



Board Meeting Book

September 17 - 18, 2025
Hybrid Meeting
Bloomington, MN

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 17 -- Thursday, September 18, 2025

Cambria Hotel
8001 Winstead Way
Bloomington, MN 55425

Day 1 - Wednesday, September 17, 2025

1:00 – 5:00 PM CDT

[Webinar Link](#)

Time (CDT)	Agenda Item	Tab	Lead(s)
1:00 PM	Welcome <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around the room introductions • Board action to approve agenda and June 2025 meeting summary. • Board members' highlight upcoming/past events 	1	Chair Tim Schaeffer & All Attendees
1:30 PM	Upcoming Board Meeting Schedule Preview <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of upcoming meeting schedule. 	2	Alex McOwen (NFHP Board Staff)
1:40 PM	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Welcome <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board welcomed by local Department of Natural Resources leadership. 		Kelly Straka (Director, MN DNR)
1:55 PM	The Recreational Fishing Industry and Fish Habitat Conservation <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of the role of the fishing industry and the Sport Fish Restoration Program in fish habitat conservation. 		Steve Quinn (In-Fisherman, retired) & Craig Kelling (USFWS)
2:50 PM	BREAK		

3:10 PM	FHP Workshop Report Out <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of outcomes of the FHP workshop.	FHP Coordinators
3:25 PM	Local FHP Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership	Joe Nohner (<i>MGLP Coordinator</i>)
3:40 PM	USFWS Update <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of FY26 budget outlook and other USFWS items of interest.	David Miko (<i>NFHP Board</i>)
3:50 PM	The Intermountain West Joint Venture Model for Funding On-the-Ground Conservation Work <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board awareness of a successful model of partnership-based landscape-scale habitat conservation	Dave Smith (<i>IWJV Coordinator</i>)
4:50 PM	ADJOURN	
5:00 PM	Social Gathering Hazelwood Food and Drink 8150 26th Ave S, Bloomington, MN 55425 (Tables Reserved)	

Day 2 – Thursday, September 18, 2025
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM CDT

[Webinar Link](#)

Time (CDT)	Agenda Item	Tab	Lead(s)
9:00 AM	Welcome Back		Chair Tim Schaeffer
9:05 AM	2026 Action Plan Discussion <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board discussion on content of first full draft of the Action Plan, possible agency signatories, and plans for public roll-out. 		Alex McOwen and Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)
10:30 AM	BREAK		
10:45 AM	NFHP 20th Anniversary Celebration Plans <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness and discussion of events and communications efforts planned for 2026. 	3	Jake Slager (NFHP Board) and Ryan Roberts (NFHP Board Staff)
11:30 AM	Multistate Conservation Grants Discussion <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of two MSCG proposals to be submitted on behalf of the NFHP Board 		Gary Whelan and Jason Olive (NFHP Board Staff)
11:50 AM	LUNCH PROVIDED AT CAMBRIA		
1:00 PM	Local FHP Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishers and Farmers Partnership • Driftless Area Restoration Effort 		<i>FHP Coordinators:</i> Heidi Keuler, Amy Smith Sara Strassman

1:30 PM	National Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative Integration with NFHP <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness on moving NACC program and staff from SARP to NFHP 	Jason Olive and Daniel Wieferich (NFHP Board Staff)
1:50 PM	Executive Session (if needed)	Chair Tim Schaeffer (NFHP Board)
2:20 PM	BREAK	
2:40 PM	Beyond the Pond Update <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of progress of Beyond the Pond. 	Julie Carter (Beyond the Pond Board Chair)
2:50 PM	National Fish Habitat Assessment Update <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of progress on the national fish habitat assessment 	4 Jared Ross & Megan Malish (Michigan State University)
3:30 PM	Overview of Procedures for Annual Project Approval and for Considering New FHP Applicants <i>Desired Outcomes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board awareness of two draft chapters for the NFHP Procedures Manual. 	5 Stan Allen (NFHP Board Vice-Chair)
4:00 PM	ADJOURN	

June 10, 2025 NFHP Board Meeting Notes & 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	Sam	Proxy - Kara Meckley
20	Ringia	Adam	-
21	Rivers	Pat	X
22	Schaeffer	Tim	X
23	Shimoda	Risa	Proxy - Gene Gilliland
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 NEAFA) 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

3

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**

8

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**

4

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**

5

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**

6

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**

2025-2026 Board Meeting Schedule

Date(s)	Location
November 18, 2025	Virtual
January 27-29, 2026	Table Rock Lake, MO
Late April/Early May 2026	Virtual
Last week of July 2026	TBD
First week of November 2026	Virtual

Communications Committee Update

Title: NFHP 20th Anniversary Concepts on 20th Anniversary Partner Toolkit, Virtual Anniversary Celebration, as well as events schedule that we are targeting to have a presence at in 2026.

