



National Fish Habitat Board Meeting

July 31 – August 2, 2024 Anchorage, AK

Hosted by: Alaska Partners of NFHP

Clarion Inn & Suites 1110 W 8th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501

[Web Meeting Access](#) (Via Microsoft Teams) Meeting ID: 258 656 948 360 Passcode: agYxFc

	Last Name	First Name	July 31	August 1
1	Allen	Stan	X	X
2	Austen	Doug	X	X
3	Booth	Austin	X	X
4	Boyles	Robert	X	X
5	Carter	Julie	X	X
6	Gilliland	Gene	X	X
7	Guertin	Steve	X	-
8	Harper/Wilson/C	Rob/Josh/Kim	X	X
9	Horton	Chris	X	-
10	Kinsinger	Anne	X	X
11	Kruse	Carter	X	X
12	Leonard	Mike	X	X
13	Linnell	Karen	-	-
14	Micchiche	Peter	X	X
15	Moore	Chris	X	X
16	Moore	Bryan	X	X
17	Nakayama	Ian	X	X
18	O Keefe (online)	John	X	X
19	Perry	Steve	X	X
20	Rauch/Trnka	Sam/Maureen	X	X
21	Ringia/Talayumptewa	Adam/Darren	X	X
22	Rivers	Pat	X	X
23	Schaeffer	Timothy D.	X	X

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24	Slager	Jake	X	X
25	Trushenski/Allen	Jesse/Stan	X	X

Approved by the Board:

- June NFHP Meeting Summary; approved by consent
- July 31-August 1 revised NFHP Board meeting agenda; approved by consent
- FHP Congressional Designation package - motion by: Stan Allen, seconded by: Austin Booth. Approved by consent.
- Letter to DOI re: Native Hawaiian non-Federal match - motion by: Stan Allen; seconded by Jake Slager. Approved by consent.

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National Fish Habitat Board Meeting

Time (AKDT)	Agenda Item	Tab	Lead(s)
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9:00 AM	Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement	1	Chair Robert Boyles & All Attendees
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Desired Outcomes:

- **Board action** to approve agenda and June meeting summary.

NFHP Chair, Robert Boyles, welcomed the NFHP Board to Anchorage, thanked our meeting hosts, and read a land acknowledgement. The Board went around the room and online to provide brief introductions. The Board adopted the June meeting summary and the slightly revised July 31 - August 1 meeting agenda (moving NOAA update to 10:30 AM since Sam Rauch is joining virtually).

9:20 AM	Welcome Remarks from Alaska Department of Fish & Game		Doug Vincent Lang <i>(Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Commissioner)</i>
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Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang welcomed the NFHP Board to Alaska and provided an overview of the Department and their connections with NFHP. He highlighted the sheer size of Alaska and the role of fisheries (commercial, recreational, subsistence) in creating thousands of local jobs and supporting tourism in the region. Much of Alaska’s land is under conservation and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has permitting authority over activity that impacts all aquatic habitats. In Alaska, where there are four Fish Habitat Partnerships, the focus is on conserving and protecting rather than restoring. Commissioner Vincent-Lang highlighted the importance of partnership and the roles of states and other partners to be successful in our mission to protect, restore and enhance aquatic habitats.

9:30 AM	Congressional Designation of FHPs	2	Stan Allen <i>(NFHP Board Vice-Chair)</i>
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- **Board vote** on designation packet to be transmitted to Congressional Committees of Jurisdiction.

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Stan Allen presented the members of the Congressional designation sub-group (8 members) and thanked the Board members for their role in reviewing and providing feedback on Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP). Stan summarized the common areas for improvement across FHPs identified by the review team. This included maintaining updated strategic plans, websites, outreach and engagement strategies, and a strong governance structure. He explained to the Board that the sub-group recommends the following materials be sent forward to the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction for their consideration:

- A cover letter from the Board Chair;
- A map of all the Fish Habitat Partnerships;
- A checklist of the ACE Act criteria;
- 20 executive summaries from each of the FHPs; and
- Appendix of full FHP applications.

