

June 10, 2025 NFHP Board Meeting Attendance

	Last Name	First Name	June 10
1	Allen	Stan	X
2	Austen	Doug	X
3	Branham	Sharif	Proxy- Scott Miller
4	Carter	Julie	X
5	Gilliland	Gene	X
6	Golden	David	X
7	Horton	Chris	Proxy- Gene Gilliland
8	Wagner	Paul	X
9	Kruse	Carter	X
10	Leonard	Mike	Proxy- Connor Bevan
11	Lohr	Steve	Proxy- Nat Gillespie
12	Micciche	Peter	X
13	Miko	David	X
14	Moore	Chris	X
15	Moore	Bryan	X
16	Nakayama	Ian	-
17	O Keefe	John	X
18	Perry	Steve	X
19	Rauch/Meckley	Sam/Kara	X
20	Ringia	Adam	-
21	Rivers	Pat	X
22	Schaeffer	Tim	X
23	Shimoda/Gilliland (proxy)	Risa/Gene	X
24	Slager	Jake	PROXY- Carter Kruse
25	Trushenski	Jesse	X
26	Will	Ted	X
27	Wright	Charles	-
28	VACANT COMMERCIAL	FISHERIES SEAT	

Approved by Motion:

- **Board meeting summary from January 28-30, 2025 in-person meeting** – motion by Jesse Trushenski, seconded by Pat Rivers.
- **Revised Board meeting agenda for June 10, 2025 virtual meeting** – motion by Steve Perry, seconded by Risa Shimoda.
- **FY2026 Fish Habitat Conservation Project list 107 projects at \$7.38M** – motion by Steve Perry, seconded by Jesse Trushenski (2 Department of Interior abstentions – David Miko and Scott Miller).
- **FY2026 FHP Operations funding up to \$2.4M** - motion by Carter Kruse, seconded by Stan Allen.
- **FY2026 Board operations** - motion by Jesse Trushenski, seconded by Pat Rivers.
- **Appointment of Sarah Schumann to represent the commercial fishing industry on the Board** – motion by Chris Moore, seconded by Steve Perry (1 abstention, Ted Will).
- **Beyond the Pond Board members all 6** – motion by Stan Allen, seconded by Chris Moore, 5 Federal Board members abstain (David Miko, Sam Rauch, Scott Miller, Paul Wagner, and Nat Gillespie).

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

1:00 PM EDT – 4:30 PM EDT

Microsoft Teams Meeting Recording

Meeting ID: 235 776 080 881 Passcode: kH2pT3ue

Time (EDT)	Agenda Item	Tab	Lead(s)
1:00 PM	Welcome <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to new Board members • Shifting tides – acknowledgement of departing Board members and FHP & FWS coordinators • Board vote to approve January Board meeting summary • Board vote to approve June 10 Board meeting agenda 	1	Tim Schaeffer (NFHP Board Chair)

Board Chair, Tim Schaeffer, welcomed the Board members and Board staff took meeting attendance. Tim acknowledged the significant changes in the landscape and how they are impacting the Partnership. Federal agencies have lost staff and that has affected NFHP Board membership, FHP Steering Committee membership, USFWS and FHP coordination, and beyond. He recognized that

these staffing changes mean a time of transition for agency staff who may be juggling new and reassigned roles and responsibilities. Tim thanked all Board members, proxies, and newcomers to the group. He welcomed David Golden (representing NEAFWA) to his first Board meetings and encouraged newcomers to ask questions and engage.

Tim described several revisions to the June 10 Board meeting agenda from the agenda that was sent to Board members 2 weeks ago and outlined that all Board votes will occur following the Executive session. The Board voted to approve the January Board meeting summary and the revised June 10 Board meeting agenda.

1:10 PM **USFWS Update**

David Miko (*Acting Deputy Director, USFWS*)

Administration and Staff Transition - David Miko provided an update on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He reminded the Board that Steve Guertin retired in April 2025. David relayed that there are lots of acting roles throughout the USFWS including Acting Director Paul Souza. There are currently 4 regional Director vacancies.