Desired outcome: The Communications Committee would like to have feedback from the Board on the concepts for: 20th Anniversary Toolkit and the Virtual Anniversary Celebration. Feedback will be appreciated in preparation of the NFHP 20th Anniversary in 2026.

Background: The National Fish Habitat Board approved a Communications Strategy for the 20th Anniversary at the June 2025 Meeting of the Board. The Communications strategy was developed from feedback received during Board discussion breakout sessions from the January Board meeting held in Nevada.

Committee Recommendation: The Communications Committee would like to move forward to finalize the FHP Toolkit, Virtual Anniversary Celebration, and further implement and provide deliverables from the 20th Anniversary Communications Strategy.

2026 Targeted Events for Promotion of NFHP for 20th Anniversary

March	Bassmaster Classic Conservation Summit
April 17-19	Major League Fishing Redcrest (Table Rock Lake, MO)
April 30- May 3	Major League Fishing Stage 5 (Beaver Lake, AR)
May 11-14	National Outdoor Recreation Conference (MN)
May	Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
May 23	World Fish Migration Day
June	Fishing Event on National Mall
July	ICAST
August 30-September 3	AFS Annual Conference (OH)
October	ASA Sportfishing Summit

Ideas for Anniversary Promotional Materials:

[Challenge Coins](#)

Calendars

Marketing table Materials Refresh needs

Tablecloth, Signage

Virtual Celebration Plan

20th Anniversary of the National Fish Habitat Partnership

Event Overview

- **Format:** 90-minute live virtual event (via Zoom, Teams, or YouTube Live)
 - **Audience:** NFHP partners, federal & state agencies, NGOs, local community groups, educators, and the general public
 - **Theme:** *"20 Years of Protecting, Restoring, and Enhancing Fish Habitat"*
 - **Date/Time:** (Pick a weekday early afternoon to maximize national attendance)
-

Agenda (90 minutes)

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks (10 min)

- Host/MC introduces NFHP and its 20-year journey
- Montage: *"20 Years of NFHP in Action"* (photos, project highlights, partner quotes)

2. Leadership Remarks (15 min)

- NFHP Board Leadership remarks
- Short reflections on NFHP's impact and collaboration

3. Partner Spotlights (20 min)

- **Three short case studies (5 min each)** featuring Fish Habitat Partnerships across the country
 - Example: River restoration success, community-led habitat project, coastal fisheries enhancement

4. Interactive Celebration (15 min)

- Live **polls** ("Which NFHP value inspires you most?")
- **Trivia quiz** with fun NFHP facts (Kahoot/ other polls)
- Recognition of **20th Anniversary Champions** (partners/volunteers highlighted)

5. Looking Forward: The Next 20 Years (15 min)

- Panel discussion with young conservation leaders & scientists
- Audience Q&A via chat

6. Closing and Reflections Celebration (15 min)

- Reflections from the founders of NFHP (scheduled and announced)
 - Debut of **20th Anniversary Commemorative Video**
 - Invitation to:
 - Share stories on social media (#FishHabitat20)
 - Join upcoming restoration events
-

Event Materials

- **Branded Virtual Backgrounds** with NFHP 20th logo
 - **Social Media Graphics** ("Save the Date" posts, countdown images, highlight reels)
 - **Commemorative Video** (2–3 minutes) showcasing 20 years of impact
 - **Digital Program/Agenda PDF** (sent in advance to attendees)
-

Promotion Strategy

- Announce via NFHP newsletter & website
 - Partner organizations share via social media (#FishHabitat20)
 - Short teaser videos posted in advance
 - Personalized email invitations to stakeholders
-

Engagement Extras

- **Virtual Photo Booth** with NFHP frames/stickers
- **Digital Swag Bag** (wallpapers, fact sheets, infographics, stickers for print-at-home)
- **Recognition Awards** for partners involved since NFHP's founding

National Fish Habitat Partnership

20th Anniversary Partner Toolkit

Introduction

2026 marks the **20th Anniversary of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP)**. For two decades, NFHP has brought together local, regional, and national partners to **protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat** across the United States.

