Memo to: National Fish Habitat Board
From: Action Plan Revision Workgroup
Subject: Approval of Objectives for Revised Action Plan
Date: October 12, 2011

The attached document contains the latest work of the Action Plan Revision Workgroup. As you know, we have been tasked with revising the National Fish Habitat Action Plan under guidelines the board approved last April and based on additional discussions at the July board meeting.

At the board meeting on October 19th, we will seek your approval of the objectives laid out in the following document. As we have shared with you in the past, we are attempting to tell a story with these objectives. The storyline is essentially:

> Let's develop consensus conservation priorities, focus our efforts on improving habitat in those priority areas over the next five years, and build the tools necessary to support those conservation activities. The tools include a community of support for our work; improved science and economics to better inform our work; and more outreach to encourage others to pursue fisheries habitat conservation.

The attached document also contains our initial thoughts on implementation strategies (the "actions" in the Action Plan) that will help us meet these new objectives. We continue to work on the implementation strategies and hope to have these completed within the next few weeks. We will be working to refine the implementation strategies further and formatting them consistently for each of the five objectives.

We look forward to speaking with you about our work at the board meeting.

Draft Objectives and Implementation Strategies for the Revised National Fish Habitat Action Plan October 2011

Objective 1. Establish a consensus set of National Fish Habitat Priorities based on the input of approved Fish Habitat Partnerships and informed by the nationwide assessment of human effects on fish habitat.

Objective 2. Measurably improve ecological condition, restore natural processes or significantly reduce threats to all areas identified within National Fish Habitat Priorities within 5 years.

Objective 3. Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of young people and local communities in conservation activities, and raising public awareness of the role healthy fish habitats play in the quality of life and economic well-being of local communities.

Objective 4. Strengthen the role of science and socio-economic analysis in conservation by filling gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its associated database and incorporating socio-economic data for improved understanding of the benefits of fish habitat conservation.

Objective 5. Identify and communicate to the public and conservation partners successful voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to fish habitat conservation.

Implementation Strategies

Objective 1. Establish a consensus set of National Fish Habitat Priorities based on the input of approved Fish Habitat Partnerships and informed by the nationwide assessment of human effects on fish habitat.

- By 2012, the Board will develop and approve a consensus list of 50 National Fish Habitat Priorities with the input of approved Fish Habitat Partnerships. A majority of these priorities will address conserving intact fish habitat or improving fish habitat that is slightly to moderately degraded, as informed by the National Fish Habitat Assessment.

Proposed tasks and timeline

1. By April 2012, the Board will develop a process for selecting 50 consensus National Fish Habitat Priorities with Fish Habitat Partnership input.
2. By August 2012, each Fish Habitat Partnership will provide the Board their top ten fish habitat priorities along with information on why they were selected, how the National Fish Habitat Assessment informed their selection, associated geographic information, and what processes (hydrology, connectivity, material transport, water quality, geomorphology and living habitat or energy flow) will be conserved or improved.
3. By October 2012, the Board will develop and approve a consensus list of National Fish Habitat priorities.

Objective 2. Measurably improve ecological condition, restore natural processes or reduce threats within all National Fish Habitat Priorities within 5 years.

- By 2012, the Board will develop and implement measurement metrics and data capture protocols for projects addressing each National Fish Habitat Priority with the input of approved Fish Habitat Partnerships.
- By 2017, the Board will report on success of measurably improving the 50 consensus National Fish Habitat Priorities.

Proposed tasks and timeline

1. By May 2012, all 50 consensus National Fish Habitat Priorities will be spatially identified. For each priority, the amount of identified habitat by type and condition will be identified, i.e. acres for lakes and estuaries and miles for streams, and what processes are in need to be conserved or improved will be detailed.

2. By August 2012, each Fish Habitat Partnership will develop and submit to the Board a set of appropriate metrics to measure success for projects conserving intact or improving processes on the selected National Fish Habitat Priorities. Metrics will be sent to the Science and Data Committee for review for the Board.
3. By August 2012, each Fish Habitat Partnership will coordinate with the Science and Data Committee to ensure that work on all projects on National Fish Habitat Priority systems are reported to the Board and recorded in the projects database.
4. By October 2012, the Board will approve the measurement metrics and data capture strategies for each priority.
5. By January 2013, the Board will develop a reporting format for use by the Fish Habitat Partnerships in showing success on achieving the objective.
6. By the end of 2017, each Fish Habitat Partnership will determine if and report to the Board whether the targeted habitats in their partnership have seen measureable improvements in process-related variables for slightly or moderately degraded habitats, or if threats to intact habitats have been reduced. Determination of success will be scaled appropriately to the type of habitat and the reports will be reviewed by the Science and Data Committee for the Board.

Objective 3. Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of young people and local communities in conservation activities, and raising public awareness of the role healthy fish habitats play in the quality of life and economic well-being of local communities.

