

## A Vision for Habitat Conservation for the Future of our Fisheries\*

Recreational fishing in the United States is woven into the fabric of America's history and culture. Americans recognize this and angling is highly-valued as one of our most popular past time activities. Recreational fishing is a significant industry comprised of thousands of small and large businesses. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, more than 46 million licensed anglers generate over \$48 billion in retail sales with a \$115 billion impact on the nation's economy creating employment for more than 828,000 people. According to the NOAA Fisheries of the United States Report (2014), the value of the commercial catch nationally was \$5.4 billion, supporting thousands of jobs in fishing, seafood processing, and wholesale, and retail sales.

- The National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP; [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)) began in 2006 following a recommendation by the Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council (Advisory Council to the Secretary of the Interior), for the purpose of conserving fish habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the American public through non-regulatory, voluntary actions such as increasing habitat connectivity, streambank stabilizations, and installing fish habitat structures.
- The NFHP is working through 20 regional efforts across the country and has implemented nearly 600 projects benefitting fish habitat, anglers, and recreational fishing-dependent businesses. The 20 partnerships implementing the National Fish Habitat Partnership program are an exemplary network of groups and individuals consisting of local communities, anglers, industry, conservation organizations, and local, state and federal agencies.
- Since 2006, \$63 million in federal funding have been leveraged with nearly \$102 million of state, local, and private funds directly benefitting on-the-ground conservation actions of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. NFHP projects have generated over \$1 billion in economic value and have supported over 20,000 jobs in ten years.
- The NFHP's coordinated national efforts to prioritize aquatic habitat conditions and areas in need of conservation or restoration through National Assessments completed in 2010 and 2015, combined with the Partnerships' grassroots approach, well positions NFHP to serve as the coordinating entity for existing aquatic restoration programs.
- The National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act will be reintroduced early in the 115th Congress to benefit the work of our Partnerships. The funding authorized through this legislation (\$7.2 million annually) is the same amount of funding the program receives annually from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and will ensure future support of and success for the program.
- **Action Item:** Pass legislation to formally put into law the NFHP and support dedicated and sustainable funding for this program.

\*A Vision for Habitat Conservation for the Future of our Fisheries document is offered by the non-federal Members of the National Fish Habitat Board