This toolkit provides resources to help our Partnerships and collaborators celebrate this milestone and share the NFHP story with your networks, communities, and stakeholders.

Key Messages

Use the following talking points in communications (social media, presentations, or events):

- **20 Years of Impact:** Since 2006, NFHP and its partners have supported thousands of on-the-ground projects improving fish habitat nationwide.
 - **Collaborative Conservation:** NFHP works through a network of 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships, leveraging local expertise and national coordination.
 - **Our Mission:** To **Protect, Restore, and Enhance** fish habitat for the benefit of fisheries, communities, and future generations.
 - **The Future:** The 20th Anniversary is not just a reflection on past successes, but a call to action to sustain and grow our efforts.
-

Branding & Logos

- **20th Anniversary Logo Package** (available in color, black & white, horizontal/vertical versions)
- **Usage Guidelines:**
 - Use the logo on event flyers, websites, presentations, reports, and promotional items.
 - Do not alter colors or proportions.
 - Always pair with the NFHP tagline: *Protect • Restore • Enhance*.
- **Logo Draft:**



Communications Tools

Social Media Toolkit

Suggested Hashtags:

#FishHabitat20 #ProtectRestoreEnhance #NFHP20

Sample Posts:

- Twitter/X:

For 20 years, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has worked to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat nationwide. Join us in celebrating #FishHabitat20! 🐟🌍

- Facebook/Instagram:

🐟 20 Years of Fish Habitat Conservation!

The National Fish Habitat Partnership is celebrating two decades of collaborative conservation. Learn more: [insert link]

- LinkedIn:

Since 2006, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has connected communities and conservationists to restore fish habitat across America. As we celebrate our 20th Anniversary, we invite partners and supporters to join us in shaping the future of fish habitat conservation.

Press Release Template

A customizable template for local partnerships to announce their involvement and highlight local projects.

PowerPoint Template

Pre-formatted slides with NFHP branding and 20th Anniversary graphics for partner presentations.

Engagement Opportunities

- **Host a Local Celebration:** Organize a community event, project tour, or habitat restoration day.
- **Feature a “20th Anniversary Story”:** Share local project successes on your website or social channels.
- **Nominate a Local Champion:** Spotlight volunteers, partners, or community members who have made an impact.
- **Educational Outreach:** Incorporate NFHP’s story into classrooms, visitor centers, or youth programs.

Partner Checklist

- Download and use the 20th Anniversary logo on communications.
- Share a press release or article highlighting local projects.
- Post regularly on social media using toolkit hashtags.
- Plan at least one celebration event or outreach activity.
- Submit photos, stories, and event recaps to NFHP for national promotion.

Science & Data Committee Report

Title: Science and Data Committee Report

Desired outcome: Board awareness of progress on the national fish habitat assessment.

Status of NFHP National Assessment 8-20-2025: This report was developed by our partners at Michigan State University (MSU). Contacts: Dana Infante - Professor (infanted@msu.edu), Megan Malish - Post Doc (malishme@msu.edu) or Jared Ross – Research Assistant (rossjare@msu.edu).

Conterminous US Assessment

- We met with the NFHP Science and Data committee (Feb. 2025) and the Fish Habitat Partnership coordinators (May 2025) to present the status and updates of the assessment approach, solicited input regarding which applications of the assessment results would be most useful from a management perspective, and present a timeline for completing a preliminary national assessment in 2025.
- Jared Ross and Megan Malish have streamlined an analytical approach by updating coding that generates assessment. This builds on a modification of the approach applied in the 2015 NFHP assessment (Ross et al. 2023; <https://doi.org/10.3390/w15132400>).
- Preliminary assessment scores have been generated and mapped for a subset of sub-indices that characterize risk of habitat degradation from land use, water quality, and fragmentation that will be used to generate a composite cumulative risk of degradation score analogous to previous assessment results
- Megan Malish has started evaluating a newly available dataset, *Index of Hydrologic Alteration* (McManamay et al. 2022), that is available for all streams of the Conterminous US. Dr. Malish is exploring whether threshold responses of stream fishes to flow alteration metrics are sufficient for generating a flow alteration sub-index. Dr. Malish also continues to evaluate the feasibility of using a database of monthly streamflow estimates for the Conterminous United States (Miller et al. 2018). Additionally, she has initiated a regional pilot study to investigate relationships between stream flow and fishes that will inform how we may implement flow into the 2025 assessment. We are also exploring whether we might use projected stream flows to anticipate future changes in fish habitat with changes in climate. This may be beyond the scope of the 2025 assessment, but our evaluation could yield insights for future work.
- We were denied access to NRCS data characterizing agricultural best management practices that have been implemented across the Conterminous United States. We are exploring other nationally consistent data or regional datasets that could provide added value to the assessment results in place of this dataset.

