic Planning

4.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Develop and amend, as appropriate, specific national fish habitat conservation goals and objectives with the advice from the Science and Data Committee.

- The Board shall coordinate with the Federal agencies to develop and implement habitat protection and rehabilitation strategies at national and regional scales, to ensure that Federal agency policies are consistent with the Plan, and to otherwise support implementation of the Plan.

4.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Develop collaboratively with regional stakeholders a strategic vision and achievable strategic or implementation plan that is scientifically sound.
- Establish strategic goals and objectives that define desired outcomes for fish species and habitats within their partnership areas.
- Identify priority places and/or issues to focus conservation action, and prioritize fish habitat conservation projects to meet goals and objectives.

4.3 Federal Agency¹

- Review policies, procedures, resources, capabilities and, where appropriate, make revisions during regularly scheduled reviews of the same, to further support of NFHP goals.
- Incorporate the goals of NFHP in its own plans for managing Federal lands and water resources, where appropriate, during regularly scheduled reviews of such plans.

4.4 State Agency

- Actively contribute to the development of relevant FHP strategic plans to ensure consistency with established state agency objectives and policies, as resources allow.

4.5 Non-Government Organization

- Identify areas of mutual interest in the strategic plan and work to build and enhance the established goals of the plan through their individual operating strategies.
- Evaluate strategic alignment with individual FHPs to collaborate on implementation of regional goals where feasible.

4.6 Beyond the Pond

- Has developed Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws as well as seated a Board of Directors and named officers of the Fund.
- Fundraise to support the strategic efforts of the National Fish Habitat Board and the FHPs.

5 Funding

5.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Establish national partnerships or other arrangements that provide funding and other resources to the FHPs and other efforts of the Plan.
- The Board will develop and implement strategies to increase public and private funding for fish habitat conservation by the FHPs, provided that the responsibility for implementation of such strategies by any Board member shall be limited by any legal or administrative restrictions that may apply to the activities of any such member.
- Develop processes to prioritize and deliver NFHP funds to the FHPs, where appropriate.

5.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Leverage funding from sources that support local and regional partnerships.
- Assist Beyond the Pond in their high-level fundraising efforts by providing fundraising case studies, proposals, and other guidance to facilitate success.

5.3 Federal Agency¹

- Contribute materials, technical assistance, services, or appropriated federal funds to projects that support the goals of the Action Plan and FHPs established under the Plan.
- Consider the goals of the Action Plan when awarding loans, grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements, consistent with federal law and respective agency processes.
- Communicate with similar programs within own agency and other federal agencies to leverage funds.

5.4 State Agency

- Contribute materials, technical assistance, services, or matching funds to projects that support the goals of the Action Plan and FHPs established under the Plan, as resources allow.

5.5 Non-Government Organization

- Acquire funding from private or government agency sources to leverage funds provided by the Board to FHPs, resulting in larger scale projects providing a greater resource impact.

5.6 Beyond the Pond

- Support charitable, educational, and scientific purposes related to the conservation, protection, and restoration of fish and aquatic habitats in the United States through the NFHP by providing fundraising and fiscal services to the National Fish Habitat Board and FHP chapters recognized by Beyond the Pond.
- Support the NFHP by providing fundraising tools for the National Fish Habitat Board and FHP chapters such as training, online donation capabilities, or other opportunities.
- In all activities and respects, Beyond the Pond will advance the NFHP and the FHPs. In no manner may the funds raised by Beyond the Pond be used to support any organization that is not a member of the NFHP or a FHP approved by the National Fish Habitat Board.

6 Reporting

6.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Develop and implement a strategy (including funding) to support development of a “Status of Fish Habitats in the United States” report to Congress, States, and other partners on the status and accomplishments of the NFHP Board. The Board’s Science and Data Committee completed 2010 and 2015 reports and future reports are anticipated on a periodic basis.

6.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Coordinate and compile information on outputs (conservation activities) and outcomes (changes in habitat condition) for reporting to the Board and stakeholders.

6.3 Federal Agency

- Communicate NFHP implementation and outcomes with other programs within the respective agency and externally with other partners..
- Report to the Federal Caucus on issues NFHP/FHPs are facing.

6.4 State Agency

- Provide input to project-specific reports and implementation of a NFHP-funded project where appropriate.

6.5 Non-Government Organization

- Assist in the distribution of report information to other parties and organizations for educational and potential funding purposes.
- Use the report as a reference for discussion with elected officials as evidence of the value realized from public funding for water resources.

6.6 Beyond the Pond

- Provide an Annual Report of Activities to the National Fish Habitat Board and FHPs.
- Board of Directors ensures that Beyond the Pond stays in compliance with Federal laws.

7 Recognition and Development of FHPs

7.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Develop appropriate policies and guidance for recognizing FHPs.
- Develop and amend, as appropriate, criteria for recognition of FHPs. The Board shall distribute the criteria, establish a process for parties to use in seeking recognition as a FHP, and maintain a publicly accessible registry of recognized FHPs. Such criteria shall include provisions to promote transparency and the highest standards of ethical conduct in the decision-making of the Board regarding recognition of FHPs.
- Develop and amend, as appropriate, a strategy to encourage the formation of FHPs. This strategy will be updated periodically to include new information on fish habitat status and the status of existing FHPs.
- .

7.2 State Agency

- Those state agencies within the scope of a proposed (new) FHP will provide feedback to the Board (upon request) regarding the need, expected benefits, and tradeoffs of establishing a new FHP.
-

8 Evaluating Performance

8.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Establish national measures of success and evaluation criteria guidelines for FHPs and facilitate Fish Habitat Partnership adaptation of these guidelines for their unique systems.
- The Board has responsibility to oversee and coordinate implementation of the Action Plan through the FHPs.
 - The Board will monitor the performance and needs of FHPs nationwide, and will update this Guidance as needed to address changing conditions.
 - Monitoring by the Board is intended to be supportive, not burdensome, to FHP operations, participation, and innovation.
 - Recognized FHPs will be re-evaluated by the Board, at an interval of every three years, to confirm that they continue to meet the criteria in this guidance.

8.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Use adaptive management principles, including evaluation of project success and functionality.

8.3 Federal Agency

- Agencies will be informed about how FHPs perform in project completion and functionality by the NFHP Board.

8.4 State Agency

- Upon request, provide feedback to the Board on the performance, effectiveness, and communication of FHPs.

8.5 Non-Government Organization

- Participate by providing input to the evaluation process and the Action Plan. Assist in the re-evaluation process and work with individual FHPs as requested.

8.6 Beyond the Pond

- Periodic evaluation reporting for Beyond the Pond will be determined and set by the Board of Directors for Beyond the Pond in coordination with the National Fish Habitat Partnership.
- Beyond the Pond is also required to provide reporting to the IRS and is subject to independent audits.

9 Project Implementation

9.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Carry out such administrative, organizational, or procedural matters as are necessary or proper.

9.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Guide, facilitate, support, or implement local and regional priority projects that improve conditions for fish and fish habitat.

- Provide leadership that develops projects at regional and local levels
- Work with other regional habitat conservation programs to promote cooperation and coordination and improve results
- Engage key audiences and the general public to build support for fish habitat conservation
- Involve diverse groups of public and private partners
- Collaboratively develop a compelling strategic vision and achievable implementation plan that is scientifically sound
- Leverage funding from sources that support local and regional partnerships
- Use adaptive management principles including evaluation of project success and functionality
- Develop appropriate regional habitat evaluation measures and criteria that are compatible with national measures

9.3 Federal Agency¹

- Consider the goals of the Action Plan when issuing permits to states or private entities when such permits may influence aquatic habitat.
- May help with implementation: project oversight, permitting, project design, data management, contracting, monitoring and other technical assistance.

9.4 State Agency

- In concert with other partners, work to develop or support the development and implementation of projects selected for funding as resources allow.

9.5 Non-Government Organization

- The non-profit organizations, both directly and indirectly, work to develop, or support the development of projects selected and funded by the Board.

9.6 Beyond the Pond

- Ensure that any grants or projects implemented through Beyond the Pond remain in accordance with Partnership priorities.

10 Legislation

10.1 National Fish Habitat Board

- Non-Federal members of the Board may educate or inform legislative process
- Non-Federal members provide support to the Legislative Team.

10.2 Fish Habitat Partnerships

- Non-Federal members may educate or inform legislative process.

10.3 Federal Agency

- Works with Federal Caucus, and other partners, but does not lobby.

10.4 State Agency

- Within the scope of existing policies and as resources allow, work through state agency associations (AFWA, WAFWA) to develop or provide comment to the Board on proposed legislation to advance NFHP goals.

10.5 Non-Government Organization

- The Board, and governmental organization members, are significantly restricted in their ability to attempt to directly influence lawmakers or pending legislation that may be of vital interest. Non-profit organizations fill an important and necessary niche within the Board through their legally protected ability to more actively engage elected representatives regarding issues of interest, and to directly participate and influence legislative acts. These activities may occur at the national, state, or local levels.
- Non-profit organizations also have the opportunity in many cases to organize and mobilize grassroots support for issues of importance through guidance and training for actions such as writing letters, and contacting their elected officials to schedule a meeting to discuss a specific topic.

10.6 Beyond the Pond

- Incorporated as a 501(c)3, Beyond the Pond is not active in legislation efforts of the NFHP.

Source Material

- Articles of Incorporation of the National Fish Habitat Fund, Inc., May 27, 2014.
- Bylaws of the National Fish Habitat Fund, Inc.
- [Charter of the National Fish Habitat Board](#). Adopted by the National Fish Habitat Board on September 22, 2006. Revised April 19, 2007, and October 13, 2010.
- Draft language from National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act. Specifically, S. 659 –Crapo Amendment #1. Dated January 19, 2016.
- [Evaluating Fish Habitat Partnership Performance](#). Approved by the National Fish Habitat Board, January 14, 2015.
- Member Guide For the National Fish Habitat Board, 2017.
- Memorandum of Understanding Between the US Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce for Implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Effective March 27, 2012 – March 27, 2017.
- [National Fish Habitat Action Plan, 2nd Edition](#). Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington, DC. 40 pp. 2012.
- Notice of Responsibility and Expectations of Chapters of the National Fish Habitat Fund
- [Policies and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships](#). Approved by the National Fish Habitat Board, October 8, 2008.
- State of Beyond the Pond – 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization to benefit the National Fish Habitat Partnership

Appendix – National Fish Habitat Board Committees

Four standing committees operate under the Board’s purview. These committees accomplish specific tasks undertaken by the Board and report back to the Board as necessary.

Science & Data Committee

The Science and Data Committee’s purpose is to provide scientific and data management expertise and oversight to advance the goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) in a scientifically sound and strategic manner.

Duties and roles of the Committee’s co-chairs and members include:

- Provide advice to the Board on setting future science and data priorities.
- Develop strategies for executing and implementing Board science and data priorities by ensuring the direction, purpose, and needs for future national assessments are well-defined.
- Oversee, coordinate, and review the development of the national fish habitat assessment including, but not limited to, assisting the assessment teams with relevant contacts, data acquisition, and expertise as needed.
- Provide expert advice and support on habitat and data issues to the Board, National Assessment Teams, and Fish Habitat Partnerships to ensure scientific data conformity and coordination between FHPs, partner agencies, and the Science and Data Committee.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee’s role is to support the partnership by sustaining critical communications needs and initiatives. The Communications Committee plays an essential role in crafting the messages that raise awareness about the partnership and help build a community of support for fish habitat conservation.

Partnerships Committee

The Partnerships Committee serves as a forum for preliminary discussions, fact-finding, and formulating recommendations for Board actions that affect Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Budget and Finance Committee

This committee works with and supports the Board in fiscal matters affecting the function of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, including the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships. The committee reports to the Board with recommendations for Board actions related to budgets, funding priorities, fiscal needs, and strategies to expand funding for Board functions and FHP projects and programs.

In addition to standing committees, the Board appoints ad hoc committees to address specific needs. As of July 2015, the following committees are active:

- *10-Year Anniversary Steering Committee*, created to help look for opportunities to promote and identify resources to celebrate the 10-Year Anniversary of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (April 24, 2016). The Steering Committee developed a

communications strategy that includes events where the National Fish Habitat Partnership could be recognized beginning in 2016 and through April 2017.

