2012 Waters to Watch Projects and Descriptions

1. Anchor River, Kenai Peninsula, Alaska

FHP: Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership (KPFHP)

Description:
To improve landscape-scale resilience for salmon in the Anchor River, Cook Inletkeeper, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust, and Kenai Watershed Forum will integrate KBRR and USFWS watershed models and spatially-explicit, remotely-sensed thermal data to help Kachemak Heritage Land Trust determine which parcels with key Chinook and coho salmon habitat are the highest priority for permanent conservation, and work together to create and implement an outreach strategy for public and private landowner contact.

2012outcomes:
This project will provide a unique opportunity to link state-of-the-art science with conservation planning and land protection strategies designed for perpetual habitat conservation to benefit salmon. This project builds upon previous work to create corridors of riparian land on the Anchor River to preserve salmon habitat.

Partners:
Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG)
Cook Inletkeeper
Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
Kenai Watershed Forum
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

2. Bear Creek, Wisconsin

FHP: Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE)

Description:
Bear Creek begins in Sauk County and flows for nearly 27 miles before entering the Wisconsin River, approximately 1.7 miles west of Lone Rock, in Richland County. It is currently classified by statute as a cold water stream in the upper reaches and as a warm water sport fishery in the lower 8.2 mile reach near the mouth. Six major tributary streams and many small tributaries flow into Bear Creek.

Years of erosion, has taken its toll on Bear Creek and several partners jumped into action to remediate the problem. Wisconsin DNR worked with a private landowner to secure a public fishing easement which helped catapult the streambank work.

2012 outcomes:
Further enhancement of streambanks to restore natural stream flow over a 2 mile stretch.

Partners:
Trout Unlimited (TU)
The Sauk County Land Conservation Department
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR)
USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS)

3. Boone River Watershed, Iowa

FHP: Fishers and Farmers Partnership (FFP)

Description:
The Oxbow Restoration Project within the Boone River Watershed (BRW) includes White Fox Creek, Eagle Creek, Buck Creek and Lyons Creek (Hamilton and Wright Counties). The BRW is a Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) watershed and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has designated the lower 26 miles as a "Protected Water Area." The Boone River is a tributary of the Des Moines River in north-central Iowa.

Current and past land use practices in the Boone River Watershed have affected both stream hydrology and hydraulics. As a result, these affects have degraded and fragmented oxbow habitat and have caused impairments to water quality. Fishers & Farmers partners are working together with landowners to restore oxbow habitat critical to all fish species and especially to the federally listed endangered species.

2012 outcomes:
In the spring (2012), the perimeter of restored White Fox Creek oxbow will be planted with native grasses. Fishers & Farmers has proposed this project for NFHP funding in 2012 for the restoration of additional oxbows.

Partners:
Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IA DNR)
Hamilton and Wright Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Iowa Soybean Association
Iowa State University
Landowners

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
US Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services (US FWS)

4. Conner Creek Migration Barrier Removal, California

FHP: California Fish Passage Forum(CA FPF)

Description:
The Conner Creek Project will provide full passage for all life stages of coho salmon and steelhead by removing two culverts. Conner Creek flows directly into the Trinity River, a tributary of the Klamath River. The first phase, accomplished in 2011, provides full fish and flood/debris passage; eliminates the potential for sediment; decreases the potential for upstream headcutting; improves flow capacity; reintroduces large wood routing in the stream, and restores natural stream function (see photos below). The second phase removal of the culvert at Red Hill Road will build on the benefits of the completed first phase of the project and is scheduled for summer 2012.The completion of both Conner Creek project opens 2.5 miles of habitat to adult and juvenile salmonids. This project is part of a larger effort by the Five Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5C). The 5C Program serves the counties of northwestern California - Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Siskiyou and Trinity. The goal of 5C is to formulate strategic land use conservation standards and implement practices to restore fisheries habitat.

2012 outcomes:
The First project, at Conner Creek Road, has been completed and will be actively monitored for three years. The second project at Red Hill Road will begin July of 2012.

Partners:
Northern California Resource Conservation and Development Council: Five Counties Salmonid Conservation Program
California Coastal Conservancy
California Department of Fish and Game Fisheries Restoration Grant Program
Trinity County Department of Transportation
National Association of Counties
United States Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee (RAC)
US Forest Service/National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
US Bureau of Reclamation-Trinity River Restoration Program Watershed Restoration Program
LanMark Forestry

5. Harpeth River, Tennessee

FHP: Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)

Description:
The Harpeth River, one of the most ecologically, culturally, historically, and recreationally significant rivers in Tennessee, drains nearly 900 square miles in Middle Tennessee and flows through one of the fastest growing areas in the country. It is a state designated Scenic River in Davidson County outside, but easily accessible from, downtown Nashville.

2012 outcomes:
The Harpeth River Watershed Association (HRWA) secured $350,000 from collaborative funding programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, and the National Fish Habitat Partnership for activities that improve fish habitat and remove blockages to fish passage. This project will remove the only barrier on the Harpeth River, a lowhead dam, and eliminate a nearly two mile long pool impoundment in order to reconnect 36 miles of river and restore riffle/run aquatic habitat that is presently submerged.