Alaska

- We have identified updates to environmental data and new datasets that have been developed since 2015. We plan to continue this through 2025, including attempting to identify fish data.

Hawaii

- Dr. Dana Infante and Jared Ross met with Dr. Yinphan Tsang from the University of Hawaii to begin to engage stakeholders from the state and discuss potential data updates and identify additional collaborators. We are working with Dr. Tsang to identify whether the NHDPlusHR (a high resolution geospatial datasets representing streams) has sufficiently addressed flow diversion issues that were identified as a data limitation in previous assessment efforts.
- Dr. Megan Malish and Jared Ross virtually attended a meeting focused on streams in Hawaii in August 2025 to learn about new landscape information and fish data that has become available since 2015. We provided a “lightning talk/announcement” describing plans to update the Hawaii portion of the NFHP assessment and asked for interested collaborators to reach out.
- We continue searching for updates to environmental data and new datasets that have been developed since 2015. We plan to continue this through 2025, including attempting to identify new fish data that have been collected since 2015 that could be used for assessment.

Other Regions and Other Data

- Dr. Megan Malish and two graduate students attended the 2025 Society for Freshwater Science conference in Puerto Rico in May and met with potential collaborators that work on streams and fishes in the territory.
- We have been provided with fish sampling and barrier data for streams in Puerto Rico and are currently linking them to our spatial framework. We plan to continue trying to identify additional stream fish data that could be used in the 2025 assessment.
- We have downloaded and begun attributing environmental and human disturbance information to our spatial framework for Puerto Rico.
- We are exploring additional datasets that could be used in conjunction with NFHP condition assessment scores to provide valuable information in a conservation decision making context (e.g., TNC freshwater resiliency index).

Inland Lakes

- Through a project supported by the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, we have environmental data for lakes >1 ha across the Conterminous US.

General

- Joel Betts (graduate student) has been investigating if new tile drainage data may be used to signal impacts to fish habitat
- We have drafted a manuscript describing the NFHP 2015 assessment results that will be submitted to *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* in September.

NFHP Fish Habitat Partnership Designation Process

Introduction

Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) are the primary work units of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP). They are self-identified, self-organized, and self-directed communities of interest composed of diverse groups of public and private partners. The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) encourages all entities with an interest in fish habitat conservation to become involved with existing FHPs wherever possible. For geographic areas, keystone species, or system types that are not well represented in existing FHPs, the Board may encourage an existing FHP to expand its scope, or it may accept applications from other partnership-based entities to be new FHPs that would address these gaps. Title 16 Chapter 101 of the United States Code, “National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships” (created via the ACE Act of 2020) states that Congress shall have the exclusive authority to designate or modify a Partnership, and that only Partnerships designated by Congress may receive federal funds via this program. The law tasks the Board with recommending to Congress entities for designation as FHPs. The law further outlines requirements for designation of an entity as an FHP. This document provides the guidelines, process, and application the Board will use for considering designation of a new candidate FHP.

Board Review Process

The Board will receive applications from candidate FHPs each year during May 1- August 31. Board members representing state-agencies (n = 5) will review applications and make a recommendation to the Board’s Executive Committee, who will then decide whether to submit the candidate FHP’s application to the full Board for a vote based on the criteria for consideration below. Approval of a candidate FHP by the Board requires 2/3 of members present. Following an affirmative vote by the Board, the candidate FHP will be submitted to Congress for designation.