- *Marketing Team*, charged with leading the creation of an educational and outreach campaign to raise awareness of the critically important aquatic habitat conservation work being implemented through the National Fish Habitat Partnership. This group also helped to form marketing guidance and principals for Beyond the Pond and communications and marketing efforts to connect the National Fish Habitat Partnership and Beyond the Pond.
- *Legislative Team*, made-up of a coalition of non-Federal members of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, this team seeks the passage of National Fish Habitat Conservation legislation, which will codify and strengthen the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Versions of the National Fish Habitat Conservation legislation have been introduced in the previous four sessions of Congress.

Overall Recommendation for the National Fish Habitat Assessment June 2017

Overall Recommendation: Based upon all of the feedback provided at the last two Board meetings and the associated surveys of all NFHP groups, the Science and Data Committee (SDC) recommendation is the Board approve moving forward with a combination of Assessment Options 2 and 3 which includes: an updated National Fish Habitat Assessment using revisions of current data layers for inland waters; a focus on hydrology and connectivity both nationally and regionally for the Inland Assessment; continued refinement of the Great Lakes Coastal Assessment; and a focus on strictly regional assessments for the Marine Coastal Assessment.

Products:

Inland Assessment. The Inland National Fish Habitat Assessment would be completed using: updates of existing data layers including the spatial framework; no additional national data layers; no changes in the analytical methodology; and an added analysis of hydrology and connectivity, either on a national or regional basis depending the availability and power of datasets. The inland assessment is expected to provide new data products for the coastal assessment(s) work.

This option would ensure that an up-to-date national picture of inland fish habitat is available for a broad set of purposes and audiences and will provide detailed information for FHPs on two key processes. Both of these areas were clearly noted in the survey results.

Great Lakes Coastal Assessment. The Great Lakes Coastal Assessment would continue to be based on the work of the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Framework using independent funding (Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, and others) with an emphasis on moving fisheries based information into the current spatial framework and developing fish-habitat relationships similar to the inland assessment but for the entire Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Coastal Assessment would continue to mature their analyses and products which will allow analytical linkages between the inland and Great Lakes assessments. The Board through the SDC would provide technical support of their efforts.

Marine Coastal Assessment. The Marine Coastal Assessment will develop regional assessments to support Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designations and identification of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). No additional updating of the National Marine Coastal Assessment is proposed at this time. The products are expected to be a set of information related to the characterization of fish habitat in the selected regions at an appropriate scale, building upon the products from the NFHP 2015 National Assessment. The Marine Coastal Assessment would provide regional fish habitat products to support FHPs and information to inform the National Fish Habitat Assessment for coastal marine waters.

Assessment Development Process

The Inland National Fish Habitat Assessment work would be conducted by Michigan State University with oversight of analyses and products by the SDC. Great Lakes Coastal Fish Habitat Assessment work will

be done by Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Framework workgroup with technical assistance and requested product review by the SDC. The Marine Coastal Fish Habitat Assessment work will follow the process indicated in the NOAA Options for the NFHP Coastal Assessment document. The work would be done by an appropriate assessment team or teams supervised by a steering committee(s) directly overseeing the work with SDC review of assessment analyses and products. Marine Coastal Assessment steering committee(s) members are to include staff from NOAA Fisheries Offices of Habitat Conservation and Science and Technology, regional NOAA Fisheries science centers, the regional fishery councils and fisheries commissions, FHPs, SDC liaison, and potentially other interested parties.

The Assessment development should have closer FHP coordination including: early scoping with the FHPs; regular status calls and webinar updates with the FHPs and Board; and the opportunity for FHP feedback and product reviews.

Timeline

To ensure full FHP participation and development of the much more difficult and detailed analyses on hydrology and connectivity and the new regional Marine Coastal Assessment products, a full Assessment completion date of January 1, 2024 is recommended. Intermediate products will include the updated National Fish Habitat Assessment without the completed hydrology and connectivity components. The intermediate product would be expected prior to the January 1, 2024 date and could be scheduled to meet the 5 year period specified in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

National Fish Habitat Assessment Summary FHP Responses

June 2017

- **Participating Partnerships** – 17 of 20 (85%)
- **How do FHPs want to use the National Fish Habitat Assessment?**
 - Tell the National Fish Habitat story and relate to local conditions – 7
 - Obtain data layers and data sharing – 5
 - Unclear use or scale issues to use – 3
 - Identify data gaps – 1
 - Relate larger watershed assessment to local conditions – 1
 - Help identify focus areas and project criteria – 1
 - Develop decision support tools - 1
- **How would you want NFHP to use the assessment if you were a Board member?**
 - Tell National or big picture habitat story – 7
 - Communication tool for outreach – 6
 - Provide data resources for FHPs - 3
 - Determine data gaps - 1
 - Funding justification and direction – 2
 - Use broadly – 1
 - Not sure - 1
- **What should be the purpose of the Board's National Assessment?**
 - National state of fish habitat, allow national comparisons, and provide science underpinning for assessment – 11
 - Outreach – 5
 - Unsure – 2
 - Public awareness of fish habitat – 2
 - Fund raising – 1
 - Regional data presentation – 1
 - Showing limiting factors and emerging risks nationally – 1
 - Partnership building – 1
 - Tie FHP assessments together – 1
 - Public data provision - 1
- **What needs should the Board's National Assessment fulfill?**
 - Outreach, communication and public awareness – 5
 - Provide information and data to FHPs and the Board – 4
 - Identify FHP priority areas and areas in best condition – 2
 - Unsure – 1
 - Analysis of habitat degradation costs regionally and nationally – 1
 - National funding strategy underpinning - 1
 - Provide a consistently measured national fish habitat picture – 1
 - Expand assessment to currently unmeasured habitats - 1
- **Who should the audience be for the Board's National Assessment?**
 - Elected Officials – 11
 - General Public – 8
 - FHPs – 7
 - Federal and State Resource Agencies – 7
 - Funding Entities – 4

- NGOs – 4
- Academia and Scientists – 3
- Board - 3
- **How you want the Board’s Science and Data Committee to interact with your FHP to complete the next National Fish Habitat Assessment?**
 - Obtain FHP input early, have regular check in calls and webinar updates, get feedback and have product reviews (essentially current practice) – 5
 - Unsure - 2
 - FHP focus group to review products – 2
 - Incorporate FHP focus areas using scoping of high priority and common objectives – 2
 - Intersect basin and national assessment products – 1
 - Plan with FHPs for product feedback and spatial framework updates – 1
 - Provide complete funding – 1
 - Much more communication as past was not acceptable – 1
 - Examine national story effectiveness - 1
- **In March, four options were provided to the Board for the next National Fish Habitat Assessment. Which of the four options is your preferred option? (1,2,3,4) Which options can you live with? Are there any options that you cannot accept as a strategy for the next National Fish Habitat Assessment?**
 - Preferred Option
 - Option 1 - 6
 - Option 2 - 6
 - Option 3 - 5
 - Option 4 - 5
 - Live-with Option
 - Option 1 - 4
 - Option 2 - 5
 - Option 3 – 4
 - Option 4 - 4
 - Cannot Live with Option
 - Option 1 – 1
 - Option 2 – 0
 - Option 3 – 0
 - Option 4 - 5
 - None - 1
 - Comments
 - Do not want a duplication of regional assessments
 - Question of frequency of assessment and maybe 5 year is too short
 - Where would the funding go if no assessment and strategy needed by Board.
 - Show additional use of FHP centric data with SDC filling gaps
 - Go with data warehouse but produce a trends analysis every 5 years.
 - Need to move to 1:24,000
 - Need cost information – GEW Comment - Cost between Options 1-3 is about the same as all require advanced analysis (Inland - \$156K and

similar amount for coastal and Option 4 just needs GIS analyst and some oversight likely \$80K).

- **Is your partnership interested in having detailed analyses of hydrology and connectivity being a key focus of next National Fish Habitat Assessment? If not, what specific processes or specific questions should be the focus of the next National Fish Habitat Assessment?**
 - Hydrology and Connectivity
 - Both - 7
 - Hydrology – 2
 - Connectivity – 1
 - Neither - 3
 - Other Processes if not Hydrology and Connectivity
 - FHP level prioritization and focus areas
 - Biologically informed thresholds for condition
 - Comments
 - Emphasis should be on western hydrology
 - Decision support tool on planning and designing habitat and passage projects
 - Concern with connectivity bias with reservoirs
 - Already have comprehensive database of all barriers in SE
 - Conduct trends analysis on high level for decision makers
- **If regionally focused assessments (Option 3) are included in the next National Fish Habitat Assessment, what specific assessments do you want to have done for your partnership?**
 - Barrier inventory - 3
 - Down to HUC 12 level
 - Metric development for habitat using remote sensing
 - Hydrology - 2
 - Hydrology including riparian assessment of surface and groundwater dynamics, risk of flow alteration and connect to connectivity.
 - Analysis of major water users and how socioeconomics measure against ecological services
 - Assessments of key variables (SLR, water quality, dredging, impervious surface, dams, etc.) on estuarine riverine bottom, SAV, tidal vegetation (mangroves and salt marshes), corals in South Florida, and oyster reefs.
 - Combine inland and coastal assessment information for fish habitat risks
 - Large river basin level assessment support
 - Cross boundary stress metrics to show transboundary mining development on AK river systems
 - Threats assessment
 - Statewide NHD+
 - Scale likely too large to be helpful.
 - None

**National Fish Habitat Assessment:
NOAA Region-based Option for the Coastal Assessment
June 23, 2017**

This document describes a region-based option that NOAA Fisheries and our fisheries management partners could potentially support (depending on the availability of funds) for the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) coastal assessment.

NOAA Fisheries' Needs for Habitat Information

The goal of this region-based option is to improve the habitat information available to support NOAA Fisheries' Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) regulatory mandate under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, support NOAA's growing commitment to Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM), and provide information needed by NFHP Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) for habitat conservation and restoration at appropriate scales.

As amended in 1997, the Magnuson-Stevens Act states that the purpose of the EFH mandate is to protect and conserve "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity." In this context, the fish referred to are in federal fishery management plans, including diadromous, coastal, and marine species. NOAA Fisheries works with the regional fishery management councils to evaluate and update EFH designations for the stocks in federal fishery management plans at five-year intervals. The Agency also needs detailed habitat information to identify Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs), which are specific areas targeted for habitat conservation, protection, or research. Although state fisheries are not subject to the EFH mandate, state agencies could benefit from the information on fish habitats used by stocks for which they have joint management responsibility. As such, they might consider working with NOAA Fisheries, the councils, and others to support a region-based coastal assessment.

NOAA Fisheries also needs habitat information at regional scales to support its growing commitment to EBFM. The EBFM Policy¹ defines EBFM "as a systematic approach to fisheries management in a geographically specified area that contributes to the resilience and sustainability of the ecosystem." The Policy articulates six guiding principles of EBFM, and the EBFM Roadmap² provides guidance under these principles for implementing the Policy. The need for more habitat information with relevant ecosystem linkages pervades the Roadmap. These needs must be met at appropriate scales to support a wide range of activities, such as developing or enhancing fishery ecosystem plans developed collaboratively with the regional fishery management councils at scales that address their fisheries.

¹ <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/op/pds/documents/01/01-120.pdf>.

² https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/ecosystems/ebfm/EBFM_Road_Map_final.pdf

Data products developed to address EFH/HAPC and EBFM could be used by the FHPs to improve the information available at regional scales to assess fish habitat. These products could also serve the needs of a redesigned national assessment. The coastal products developed for the 2010 and 2015 national assessments do not provide information that has proven useful for meeting the habitat mandates of NOAA Fisheries or our fishery management partners, so NOAA Fisheries will not provide funding or staff support for a national coastal assessment as described in the options that were presented to the NFHP Board on March 17, 2017.

A Region-based Option for the NFHP Coastal Assessment

The purpose of this option is to develop data products that are useful for improving the information available to FHPs at the regional scale and that are also useful for meeting the priorities of NOAA Fisheries and our fisheries-management partners. This option also incorporates several aspects of the national assessment options that were discussed at the March 17 NFHP Board meeting, as detailed in the Appendix.