Finally, Stan introduced the package of 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships that the sub-group recommended for Congressional designation. Board members discussed the compatibility of specific FHP missions and Stan highlighted that the Congressional designation sub-group worked extensively with four FHPs to strengthen their applications and document areas to improve moving forward. The Board buddy system is one way Board members can support the FHPs in their implementation of these improvements. The Board voted to nominate all 20 FHPs for Congressional designation and Chairman Boyles recognized Stan Allen and Bryan Moore for their leadership through this process.

10:00 AM **Non-federal Match Waiver for Native Hawaiians**

Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)

- **Board vote** on sending a letter to the Secretary of the Interior requesting a waiver of the 1:1 non-federal match for projects conducted by Native Hawaiians.

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Jason Olive reminded the Board that the ACE Act allows the Secretary of the Interior to issue a waiver for the non-federal match requirement for states and Federally recognized Tribes. At their June meeting, the NFHP Board EXCOM discussed and supported the idea of requesting the Secretary issue a non-Federal match waiver for Native Hawaiian organizations since the Hawaiian FHP has challenges meeting the non-Federal match. Jason highlighted that waiving this match funding requirement would provide more NFHP funding opportunities for the Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership that are currently unavailable due to a lack of match funding. There has also been an effort to add Native Hawaiians during the reauthorization of the ACE Act. Jason Olive consulted with Lane Kisonak, AFWA attorney, on this. There was Board discussion on the whether or not this request could cause issues with obtaining passage of the ACE Reauthorization Act, and members of the Policy Committee indicated that they did not think it would have any impact. The Board approved a motion to send a letter to the Secretary of Interior requesting a waiver of the 1:1 non-federal match for the two state agencies that directly serve the interests of Native Hawaiians.

10:30 PM NOAA Fisheries Update

Sam Rauch (NFHP Board Member)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of the FY24 NOAA-funded NFHP projects.

Sam Rauch, NOAA Board member, updated the Board on the FY24 NOAA-funded NFHP projects in SARP, PMEP, and Hawaii FHP. NOAA will also join the September FHP Coordinator call to share about BIL/IRA funding and opportunities to build in capacity building.

10:35 AM BREAK

10:45 AM Policy Committee Update

3 Ian Nakayama (Policy Committee Chair)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of ACE Act Reauthorization and Policy Committee activities.
- **Board discussion** on next steps with scientific and technical support.

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Ian Nakayama, NFHP Policy Committee Chair, provided an update to the Board on ACE Act reauthorization – in the House, HR 8811 was introduced on June 21, 2024 and there was a hearing that included HR 8811 on July 9 that mostly focused on ESA issues. The bill introduced in the House did not include a budget increase because all budget shifts require a “pay for”. Ian indicated that the reauthorization may be included in a large, end of year package and that the House is now in August recess. If it were to pass the House there would then be a negotiation between the House and Senate bill versions. Ian indicated the Board should expect little movement on the bill until November and then there could be lots of rapid movement after November.

The Policy Committee thanked the Federal agencies for their responses to the request in December about scientific and technical assistance funds. The Committee feels that there is still funding being left on the table with respect to the Scientific and Technical Assistance. Currently, the USFWS is the only Federal agency (of the four listed in the ACE Act) that are requesting the \$400,000 of Scientific and Technical Assistance funds in their budget. The Committee would like to support Federal agencies authorized to receive the \$400,000 in Scientific and Technical Assistance funds navigate adding this request to their budget if they require support. A one-pager has been developed to summarize the issue in the Board book (Tab 3).

There was Board discussion about whether or not the Federal agencies can send funding to the states and potential uses for the scientific and technical assistance funds. Board members also acknowledged that budget development among the Federal agencies can be close hold and Chair Boyles recognized the recurring theme and the many filters that feed into Federal budget development.

Overall, there was Board support for the Policy Committee supporting the Federal agencies to navigate these additions to their Federal budget requests. The NFHP Policy Committee will be working with OMB to advocate that the scientific and technical assistance funds be included in the President’s Budget.

11:00 AM NFHP Action Plan 3.0 Update and Options

Alex McOwen and Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board discussion** of approach and timing for next Action Plan.