Process Timeline

DATE	ACTION
<i>AUGUST 31</i>	Deadline for candidate FHPs to apply for designation to the Board
<i>SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER</i>	Board’s five state agency representatives and EXCOM consider application(s)
<i>NOVEMBER-DECEMBER</i>	Board votes on whether to submit a candidate FHP to Congress for consideration
<i>FEBRUARY 1</i>	Board submits designation application to Congress for approval
<i>MAY 1</i>	Upon inaction of Congress, a candidate FHP becomes designated

NOTE: A newly designated FHP will be eligible for the lesser of \$125,000 or 50% of the Tier 1 FHP allotment during the first two fiscal years following Congressional Designation.

Criteria for Consideration

- 1) Do the state fish and wildlife agencies in the covered geography support this candidate FHP?
- 2) Has the candidate FHP demonstrated an ability to convene a diversity of partners (e.g., Tribal, federal, non-profit, private) to achieve landscape-scale fish habitat conservation outcomes?
- 3) Does the candidate FHP clearly demonstrate reliance on the best available science and contribute to the scientific foundation of fish habitat conservation in their region?
- 4) Does the candidate FHP have a robust governance structure and clearly outlined mission?
- 5) Does the candidate FHP use strategic planning and adaptive management to guide its activities?
- 6) Has the candidate FHP demonstrated an ability to leverage various sources of funding to achieve landscape-scale fish habitat conservation outcomes?
- 7) Does the candidate FHP bring resources, connections, and credibility that will benefit the Board and existing FHPs?
- 8) To what extent, if any, are the candidate FHP's goals, activities, geographic scope, or focal species redundant with an existing FHP?
- 9) How are the candidate FHP's goals and activities complementary to the goals and activities of neighboring FHPs, overlapping Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, State Wildlife Action Plans, and other state, Tribal, or regional habitat conservation plans?

Reference

Polices and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships. 2008. National Fish Habitat Board.

Appendix A. Relevant verbiage from 16 CFR 101 Section 8204- Fish Habitat Partnerships

- (a) Authority to Recommend.
The Board may recommend to Congress the designation of Fish Habitat Partnerships in accordance with this section.

- (b) Purposes.
The purposes of a Partnership shall be—
 - (1) to work with other regional habitat conservation programs to promote cooperation and coordination to enhance fish populations and fish habitats;
 - (2) to engage local and regional communities to build support for fish habitat conservation;
 - (3) to involve diverse groups of public and private partners;
 - (4) to develop collaboratively a strategic vision and achievable implementation plan that is scientifically sound;
 - (5) to leverage funding from sources that support local and regional partnerships;
 - (6) to use adaptive management principles, including evaluation of project success and functionality;
 - (7) to develop appropriate local or regional habitat evaluation and assessment measures and criteria that are compatible with national habitat condition measures; and
 - (8) to implement local and regional priority projects that improve conditions for fish and fish habitat.

- (c) Criteria for Designation.
An entity seeking to be designated by Congress as a Partnership shall—
 - (1) submit to the Board an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Board may reasonably require; and
 - (2) demonstrate to the Board that the entity has—
 - (A) a focus on promoting the health of important fish and fish habitats;
 - (B) an ability to coordinate the implementation of priority projects that support the goals and national priorities set by the Board that are within the Partnership boundary;
 - (C) a self-governance structure that supports the implementation of strategic priorities for fish habitat;
 - (D) the ability to develop local and regional relationships with a broad range of entities to further strategic priorities for fish and fish habitat;
 - (E) a strategic plan that details required investments for fish habitat conservation that addresses the strategic fish habitat priorities of the Partnership and supports and meets the strategic priorities of the Board;
 - (F) the ability to develop and implement fish habitat conservation projects that address strategic priorities of the Partnership and the Board; and

(G) the ability to develop fish habitat conservation priorities based on sound science and data, the ability to measure the effectiveness of fish habitat projects of the Partnership, and a clear plan as to how Partnership science and data components will be integrated with the overall Board science and data effort.

(d) Requirements for recommendation to Congress.

The Board may recommend to Congress for designation an application for a Partnership submitted under subsection (c) if the Board determines that the applicant—

- (1) meets the criteria described in subsection (c)(2);
- (2) identifies representatives to provide support and technical assistance to the Partnership from a diverse group of public and private partners, which may include State or local governments, nonprofit entities, Indian Tribes, and private individuals, that are focused on conservation of fish habitats to achieve results across jurisdictional boundaries on public and private land;
- (3) is organized to promote the health of important fish species and important fish habitats, including reservoirs, natural lakes, coastal and marine environments, coral reefs, and estuaries;
- (4) identifies strategic fish and fish habitat priorities for the Partnership area in the form of geographical focus areas or key stressors or impairments to facilitate strategic planning and decision making;
- (5) is able to address issues and priorities on a nationally significant scale;
- (6) includes a governance structure that— (A) reflects the range of all partners; and (B) promotes joint strategic planning and decision making by the applicant;
- (7) demonstrates completion of, or significant progress toward the development of, a strategic plan to address declines in fish populations, rather than simply treating symptoms, in accordance with the goals and national priorities established by the Board; and
- (8) promotes collaboration in developing a strategic vision and implementation program that is scientifically sound and achievable.