Although not within the scope of this region-based option for the coastal assessment, partnerships could contribute region-specific information to the inland component of a national assessment to address region-specific concerns, such as those identified by partnerships in the desert southwest. This could enhance the relevance of the NFHP assessment products to partnerships as well as to state and regional fisheries scientists and managers.

NOAA Fisheries proposes the following steps to develop and implement regional work plans.

1. *Select region(s)*: NOAA Fisheries will assess priorities internally for updating EFH information, identifying HAPCs, and/or for supporting EBFM information needs. The Agency will engage with one or more fishery management councils and the FHPs in their region(s) that include coastal habitats to assess priorities, interest, and ability to collaborate for developing habitat assessment products. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has expressed interest in piloting this approach. The intent is to support development of assessment products in every region over time.
2. *Define Region-specific Product(s)*: For the region(s) identified, NOAA Fisheries will form a steering committee(s) to identify specific information needs related to the characterization of fish habitat in the region, and the scale at which this information is needed. The steering committee(s) will comprise experts from the major habitat conservation, restoration, and science partners in the region. Members should also be familiar with national habitat data needs, and may include members from the NOAA Fisheries Offices of Habitat Conservation and Science and Technology, and from the regional NOAA Fisheries science centers, the involved councils, fisheries commissions, FHPs, etc. Depending on the needs, these data products could include physical or biological habitat characteristics, stressors, or fish survey data. Based on knowledge of data resources in their region, steering committees will identify and prioritize the kinds of

information to be included in their regional assessment. To the extent possible, these products will build upon the products from the NFHP 2015 National Assessment, including the spatial framework and the existing data products.

Although this option is termed a “coastal” assessment, the spatial domain would be defined by region-specific information needs. Estuaries, coastal waters, and, if necessary, waters extending to the shelf or the EEZ, would be connected through the spatial framework to the watersheds and water bodies contained in the inland NFHP assessment. This would enable analysis of inland impacts to EFH and to estuarine-dependent and diadromous fish.

3. *Develop Regional Work Plan(s)*: The regional steering committee(s) will develop the work plan(s) for the regional assessments. The work plans will identify the participants/project teams, their responsibilities, financial commitments, timelines, and product delivery dates.
4. *Implement Regional Work Plan(s)*: The project team(s) will then carry out the work plan(s), delivering the products to the partnerships, the NFHP Science and Data Committee, NOAA Fisheries, and the other involved partners.

Resource constraints will determine how many regions can be supported, and when this support will be provided to a given region. To the extent that funds and/or staff are available, NOAA Fisheries will target providing six months of staff or contractor time or \$50,000 over the course of one year for each chosen region. Significant in-kind support or funding from partners will be required.

National Coastal Assessment

Because of our commitment to supporting regional assessment products, NOAA Fisheries will not be able to contribute funding or staff time to a national coastal assessment. This does not mean we are opposed to the development of some kind of national assessment, it simply means we are prioritizing development of regional assessment products that address our needs and the needs of our fishery management partners. We would be able to participate in an appropriate national-level steering committee for the design of a national assessment, potentially under the auspices of the NFHP Science and Data Committee. NFHP and its national assessment report could continue to be an important outreach tool at the national level, but the introduction of more specific regional information will increase the utility and value of coastal assessment products to FHPs, state and regional fisheries scientists and managers, and others.

Appendix: Comments on the coastal assessment options presented to the NFHP Board on March 17

The options described below are derived from Options 2-4 provided to the NFHP Board on March 17, 2017 (The Board decided to eliminate Option 1.). The inland components of these options are not addressed here, though NOAA Fisheries favors efforts to ensure that coastal assessment products can be used seamlessly with the inland products.

NOAA Fisheries' comments are provided in *italics* under the bullet points from the options presented to the NFHP Board on March 17.

Option 2

With Implementation of Option 2, the Assessment Project would include:

- Completed new Assessment report by the end of 2021 with new information provided to the Board and the FHPs as available.

The only national assessment report that could be supported by NOAA Fisheries is an outreach tool that provides information on the partnerships, such as a story map. NOAA Fisheries will not contribute staff or funding to the national assessment described in this option.

- Continued training workshops and how-to sessions for Board members and FHPs on the use of the “Big Data” in the National Fish Habitat Assessment in their work.

NOAA Fisheries would favor providing training for the partnerships on appropriate use of the NFHP data. This training could also be made available to staff from the fishery management councils, fisheries commissions, and NOAA Fisheries.

Coastal Assessment: Regional Fishery Management Councils would take lead with NOAA support

- Regional Fishery Management Councils would take the lead and in collaboration with affected FHPs develop the best Coastal Assessment approach using existing National Assessment information as a starting baseline. The approach would be based on Essential Fish Habitat concepts.

NOAA Fisheries believes that the councils and commissions could potentially participate in and benefit from developing regional data products relevant to meeting their EFH or EBFM needs. They manage fisheries on a regional basis, so they are more likely to support work in their region than a national assessment. Moreover, the councils and commissions are seldom able to commit substantial funds to projects that do not directly support their primary fishery management responsibilities, which are inherently in their region. Therefore, it is unlikely that councils would undertake a national assessment,

and such an effort would depend heavily on additional funding from NOAA or other sources, which is not currently available.

- Regional based analyses using comparable fish-based approaches and the same spatial framework done for all coasts and estuaries in the Lower 48.

Compiling the fish data for the 2015 Gulf of Mexico assessment required a considerable effort, because the individual state data sets are not consistent or easily combined. NOAA Fisheries could only support taking this on as a component of a regional NFHP project if requested by a council, commission, and/or NOAA Fisheries, and if the project had clear relevance to supporting EFH and/or EBFM requirements. A rough estimate of the support required to complete a coastal assessment that includes comprehensive fish data for one single region is 2-3 person years, or \$350-500K, but this level of funding is not currently available from NOAA Fisheries.

In addition, NOAA Fisheries cannot commit to using a comparable analysis approach or spatial scale for assessing fish in all coastal regions, because regional needs may differ, and the level of effort required would be cost-prohibitive.

- HI and AK coasts assessed if sufficient resources are available either from Regional Fishery Management Council or from the FHPs.

NOAA Fisheries would consider this if requested by a council, commission, and/or NOAA Fisheries, if the project had clear relevance to supporting EFH and/or EBFM requirements, and if resources were available.

- The Great Lakes Assessment is a component of the Coastal Fish Habitat Assessment if completed in time for the 2021 National Assessment.

NOAA Fisheries does not have fisheries management responsibilities in the Great Lakes, so NOAA support would have to come from other NOAA entities.

Option 3

The Assessment Project would include:

- Completed new Assessment report by the end of 2021 with new information provided to the Board and the FHPs as available.

As in Option 2, the only national assessment report that could be supported by NOAA Fisheries is an outreach tool that provides information on the partnerships, such as a story map. NOAA Fisheries will not contribute staff or funding to the national assessment described in this option.

- Continued training workshops and how-to sessions for Board members and FHPs on the use of the “Big Data” in the National Fish Habitat Assessment in their work.

As in Option 2, NOAA Fisheries would favor providing training for the partnerships on appropriate use of the NFHP data. This training could also be extended to staff from the fishery management councils, fisheries commissions, and NOAA Fisheries.

Coastal [not Marine] Assessment – Either NOAA or Regional Fishery Management Councils with NOAA support.

As in Option 2, NOAA Fisheries believes that the councils and commissions could potentially participate in developing regional data products relevant to meeting their EFH or EBFM needs. They manage fisheries on a regional basis, so they are more likely to support work in their region than a national assessment. Moreover, the councils and commissions are seldom able to commit substantial funds to projects that do not directly support their primary fishery management responsibilities, which are inherently in their region. Therefore, it is unlikely that councils would undertake a national assessment, and such an effort would depend heavily on additional funding from NOAA or other sources, which is not currently available.

- All coasts examined using a similar analytical basis/standard.

NOAA Fisheries supports a region-based approach, so will not update existing national-level data sets. In addition, NOAA Fisheries cannot commit to using a comparable analysis approach or standard for all coastal regions, because regional needs may differ.

It is not clear whether “all coasts” in this option includes AK and HI. Many key coastal data sets do not include AK and HI.

- Updated existing data layers as new national information becomes available.

NOAA Fisheries supports a region-based approach, so will not update existing national-level coastal data sets. Some key national-scale coastal data sets are not being updated by their original producers (e.g., NOAA’s Eutrophication Report).

- Increased and updated fish data.

Fish data were not included in the national 2015 coastal assessment, so this would require an extensive effort to develop a national fish data set. As in Option 2, NOAA Fisheries would only support taking this on as a component of a regional NFHP project if requested by a council, commission, and/or NOAA Fisheries, and if the project had clear relevance to supporting EFH and/or EBFM requirements.

- Updated condition analysis based on new information but no “new” data layers included in the analysis.

NOAA Fisheries will not support updating coastal information or analysis at a national level. If this bullet were to be implemented as written, the analysis would not include the fish data described in the previous bullet.

- Maintain and provide needed national information for FHPs.

Other than supporting the development of outreach materials, NOAA Fisheries will not provide funding or staff for any additional coastal work at the national level. The councils and commissions cannot be expected to support national efforts.

- FHP information integrated into the National Assessment Database and focused analysis on a selected group of variables requested by the FHPs.

NOAA Fisheries could potentially support a clear EFH- or EBFM-linked request from a council, commission, or NOAA Fisheries at a regional or FHP-specific scale.

Option 4

The Assessment Project would include:

- No new Assessment report.

At the national level, NOAA only supports development of outreach materials for NFHP. NOAA Fisheries will not provide funding or staff for any additional coastal work at the national level.

- No additional training on the existing Assessment data layers.

Assuming no new national data products, NOAA Fisheries agrees that additional training on national products would not be needed. However, if regional products are developed, training could prove necessary.

- Updated existing data layers as new national information becomes available with increased and updated fish data.

NOAA Fisheries will not provide new coastal information at the national level.

- Maintain and provide needed national information for FHPs.

NOAA Fisheries cannot maintain or provide new coastal information at a national scale. NOAA Fisheries could potentially support a clear EFH- or EBFM-linked request from a council, commission, or NOAA Fisheries to provide existing coastal information at a regional or FHP scale.

Title: Budget and Finance Committee Update

Desired Outcome:

- **Board awareness** of Multistate Conservation Grant process and timeline

Background:

The FHPs of the National Fish Habitat Partnership through the Board have applied for Multistate Grant funding through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Similar FHP Applications have been funded in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. In 2015 the FHPs agreed to apply collectively through the Board for these funds for three years. The current 2018 application is the last year of the agreement.

2018 Multistate Timeline:

- April: Preparation of Letter of Intent (LOI) application and review by participating FHPs and Partnerships Committee/Board Staff.
- May: LOI submitted to National Grants Committee
- June/July: Response expected from National Grants Committee regarding recommendation to submit a full proposal.
- August: Full proposals are due August 4 (if invited to submit).
- September: Grant submissions are voted upon for funding by National Grants Committee at AFWA Annual Meeting, September 13.
- February – April 2018 allocations are typically received.

Next Steps:

- Evaluate approach for future Multistate Grant funding at fall 2017 Board meeting.