David highlighted that the Department of Interior is engaged in a reorganization effort that is impacting how we do business. This change highlights the need for us to work together in conservation and USFWS appreciates NFHP's support. David explained that the USFWS does not have a lot of clarity on their budget – they are operating on a Continuing Resolution (CR) for FY25 and are receiving funding in monthly increments. The NFHP funding is level at \$7.2M (NOTE: this includes the FWS's \$400,000 for science and technical support) and USFWS expects that we will start FY26 with a CR as well.

Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) Programs – FAC started a strategic planning effort last year and FAC completed the first draft and this effort is on hold until the new Director is confirmed and has an opportunity to provide his input. FAC would like to have the strategic plan released before start of FY2026 in October 2025. Since the administration is focused on greater hunting and fishing access, FAC is messaging hatchery production as an opportunity for increased angler access. DOI has consolidated several programs – Human Resources, Office of Conservation Investment, and others and continue to work through large scale change. David encouraged NFHP partners to reach out to USFWS if they encounter any challenges due to staffing changes and vacancies. Board member, Peter Micciche shared that Secretary Burgum visited Alaska last week and Mayor Micciche was encouraged by his engagement and level of knowledge on fisheries-related issues.

1:25 PM **NFHP FY25 Budget Overview**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of FY25 budget

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Jason Olive and Ryan Roberts (*NFHP Board Staff*)

Board Chair, Tim Schaeffer, introduced that he asked Jason Olive and Ryan Roberts to provide an update about the FY2025 Board budget in the interest of increased transparency with the NFHP Board. Jason shared Board tab 7 which outlines the FY2025 Board budget. It includes \$5.4M that

supports FHPs (projects and coordination). He highlighted how FHPs also leverage significant external funding beyond the \$2.3M that USFWS supports for FHP coordination. Jason explained that 80% of the USFWS funding for NFHP goes to FHPs, 13% is used for USFWS support (processing awards, etc.), and 2% supports the National NFHP Assessment which is also being funded by a Multistate Conservation Grant. Finally, Jason shared that NFHP is currently \$436K below the full funding authorization.

Ryan Roberts shared the breakdown of the NFHP Board operations budget. This budget supports in-person Board meetings, travel support for Board members, and Ryan's work at AFWA. Ryan reminded the Board that Board members may apply to Ryan to be reimbursed for their travel expenses to attend in-person Board meetings – the Board has a small pot to support these expenses.

Alex McOwen reviewed the upcoming Board meeting schedule for the remainder of 2025. The Board will meet next in person in Minneapolis, MN on September 17-18 (1.5 days). There will also be an in-person FHP workshop September 16-17 (1.5 days) which is optional for Board members to attend. Pat Rivers noted he looks forward to hosting the Board in Minnesota and he has 2 Boundary Waters permits for canoeing with a few spots left. Please let Pat know if you are interested in joining.

1:45 PM **Vote on New Board Member Representing Commercial Fishing Industry**

Tim Schaeffer (NFHP Board Chair)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board vote** on new Board member.

Board Chair, Tim Schaeffer, introduced that the Board received one application for the vacant Board seat representing the commercial fishing industry. Her name is Sarah Schumann and she has 20+ years of experience in the field of fishing and habitat conservation. The Board will be voting on her nomination after the Executive Session.

2:00 PM **Presentation of Proposed FY26 Fish Habitat Conservation Project List**

2 **Stan Allen** (NFHP Board Vice-Chair)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of changes resulting from ACE Reauthorization Act.
- **Board awareness** of new timeline for FY27 project solicitation process.

Stan Allen presented on behalf of the NFHP Board Review team who reviewed the FY2026 proposed Fish Habitat Conservation Project list. He shared the process that the 10-member review team took in their review which was very similar to last year's process. Stan highlighted that since the reauthorization of the ACE Act, FHP operations funding proposals are no longer considered "fish habitat conservation projects" which means they no longer require approval from the Secretary of the Interior. The FHP operational funding requests also no longer require 1:1 non-federal match. Stan presented two minor changes to the project list since it was sent to the Board and concluded by presenting the recommendation from the Board Review Team to fund 107 fish habitat conservation

projects for a total funding request of \$7.38M. Finally, Stan presented the FY2026 Board operations funding proposal for a total of \$661K.

