



Back to The Future

Revisiting the NFHP Vision

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National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
with

National Fish Habitat Partnership Coordinators

December 6, 2023

Charleston, SC



Twenty- three Years: 2000-2023

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

Goal: Compensate for:

- Losses of institutional history
- Losses of institutional knowledge*

* Might be other perspectives, lots of turnover in 23 years



WHY NFHP FORMED?



National Problem

Significant declines & negative trends in quantity & quality of aquatic habitats required to sustain productivity of fish & aquatic organisms (freshwater, **estuarine & marine) nationwide** (highlighted by the Sport Fishing & Boating Partnership Council in early 2000s)



National Problem (continued)

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



Solutions Approach

Sport Fishing & Boating Partnership Council (SBPC) hosts nationwide stakeholder meetings to better define scope of problems & pathway to solutions (~2002-2004)



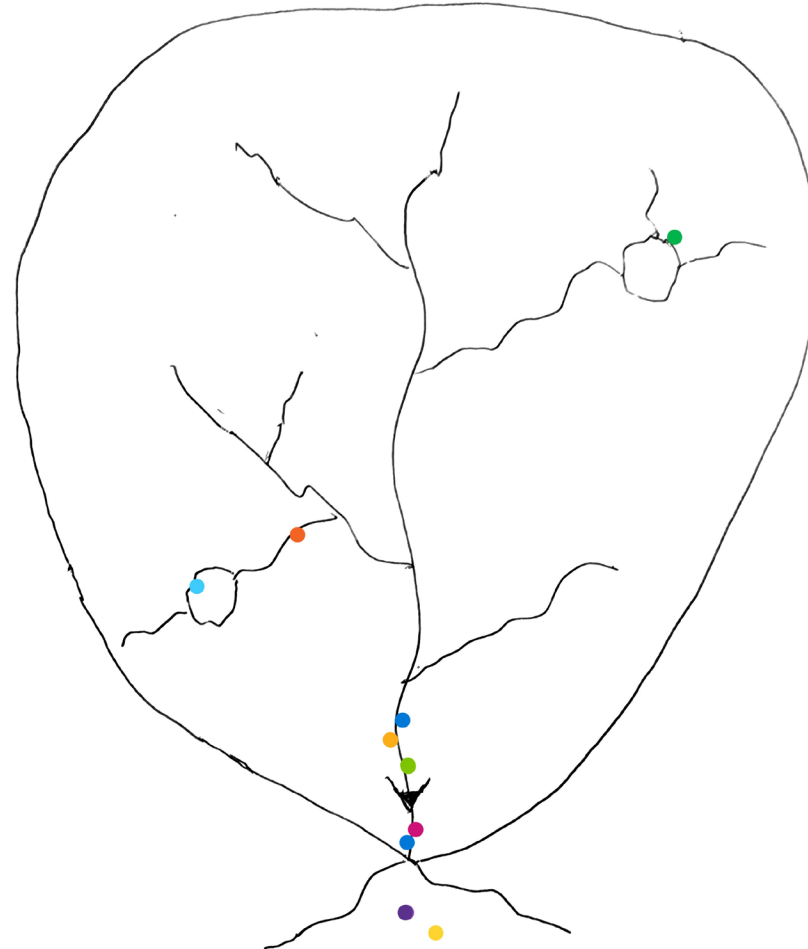
SBPC STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS RESULTS

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

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

National Problem (continued)

Conceptual Watershed Illustrating Coordination Issues: different colored dots represent different entities (sometimes the same entity) independently collecting the same or different data within different portions of freshwater, estuarine & marine habitats (without or limited coordination & comprehensive assessments) based on jurisdictions, ownership boundaries, funding sources, etc.



PROPOSED REMEDY

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

*Shout out to Gary Myers for his assistance related to NAWCA lessons learned

Resulting Actions (Highlights)

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



Related Actions (examples)

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



Related Actions (examples continued)

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

(note: ~1500 partners today)



Related Actions (examples continued)

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

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



Related Actions (examples continued)

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

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



Related Actions (examples continued)

19 Federal agencies, headed by the USFWS, formed the Federal Caucus (basis for Interagency Operational Plan, IOP) to coordinate federal efforts among themselves to support development & implementation of the *NFHAP*.

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



Related Actions (examples continued)

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



Related Actions (examples continued)

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

2006 Edition

National Fish Habitat
Action Plan



2006 NFHAP ENDORSEMENT



April 24, 2006

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

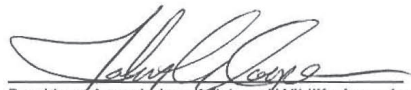
Galvanized into action by the threat of aquatic habitat losses, an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies and industry leaders forged the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The plan's principal aim is to better protect, restore and enhance fish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

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


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

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


Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior


President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies


Secretary, Department of Commerce


Executive Vice President, Association of
Fish and Wildlife Agencies

The logo for the National Fish Habitat Partnership. It features a stylized fish icon on the left, similar to the one in the top logo. To the right, the words "NATIONAL", "FISH HABITAT", and "PARTNERSHIP" are stacked vertically in a bold, sans-serif font, separated by horizontal lines.