Board Book Material:

Tab 5b Letter of Intent 2018 NFHP Final



2018 Multistate Conservation Grant Program Announcement

****Submission Deadline: 5:00pm Eastern Time on May 5th, 2017**

THE LETTER OF INTENT

(Limit – 3 pages)

Applicant Information

1. **Full Legal Name of Organization:** National Fish Habitat Board. If awarded, the grant will be administered on behalf of the National Fish Habitat Board by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 1100 First Street NE, Suite 825, Washington DC, 20002

1. **Organization Website URL:** <http://fishhabitat.org>
2. **Lead Applicant's Contact Information:**
Mr. Tom Champeau, Chief (Inland Fisheries), Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Chair, National Fish Habitat Board
c/o Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
1100 First Street NE, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002
Email: tom.champeau@myfwc.com
Phone Number: 850-556-7684

3. **Name and Affiliation of Co-Investigators(s)/Partner(s) (if applicable)**
Gary Whelan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Ryan Roberts, National Fish Habitat Board Communications Coordinator

4. **Have you applied for MSCGP funding before? (Yes)**

5. **If yes, was/were your previous proposal(s) funded? (Yes)**

6. **Date(s) of Previous Applications(s) from the most recent 3 years (if applicable) 2017, 2016, 2015**

Program Eligibility

9. **Organization Information:**
 - a. **Applicant Classification:** Nongovernmental Organization
 - b. **Nongovernmental Organization Classification:** 501(c) 6
10. **State Benefit Requirement:** a. all 50 states
11. **States Benefitted**
 - a. States
 - b. USFWS Regions
 - c. Regional Associations
12. **Primary National Conservation Need (NCN) Addressed**

NCN #14: Broadening Conservation Partnerships through the National Fish Habitat Partnership
13. **Terms and Conditions.** *Use of MSCGP Grants - All applicants must ensure that their proposed project does not fund, in whole or in part, an activity that promotes or encourages opposition to the regulated hunting or trapping of wildlife or taking of sport fish. If you accept these terms, please state "I agree with the above terms and conditions."*

Project Information

14. **Project Title: Conservation Collaboration across the U.S. through the National Fish Habitat Partnership**
15. **Project Length: (1 year) (Final year of three year application)**
16. **Funding Source.** Funding Source: _____% WR 100% SFR
17. **Funding Requested.** (MSCGP Grants are funded only for 1 year): \$209,960.00
18. **Estimate of Partnership Funds/Existing Assets to be Leveraged (if applicable)**

\$1 Million
19. **Problem and Needs to be addressed (150 words):**

Waterways, healthy habitat, and thriving fish populations are vital to the well-being of American society, providing clean water, food, and recreation. Healthy waters sustain their ecological functions and resilience while meeting the economic and social needs of society. Unfortunately, in many places around the United States, fish and the habitats on which they depend are in decline. This is a particular concern to the 48 million recreational anglers who pursue fish and too many others who depend upon fish and shellfish for sustenance and commerce. Nearly 40 percent of the nation's freshwater fish species are considered at risk or vulnerable to extinction. Through the

efforts of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, established in 2006 our 20 partnerships established regionally are collaborating on efforts to stop and reverse declines and impairment of fish habitat through voluntary, non-regulatory efforts.

20. Summary of Proposed Solution (200 words):

The National Fish Habitat Partnership brings a focused and coordinated approach to conserving, rehabilitating, and enhancing the nation's aquatic habitats under the objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. This proposal strengthens that approach by linking the oversight responsibility of the Board and the operational responsibility of the FHPs to achieve national and regional science and data driven conservation goals established by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan 2nd Edition (2012). Through collaborative projects, partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Partnership are compounding their efforts in maximizing project potential, reach and ultimately successful conservation outcomes through this project.

In general, this project will support activities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships that will help to achieve four of the objectives in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, 2nd Edition:

1. **Achieve measurable habitat conservation results** through strategic actions of Fish Habitat Partnerships that improve ecological condition, restore natural processes, or prevent the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions and increased fishing opportunities.
2. **Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation** by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of local communities.
3. **Fill gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment**
4. **Communicate the conservation outcomes**

21. Implementation, Outreach and Communication of the results: (100 words)

The partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Partnership are experienced in collaborating on specific projects that meet common goals and have successfully received funding, disseminated results and promoted conservation outcomes to lawmakers, state and federal agencies and the National Fish Habitat Board in previous years. This proposal is an effort to continue this critical work through funding unmet needs of partnerships and fulfill their intent of maximizing the reach of federal funding in project collaboration. The partnerships involved in this proposal have established strong networks of communication and outreach to help spread the message of conservation success implemented through the MSCG program.

Budget

ATTACHMENT 1 – Sample Budget:

The Grants Committee is only considering funding for 2018 activities at this time.

*P.F: Partnership Funds – projects are not required to provide partnership funds for the multistate conservation grant program, however higher consideration is given to P.F when 2 or more projects score the same.

Budget Reflects indirect cost rate of 20%

	Fish Habitat Partnerships	MSCGP	P.F.*	Total
AFWA	Program Support	\$24,000.00		\$24,000.00
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Coastal FHP, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership	\$36,000.00		\$36,000.00
Western U.S.	Desert FHP Western Native Trout Initiative	\$18,000.00		\$18,000.00
Midwest U.S.	Driftless Area Restoration Effort	\$16,000.00		\$16,000.00
Great Lakes	Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership	\$18,000.00		\$18,000.00
U.S.	Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership	\$20,000.00		\$20,000.00
California	California Fish Passage Forum Western Native Trout Initiative	\$16,000.00		\$16,000.00
Hawaii	Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership	\$16,000.00		\$16,000.00
Pacific NW	Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership	\$12,800.00		\$12,800.00

Budget Breakdown

Total request = \$209,960.00

Travel	12,000.00
Supplies	12,000.00
Contract	152,800.00
Total	176,800.00
Indirect	33,160.00
Grand Total	209,960.00



National Fish Habitat Partnership
1100 First Street, NE, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002
Tel: 202/838-3474 ♦ F: 202/350-9869
Web www.fishhabitat.org

June 15, 2017

Dan Shively
USDA Forest Service
Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air & Rare Plants
201 14th Street SW, Yates Bldg., 3 SC
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Dan:

On behalf of the National Fish Habitat Board, thank you for the opportunity to review the Forest Services' National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy. It is a thoughtful, well-articulated plan and we commend the Service's emphasis on partnerships in stewarding the nation's aquatic resources and its commitment to fish habitat conservation in national forests, grasslands, and beyond. In addition, we applaud your goal of better connecting the American people to the aquatic world through recreational fishing. As a partnership of Federal, tribal, state, local, non-government, and other entities, we see many opportunities to provide mutual support to achieve these shared priorities.

We encourage the Service to use the National Fish Habitat Board and individual Fish Habitat Partnerships to help guide and achieve the goals of its Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy. And as a state-led Partnership, we would also like to highlight the importance of coordinating with state fish and wildlife agencies and their distinctive statutory authorities, particularly when it comes to identifying conservation areas or establishing fishery management policy. In the attached document we have identified areas in the strategy where these and other ideas can be further clarified or emphasized.

We appreciate the Forest Service's participation in the National Fish Habitat Partnership and look forward to working together towards protecting, restoring, and enhancing the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Champeau".

Tom Champeau, Chair
National Fish Habitat Board

DRAFT VERSION DATE: MAY 5, 2017

REVIEW DRAFT

**USDA FOREST SERVICE
NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY**

Note to Reviewers: Please provide your comments by June 30, 2017 to:

Dan Shively, dshively@fs.fed.us (202-205-0951) or

John Rothlisberger, jrothlisberger@fs.fed.us (202-365-4062)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. CHIEF’S STATEMENT..... iii

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

III. INTRODUCTION.....1

 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY1

 PURPOSE AND PROCESS2

IV. OVERVIEW OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC ECOLOGY IN THE USDA FOREST SERVICE.....3

 FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES ON NATIONAL FORESTS3

 FISH AND AQUATIC ECOLOGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT3

 STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION4

 CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES5

V. STRATEGIC GOALS5

 GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND RESTORE FISH AND AQUATIC RESOURCES5

 GOAL 2: CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE AQUATIC WORLD THROUGH FISHING, BOATING, AND OTHER WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES8

 GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND WORK ACROSS BOUNDARIES9

 GOAL 4: DELIVER AND APPLY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH11

 GOAL 5: BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH MENTORING AND TRAINING13

 GOAL 6: COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF OUR WORK14

VI. ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY WITH THE FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN15

VII. HIGH-PRIORITY ACTIONS AND MEASURING PROGRESS.....16

 HIGH-PRIORITY ACTIONS16

 STEERING COMMITTEE17

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS17

APPENDIX A. CORRELATION OF NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY GOALS WITH AGENCY GOALS19

APPENDIX B. CONTRIBUTORS21

Commented [NFHP1]: It was very nice to see such a strong NFHP presence in this USFS effort – TNC, AFWA, ASA, AFS

I. CHIEF'S STATEMENT

[STATEMENT TO BE INSERTED HERE]

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Forest Service is a leading conservation agency and plays a key role in the stewardship of the Nation's water resources and aquatic habitats. The national forests and grasslands contain some of the Nation's healthiest, most intact aquatic ecosystems, providing important strongholds that contribute to sustaining the Nation's fish and aquatic resources. The agency's work extends beyond the national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service works with state fish and wildlife agencies and other partners to protect and sustain ~~all~~-forested lands nationwide and to safeguard water quality as well as fish and aquatic resources. Forest Service research stations and facilities conduct cutting-edge science on fish and aquatic ecology with broad application and utility across the country and around the world.

The Forest Service's National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy updates the agency's Rise to the Future Action Plan for the 90s and marks the 30-year anniversary of Rise to the Future, which brought about increased agency and partner awareness and support for the conservation of fish and aquatic resources. This updated strategy was prepared by a large team with representatives across mission areas at all levels of the agency and from several key partner organizations. The updated strategy tiers to the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY2015–FY2020, helping the agency meet its goals for the conservation, protection, and restoration of fish and aquatic resources and abundant clean water. The Forest Service worked in partnership ~~with others and in cooperation~~ with state fish and wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies, and tribal governments to update the strategy. The success of this strategy will depend largely on working with partners and cooperating with state fish and wildlife agencies, tribal governments, and other Federal agencies that play key roles in the conservation of fish and aquatic resources.

The National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy contains six goals: (1) to conserve and restore fish and aquatic resources; (2) to connect people to the aquatic world through fishing, boating, and other water-based activities; (3) to strengthen partnerships and work across boundaries; (4) to deliver and apply scientific research; (5) to build capacity through mentoring and training; and (6) to communicate the value of Forest Service fish and aquatic stewardship.

Each goal contains multiple objectives, laying a long-term strategic foundation for rising to current and future challenges, including invasive species; impacts from drought, floods, and other extreme weather events; and limited resources. The goals and objectives will also help the Forest Service take advantage of such opportunities as emerging research technologies and innovative and nontraditional partnerships.

The strategy names eight specific actions as near term priorities to work on with our partners:

1. Develop a coarse-scale national assessment of aquatic biodiversity on National Forests and Grasslands by 2020.

Commented [NFHP2]: Consider adding an action to create a diversity joint venture to increase diversity in aquatic work places (under Goal 5).

2. Cooperate with States, NFHP, and other partners to develop criteria for identifying conservation watersheds for fish and aquatic species on national forests and grasslands. Select conservation watersheds by 2019. Update the list as needed.
3. Collaborate with state fish and wildlife agencies and partners to identify priority locations for recreational fishing access improvements that will yield the greatest increase in fishing participation by 2019.
4. Increase the number of youth connecting to the outdoors through recreational fishing and other water-based activities by 20 percent by 2023.
5. Increase partnerships with States, tribal governments, water providers, corporations, and multi-stakeholder groups that result in meaningful conservation outcomes with multiple benefits by 20 percent by 2023.
6. Conduct and distribute a national fish and aquatic ecology research needs assessment by 2019.
7. Develop business practices and protocols for effective mentoring of fisheries biologists and aquatic ecologists by 2018.
8. Work with communications and marketing experts to develop and implement a communications and outreach plan by 2018.

Commented [NFHP3]: Consider a more aggressive timeline.

Commented [NFHP4]: Suggest increasing to 50%. See specific comments on Page 9

Commented [NFHP5]: How will increase in partnerships be measured?

Commented [NFHP6]: Suggest pushing this date to sometime after 2019 given some of the above referenced action items aren't completed until 2019 or later.

III. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The Forest Service, founded more than 100 years ago, is a lead Federal agency in natural resources conservation. We oversee the protection, management, use, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources on over 193 million acres of forests and grasslands. This large area, known as the National Forest System, is composed of 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands from New England to Florida and from Alaska to California.

