Welcome to the Board

A Manual for Members of the National Fish Habitat Board

Introduction

Congratulations on your appointment to the National Fish Habitat Board. The 22-member Board was established to promote, oversee and coordinate the National Fish Habitat Partnership and implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Plan). You will serve alongside top aquatic conservation leaders from across the United States. The Board includes members from federal, state and tribal governments as well as conservation organizations and industry.

This Board makes decisions on budgets, approves and guides Fish Habitat Partnerships, develops national measures of success and evaluation criteria guidelines for partnerships, and reports to Congress, states, and other partners on the status and accomplishments of the Partnership. The Board is supported by staff and committees.

Membership on the Board marks you and your organization as a leader in fish habitat conservation, and gives you an opportunity to contribute to the Partnership's vision of "healthy habitats, healthy fish, healthy people, and healthy economies". Your work with the Board and the Partnership will have an impact on aquatic habitats in our country for generations to come.

This manual provides some background for you in your role as a board member. Some common definitions are included in the appendix.

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Determined to reverse the declines of America's fish habitats, fisheries professionals, state and federal agencies, tribes, foundations, conservation and angling groups, businesses and industries joined together to create the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (plan). The idea was to create something similar to the effort undertaken for waterfowl and their habitat in the 1980s through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Development of the plan began in 2001 when an ad hoc group of fisheries interests, led by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, explored the concept of developing a partnership for fish habitat. That ad hoc group has grown into the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), the term we use to describe ourselves and which includes all of the stakeholders in the effort (see Chart 1: National Fish Habitat Partnership Structure).

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is built on a set of principles that are integral to its mission and goals. The initial plan was endorsed on April 24, 2006 by the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce and the President of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). A revised plan is expected to be published in early 2012.

The plan encompasses five important lessons that emerge from America's past efforts to protect and restore fish habitat:

- be strategic rather than merely opportunistic
- address the causes of and processes behind fish habitat decline, rather than the symptoms
- provide increased and sustained investment to allow for long-term success
- monitor and be accountable for scientifically sound and measurable results
- share information and knowledge at all levels from local communities to Congress.

The plan works at federal, state, tribal and local levels to target new and existing funding and technical resources for fish habitat projects.

Some of the key concepts in the plan include:

1. Science based on a landscape scale
   The plan encourages use of existing and emerging science-based tools to target priority areas and implement needed projects, address causative factors and use best practices. Project outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.
2. Non-regulatory
   The plan funds and supports projects that are developed voluntarily by willing partners and stakeholders. These voluntary projects will supplement the existing foundation of regulatory programs that protect aquatic habitats from pollution and degradation.
3. Sustained and accountable
   The plan recognizes the need to support regional fish habitat initiatives on a long term, sustained basis. It also understands the need to evaluate and report each project's performance and demonstrate overall results to Congress, partners and the general public.

The plan offers an unprecedented opportunity to meet the challenges of protecting, restoring and enhancing aquatic habitats on a national scale. The plan's vision of healthy habitats, healthy fish, healthy people and healthy economies will be achieved through cooperation, investment and stewardship. This vision will result in local actions that yield measurable social, economic and ecological benefits — and more fish!

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MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Mission

The Mission of the National Fish Habitat Partnership is to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. This mission will be achieved by:

- Supporting existing fish habitat partnerships and fostering new efforts
- Mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals
- Setting national and regional fish habitat conservation goals
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of fish habitats
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats

Goals

- Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems
- Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected
- Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms
- Increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species

Objectives

- To Be determined (end of 2011)

THE NATIONAL FISH HABITAT BOARD

The Board consists of up to **22 members**.

State Government Representatives

The Board includes **five state fish and wildlife agency representatives** and the **Executive Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**. Each of the four regional fish and wildlife agency associations (Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and Western) nominates a representative to the ELT for approval. The fifth state representative is appointed by the ELT. These representatives are selected to create an appropriate balance between inland and coastal states. The Executive Director of the Association serves on the board by the virtue of his or her office.

Federal Government Representatives

The Board includes up to **five federal agency representatives**. These include the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, who serve by virtue of their office.

Indian Tribal Representation

The Board includes **at least one representative from an Indian tribal or native Alaskan government**.