NFHAP Cover Letter Highlights

Improve Habitat Conservation & Quality of Life

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



Letter Highlights (examples continued)

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

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

Letter Highlights (examples continued)

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

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



NFHAP VISION

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



Post NFHAP Endorsement (highlights)

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

2012 Edition

National
Fish Habitat
Action Plan

2nd Edition

Cooperation
Investment
Stewardship



Supplements 2006 Original Edition- **not a substitute**

Updates to NFHAP Implementation post endorsement of the 2006 edition

Includes Memorandum of Understanding between Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration & updated Federal Caucus Matrix (See pages 15,25-29, 35, 37, 41, 42 *NFHAP* (2012 edition))

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

Federal Caucus

(member examples NFHAP 2012 edition)

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



Interagency Operational Plan, IOP*

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

*based on NFHAP 2006, 2012 Federal Caucus (PL 116-188, Title II, Section 208)



Reflections

- No silver bullets
- Infancy
- Plan/Law/Charter relationships
- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies/Regional Associations
- FHP & Board Expectations
- Capacity, Networking, IOP
- Improve the wheel/don't reinvent
- Personally rewarding – making a difference
- Not intended for assembly line mentality (breaking the mold)
- Should existing action plans now be referenced as transformational change plans?
- Implement the Federal Caucus (Section 208, ACE Act)
- Implement scientific & technical support using the \$ 2 million authorization (Section 206, ACE Act)
- Reminder of the rationale for 2 tribal seats
- There are no substitutes for reading the 2006 & 2012 NFHAP editions & PL 116-188, Title II
- Celebrate the founders

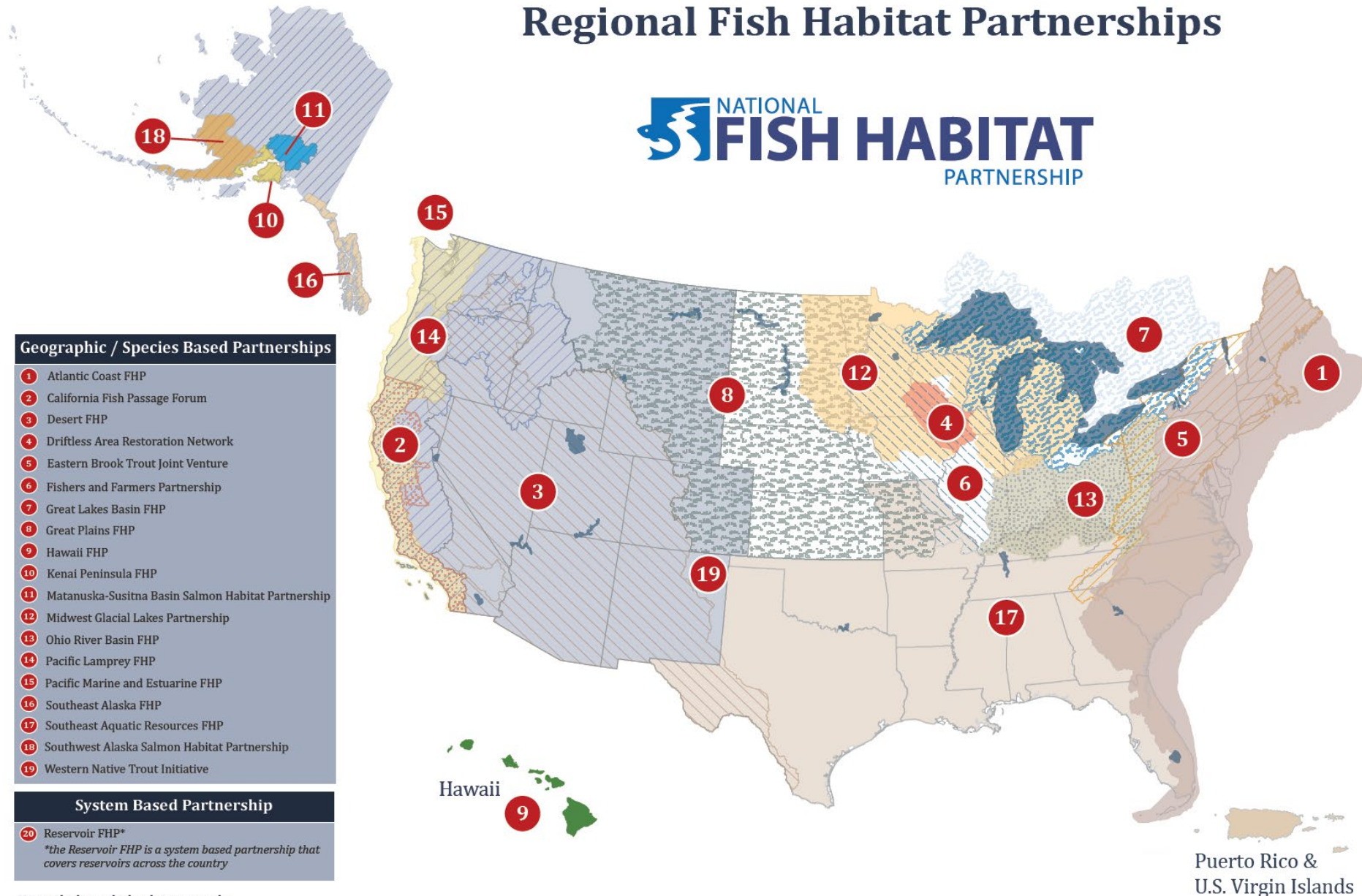


NFHP Toolbox Recaps

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



Regional Fish Habitat Partnerships



Geographic / Species Based Partnerships

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

System Based Partnership

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

Note: Alaska and islands not to scale

Includes current fish habitat partnerships, approved by the NFHP Board, June 2016.

Puerto Rico &
U.S. Virgin Islands



Mission:

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

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





THANKS to the NFHP Board, Staff, & Fish Habitat Partnerships including all past founders, staff, Board Members, & partners !



Questions ?

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www.fishhabitat.org