Alex McOwen reviewed the history of the NFHP Action Plans (2006 and 2012) and an unapproved version that was in draft in 2020. Jason presented justification for why the Board might want to update the Action Plan. Upon agreement from the Board that they would like to update the Action Plan, Jason presented an approach for updating the Action Plan in order to complete a revised plan for 2026. Staff propose that a team (~10 members) be developed consisting of the following:

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- Jason Olive
- Alex McOwen
- 1 AFWA Board rep
- 1 Federal Board rep
- 1 Tribal Board rep
- 1 Fishing group/organization Board rep
- 1 Other Board rep
- 3 FHP coordinators

Jason also presented a draft timeline to complete the Action Plan revision and Board approval by 2026. This timeline includes surveying Board members, State Fish Chiefs, external stakeholders, and Tribes about potential NFHP opportunities and the Action Plan objectives given NFHP’s role in the aquatic habitat conservation space. Christopher Estes clarified that the 2012 Action Plan was an add on, not replacement, to the 2006 NFHP Action Plan. The Board discussed referring to the 2006 Action Plan as a “NFHP Constitution” and there was general Board agreement to update the Action Plan to:

- Integrate the ACE Act elements;
- Build in “SMART” objectives;
- Retain the foundation laid by the 2006 and 2012 plans;
- Connect with and re-energize a new generation around aquatic habitat conservation; and
- Celebrate NFHP leading up to the 20th anniversary.

11:30 AM USFWS Update

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of USFWS FY 2025 budget outlook and upcoming FAC program strategic plan development.

Steve Guertin (NFHP Board Member) and **David Miko** (USFWS FAC Assistant Director)

Steve Guertin presented an update on the FY25 USFWS budget outlook and thanked the Board for sending in the FY25 Fish Habitat Conservation Project list. The signature on this project list has been delegated to Shannon Estenoz, the new Deputy Secretary of the Interior. Steve indicated that the Federal agencies are likely facing budget cuts in future fiscal years (e.g. BIL/IRA funding drop off is coming soon). He confirmed that the USFWS requested the \$7.7M funding for NFHP in their FY25 budget.

Next, David Miko shared about upcoming plans to update the USFWS Fish and Aquatic Conservation 5 – year Strategic Plan. The USFWS will be reaching out to partners to get input and suggestions on the plan including the 20 FHPs, and two Board members indicated their interest in representing the Board

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(Julie Carter & Doug Austen). Board members asked whether or not hatcheries will be included in the new strategic plan, and Dave confirmed that it would.

12:00 PM **LUNCH (On Your Own)**

1:30 PM **The Alaska NFHP Story**

4 **AK FHP Coordinators and Key Partners**

Mike Daigneault, USFWS, presented an overview of the commonalities among Fish Habitat Partnerships based in or covering Alaska. Mike highlighted the size of Alaska, the tiny portion of the state that is privately owned, and the cultural and economic importance of salmon in Alaska. He reminded the Board that Alaska is a data-poor state and Alaska faces unique challenges (e.g. oil, lack of roads, mining, invasive species, drought, climate change, wildfire, rain/flooding).

Following his introductory remarks, Mike led a panel of presentations from each of the FHPs based in or covering Alaskan geography (e.g. SEAFHP, SWAK, KPFHP, Mat Su, PLCI, and WNTI). The Alaska FHPs meet once or twice per year to build partnerships, coordinate, and share information. Following each of the FHP presentations, Mike led a discussion among Board members and FHP coordinators focused on developing new partnerships, needs for addressing priorities, and Board support for the FHPs. Coordinators identified industry (e.g. mining, logging, etc.), Bureau of Land management, Departments of Natural Resources, and local governments as areas where partnerships could be strengthened. Coordinators identified engagement (particularly with Tribes) and buy-in, filling Steering Committee vacancies, and capacity/coverage during turnover as things they need to be successful addressing their FHP priorities. Coordinators identified increasing awareness of species requiring passage (e.g. lamprey), potential ways to elevate NFHP projects in existing funding opportunities, and leverage as ways the Board can offer support for the FHPs.