Non-Governmental Organizations

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** and the **American Fisheries Society** each nominate a representative for approval by the ELT.

Other Groups
The remaining **eight members are appointed to ensure the Board includes representation from a range of interests** including: sportfishing, commercial fishing, sportfishing industry, academic, and land and aquatic resource conservation organizations. In addition, these members are appointed to ensure the Board includes a balance of governmental and non-governmental organizations and a balance of freshwater and marine interests.

APPOINMENT TO THE BOARD AND BOARD MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Appointment
The Board is appointed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The membership of the ELT consists of: the President and Executive Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. The ELT has final responsibility for appointment and, if necessary, removal of all Board members, except those serving by virtue of their office.

General Board Position Description
Board members must be organized proactive and creative thinkers, and should have excellent coalition building skills. Board members must be able to keep the bigger picture (what's in it for all instead of what's in it for my group) in the highest regard at all times. They must be willing to invest time and energy in the Board and the partnership, and participate in Board meetings to the best of their ability.

Expectations
As a member of the Board, you have assumed some responsibilities and obligations to be engaged, attend board meetings, and help advance the National Fish Habitat Partnership. We encourage all of our board members to:

- advocate actively for the National Fish Habitat Partnership
- help the 17 board-approved Fish Habitat Partnerships leverage resources, and
- work to enhance collaboration among partners.

Code of Conduct
Members appointed to the National Fish Habitat Board are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner using the highest principles, values, and standards, to guide their interactions and decisions as a Board member. Members should seek to guide the partnership in a way that contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders and respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations.

Board Member Commitment
As a member of the Board you are expected to participate in up to three Board meetings per year (two in person and one conference call) plus related activities. While there are no specific time commitments set for Board members, you should be willing to spend whatever time is necessary to become informed about agenda topics and engaged during the Board meeting discussions and decisions. You should carefully review your Board meeting briefing book, which is provided in advance of meetings.

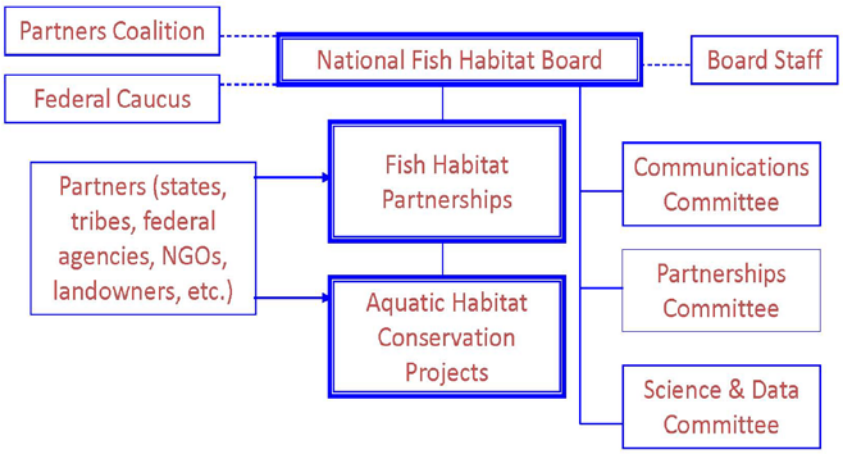
Committees and Workgroups
Board members may be asked to serve on *ad hoc* committees or workgroups that are formed to accomplish specific tasks undertaken by the Board. Every Board member should expect to serve on one or more of these committees during their tenure as Board member.

Board Member Travel Expenses
The Board has travel assistance funding built-in to its budget annually for members to utilize if necessary for travel to and from Board meetings. Please contact Ryan Roberts or Matt Menashes to inquire about travel expenses.

Federal Agency Involvement on the Board
Federal employees serving as members of the Board may participate in discussions, offer proposed suggestions for Board actions, and advance the goal of further integrating agency programs with respect to fishery habitat conservation. This includes engaging in discussions of agency policy, advising other Board members about their own agency's goals and criteria in awarding funds, and commenting on proposed suggestions for program activities. In all cases, federal employees may offer to make recommendations to other officials within their own agencies regarding ideas and concepts discussed during Board meetings and conferences.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) provides an orderly procedure for federal agencies to seek advice and assistance from citizens and experts. Any time a federal agency intends to establish, control, or manage an advisory group that includes persons other than federal, state, tribal, or local government employees operating in their official capacities, the agency must comply with FACA and implementation guidelines. The Board is not nominally or actually controlled by federal agencies; therefore, **the Board is not an "advisory committee" as defined by the Federal Advisory Committee Act**. State and private members maintain a leading, active role in the management and direction of the Board and the Board is a collaborative undertaking, not predominately an advisory body to federal agencies.