The Forest Service has a rich history characterized, in part, by the protection of water resources. Congress sought to create, manage, protect, and care for the Nation's forest reserves by passing the Organic Administration Act in 1897, followed by creation of the Forest Service in 1905. Forest reserves were created "to improve and protect the forest within the reservation, or for securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States." In 1905, the forest reserves became the national forests and grasslands. Gifford Pinchot, who served as the first Chief of the Forest Service, stated that "where conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

The Forest Service seeks to balance the delivery of drinking water from the National Forest System (which about 20 percent of all Americans depend on) with the provision of sustainable timber, fish and wildlife, oil and gas, mining, and grazing activities as well as an immense and growing outdoor recreation industry. The Forest Service is charged with sustainably managing all these resources and uses while also providing for healthy aquatic habitats that support sustainable fish and aquatic resources. The national forests and grasslands contain some of the Nation's healthiest intact aquatic ecosystems, which serve an important role in sustaining the Nation's fish and aquatic resources.

The Forest Service's role extends well beyond the borders of the national forests and grasslands. The work of our State and Private Forestry mission area is vital to ensuring the health of all forested lands and safeguarding water quality as well as fish and aquatic resources. Together with partners, we improve the lives of people in local communities, rural and urban, through our work with State, local, and tribal governments. At our research stations and facilities, we conduct cutting-edge research on fish and aquatic ecology. Our research has broad application and utility across the country and around the world.

The Forest Service's focus on the stewardship of fish and aquatic resources sharpened in 1985 when the American Fisheries Society was invited to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the agency's Fisheries Program in meeting current and projected resource needs and user demands.

Forest Service Mission: The Forest Service is different from many Federal agencies in that it is guided by a principle of sustainable multiple use and has an eloquent and progressive mission: "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

Forest Service Motto:
Caring for the Land and
Serving People

The evaluation pinpointed opportunities for improvement. It also led to the formation of a national task force commissioned by the Chief to develop a strategy for improving fisheries habitat on the national forests and grasslands. Led by Alaska Regional Forester Mike Barton, the task force laid the foundations for the Rise to the Future Fisheries Program and Action Plan put in place by Chief Dale Robertson in March 1987, the first nationwide fisheries strategy by a Federal agency. The Forest Service worked with a broad base of partners to improve the quality of aquatic habitat on the national forests and grasslands and increase recreational fishing as well as other use and public enjoyment of fish and aquatic resources.

In 1988, the Forest Service partnered with the Sport Fishing Institute to emphasize recreational fishing. By early 1990, the Bureau of Land Management joined the Forest Service in signing a Recreational Fishing Policy to strengthen programs and partnerships for managing recreational fishing across almost half a billion acres of federally managed lands. In 1991, the Forest Service strengthened protections for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, putting the agency at the forefront of conserving aquatic resources. In April 1991, the early Rise to the Future program matured into Rise to the Future: Action Plan for the '90s, a comprehensive framework for fish habitat management and fish and aquatic ecology research.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy replaces the Rise to the Future: Action Plan for the '90s as the Forest Service's articulation of its commitment to and role in stewardship of fish and aquatic resources. The National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy builds on 3 decades of experience with Rise to the Future. The Forest Service needs a new strategy now because there have been important social, economic, ecological, and scientific developments in the past 30 years. This updated strategy seeks to align actions and programs related to fish and aquatic stewardship in all parts of the agency. Revising the strategy is also intended to make it more relevant and useful to the agency's contemporary and future partners and cooperators. Increased alignment and relevancy will allow the Forest Service to take advantage of new opportunities. Opportunities today include a growing emphasis on integrated program delivery and an agency-wide shift to watershed-scale restoration through watershed partnerships.

In 2016, the agency formed a national team with representation across mission and program areas and at every level of the organization. A core team offered oversight and guidance, while an extended core team performed reviews and gave input. Six working groups, one for each of the six strategic goals, fleshed out the goals and accompanying objectives. Key partners offered input and feedback along the way. To respond to the issues, concerns, and needs of state and tribal governments, the Forest Service solicited their input and feedback through meetings and Webinars.

Commented [NFHP7]: On page 14, Objective C.iii, Rise to the Future is specifically mentioned as part of the actions, which is confusing after reading here that Rise to the Future is being replaced. Suggest clarifying.

IV. OVERVIEW OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC ECOLOGY IN THE FOREST SERVICE

FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES ON THE NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

The Forest Service manages a large, diverse area that contains a rich array of fish and aquatic resources, including over 220,000 miles of fishable streams and rivers and more than 10 million acres of fishable lakes and reservoirs. Because the National Forest System has some of the highest quality waters and aquatic habitat in America, the Forest Service manages habitat for 60 percent of the fish listed under the Endangered Species Act and 80 percent of the listed freshwater mussels and clams. We manage some of the best—sometimes some of the only—remaining habitat for many fish and other aquatic species with high conservation and cultural value. We strive for multiple use, but certain aquatic resources warrant special recognition, protection, resources, and attention, including research and long-term monitoring, given their scarcity at a landscape scale and increasing threats over time.

The fish and other aquatic species and the habitat where they thrive hold tremendous value. National Forest System lands and waters sustain diverse and growing recreational economies, including activities that depend on clean water, healthy watersheds, and healthy streams, rivers, and lakes. Such activities include fishing, boating, swimming, wildlife watching, camping, photography, and more. In Alaska, the national forests support a world-renowned, billion-dollar commercial salmon industry, as well as culturally important subsistence fisheries for Alaska Native communities.

Recreational fishing, a gateway outdoor recreational activity, introduces many Americans to the outdoors and their public lands. Millions of people go fishing on the National Forest System, a time-honored tradition with a strong constituency. Fishing on public lands connects people to the natural world, fostering current and future generations of citizen stewards. Recreational fishing on the national forests and grasslands supports more than \$2.2 billion of economic activity each year nationwide and contributes revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies through license sales and the excise taxes levied on fishing and boating equipment and fuel. These revenues help sustain state fish and wildlife agency operations, funding their important work on public access, fisheries management, and habitat restoration.

The fish and waters on the national forests and grasslands are important sources of economic value and also of local pride and cultural value. Clean, healthy waters are a natural draw for people, bestowing physical and emotional benefits. These special places and the many rare and important species they support deserve special focus, protection, and sustained commitment to ensure that future generations will enjoy them too.

FISH AND AQUATIC ECOLOGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Forest Service's Research and Development is the world's largest forest research organization. Its mission is to develop the knowledge and technology needed to improve the health and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands and to share science and

technology across the Nation and around the world. We employ more than 500 scientists working in 77 field laboratories in the United States and Puerto Rico. They conduct research on 80 experimental forests and ranges and 370 research natural areas, as well as on sites outside the National Forest System through over 1,000 cooperative research agreements with partners. Forest Service researchers offer scientific information and analysis to help land managers and policymakers make well-informed decisions and to anticipate emerging natural resource issues, both nationally and internationally.

Our Fish and Aquatic Ecology Research Program generates knowledge and tools to improve policy initiatives and management decisions affecting fish and other aquatic species and their habitats. Our scientists in disciplines such as fish biology, genetics, and hydrology conduct basic and applied research on aquatic species and ecosystems. We study the effectiveness of management and restoration actions in achieving conservation outcomes, and we characterize and evaluate emerging threats to aquatic ecosystems, including invasive species and drought. We also develop cost-saving protocols for inventorying and monitoring fish populations and habitats. Our science helps improve strategies for meeting growing demands for water, energy, and other forest-based commodities while ensuring the sustainability and diversity of aquatic species.

The Forest Service has a strong track record of developing and applying innovative methods for studying fisheries and aquatic ecosystems at large geographic scales and over long periods of time. Agency scientists have gained crucial insights into the roles played by watershed integrity, natural disturbance regimes, habitat complexity and connectivity, and gene flow in the long-term viability of aquatic species. In recent years, our researchers have created user-friendly systems to organize and analyze information about native fish habitat and associated watershed characteristics to improve the cost-effectiveness of investments in stewardship of fish and aquatic resources. We share our findings through publications, workshops, Webinars, and decision support tools. We work with partners in Federal, State, and tribal agencies; universities; nongovernmental organizations; and international organizations. This strategy provides the framework needed to ensure we will continue to develop new science and technology for better management decisions and conservation practices affecting aquatic species.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION

Cooperative Forestry, part of the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry mission area, works through State agencies and other partners to protect and sustain the Nation's forest resources. Programs like Forest Legacy, Forest Stewardship, and Urban and Community Forestry work in partnership with state and local governments and nonprofit organizations to give communities and family woodland owners financial and technical assistance to maintain resilient, healthy forests. Our State and Private Forestry programs and partners collaborate with the national forests and grasslands for seamless conservation, including aquatic conservation, across the country. Working with our partners and private landowners, for example, the Forest Legacy Program has conserved more than 170,000 acres of waterbodies and more than 3,300 miles of streams.

Over 130 million acres of urban and community forests benefit the 83 percent of all Americans who live in cities and towns. Over two-thirds of the Nation's forests are in non-Federal ownership. These 445 million acres of forests are owned and managed by private individuals and businesses, tribal governments, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Urban and other non-Federal forests yield numerous public benefits, including protecting streams and rivers, intercepting stormwater and reducing pollutant runoff, enhancing fish and aquatic habitat, providing clean and abundant water, and furnishing numerous recreational opportunities.

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Nation is undergoing vast ecological and socioeconomic change, partly due to a confluence of stressors, including large wildfires, outbreaks of insects and disease, invasive species, and increased drought and flooding. Despite these challenges and although impacts from historical mining, timber, grazing, and development often require ecosystem restoration across large landscapes, many aquatic habitats on the National Forest System are pristine or of high quality. Meanwhile, demand is growing for the many aquatic resources and services that people get from watersheds on the Nation's forests and grasslands, including water that is clean, abundant, and cold enough to support habitat for native aquatic species. As the country changes and grows, the Forest Service and its [state and other](#) partners will continue to sustain and restore fish and wildlife habitat, recreational infrastructure, water supply and quality, and healthy watersheds by using the best available science to integrate aquatic conservation into land management. Restoring watershed health and function is critical to sustaining the clean and reliable water supplies and the fish and aquatic resources that communities value, use, and appreciate.

Accordingly, the Forest Service is accelerating the pace of restoration and creating more jobs on the national forests and grasslands. To do so, we are investing in partnerships [with state fish and wildlife agencies and other organizations](#), bringing people together to achieve shared objectives. We are working with traditional and new partners across landownerships to serve local communities and the American public. Our partners contribute millions of dollars and tens of thousands of volunteer hours annually to ecosystem restoration projects on the National Forest System, and they can play an even larger role into the future. Our focus on restoring fish populations, water quality, and natural processes feeds a growing restoration economy that employs local contractors, workers, engineers, and natural resource professionals [from diverse backgrounds](#).

Commented [NFHP8]: This may be true but it is a reactive, costly alternative to more careful conservation. Consider protecting valued resources in addition to restoring degraded habitats or fish populations. It may be better financially and ecologically for the USFS to "focus on 'conserving' fish . . .to feed a growing 'conservation' economy."

V. STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND RESTORE FISH AND AQUATIC RESOURCES

Sustaining the health and diversity of native fish, other aquatic species, and their habitats is part of the Forest Service's mission. To achieve our goals, we will protect, conserve, and restore watersheds and aquatic ecosystems upon which populations of native fish and other aquatic species depend. Our strategies and actions are designed to help aquatic species and ecosystems adapt to multiple stressors, including drought, floods, invasive species, and disease.

We will work with state fish and wildlife agencies and other partners ~~will~~ to identify watersheds important for the conservation of native fishes and other aquatic species and their habitat. ~~These~~ By ensuring these “conservation watersheds” will be aligned with state plans and policies, this collaborative approach will help managers strategically plan and prioritize activities for the greatest ecological, social, and economic benefits. The designation of conservation watersheds will complement the classification of high-priority watersheds under the Watershed Condition Framework. Through the Watershed Condition Framework, developed in 2011, the Forest Service classified watershed conditions and works with partners to protect and maintain functioning watersheds and to restore degraded watersheds on National Forest System lands. This effort can benefit from similar activities such as the National Fish Habitat Partnership’s (NFHP) assessment program that can help to identify priorities watersheds for protection and restoration. Similarly, listing conservation watersheds is intended to protect and maintain the most intact aquatic systems as well as restore degraded watersheds of high importance. These areas often include or overlap with ecosystems that depend on ground water, and they provide abundant clean water in addition to high aquatic biodiversity.