Brief overviews of each presentation are below:

- **Mat Susitna Salmon Habitat Partnership - Jessica Speed**
 - 5 species of pacific salmon, key to culture
 - Fastest growing part of the state
 - Greatest threats are many small actions compounding over time (invasive, development, climate change)
 - One of the founding partnerships (original 4)
 - Strategic Action Plan – with priority issues revisited each year
 - Anadromous Waters Catalog

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- Fish passage focus
- Project inventory online
- **Southeast Alaska FHP - Debbie Hart & Andy Stevens (USFWS)**
 - Geographically isolated
 - Action Plan was critical in forming SEKAFHP
 - >250 members, 40 organizational partners
 - Host conferences
 - Information sharing with Tribal partners
 - Fish passage is a big focus
 - Metlakatla project – invest \$80,000 and leveraged to get 2.7M USFWS BIL FHWA funding
- **Southwest Alaska - Tim Troll**
 - Protection oriented (can't use NFHP funds for this)
 - NFHP funds have supported assessments
 - Focus on working with Native corporations
 - Protected ~80,000 acres
 - State of AK is biggest landowner
 - Added 1,350 stream miles to AWC
 - Bristol Bay Fly Fishing & Guide Academy started in 2008 (184 participants since)
- **Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership & Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative - Joan Drinkwin**
 - Looking to build energy around pacific lamprey conservation in AK
 - Supporting traditional Tribal use – is main part of mission
 - First food for Native Alaskans
 - PL is anadromous, USFWS trust species
 - PL are >360M years old! What can we do to help the species continue to persist
 - Wilamette Falls is one of the only places you can harvest
 - Conservation agreement (58 signatories), status assessment, regional implementation plans
 - BPA supports PL in Columbia River Basin
 - Looking to expand to doing projects in AK
 - Want to take advantage of the AWC – need to fill in the distribution map of where lamprey are in AK
 - FY22 funding on lamprey ID in AK (workshops to be held in 2025) - can we add lamprey to the salmon field work??
- **Kenai Peninsula FHP - Trent Dodson**
 - Freshwater and saltwater (needs updating) conservation action plans
 - Focal funding areas (biological capacity)
 - 2022 Accomplishments - Stream Watch and Adopt A Stream (targets students), impervious surface modeling
- **Western Native Trout Initiative - JD Davis**
 - Coastal cutthroat trout, char
 - Will see a NFHP WNTI project on field trip
 - Project mapped

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- Native trout challenge – 245 have completed challenge
- Bear River Project funded by Open Rivers Fund
- Snake River System largescale trout

2:55 PM **BREAK**

Announce Stan’s receipt of Stan Moberly Award

3:10 PM **North Pacific Research Board Presentation**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of the North Pacific Research Board mission and opportunities to engage with NFHP.

Lynn Palensky, MPA
(NPRB Executive Director) or Matt Baker, PhD (NPRB Science Director)

Lynn Palensky presented an overview of the [North Pacific Research Board](#) (NPRB). While NPRB was created by Congress in 1997, they are not a Federal agency. NPRB was created to fund and support marine research in and around Alaska and has small staff of six people based in Anchorage. Following Lynn’s portion, Matt Baker reviewed the science programs of the NPRB with the Board. NPRB funds research that informs fisheries management through partners like the Fishery Management Councils. They also fund graduate level research, an outreach program, long-term monitoring, and cooperative research. Each year, the NPRB leads the Alaska Marine Science Symposium that has ~700-800 attendees.

3:25 PM **NFHP Interagency Operational Plan Update**

Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of progress on IOP development.

Jason Olive provided an overview of the Interagency Operational Plan (IOP) draft which was sent to the Board on 7/16/24. He asked for Board member feedback on the draft IOP (*focusing on Chapter 3 if time is limited*) and indicated it will be sent for Federal agencies review later this year. The Board will likely be signing off on a final version in early 2025. Jason acknowledged that, with its many, large tables of information, the IOP would greatly benefit from an online searchable database-like format for this information. The Board discussed how mature the draft IOP needs to be before it is sent to

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the Federal agencies for their review and signoff. Chair Boyles indicated his interest in getting a renewed NFHP commitment by having Secretarial level sign off on the IOP.