Chart 1. National Fish Habitat Partnership Structure



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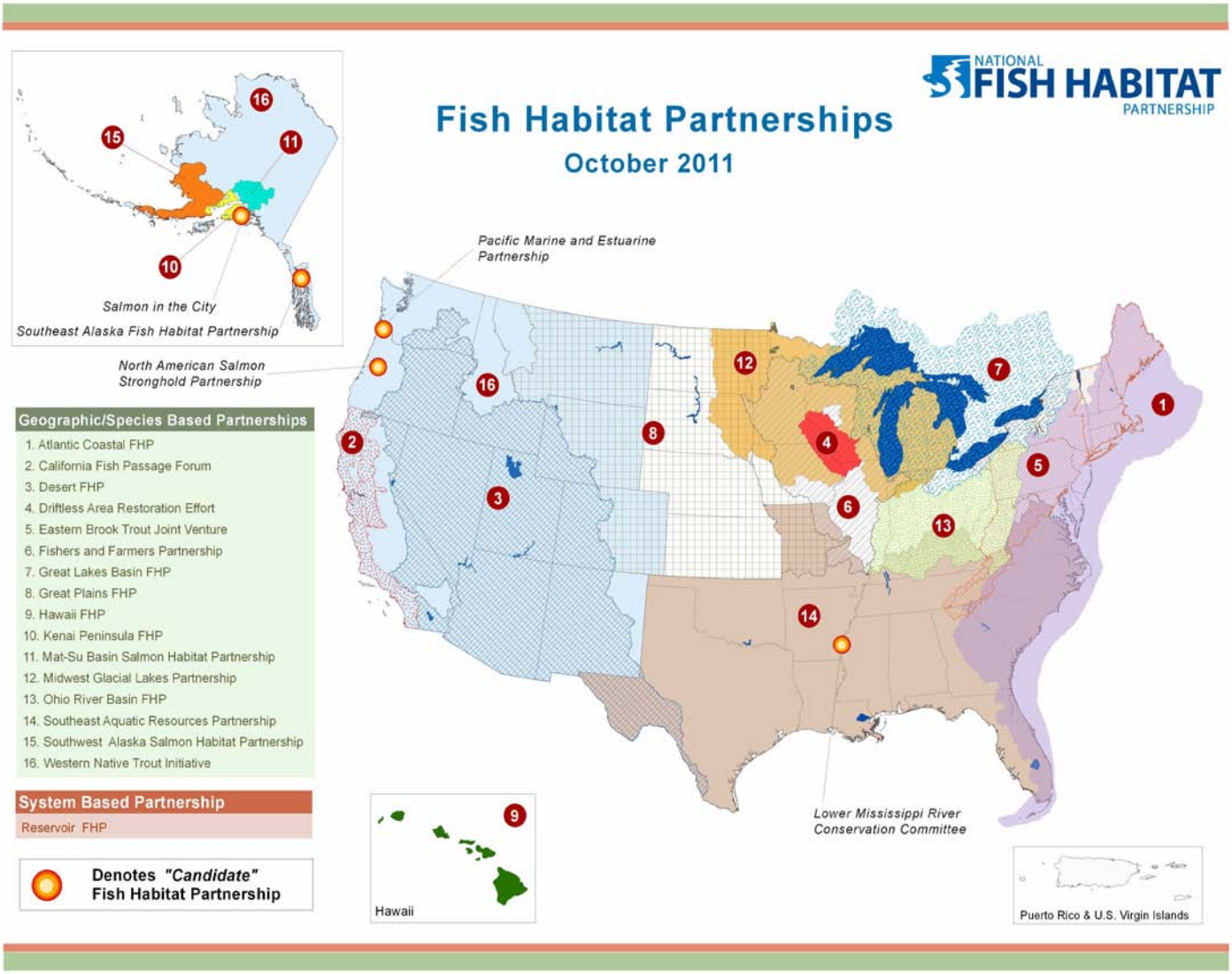
FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS

Seventeen Fish Habitat Partnerships are implementing aquatic habitat conservation projects across the nation based on their scientific assessments and strategic plans. The 17 recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships and four "Candidate" Fish Habitat Partnerships are shown in the map below, map can also be found at www.fishhabitat.org.