There were several Board member questions clarifying the purpose of the various lines in the Board operations proposal that fund the national assessment. Gary Whelan clarified part of the assessment funding supports reporting writing and 1.75 FTEs at Michigan State University to compile assessment data. The Board also applied for a Multistate Conservation Grant to potentially fund some of the assessment this year.

2:30 PM **Beyond the Pond Update**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of progress re-convening Beyond the Pond Board.
- **Board vote** (after Executive Session) on new BtP Board Members

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Therese Thompson

*(Nonprofit
Management
Solutions, LLC)*

Former and acting Chair of the Beyond the Pond Board, Kelly Hepler, explained that Therese Thompson was hired to provide part-time support of Beyond the Pond to review and revise their bylaws and Board membership and support strategic planning. He reminded the NFHP Board that they must vote to elect all members of the Beyond the Pond Board. Kelly reflected fondly on his time supporting NFHP and Beyond the Pond and highlighted the pleasure it has been working with the Partnership.

Therese presented a brief background overview of Beyond the Pond, the 501c3 arm of NFHP that does business as Beyond the Pond. FHPs are able to be Beyond the Pond chapters in order to receive donated funds directly. Beyond the Pond has had some success securing additional private funds to support on the ground NFHP projects, particularly from Bass Pro Shops (\$500K). These Bass Pro donations have primarily funded projects in the Reservoirs FHP, however, moving forward the goal is to replicate the success for the Reservoir FHP with all other 19 FHPs. Beyond the Pond applied for another \$500K Outdoor Fund Grant from Bass Pro Shops. All FHPs can set up a FlipCause donation portal to collect donations or registration fees through Beyond the Pond.

The results of the 2023 stakeholder assessment and visioning were the driver behind this Beyond the Pond reboot. All former members of the Beyond the Pond Board have termed out and the Board needed to be reformed. Six nominees for the Beyond the Pond Board were presented to be voted on by the NFHP Board including: Julie Carter, Carter Kruse, Jesse Trushenski, Jake Slager, Deborah Pederson, and Daniel Wagner (three nominees overlap with the NFHP Board as required by the Beyond the Pond bylaws). These members would serve staggered terms one- or two-year terms. The Beyond the Pond Board will comprise 8-12 Board members with no less than 3 selected from the non-Federal members of the NFHP Board. Thus, two additional Beyond the Pond Board members will need to be selected soon. Desired qualifications for those two members are a candidate with a network in corporate industry and an attorney.

There was some discussion about inviting a Bass Pro Shops representative to our in-person Board meeting in Minneapolis in order to thank them in person for their support of Beyond the Pond and NFHP. There was also discussion about creating efficiencies in the funding application process for

applicants to indicate if they are interested in being considered for Beyond the Pond or NFHP (USFWS) funding.

2:50 PM **Executive Session (if needed)**

Tim Schaeffer (NFHP Board Chair)

The Board moved into a virtual Executive Session from about 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM ET.

3:20 PM **NFHP Board votes on:**

- FY26 Fish Habitat Conservation Project List; and
- Beyond the Pond Board members.

When the Board returned from Executive Session, they voted on the following motions:

- Motion to approve the Board Recommended Projects, 107 Fish Habitat Conservation Projects (\$7.38M) to be submitted by July 1, 2025 to the Secretary of the Interior by the Board Chairman - motion by Steve Perry, seconded by Jesse Trushenski, motion carries, abstentions: David Miko and Scott Miller.
- Motion to approve the FY26 FHP operational funding up to \$2.4M, contingent upon availability of funds and Board discretion - motion by Carter Kruse, seconded by Stan Allen, no abstentions, motion carries.
- Motion to approve the FY26 Board operations proposal (\$661K) - motion by Jesse Trushenski, seconded by Pat Rivers, no abstentions, motion carries.
- Motion to appoint the nominee, Sarah Schumann, to the NFHP Board representing the commercial fisheries industry – motion by Chris Moore, seconded by Steve Perry, 1 abstention (Ted Will), motion carries.
- Motion to appoint the six members below as presented to re-form the Beyond the Pond Board (*Julie Carter, Carter Kruse, Jake Slager, Jesse Trushenski, Deborah Pederson, and Daniel Wagner*) – motion by Stan Allen, seconded by Chris Moore, Federal partners abstain (n=5), motion carries.