(e) Report to Congress

(1) In general

Not later than February 1 of the first fiscal year beginning after October 30, 2020, and, subject to paragraph (3), each February 1 thereafter, the Board shall develop and submit to the appropriate congressional committees an annual report, to be entitled "Report to Congress on Future Fish Habitat Partnerships and Modifications", that—

(A) identifies each entity that—

- (i) meets the requirements described in subsection (d); and
 - (ii) the Board recommends to Congress for designation as a Partnership;
- (B) describes any proposed modifications to a Partnership previously designated by Congress under subsection (f);

(C) with respect to each entity recommended for designation as a Partnership, describes, to the maximum extent practicable—

(i) the purpose of the recommended Partnership; and

(ii) how the recommended Partnership fulfills the requirements described in subsection (d).

(2) Public availability; notification

The Board shall—

(A) make the report publicly available, including on the internet; and

(B) provide to the appropriate congressional committees and the State agency of any State included in a recommended Partnership area written notification of the public availability of the report.

(3) Limitation

The Board shall only submit a report required under paragraph (1) in the fiscal years in which the Board is proposing modifications to, or new designations of, 1 or more Partnerships.

(f) Designation or modification of Partnership

(1) In general

Congress shall have the exclusive authority to designate or modify a Partnership.

(2) Designation or modification process

A Partnership designation or modification the Board recommends to Congress shall be deemed to be approved by Congress if Congress does not pass a joint resolution of disapproval with respect to the designation or modification by the date that is 90 days after the date on which the relevant congressional committees receive such recommendation.

(g) Existing partnerships

(1) Designation review

Not later than 5 years after October 30, 2020, any partnership receiving Federal funds as of October 30, 2020, shall be subject to a designation review by Congress in which Congress shall have the opportunity to designate the partnership under subsection (f).

(2) Ineligibility for Federal funds

A partnership referred to in paragraph (1) that Congress does not designate as described in that paragraph shall be ineligible to receive Federal funds under this chapter.

Appendix B. Fish Habitat Partnership Designation Application

Attached.

NFHP Annual Project Evaluation and Funding Process

Introduction

The America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act of 2020 and the ACE Reauthorization Act of 2024 provide the overall requirements for fish habitat conservation projects funded by NFHP through the Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) as well as the required timelines for approval by the Board and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Figure 1 depicts the timeline described in the steps below.

Board Review & Scoring

1. FHP project submissions are due to the Board by entering them in the project tracking database by November 15 annually.
2. Upon receipt of project submissions, the NFHP data steward verifies that data entries are complete and project proposals are free of errors.
3. An ad-hoc Board Review Team is established – composed of at least eight Board members, divided into teams. Board staff provide support to this team to schedule meetings and distribute materials.
4. FHPs' project lists and work plans are randomly assigned to Board Review Team with each FHP being scored by a minimum of four reviewers.
5. This Board Review Team initially convenes prior to the submission deadline to review the project scoring rubric and methodology.
6. **Scoring methodology:**
 - a. Scoring rubric is based upon the guidelines in Section 205 of the ACE Act.
 - b. Board member reviewers score each FHP across their entire project list.
 - c. Board member reviewers provide comments & feedback for each FHP.
7. Subsequent to the initial Review Team meeting (see item #5 above), the Board Review Team individually reviews and scores all assigned FHP project submissions to ensure they meet all the ACE Act criteria.
8. Board Review Team scores are shared with Board staff and compiled to obtain average scores across all reviewers.
9. The full Board Review Team meets in January to discuss the project scoring, common challenges across FHPs, discuss any scoring issues, and identify the score cutoffs for the FHP funding tiers (I, II, or III).
 - a. To determine the funding tiers, the Board Review Team should assess the ranked scores for the FHPs and identify break points for dividing them into three groups.
10. **Report cards methodology:**
 - a. Each FHP will receive a report card based on a template that is updated annually.
[FHP FY24 ReportCard Final.docx](#)
 - b. The average score (across all reviewers) is entered into the report card for each scoring criteria along with specific FHP comments (filtered) and common feedback across all FHPs (filtered).