The Board has established policies and guidance related to the FHPs that can be found at http://fishhabitat.org/images/FHP/approved_fhp_guidance.pdf.

Chart 2. The Fish Habitat Partnerships



COMMITTEES

Committees that operate under the Board are:

Science & Data Committee

The National Fish Habitat Partnership's science and data strategy is built on four associated activities:

- identify causative factors for declining fish populations in aquatic systems
- use an integrated landscape approach that includes the upstream/downstream linkages of large-scale habitat condition factors
- assess and classify the nation's fish habitats
- provide partners easy access to information to support their work.

The partnership will assist all partners in understanding priorities for projects and how to prevent and reverse declines in both freshwater and marine systems. It will use an integrated landscape approach to link upland and marine systems. It will further the ongoing effort to determine the condition of the nation's waters by classifying waters based on published landscape classification systems.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee's role is to support the partnership by sustaining critical communications needs and initiatives. The Communications Committee plays an essential role in crafting the messages that raise awareness about the partnership and help build a community of support for fish habitat conservation.

Partnerships Committee

In May 2008, the National Fish Habitat Board established a standing Partnerships Committee as a forum for preliminary discussions, fact-finding, and formulating recommendations for Board actions that affect Fish Habitat Partnerships.

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT BOARD STAFF - 2011

Tom Busiahn, FWS, 703-358-2056, tom_busiahn@fws.gov
Matt Menashes, AFWA, 202-624-3602, mattm@fishwildlife.org
Karen Abrams, NOAA Fisheries, 301- 301 427-8629, Karen.abrams@noaa.gov
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Andrea Ostroff, USGS, 703-648-4070, aostroff@usgs.gov
Ryan Roberts, AFWA, 202-624-5851, rroberts@fishwildlife.org

National Fish Habitat Partnership Coordinator - Tom Busiahn, FWS

- Serve as the Board's liaison with Fish Habitat Partnerships and facilitate communication among the Partnerships
- Maintain and compile reports on accomplishments of Fish Habitat Partnerships
- Maintain database of contact and other information on recognized and candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships
- Provide information and guidance to prospective Fish Habitat Partnerships
- Convene regular meetings of Federal agency personnel to promote awareness, coordination, and Federal agency contributions to NFHAP activities

- Maintain database of Federal agency contact information and distribute information on activities of the Board and NFHAP partners
- Encourage Federal agencies to provide current contact information through the online Federal partners map

Policy Advisor and State Fish and Wildlife Agency Liaison – Matt Menashes, AFWA

- Coordinate with state fish and wildlife agencies to represent interests of state fish and wildlife agencies on all NFHP matters and teams
- Provide funding guidance options for Board approval and provide direction for expenditure of funding in accordance with Board direction
- Work with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, agencies, non-profit organizations, corporate sponsors, private entities, and other stakeholders/interests to secure funding resources to support Action Plan administration and implementation consistent with Board direction
- Coordinate and leverage funding with NFWF and other funding resources such as the federal caucus, state agencies, congress, corporate, non-profit, and private sponsors
- Supervise Communications Coordinator

Board Coordination, - Karen Abrams, NOAA Fisheries

- Coordinate communication with Board, Board staff, and among Board sub-committees.
- Work with Board staff, Board Chair and Vice-Chair to prepare materials and assist in running Board meeting s three times a year.
- Develop annual report to Board Chair each January summarizing Board activity during the past calendar year, highlighting any areas needing improvement

Science and Data Coordination – Gary Whelan, MI DNR and Andrea Ostroff, USGS (Co-Chairs)