Board member discussion focused on the appropriate level of agency signoff on the document (e.g. Directorate or Secretarial) and adding in more narrative in Chapter 3 to highlight how agencies are committing to work together and forming a coordination body. There was a desire to better express the value of NFHP to Federal agencies somewhere in the IOP. In the end, the Board agreed to slightly delay this process and revisit it in October.

3:50 PM Science & Data Committee Update

5 Gary Whelan & Daniel Wieferrich (NFHP Board Staff, Science & Data Committee Co-Chairs)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of science and data committee assessment progress.
- **Board awareness** of rollout plan for public-facing NFHP Project Tracking Dashboard.

Gary Whelan presented an overview of the progress and plans for the National Fish Habitat Assessment. He explained to the Board the three-stage process to analyze the data layers, add in new hydrology, grazing intensity and socioeconomic info, and large macrohabitats. The Assessment report will begin drafting in October 2025 and will be completed by the end of 2025. There was some Board discussion on considering the value added by stream miles opened by NFHP projects in the assessment and utilizing a lot of the existing information about natural capital accounting to better quantify and describe the impacts of NFHP work.

Kate Sherman presented an overview of the public-facing NFHP dashboard. Kate showcased the various data sources, filters, and functionalities within the draft dashboard. She asked Board members to provide their feedback to the draft dashboard (*login info was shared with FHP coordinators and Board members*). The dashboard also creates Wordclouds by each FHP to highlight partners. This draft dashboard will be presented at the 2024 American Fisheries Society meeting.

4:10 PM Governance Committee Update

6 Doug Austen (Governance Committee Chair)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board to provide feedback** on the draft Code of Conduct developed by the Committee.

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Doug Austen, Chair of the NFHP Governance Committee, updated the Board on the progress towards developing a full NFHP Procedures Manual. The Committee’s latest completed draft section was the Code of Conduct. Doug requested review and feedback from NFHP Board members (by August 23) and the group will continue to develop other sections and work with Board Committees to document their procedures.

5:00 – **Happy Hour Hosted by Trout Unlimited @ King**
 7:00 PM **Street Brewery** (9050 King St, Anchorage, AK 99515)

Thursday, August 1, 2024

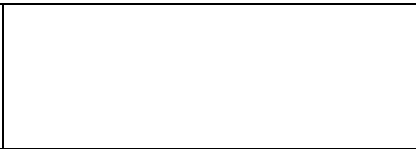
Clarion Inn & Suites 1110 W 8th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501

[Web Meeting Access](#) (via Microsoft Teams)

Meeting ID: 248 490 327 582 Passcode: N2G7tz

Time (AKDT)	Agenda Item	Tab	Lead(s)
9:00 AM	Welcome Back		Chair Robert Boyles
9:05 AM	Continuation of Alaska FHP Panel Alaska Tribal Interests in Fish Habitat <i>Desired Outcomes:-</i> ● Board awareness of Tribal interests in Alaskan fish habitat and opportunities for engagement.-		Mike Daigneault Charlie Wright (Alaska Native)

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Mike Daigneault continued the Alaska FHP panel that was started on meeting day one and the FHPs focused on the effects of and how they are addressing climate change. We heard that in SEAKFHP, climate change is leading to more scour, mudslides, flooding, drought, reduction in fish price, and the FHP is trying to increase monitoring. In the WNTI more hundred-year events continue to happen so projects must be prepared for that (e.g. wildfires). Water quality, water temperature, and communicating the information to non-scientists are also key priorities to address climate change in WNTI. The Kenai Peninsula FHP is observing invasive species proliferation, sometimes caused by float plane operations, and more frequent wildfires. The discussion again focused on what the Board can do to support the FHPs. Much of the discussion on this topic focused on increasing awareness with the state associations of fish and wildlife agencies (e.g. “put the F back in WAFWA”). FHPs emphasized the importance of communications to tell the NFHP story and connect more with the public. Several Board members expressed interest in joining the NFHP Communications Committee to assist with these efforts.

9:40 AM

Bureau of Land Management Aquatics Program & NFHP Engagement

Sharmila Jepsen (*Lead Fisheries Biologist, BLM*)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of BLM’s Aquatics Program and NFHP engagement.