11. Once report cards are all issued to FHPs, FHPs have an opportunity to ask for additional feedback from the Board Review Team on their scores.

Board and Secretarial Approval

12. Upon completion of the scoring process and assignment of FHPs to funding tiers, a list of all FHP projects recommended for approval will be compiled by staff and presented to the Board at its first meeting of the year (late January-early February) for review and approval.
13. Following the Board's approval of the annual fish habitat conservation project list, the Board Chair will submit the list along with a cover letter to the Secretary of the Interior for review and approval.
14. The Secretary (or their designee) must provide a response to the Board regarding approval of the projects on the Board's list within 90 days of receipt of the list.

Funding Allocation

15. Regardless of the timing of prior steps, this process does not begin until the President signs the annual appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior, which contains the NFHP appropriation.
16. The USFWS Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program determines the amount needed to support the FHPs, administer the financial assistance process, and help award recipients meet permitting and compliance requirements for each Board-approved project. (Note: The FY24 agreed upon amount was \$850,000 (12.6%)). The USFWS then communicates the total funding amount available to the Board to distribute.
17. The Board then subtracts from that total the approved amount of funding to be used for Board expenses and support (AFWA grant), database support, funds to be used for a national fish habitat assessment, and any other national appropriation desired by the Board. The resulting number is then allocated to the FHPs for funding operations and fish habitat conservation projects.
18. Funds are assigned to each FHP based on their funding Tier from their report card. All FHPs in a given tier receive the same funding.
19. Each FHP Coordinator is contacted and asked to confirm the amount of operations funding they wish to take from their allotment (up to \$125,000), and, for each project, they are asked to confirm the need and funding amount for each approved project they wish to fund. For some projects, this requires checking with the applicants to confirm whether they are willing to accept partial project funding.
20. Each FHP Coordinator communicates their final funded list to the Board Review Team Chair and Board staff.
21. If an FHP does not use its entire allocation, the remaining funds are reallocated to other FHPs based on need. All appropriated funds are allocated to projects.
22. Board staff reviews list to confirm that Tribal project funding meets the 5% threshold specified in the ACE Act.

23. Board staff compiles the national list, confirms accuracy of all calculations, then communicates the list to USFWS Regional staff who will assist the awardees with their award application process.
24. USFWS staff publish a Directed Announcement for funding availability that lists each applicant that was selected for funding and shares it with all FHP Coordinators.
25. FHP Coordinators inform project applicants on the amount of funding they will receive and send those who were selected the link to the Directed Announcement.