- Establish measurement criteria and reporting protocols
- Develop procedures and policies for reviewing science and data needs for NFHAP projects
- Work with and support Fish Habitat Partnerships in following NFHAP science and data policies and procedures
- Provide system classification and habitat assessment information
- Communication with and assistance to data systems manager for data bases, or links to other systems needed for system classification, habitat assessment, and existing priorities databases
- Produce and print Science and Data reports as directed by the Board
- Assist and coordinate with Science and Data Committee on issues relating to National Fish Habitat Action Plan Implementation

Communication Coordinator – Ryan Roberts, AFWA/NFHAP

- Receive and disseminate information to partners and stakeholders and among teams and the board as directed by the Board
- Produce information based materials for the public, partners and stakeholders as directed by the Board through core staff in support of other team functions
- Produce information for target audiences as directed by the Board
- Assist partners to communicate within organizations and agencies
- Coordinate communications for consistency and accuracy with Action Plan and Board directives with other partner and stakeholder communication leads

- Oversee development and maintain content of www.fishhabitat.org website
- Coordinate outreach materials for Action Plan Initiatives and Fish Habitat Partnerships as needed
- Tailor development functions to successfully implement and support Science/Data, Communication, Partnership, and Partner Outreach support and other Action Plan resource related needs to insure successful implementation consistent with Action Plan and Board direction
- Work with the legislative team on strategic planning for communications related materials to benefit the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act
- Actively coordinate with State fisheries coordinators on NFHAP communications materials relative to the States

Shared Staff Duties

- Preparation of materials necessary for Board actions
- Strategic Planning recommendations to Board for Action Plan implementation, including staffing levels, restructuring of teams, adding new teams, permanent staff support for teams, etc.
- Support, and as appropriate, participate in Federal Caucus, Partners Coalition, and other stakeholder activities to insure consistency with Action Plan and implementation
- Provide assistance to sub-committees and work groups that are formed by Board as directed by Board

POLICY AND TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL FISH HABITAT BOARD

Information about the board not covered in the above summary is included in the Board Charter which is an appendix to this guide. Other important documents include (all found on www.fishhabitat.org) :

Policies and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships (October 8, 2008)
Recommended Strategic Plan Framework for Fish Habitat Partnerships (October 8, 2008)
Process for Recognizing New Fish Habitat Partnerships (March 4, 2010)
Guidance on the Use of the "National Fish Habitat Action Plan" Brand (October 7, 2009)
A Framework for Assessing the Nation's Fish Habitats (October 2008)
Final Interim Strategies and Targets for National Fish Habitat Action Plan (November 8, 2007)
Through a Fish's Eye: the Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010 (April 2011)

Appendix A

DEFINITIONS

National Fish Habitat Partnership

The National Fish Habitat Partnership is an organization established to conserve fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal funds with private funds to achieve the greatest impact on the landscape through priority conservation projects. The National Fish Habitat Partnership is aimed at growing a community of support concerned about fish habitat conservation and the future of our aquatic habitats.

Fish Habitat Partnership

A National Fish Habitat Board approved group of state, federal, local, nonprofit, tribal, Alaskan Native or private individuals or entities that coordinate to implement the Plan at a regional level. Fish habitat conservation projects proposed by these FHPs are eligible for funding as NFHAP projects.

Candidate Fish Habitat Partnership

A partnership that is working toward recognition by the Board to become a recognized Fish Habitat Partnership. Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships are eligible for coordination and technical assistance from the Board. Fish habitat conservation projects proposed by these Partnerships are eligible for funding as NFHAP projects.

Coalition Partner

A group that is not working toward recognition by the Board as a Fish Habitat Partnership, but that is working to achieve the goals of the Action Plan through the conservation of fish habitat. Coalition Partners will share in the coordination and technical assistance provided by the Board.

Fish Habitat Conservation Project

Fish Habitat Conservation Projects are:

1. approved actions taken for the conservation or management of aquatic habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms;
2. the provision of technical assistance to states and local communities to facilitate development of strategies and priorities for aquatic habitat conservation;
3. the obtaining of a real property interest in lands or waters, including water rights, if the obtaining of such interest is subject to terms and conditions that will ensure that the real property will be administered for the long-term conservation of such lands and waters and the fish dependent thereon. Real property interest means any ownership interest in lands or a building or an object that is permanently affixed to land.