Many native fish and aquatic species are indicators of excellent water quality and depend on clean, abundant water flowing on and from the national forests and grasslands.

Source: <https://digitalmedia.fws.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/natdilib/id/7908/rec/75>

Conservation watersheds will protect both common and rare species and habitats as well as natural processes at multiple scales (forestwide, regionwide, and nationwide), helping the Forest Service build a network of healthy, functioning watersheds. Conservation watersheds represent a strategic, long-term approach to working with partners to improve aquatic conditions on and off the National Forest System. In cooperation with States, other Federal agencies, and tribal governments, we will monitor the populations of native fish and other aquatic species, along with their habitats. Knowledge gained from monitoring will help us better understand the complex and ever-changing ecosystems we manage as well as evaluate approaches and formulate new strategies for sustaining and restoring them.

LONG-TERM VISION

Watersheds and aquatic ecosystems across the national forests and grasslands are in a healthy condition characterized by complex, interconnected, and diverse habitats. They contain self-sustaining assemblages of native fish and aquatic species and have a high level of resilience in the face of multiple stressors, including natural disturbances.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Evaluate the current status and diversity of populations of native fish and other aquatic species and their habitats on National Forest System lands in cooperation with states and other partners.

- i. Develop a coarse-scale national assessment of aquatic biodiversity on the national forests and grasslands by 2020, including identification of important native fish and other aquatic species, their conservation status and trends, and critical information gaps using available data and assessments from state fish and wildlife agencies, tribal governments, Federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. Update the assessment every 10 years.
- ii. Encourage development and updates of regional assessments of aquatic ecosystems on the national forests and grasslands that tier to the national assessment and contribute to forest plan revision and subsequent monitoring.
- iii. Encourage development and updates of finer scale assessments of aquatic ecosystems on the national forests and grasslands that contribute to forest plan revision and subsequent monitoring.

Objective B: Identify conservation watersheds to help the Forest Service strategically focus on protecting, conserving, and restoring the populations of native fish and other aquatic species.

- i. Cooperate with States and other partners including NFHP Fish Habitat Partnerships to develop criteria for identifying conservation watersheds on the National Forest System aligned with state plans, priorities, and outcomes. Select conservation watersheds by 2019 ~~and~~ ~~U~~update the list as needed.
- ii. Help ~~partners~~ States as requested identify other important areas off the National Forest System for protection, conservation, and restoration of the populations of native fish and other aquatic species.
- iii. Develop regional assessments of vulnerability of fish and aquatic resources on National Forest System lands to extreme weather events. The assessments should specify high-priority management actions in conservation watersheds.

Commented [NFHP9]: Recommend that the strategy reflect the distinction between the roles and authorities of states (and any other entities with statutory authority) and those of other partners when it comes to identifying conservation watersheds or establishing fishery management policy or actions.

Objective C: Participate in and contribute to developing and updating protection, conservation, and restoration plans.

- i. Participate in the development, updates, and reviews of conservation strategies and recovery plans for at-risk fish and other aquatic species (for example, National Fish Habitat Partnership plans, State-led and tribally led plans).
- ii. Incorporate measures from established protection, conservation, and restoration plans (that is, the Northwest Forest Plan, the Sierra Nevada Framework, PACFISH, and INFISH) into existing or new Forest Service strategies and into forest plan revisions. Refer to established protection, conservation, and restoration plans when selecting conservation watersheds.

Commented [NFHP10]: Agree!

Objective D: Carry out strategic protection, conservation, and restoration actions and demonstrate beneficial outcomes for native fish and aquatic communities.

- i. Perform watershed- and site-specific protection, conservation, and restoration activities based on watershed and threat assessments. Work in an integrated, interdisciplinary manner in collaboration with partners.

- ii. Plan and carry out road-related restoration activities, including best management practices and monitoring, to reduce risks and damage to aquatic resources, protect transportation infrastructure, and ensure safe access for communities.
- iii. Work with the ranching community and encourage new partnerships for working-lands solutions that improve riparian and aquatic habitats and coordinate through the National Fish Habitat Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships to find leverage.
- iv. Limit and reduce the impacts of invasive species on the Nation's fish and aquatic resources by implementing best management practices, including decontamination of boats and gear, and support public outreach and education to prevent the spread of invasive species. Work closely with States and participate in multipartner monitoring and surveillance programs to detect new invasions and to rapidly respond and coordinate through the National Fish Habitat Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships to find leverage.
- v. Track restoration actions and associated performance outcomes using official databases.

Objective E: Monitor populations of native fish and other aquatic species, along with their habitats.

- i. Monitor and assess populations of native fish and other aquatic species at multiple scales as well as habitat conditions over time. Coordinate monitoring and assessment with States, other Federal agencies, tribal governments, and nongovernmental organizations.
- ii. Monitor the effectiveness of management actions and apply the results to adapt and change management practices and strategies where needed (such as forest plans).
- iii. Support and expand a network of long-term monitoring sites, including sentinel and reference watersheds, to track watershed and aquatic habitat conditions over time.

GOAL 2: CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE AQUATIC WORLD THROUGH FISHING, BOATING, AND OTHER WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

Fishing, boating, and other water-based activities afford economic, social, and cultural benefits. The Forest Service will enhance recreational fishing and water-based recreational activities on National Forest System lands across America through access, facilities, and programs that connect people in urban, rural, and underserved communities with the outdoors. Personal and cultural awareness of and appreciation for the beauty and value of nature build public support for public lands and their stewardship. Through increased public recognition of the value of healthy, sustainable fisheries and aquatic resources, we will engage more people in the conservation of natural resources.



Healthy watersheds and clean water on national forests and grasslands improve opportunities for people to explore and enjoy the aquatic world.

Source:
<https://digitalmedia.fws.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/natdglb/id/9941/rec/35>

LONG-TERM VISION

Everyone has opportunities to enjoy fishing and other water-based activities on the National Forest System, including youth and others with

limited access to the outdoors. The next generation of natural resource stewards understands and appreciates the value of public lands and waters and the benefits of clean water, water-based recreation, and healthy aquatic environments.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Increase recreational fishing and fishing opportunities on the national forests and grasslands.

- i. Maintain, improve, and expand public access for recreational fishing on the national forests and grasslands. Collaborate with state fish and wildlife agencies and partners to find high-priority locations for improvements that will yield the greatest increase in participation.
- ii. Collaborate with anglers, state fish and wildlife agencies, and partners to identify the social, cultural, and economic barriers to recreational fishing (for example, accessibility, transportation, prior experience, and language) and to seek remedies.
- iii. Support and expand partnerships locally, regionally, and nationally to increase recreational fishing, including coordination with state fish and wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies, tribal governments, and nongovernmental organizations.
- iv. Introduce youth to recreational fishing through activities such as kids' fishing events and educational campaigns in partnership with state fish and wildlife agencies, corporations, and other partners. Host 20 percent more events in each region in 2023 than in 2016. (In fiscal year 2016, a total of 96 youth fishing events reaching 23,200 people were reported by Forest Service units and regions.)
- v. Inform the public about the sustainable use of recreational fisheries, and fishing and boating safety.

Objective B: Connect people to the outdoors, public lands, and the Forest Service through water-oriented recreation, stewardship, citizen science, and educational activities across America.

- i. Work with partners to support volunteer opportunities for youth and adults to engage in citizen science, aquatic restoration, and educational programs and projects.
- ii. Work with the Forest Service's Conservation Education and NatureWatch programs and agency partners to help people learn about relationships among forests, watersheds, water, fish, and aquatic health (for example, through freshwater snorkeling, educational programs, and youth art contests).
- iii. Educate the public about conservation ethics through programs and workshops with partners.

Objective C: Increase public interest in recreational fishing, boating, and other water-based activities.

- i. Partner with state fish and wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies, and nongovernmental partners to promote recreational fishing and water-based activities on the national forests and grasslands.
- ii. Endorse and contribute to State recreational fishing programs, including those targeting sustainable native fisheries (such as Utah's Cutthroat Trout Slam and Florida's Trophy Catch).

Commented [NFHP11]: What metrics will be used to evaluate progress towards attaining this objective?

Commented [NFHP12]: Will additional resources be allocated to implement the improvements once they've been identified?

Commented [NFHP13]: Commendable, but highly ambitious – suggest providing more specificity for how this will be accomplished and how progress will be measured.

Commented [NFHP14]: Consider adding a statement to reflect support (financial or other) of efforts to evaluate and prioritize recruitment efforts.

Commented [NFHP15]: Suggest increasing to 50% more events over the same time period, bringing the total to 145 events.

Commented [NFHP16]: Recommend identifying metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of actions identified.

- iii. Document and communicate the economic and social value of recreational fishing and water-based recreational activities.
- iv. Use apps and other digital user platforms to share information about fishing access, opportunities, and regulations (for example, through “Discovery Agents” and “Discover the Forests”). Encourage the use of digital tools and platforms during events such as National Fishing and Boating Week, Public Lands Day, and Get Outdoors Day.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND WORK ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Tribal and state governments and our Federal and nongovernmental partners are critical to the Forest Service’s ability to achieve our strategic goals. Partners support Forest Service work by lending credibility and sharing resources. Partners help us achieve our objectives for collaborative conservation across multiple landownerships. We will expand and refine our partnership network and work to achieve shared objectives across jurisdictional boundaries and multiple landownerships.

LONG-TERM VISION

Partners support and lend credibility to the Forest Service’s science and management pertaining to fish and aquatic conservation. They play an essential role in achieving desired outcomes across multiple landownerships. Partnerships yield a wide range of benefits and are essential to meeting our strategic goals. We have a large and diverse partnership portfolio and are a partner of choice for large public-private ecosystem restoration and education outreach projects.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Work with tribal governments to form stronger and more effective relationships.

- i. Support subsistence use and fulfill treaty obligations, in cooperation with relevant State and Federal partners.
- ii. Incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into planning and design of restoration and management projects, as well as into monitoring and research, and recreational use of fish and aquatic resources, in cooperation with relevant State and Federal partners.
- iii. Improve working relationships, partnerships, and collaboration with tribal governments in areas of mutual interest related to fish and aquatic resources.

Objective B: Work with State governments to form stronger and more effective working relationships.

- i. Improve working relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with State fish and wildlife agencies to discuss and address areas of mutual interest related to fish and aquatic habitat, including continued annual fish enhancement/stocking to bolster fish populations for public recreational use and enjoyment on National forests and grasslands.
- ii. Leverage the expertise and resources of State fish and wildlife agencies and of the Forest Service to achieve mutual goals for the Nation’s forests and grasslands, including sustainable fisheries, increased participation in recreational fishing, and improved boating and fishing access.

Objective C: Expand collaborative efforts to achieve multiple benefits with all of our partners.

- i. Engage in partnerships and initiatives for collaborative conservation of fish and aquatic resources, including the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, Watershed Condition Framework, Joint Chiefs' Initiative, and National Fish Habitat Partnership.
- ii. Partner with other Federal agencies, state and tribal governments, and local, regional, and national nongovernmental organizations in areas of shared interest, such as youth education, citizen science, recreational fishing, invasive species management, scientific research, and training.
- iii. Pursue partnerships that integrate objectives for restoring and protecting terrestrial and aquatic natural communities.

Commented [NFHP17]: Agree!

Objective D: Create strong and effective partnerships through durable and long-lasting relationships and improved business practices.

- i. Invest in establishing and maintaining strong relationships with state fish and wildlife agencies and other partners to develop a clear understanding of their unique perspectives as well as of mutual interests, strengths, and assets.
- ii. Establish and update formal agreements that specify mutual benefits, clear expectations, and deliverables for all parties involved.
- iii. Promote the use of multiple authorities for ecosystem and aquatic restoration (such as Stewardship Contracting, Good Neighbor, and Wyden Amendment authorities).

Objective E: Increase partnerships with water providers, corporations, and multistakeholder groups that result in expansive conservation outcomes with multiple benefits.

- i. Recognize and encourage successful partnerships to help keep them going.
- ii. Working with Forest Service researchers and partners, quantify the benefits of and the return on investments in ecosystem restoration projects on the national forests and grasslands.
- iii. Use the best available science to locate the best opportunities for large-scale investments in restoring aquatic and terrestrial communities while also yielding social and cultural benefits.