Sharmila Jepsen shared with the NFHP Board about the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Aquatics Resources Program. The Aquatics Resources Program (composed on 4 HQ staff) handles everything from river restoration to invasive species to groundwater and fisheries. Sharmila shared the four strategic program goals to:

- Conserve, restore, and connect riparian, fisheries, and water resources
- Protect water supplies and uses
- Prevent the establishment and spread of aquatic invasive species
- Foster a watershed approach to improve water quality and habitat function

Sharmila has been actively working to increase BLM’s engagement with NFHP and Western FHPs and has expressed interest in a seat on the NFHP Board.

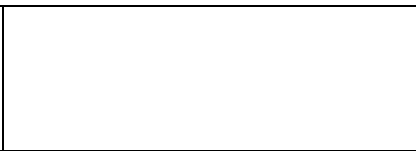
10:10 AM

NFHP Webinar Follow-Up

Christopher Estes

Desired Outcomes:

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- **Board awareness** of outcomes resulting from Christopher’s NFHP talk in December 2023.

Following Christopher’s talk at the December 2023 Board meeting and a public webinar in May 2024, he presented to the Board on some of follow ups within NFHP partner organizations that have resulted since then. For example, Julie Carter highlighted her work with WAFWA to re-engage the fish chiefs in the region and starting up a WAFWA NFHP Working Group. Jason Olive highlighted Tim Schaeffer’s (NEAFWA) efforts to include a NFHP presentation at the spring NEAFWA Directors’ Business Meeting, and host a NFHP symposium at the conference. Anne Kinsinger shared that the USGS ecosystems mission area set up an informational webinar about NFHP to bring staff and FHP Coordinators together to talk about the Partnership and potential areas ways to support and engage. There was some discussion encouraging Board members to identify ways to increase awareness through their own organizations about NFHP and opportunities to get involved with a local FHP. The Board identified MAFWA as a particular challenge and hope to reconnect with MAFWA states and re-energize their engagement in NFHP.

10:30 AM **BREAK**

10:45 AM **Upcoming NFHP Board Meeting Schedule** 7 **Alex McOwen (NFHP Board Staff)**

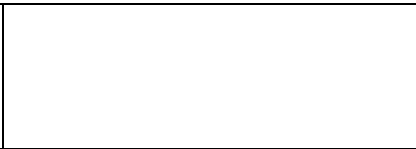
Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of 2024 Board meeting schedule.
- **Board discussion** of potential 2025 meeting dates.

Alex McOwen shared with the Board a draft meeting schedule for 2025 including:

- **Week of February 10** – virtual meeting;
- **Week of June 8** – in-person meeting in upstate New York;
- **Week of September 22** – virtual meeting; and

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- **Week of December 1** – in-person meeting (and FHP workshop?) in Arizona.

The Board raised concerns about the almost one-year time between in-person meetings. Julie Carter informed the staff that an FHP field trips in Arizona may be difficult given the mountain locations of FHP projects. The staff will work with the Chair and Vice Chair to rework the 2025 meeting schedule based on the Board’s concerns.

11:00 AM	<p>Kenai Peninsula and Mat-Su FHP Field Trips Preview</p> <p><i>Desired Outcomes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board awareness of field trips planned for August 1 afternoon and full day on August 2. Local experts will preview what Board members will see and who they will meet. ● Board staff to obtain a final headcount for August 2 field trip. 	8	<p>Jessica Speed (<i>Mat Su Salmon Habitat Partnership Coordinator</i>) and Ben Meyer (<i>Kenai Watershed Forum, Water Quality Coordinator</i>) or Trent Dodson (<i>Kenai Watershed Forum, Executive Director</i>)</p>
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The Board heard presentations from Jessica Speed and Trent Dodson on the upcoming field trips into the Mat Su Salmon Habitat Partnership and the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership geographies. See the Board book field trip itineraries for a full description.

12:00 PM **Adjourn**

12:30 PM **Depart Hotel for Mat-Su Basin Field Trip**

****See Tab 9 for the Communications Committee update and Tab 10 for the Partnerships Committee update**

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