3:35 PM **Governance Committee Update**

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Doug Austen (NFHP Board)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board vote on** revised NFHP Bylaws which incorporate elements of ACE Act Reauthorization.
- **Board awareness** of new procedures manual chapters.

Doug Austen presented on the Committee's progress updating the NFHP bylaws and developing the NFHP Procedures Manual. Several minor revisions were required to align the NFHP Bylaws with the Reauthorization of the ACE Act. The procedures manual still required a few more processes to be documented and the Board evaluation process is on hold for the time being. The Committee will be

seeking to make the completed components of the Manual available for all Board members on the NFHP website. The Board voted in favor of adopting the revised version of the bylaws.

3:50 PM **NFHP Action Plan 3.0 Update**

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**Alex McOwen and
Jason Olive (NFHP
Board Staff)**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of Action Plan Team progress
- **Board discussion** of leadership endorsement strategy

Jason Olive presented a summary of the results of the external NFHP Action Plan survey which was sent to 140 partners for an opportunity for external entities to provide input into the revisions of the NFHP Action Plan. We received 52 responses to the survey (37% response rate).

Jason highlighted that the Action Plan team will continue to meet to further refine the objectives as well as draft the strategies and actions underneath all objectives in order to finalize the plan for the Board to vote on it in September. FHP coordinators will all have an opportunity to review the draft objectives thus far following this meeting.

4:00 PM **Communications Committee Update**

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**Pat Rivers (NFHP
Board) and Ryan
Roberts (NFHP Board
Staff)**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board discussion** of draft 20th Anniversary Communications Plan
- **Screening** of new NFHP Video

Pat Rivers shared the Committee's draft Communications Plan for the 20th Anniversary of NFHP in 2026. The plan includes key objectives, audiences, and messages as well as a timeline and metrics of success. Ryan Roberts also share the link to the new [NFHP promotional video](#) that was completed in May and contains Board member, staff, and FHP coordinator interviews completed at the 2023 meeting in Charleston, SC.

4:10 PM **Policy Committee Update**

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**Connor Bevan (NFHP
Board Proxy) and Kate
Sherman (NFHP Board
Staff)**

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of FY26 Appropriations Request Letters
- **Board awareness** of FHP Coordinator virtual Hill visits facilitated by ASA
- **Board awareness** of finalized FHP Policy Advocacy Guidelines

Connor Bevan, proxy for Mike Leonard, gave an update about 10 virtual Congressional office visits that were attended by FHP coordinators and Steering Committee members focused on the appropriations ask. Meetings went very well and staffers learned about NFHP and on the ground work examples in their districts.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (AFWA) submitted a letter requesting the full NFHP appropriation to Congress this spring.

Kate Sherman shared the final version of the FHP Advocacy Guidelines developed to help guide FHPs in whether or not they should engage in advocacy work. This document will be updated as needed.

4:20 PM **Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force Biannual Update**

Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)

Desired Outcomes:

- **Board awareness** of Fish Passage Task Force activities

Jason Olive provided a brief update about the Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force. This group has been informally linked to NFHP and this has been memorialized in the Interagency Operational Plan (IOP). Currently, the IOP is on hold. The task force will give an update twice per year at NFHP Board meetings. Currently, there is not a lot of movement with the task force, but this group is still meeting. Former Task Force Coordinator Shannon Boyle has left USFWS and Jason is hosting monthly meetings for now. Federal Board members are supportive of staff participating.

AGENDA ITEM ADDED National Center for Ecologically Sustainable Water Conservation and Management Update – Doug Austen

Doug Austen reported that the group received 7 or 8 proposals to host the Center, and have narrowed potential hosts down to 4. The group is working on responding with additional questions and arranging site visits (September and October 2025) and hopes to have a final choice by the end of 2025. Doug thanked NFHP for the supportive letter the Board provided in 2024 which, along with other such endorsements, likely helped the Center receive a very positive response from major universities and consortia. The group hopes to move ahead with fundraising, development of courses, etc. after the host site is selected. Currently, there is some seed money, but universities are exploring how their fundraising could support the Center.

4:30 PM **Adjourn**