- Increase by 50% the number of governmental agencies, municipalities, local community groups, youth organizations, and private sector partners engaged in National Fish Habitat Partnership projects. Baseline is the number of entities engaged between 2006 and 2010.
- Increase news media citations about fish habitat conservation by 50% through outreach activities of the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships. Baseline is news media citations in 2006-2010.
- By 2013, in all outreach materials and efforts by the Board and Fish Habitat Partnerships, promote the economic values associated with healthy fish habitat as a means to gain broad support for fish habitat conservation.
- By 2014, publish, either in NFHP brochures/press releases or in popular media outlets, a minimum of 10 case studies annually highlighting increased fishing opportunities created by NFHP projects and/or economic and quality of life benefits of healthy aquatic habitats.

Objective 4. Strengthen the role of science and socio-economic analysis in conservation by filling gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its associated database and incorporating socio-economic data for improved understanding of the benefits of fish habitat conservation.

Decision Support Tool

1. By 2015, develop a conceptual decision support tool that incorporates both fish habitat condition or stress level and socio-economic data in a manner that supports the Board and Fish Habitat Partnership planning and outcome reporting purposes.

Socio-economic strategies

1. Require all proposed projects to include basic social and economic data that will improve the generation of economic estimates used for communication and advocacy. Develop the data support system to effectively store and output these data.
2. Work with industry and appropriate government agencies to gain access to existing sportfishing and commercial fishing catch and effort information on the best available spatial scale that is linked to appropriate economic valuation data and incorporated into a decision support tool.
3. Create an economic database as an add-on to existing assessment tools or through a parallel process, with data elements suitable for use in a decision support tool.
4. Integrate the economic database into a decision support tool that measures monetary effectiveness for each proposed fish habitat conservation project and that could be used for prioritizing future projects.

Overall Science and Data strategies

1. By 2015, complete refinement of 2010 Assessment and Data Support System in coordination with Fish Habitat Partnerships for incorporation into the 2015 Assessment
    a. Refine current data support system to improve the capture and integration of needed assessment data from all potential sources.
    b. Continue to refine the 2010 river assessment by improving connectivity, hydrology, land use, and water quality metrics to allow for improved fish-habitat response analysis. Incorporate updated data layers, protected lands data, and mining/energy extraction information.
    c. Integrate fisheries, shellfish, and invertebrate (where applicable) data into estuarine, inland Hawaii, and inland Alaska assessments.

d. Develop improved linkages between inland and estuarine-coastal assessments.
e. Continue to refine the 2010 estuarine assessment by developing fish/shellfish-habitat response relationships, incorporating additional process related variables, integrating the Southeast Alaska estuarine assessment, completing the spatial framework for coastal Alaska, and completing an improved condition analysis.
f. Complete initial lake, reservoir, Hawaii estuarine and coastal, Alaska estuarine, and inshore coastal assessments.
g. Seek the development of improved spatial frameworks, in particular NHD+, for inland Alaska to allow future fish habitat condition analysis.

2. By 2015, develop initial detailed process-related fish habitat assessment for incorporation into the 2015 assessment in coordination with Fish Habitat Partnerships
    a. Develop data capture and support system to capture and integrate detailed process data from Fish Habitat Partnerships, other direct NFHP partners, and from existing scientific literature.
    b. Identify a minimum of two key variables for each process that are measured in a consistent manner to be incorporated at an appropriate scale for fish habitat condition analysis.
    c. Develop methodology and fish/shellfish/invertebrate-habitat response relationships to allow for the output of condition analyses for selected process variables at an appropriate scale.
3. Continue refinement of data display and report system to support Board, Fish Habitat Partnership, and other external partners' decisions.

Objective 5. Identify and communicate to the public and conservation partners successful voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to fish habitat conservation.

<u>Proposed tasks and timeline</u>

- Continue to highlight the annual 10 Waters to Watch to demonstrate effective voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to conservation.
- By 2015, create a web-based 'tool-kit' of best practices to achieve fish habitat conservation using existing resources and organized by threat/resource need (e.g. sedimentation, nutrients, flow, protection, bank stabilization, etc.) to the fishhabitat.org website.

   a. This 'tool-kit' should easily accessible to help people find existing resources that already exist rather than creating a new compendium – so the tool-kit would provide a way to easily find the information needed.

- By 2013, establish a learning network among Fish Habitat Partnerships through calls and regularly scheduled webinars to promote continuous learning and information exchange among NFHP partners.
- Through news releases, outreach materials, and face-to-face venues, highlight success stories where conservation action led to resilient aquatic systems (e.g. floodplains, coastal wetlands) that provide vital ecosystem services and economic benefits along with healthy fish habitat.
   a. By 2012, with input from Fish Habitat Partnerships, identify 5-10 illustrative success stories.
   b. By 2013, with input from the Communications Committee and the Science and Data Committee, develop compelling, technically sound descriptions of the voluntary, non-regulatory approaches utilized and the benefits achieved.
   c. By 2014, strategically employ this information to enhance knowledge among conservation partners and the public.