GOAL 4: DELIVER AND APPLY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Science-based decisionmaking is critical to stewardship of fish and aquatic resources. The Forest Service produces and relies on high-quality science to help formulate strategies and actions to conserve fish and aquatic species. We contribute to and support scientific progress in fisheries and aquatic ecology by ensuring data consistency and quality and by sharing knowledge both internally and externally. Forest Service employees support the conservation of fish and aquatic resources by applying science and technology, building research partnerships, and creating and maintaining reliable databases.

Our scientists and natural resource managers will work together and with partners to formulate and investigate the highest priority research questions related to fisheries and aquatic ecology. Our researchers will advance the science of aquatic ecology and produce impartial and reliable data, analyses, and syntheses that managers and decisionmakers can use at local, state, regional, national, and international levels. We will communicate the value of research, align research

priorities in fish and aquatic ecology with management needs, and apply the best available science to guide policy and management decisions. The agency will work with partners such as the American Fisheries Society to use peer-reviewed scientific journals to share research results with the broader fisheries community.

LONG-TERM VISION

The Forest Service excels in science and science-based management of aquatic resources. Forest Service scientists collaborate with managers across the agency, as well as with State and other Federal agencies, academia, and other stakeholders. Our research is reliable, advances scientific understanding of aquatic ecosystems, and helps decisionmakers. Our national, publicly accessible databases document the status and trends of aquatic species and habitats across the national forests and grasslands. The public, other agencies, and Congress are well informed about the status of fish and aquatic resources and the importance of public lands for their conservation.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Prioritize research projects on fish and aquatic ecology needed to sustain the health and diversity of aquatic life on the Nation's forests and grasslands.

- i. Conduct and distribute a national fish and aquatic ecology research needs assessment every 5 years. Include fish and watershed professionals and stakeholders from both inside and outside the agency (e.g. members of the NFHP Science and Data Committee) in the assessment.
- ii. Develop and apply methods and protocols to meet inventory and monitoring requirements related to fish and aquatic resources at multiple levels.

Objective B: Produce, support, and synthesize the science related to the conservation of fish and aquatic resources needed to sustain the health and diversity of aquatic life in the Nation's forests and grasslands.

- i. Encourage partnerships and secure resources to meet the needs in the national assessment of science needs related to conserving fish and aquatic resources.
- ii. Encourage the formation of high-performance groups of researchers, managers, and partners with complementary expertise and supported by professional staff with necessary technical skills (that is, in relational databases, geospatial databases, Web design, and technology transfer).
- iii. Motivate researchers and managers to work together on high-priority research projects related to the conservation of fish and aquatic resources.

Objective C: Use Forest Service science to help managers achieve desired outcomes related to fish and other aquatic resources.

- i. Link research activities to management needs. Establish mechanisms for staff on the national forests and grasslands and for other management partners to engage our scientists in meeting their research needs.
- ii. To encourage collaboration, hold regular meetings across mission areas (National Forest System, Research and Development, and State and Private Forestry) and program areas (such as fisheries, watersheds, soils, range ecology, and forest management). Establish other regular channels of communication among scientists and managers. Consider using

regular meetings of groups like the American Fisheries Society to maximize communication efforts.

iii. Maintain and expand the Forest Service's ability to share knowledge internally and externally through innovative approaches to technology transfer.

iii-iv. Work with partners, including NFHP and FHPs, to deliver science and results such as through journals and mailing lists.

Objective D: Improve practices for data collection and stewardship to increase transparency and opportunities for partnerships inside and outside the Forest Service.

- i. In cooperation with state fish and wildlife agencies, tribal governments, and Federal agencies, develop and use nationally standardized protocols to collect, report, manage, and share data about fish and aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands. Build on the Forest Service's capacity to collect and analyze large datasets from various partners and across diverse landscapes
- ii. Streamline and improve monitoring programs and databases to increase the knowledge gained from monitoring data and to improve the usage, interoperability, stewardship, and accessibility of data.
- iii. Create database task force teams to work with the national forests and grasslands and partners to compile, organize, and integrate large legacy datasets and new datasets to address issues related to the protection and conservation of fish and aquatic resources at broad scales.

GOAL 5: BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH MENTORING AND TRAINING

Competent, motivated, and well-networked professionals and technicians are essential to successful aquatic resource management. The Forest Service gives employees training and opportunities to effectively manage aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands and to advance science to improve aquatic resource management. We will improve the skills, capabilities, and professionalism of our workforce in support of the conservation of fish and aquatic resources. We will recruit and maintain a diverse workforce with opportunities, training, technologies, and toolsets to increase its effectiveness. We will foster an inclusive work environment, recognizing and valuing the diverse perspectives and contributions of all employees. Formal and informal networking with peers and mentors will accelerate capacity building and adaptability, transferring institutional knowledge throughout the workforce. We will create opportunities for professionals and technicians to grow and develop throughout their careers.

LONG-TERM VISION

The Forest Service's well-trained, effective professionals consistently perform at a high level and are recognized for their contributions. They demonstrate leadership, working in an interdisciplinary manner in support of fish and aquatic resource conservation by planning and executing integrated resource management projects and scientific investigations. They are part of an active network of professionals who support and advise one another. They work well together and with others, and they are sensitive to the concerns of others, both internally and among external constituencies. Resources are available for training and professional development. Peers,

supervisors, program leaders, and mentors encourage staff to participate in developmental opportunities, raise their visibility, and showcase their technical skills and professional achievements. The diversity of Forest Service fisheries biologists and aquatic ecologists reflects the public we serve.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Recruit and maintain employees from diverse backgrounds to meet current and future needs for fish and aquatic resource research and management.

- i. Assess staffing needs for current and future workloads. Develop coordinated plans to meet needs nationally, regionally, and locally.
- ii. Adopt efficient and effective consolidated hiring practices for positions related to fisheries biology and aquatic ecology.
- iii. Support entry-level and career-ladder positions throughout the agency.
- iv. Recruit from underrepresented groups to diversify workforce perspectives.
- v. Reach out to students at all levels by offering workshops and distributing information at professional conferences.
- vi. Develop and support career opportunities for youth and young adults through internships, summer work programs, and seasonal jobs.

Commented [NFHP18]: The details under this objective are described in more general terms than those in earlier objectives. More description will help to explain intent. One option is to connect with the state-private Diversity Joint Venture effort now underway.

Commented [NFHP19]: Consider a diversity joint venture to increase diversity in aquatic work places.

Objective B: Offer training and mentoring for technical and professional development.

- i. Assess technical and professional training needs and opportunities. Encourage employees to complete training in aquatic ecosystem management. Work with professional societies and other agencies to coordinate training schedules and opportunities for continuing education.
- ii. Expand mentoring opportunities across mission and program areas at all agency levels.
- iii. Expand opportunities for fisheries biologists and aquatic ecologists to take communications training to help them network and tell their stories.
- iv. Offer leadership development through formal leadership programs (such as the Forest Service Middle Leader and Senior Leader Programs), training, detail assignments, and job shadowing.
- v. Emphasize the importance of individual development plans.

vi. Incorporate IPA's (Inter-personnel Agreements) and staff details with AFS, state fish and wildlife agencies to cross-train staff.

vii. Develop internship opportunities.

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Objective C: Foster an environment of professional excellence.

- i. Encourage employees to participate in and contribute to professional societies (such as the American Fisheries Society and the Society for Freshwater Science) at national, regional, and local levels, including serving in leadership positions.
- ii. Hold agency meetings among researchers and managers in fisheries biology and aquatic ecology in conjunction with external professional meetings to encourage internal and external coordination and networking.

- iii. Recognize and reward exceptional contributions to fish and aquatic conservation and science and to an integrated fish and aquatic conservation community through the annual Rise to the Future awards program.

GOAL 6: COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF OUR WORK

Sharing what the Forest Service does and why we do it demonstrates the value of our work and enhances our ability to support the conservation of fish and aquatic resources. We are committed to awakening and strengthening the connection of all people to aquatic ecosystems. Accordingly, we will tell our stories locally, nationally, and globally. We will listen and respond to the needs and values of the public. We will be accountable for the resources we manage, and we will effectively communicate our accomplishments and explain the value of conserving fish and aquatic resources and its connection to abundant clean water for the American public. We will showcase our conservation successes and the recreational and other opportunities we offer.

LONG-TERM VISION

A wide range of local, national, and global audiences understand the value of our work in fish and aquatic conservation. The public, our agency, and our partners appreciate the value of fish and aquatic resources, recognizing our role in conserving them and in delivering abundant clean water. We listen and respond to the public and our partners.

OBJECTIVES

Objective A: Develop and share media and information to increase public awareness of and engagement with fish and aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands.

- i. Work with state and tribal governments, Federal agencies, and nongovernmental partners to develop and share coordinated messages that underscore the connection between healthy fish and aquatic resources and abundant clean water.
- ii. Work with communications and marketing experts to develop and carry out a communications and outreach plan to deliver key messages through film, social media, and other formats (such as fish cams) to tell our story to various audiences.
- iii. Update our Websites regularly and use social media to communicate the benefits of our work to the American public.
- iv. Encourage upward reporting of conservation success stories related to fish and aquatic resources (such as Show-and-Shine reports) at the forest, region, station, and Washington Office levels.
- v. Highlight stories about staff and partners who work across disciplines and geographies in support of fish and aquatic resource conservation in urban locations and other nontraditional arenas (such as grazing, engineering, and wildland fire management).
- vi. Motivate Forest Service researchers to share their findings through social media and networks in both scientific and nontechnical language.

Objective B: Communicate the value of partnerships in achieving the Forest Service's mission.

- i. Track partner support and diversity and communicate the corresponding benefits to stakeholders, the public, and Congress.

- ii. Work with partners such as the communications committees of the National Fish Fish Habitat Partnership and individual Fish Habitat Partnerships to Promote effective partnerships and collaboration through awards, outreach material, and media, illustrating models and components for success.

Objective C: Listen and respond to partners and the public.

- i. Find opportunities to interact with various audiences, including in urban communities, to get people's perspectives about fish and aquatic resources and our stewardship activities.
- ii. Invite individuals and communities to use social media and other interactive communication platforms to tell their stories and express their values with respect to fish and aquatic resources.
- iii. Incorporate partner and public feedback into our program direction, public outreach and education activities, conservation projects, and youth programs.

VI. ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY WITH THE FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN

The National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy's six goals, along with their supporting objectives and action items, will help the agency to carry out the Forest Service Strategic Plan. As regional offices, research stations, and national forests and grasslands tier their respective fish and aquatic conservation plans and activities to this national strategy, the Forest Service will make progress locally, regionally, and nationally in achieving the goals of this strategy. We will meet the ecological, social, and economic goals of the National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy by working together across mission and program areas to achieve multiple benefits at all levels. Equally important is collaborating with and aligning priorities with tribal governments, state fish and wildlife agencies, other federal agencies, adjacent private landowners, and the many and diverse stakeholders and partner organizations who use and value the National Forest System. It is crucial not only to align our priorities with those of our partners and to meet their expectations but also to complement each other's strengths, skills, and assets.

Appendix A describes the alignment of the six goals outlined in this strategy with the four strategic goals in the Forest Service’s Strategic Plan. In some cases, the goals in this strategy align with more than one agencywide strategic goal.

Long-Term Vision for the Results of Alignment: Protection, conservation, and restoration of abundant clean water and fish and aquatic resources are widely recognized and embraced as an important part of who the Forest Service is and what the agency does. The agency actively engages with government and non-government partners at local, regional, and national levels to ensure our efforts support the conservation, recovery, and public use and enjoyment of fish and other aquatic resources.

VII. HIGH-PRIORITY ACTIONS AND PROGRESS MEASURES

To begin carrying out the National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy, the Forest Service will focus on implementing the eight high-priority actions listed below. The actions are from the list of goals and objectives above, as indicated in parentheses after each action. Each action is associated with a clear deliverable (that is, a plan or assessment) or numerical accomplishment (for example, a 20-percent increase in partnerships) and an associated timeframe.