NFHP ANNUAL PROJECT FUNDING

TIMELINE

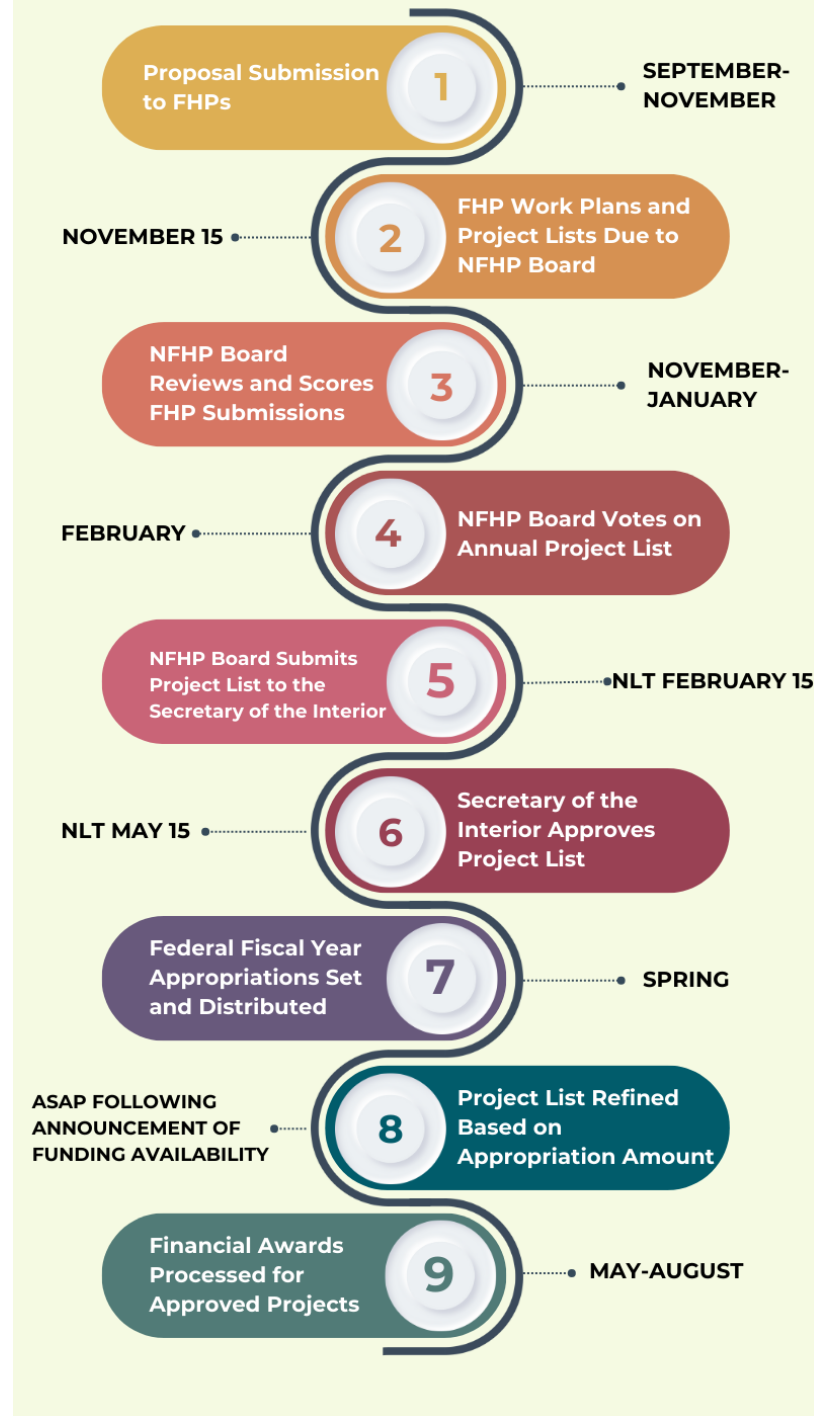


Figure 1. Annual NFHP project funding process timeline.

NFHP Governance Committee Update

Procedures Manual Components Status & Timeline

- Committee has continued work developing the NFHP Procedures Manual
- Completed items: green
- Components on pause: orange

CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY	DRAFT	FINALIZE
Bylaws	Bylaws for NFHP Board		0	Done	Revised & adopted Apr. 2025
Code of Conduct	Board member code of conduct including policy on conflicts of interest	Governance Committee	1	Done	Adopted Nov. 2024
Designation of FHPs	Description of the process for obtaining Congressional designation of existing FHPs and the process for approving new FHPs	Partnerships Committee	2	July 2025	Winter 2025
Committee Governance Documents	All standing committees of the Board are required to have their own guidance document that describes how they will operate	Each committee develops their own, Governance Committee reviews, and Board approves	3	PC – done GC – done CC - done PoIC -done SDC – done	Various dates
FHP Evaluation Process	Description of how the annual FHP evaluation process is to be conducted	Partnerships Committee	4	TBD	TBD
Interagency Operational Plan (IOP)	Include the IOP itself in the procedures manual to outline the collaboration of Federal entities within NFHP.	Jason Olive (USFWS)	5	Jan 2025	TBD
National Conservation Priorities	Description of how the Board develops/modifies the National Conservation Priorities	Science & Data Committee	6	TBD	TBD
Budget	Description of the annual project funding cycle and how the FHP allocations are determined once USFWS receives its budget	Stan Allen & NFHP Board Staff	7	July 2025	Sept 2025
NFHP Staffing Plan	Description of the Board's staffing needs and how the Board will interact with Board staff relative to duties and accountability	EXCOM	8	TBD	TBD



National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
September 2025
Minneapolis, MN

Committee Membership:

- Doug Austen (Chair)
- Bryan Moore
- Chris Moore
- Sam Rauch
- Simen Kaalstad (ACFHP)
- Alex McOwen (NFHP staff)