Accomplishing the actions in coordination with our partners within the specified timeframes will demonstrate that the strategy is producing results and contributing to the desired outcomes set forth in the Forest Service Strategic Plan.

HIGH-PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. Develop a coarse-scale national assessment of aquatic biodiversity on the national forests and grasslands by 2020 (goal 1, objective Ai).
2. Cooperate with States and other partners to develop criteria for identifying conservation watersheds for fish and aquatic species on national forests and grasslands. Select conservation watersheds by 2019. Update the list as needed (goal 1, objective Bi).
3. Collaborate with state fish and wildlife agencies and partners to identify the best locations for improving access to recreational fishing by 2019—locations that will increase fishing the most (goal 2, objective Ai).
4. Increase the number of youth who connect to the outdoors through recreational fishing and other water-based activities by 20 percent by 2023 (goal 2, objectives Aiv and Bii).
5. Increase partnerships with States, tribal governments, water providers, corporations, and multistakeholder groups that result in meaningful conservation outcomes with multiple benefits by 20 percent by 2023 (goal 3, objectives A, B, and D).
6. Conduct and distribute a national fish and aquatic ecology research needs assessment by 2019 (goal 4, objective Ai).
7. Develop business practices and protocols for effective mentoring of fisheries biologists and aquatic ecologists by 2018 (goal 5, objective Bii).

Commented [NFHP20]: Please see comments in the Executive Summary.

8. Work with communications and marketing experts to develop and implement a communications and outreach plan by 2018 (goal 6, objective Aii).

STEERING COMMITTEE

A strategy implementation steering committee will give guidance and ensure accountability in achieving results. The purpose of the steering committee is to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy and its alignment with, and contributions to meeting, the broader goals of the Forest Service and the fish and aquatic conservation community. The steering committee will include Washington Office directors, regional office directors, forest supervisors, research station assistant directors or program managers, and representatives from partner organizations. The national fisheries program leader and the national program leader for fish and aquatic ecology research will meet with the steering committee every 2 years, beginning in the first quarter of fiscal year 2020, to report on strategy implementation. The steering committee will receive written progress reports at the meetings, and the reports will be shared widely, internally and externally.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Numerous participants across the agency at all levels contributed to the development of this strategy, including participants from all three mission areas (National Forest System, Research and Development, and State and Private Forestry). Several key partner organizations also contributed and many tribal governments provided input. Appendix B lists the names and affiliations of all who contributed.

KEY MESSAGES

Note to Reviewers: In the final version of the strategy, the following key messages will not appear in this location or in this format. Instead, the key messages will be placed throughout the strategy in the sections of the document indicated in brackets after each message. The purpose of these messages is to convey in a condensed manner the major themes of the strategy. Each key message will be set off from the main body of the text and will be illustrated with a high-quality photo related to the message. The placement of the messages and accompanying photos will occur as the strategy is prepared for final production. Comments on the key messages are welcome.

Americans benefit from nature and healthy headwaters on the national forests and grasslands. [couple with photo and put next to Sec. III.]

Fish your national forests. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 2.]

Explore waters on your national forests. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 2.]

The Forest Service is a premier fish and aquatic habitat conservation agency. [couple with photo and put next to either the Chief's Statement or Sec. IV or Sec. V – tbd]

Science is the foundation for collaborative fish and aquatic conservation. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 4]

Partnerships are key to our success. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 3.]

The Forest Service manages some of the best remaining fish and aquatic habitat in the country. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 1.]

Fish and aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands are an irreplaceable part of America's cultural legacy. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 6.]

Fish and aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands have tremendous economic value. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 6.]

People are our most valuable asset. [couple with photo and put next to Goal 5.]

APPENDIX A. CORRELATION OF NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY GOALS WITH AGENCY GOALS

The goals of the Forest Service's National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy are correlated with the goals of the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY2015 – 2020.

The four goals of USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan are:

Sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands

Deliver benefits to the public

Apply knowledge globally

Excel as a high-performing agency

The descriptions below specify how each of the six goals of the National Fish and Aquatic Stewardship Strategy align with one or more of the four Forest Service strategic goals.

Goal 1. Conserve and restore fish and aquatic resources.

Fish and aquatic resources are integral parts of the Nation's forests and grasslands. As we conserve healthy native fish populations and restore aquatic resources on national forests and grasslands, we contribute to *sustaining our Nation's forests and grasslands*.

Goal 2. Connecting people to the aquatic world through fishing, boating, and other water-based activities.

Fishing, boating, and other water-based activities that connect people to the aquatic world are enjoyable and valued experiences that offer a wide range of personal and social benefits from relaxation to exhilaration to education to making positive memories with friends and family. As people participate in these activities on national forests and grasslands, we *deliver benefits to the public* and we foster a caring, engaged public with a sense of stewardship to ensure we collectively *sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands*.

Goal 3. Strengthen partnerships and work across boundaries.

No single agency or organization can do all that needs to be done to conserve the Nation's fish and aquatic resources. Partnering with other Federal agencies, States, tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private landowners is vital to fish and aquatic conservation, and is essential to *sustaining our Nation's forests and grasslands*. With rich and diverse partnerships, we are able to accomplish more than we would be able to do alone, increasing our ability to *deliver benefits to the public* and to *excel as a high-performing agency*.

Goal 4. Deliver and apply scientific research.

The fish and aquatic ecology research we conduct serves as the foundation for fish and aquatic conservation at multiple scales. This scientific foundation is necessary to *apply knowledge globally* and to manage aquatic resources effectively so that we *excel as a high-performing agency*.

Goal 5. Build capacity through mentoring and training.

A well-trained, highly-motivated diverse workforce is a critical component of our organizational capacity to *excel as a high-performing agency* which allows us to *sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands, deliver benefits to the public, and apply knowledge globally*.

Goal 6. Communicate the value of our work.

Communication is key in all that we do. Effectively communicating the value of our work lends relevance and credibility to our efforts to *sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands, deliver benefits to the public, apply knowledge globally, and excel as a high-performing agency*.

APPENDIX B. CONTRIBUTORS

Numerous participants across the agency at all levels contributed to the development of this strategy, including participants from all three mission areas (National Forest System, Research and Development, and State and Private Forestry). Several key partner organizations also contributed and many tribal governments provided input. The names and affiliations of all who contributed follow below.

CORE TEAM

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EXTENDED CORE TEAM

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Mike Leonard, Ocean Resource Policy Director, American Sportfishing Association
Bryan Moore, Chief Intergovernmental Officer, (Partner) Trout Unlimited
Michelle Pico, Program Director for Marine Conservation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Taylor Pool, former Policy Analyst, American Fisheries Society
Vera Smith, Director of Policy and Planning, The Wilderness Society, National Forest Action Center

Commented [NFHP21]: Add NFHP

Title: Communications Committee Update

Desired Outcome:

- **Board awareness** Communications Committee activities and timelines
- **Demonstration of NFHP Story Map**

Background:

The National Fish Habitat Board approved the following priorities for the Communications Committee in March. The Priority Actions section represents how we are working towards objectives and priorities.

Priority A: NFHP website services.

Priority B: Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and improving connections to Beyond the Pond.

Priority C: Continue building the database for newsletter distribution to increase engagement with partner coalition.

Priority D: Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Priority E: Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act.

Priority F: Review and make any needed changes to the communications strategy (Board approved 2011 and updated in 2013) to ensure that it remains a guide for committee work and maintained as a living document.

Priority G: Increase outreach of Waters to Watch Campaign for its Ten Year Anniversary.

Priority Actions and Progress:

Priority A: Since March we have developed a Partnerships Resources page on the website and updated content. The Waters to Watch Archive on the website is nearly complete. We have also added social media icons for Facebook, twitter and YouTube on the website.

Priority B: We have our online donation page up and running for Beyond the Pond. We are running an ad for Beyond the Pond and NFHP in the ICast edition of Angling Trade Magazine.

Priority C: Since March we have managed to keep our newsletter database level with sign-ups. We typically have more additions to our newsletter later in the year through promotions for NFHP at events such as AFS. We still maintain an average open rate of 25% and have improved our link clicks from 3% to 10% in our last 3 emails. The additional link clicks within the newsletter drive traffic to www.fishhabitat.org.

Priority D: Working on planning and details for Video highlighting 10-year Anniversary of NFHP. In terms of the limited budget, we will be allocating much of our efforts to shooting interviews with the Board and partners. We will use primarily conservation project video that we currently have for the project

Priority E: Working with the legislative team to assess progress towards the reintroduction of National Fish Habitat Conservation legislation in the 115th Congress. The Communications Committee developed a toolkit of resources and fact sheets for the NFHP program.

Priority F: The Communications Committee held a spring conference call, (April) and discussed development of a story map for NFHP. We also discussed the Waters to Watch campaign for 2017, which will be announced in July. The Communications strategy will be evaluated later this summer. If changes are suggested we will bring back to the Board for endorsement in October.



United States Department of the Interior

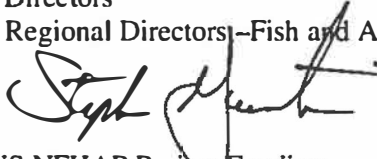
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D. C. 20240



FWS/AFAC/FAC DCN 065707

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Assistant Regional Directors—Fish and Aquatic Conservation

From: Director 

Subject: FY17 FWS NFHAP Project Funding

Working with others to protect, conserve, and enhance fish and their habitats is an essential component of the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) mission. To help achieve this, the FWS is committed to supporting the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP or Action Plan) and the Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) that implement it. The Action Plan is a science-based, voluntary effort to address fish and aquatic habitat issues across the US. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, the FWS is providing \$3,171,875 to support cost-shared, strategic fish and aquatic habitat projects that address the goals of the Action Plan.

Eighteen FHPs will receive \$75,000 each in stable operational support totaling \$1,350,000. The remaining \$1,821,875 of the project funds will be distributed based on each FHP's performance level (PL) score for FY17. Each FHP's PL score was determined by applying the FWS's NFHAP Allocation Methodology, adopted in December 2013 and revised in November 2015. The resulting PL scores and respective funding amounts for each FHP can be found in the attachment.

FWS funds will be used to support FHP operations, conduct aquatic habitat assessments, and implement on-the-ground conservation projects that address the goals of the Action Plan and align with the mission of the FWS. Specifically, the FHP's will use the funds to implement proposed projects identified in their Work Plan and Accomplishment Reports. In case of delays, funds may be carried over to FY18 and used as soon as possible. Additionally, all projects will be tracked and project accomplishments will be reported in the FWS's Fisheries Information System—Accomplishments Module.

The FWS looks forward to continuing its support of the Action Plan and partnering with the FHPs. If you have questions regarding FY17 Action Plan allocations, please contact David Hoskins, Assistant Director for Fish and Aquatic Conservation, at 703-358-2250 or David_Hoskins@fws.gov.

Attachments

Table 1. Number of Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) at each performance level (Level) and respective project funding amount for FY17

Performance Levels	Number of FHPs at each Level	Project Funding at each Level
Level 1	3 FHPs	\$35,723
Level 2	11 FHPs	\$107,169
Level 3	3 FHPs	\$178,615

Table 2. FY17 performance levels and the corresponding funding amount for each FHP

Lead FWS Region	Fish Habitat Partnership Name	Performance Level ¹	Total FY17 FHP Funding ²
1	Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership	1	\$110,723
	Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
2	Desert Fish Habitat Partnership	1	\$110,723
3	Driftless Area Restoration Effort	2	\$182,169
	Fishers and Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin	1	\$110,723
	Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership	N/A	\$75,000
	Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership	2	\$182,169
	Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
4	Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership	2	\$182,169

¹ FHP performance levels are applicable to the 2017 federal fiscal year, only

² FHP funding amounts include \$75,000 of operational support for each Fish Habitat Partnership

Lead FWS Region	Fish Habitat Partnership Name	Performance Level ¹	Total FY17 FHP Funding ²
5	Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
	Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture	3	\$253,615
6	Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
7	Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
	Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership	3	\$253,615
	Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169
8	California Fish Passage Forum	2	\$182,169
	Western Native Trout Initiative	3	\$253,615
HQ	Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership	2	\$182,169

Total FY17 NFHAP Project Funding \$3,171,875