Partners:
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)
US Fish & Wildlife Service (US FWS)
Harpeth River Watershed Association (HRWA)
City of Franklin, Tennessee
Beaver Creek Hydrology, LLC (BCH)
Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC)
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)
Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association (TSRA)
United States Geological Survey (USGS)
Vulcan Materials (local quarry)

6. Rio Grande Tributaries, Texas

FHP: Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP)

Description:
The Rio Grande, which runs through the heart of the northern Chihuahuan Desert in the Big Bend region of Texas, is the centerpiece of an emerging bi-national system of lands dedicated to conservation.

Rio Grande tributary watersheds, such as Terlingua and Alamito creeks, are important spawning and refuge areas for imperiled fishes, including the federally listed Rio Grande silvery minnow.

2012 outcomes:
The Alamito Creek restoration project is one of DFHP's 2012 priorities. Alamito Creek Preserve (The Preserve) contains a 3.5 mile section of scenic Alamito Creek that historically flowed much of the year. Perennial pools in this reach support populations of endemic fishes, amphibians and aquatic invertebrates, and a healthy riparian habitat. The Preserve and its segment of Alamito Creek are recognized by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) as meeting the criteria as an Ecologically Unique River and Stream Segment. The Preserve will restore natural, perennial creek flow by removing large areas of invasive mesquite which is the dominant upland vegetation in the watershed and is partially responsible for lowering the water table in an already arid habitat.

Partners:
US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS)
- Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

7. Rock Creek Coast, South Carolina

FHP: Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP)

Description:
In South Carolina, shorelines adjacent to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway are subject to severe erosion due to heavy boat traffic and artificial channelization, which disrupts natural shoreline processes. This erosion destroys or threatens oyster reef and salt marsh habitats. In the project area, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) has documented 2.25miles of shoreline on the Ashepoo/Rock Creek cut as suffering from severe marsh erosion and in need of protection.

According the SCDNR's latest oyster resource survey, conducted between 2003 and 2008 using ¼ meter digital aerial photography, there are no oysters on this shoreline and the marsh edge is as much as 35 meters from the water, with nothing but mudflats in front of it. Previous work has demonstrated that bagged oyster shells provide a stable substrate for oyster recruitment and create self-sustaining reefs which stabilize the shoreline, promote sediment accretion, and foster salt marsh expansion in various waters and creeks within the waterway.

2012 Outcomes:
This project will rehabilitate tidal marsh areas experiencing degradation from boat traffic along the Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW), by constructing natural breakwaters using oyster reefs.

Partners:
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' (SCDNR) community-based oyster restoration program (SCORE)
US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS)
Coastal Conservation Association (CCA)

8. Table Rock Lake, Missouri

FHP: Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP)

Description:
Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo are located in the White River Hills region of the Ozark Plateau along the Missouri-Arkansas border. At conservation pool, Table Rock Lake encompasses 43,100 acres with 745 miles of shoreline, and Lake Taneycomo covers just over 2,000 acres. Table Rock Lake is the second largest of five reservoirs in the upper White River drainage basin which covers over 5,000 square miles in both Missouri and Arkansas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates the recreational use of the lake at between 40 and 50 million visitor visits annually with the economic value of the fishery estimated at $41 million (1997 estimate). Along with the Branson tourism industry, Table Rock and the other White River impoundments are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars pumped into the local economies.

This high-profile recreational development has come with an environmental cost. The large number of visitors to the area and population growth created water quality issues in Table Rock Lake.

2012 Outcomes:
Habitat improvements to the upper portion of Lake Taneycomo began in November 2011 and are ongoing in 2012. These habitat improvements will include large rock structures designed to increase holding areas for trout and other fish, as well as increase locations for anglers to fish. Project publicity has been a success, with the cooperation of our various partners and other media outlets and businesses.

Partners:
Missouri Department of Conservation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Bass Pro Shops
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Army Corps of Engineers
Table Rock Lake Water Quality, Inc.

9. Weber River, Utah

FHP: Desert Fish Habitat Partnership/ Western Native Trout Initiative (DFHP/WNTI)

Description:
This project is intended to protect native fishes and improve water use efficiency for water companies in the Weber River drainage. It will re-connect 17.5 total river miles and allow native trout and sucker species to pass one mainstem diversion and two culvert barriers in two tributaries.

Habitat fragmentation is the primary threat to the persistence of the bonneville cutthroat trout population. These barriers have fragmented mainstem and spawning habitats. Restoring connectivity at these sites is a critical step towards improving the resiliency and genetic diversity of this population.

2012 outcomes:
Facilitate upstream passage by slowing water velocity for as many species as possible in the Lower Weber River drainage with target species being Bonneville cutthroat trout and Bluehead sucker.

Partners:
Trout Unlimited (TU)
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Dept. of Transportation

10. White River, Vermont

FHP: Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV)

Description:
Tropical Storm Irene devastated much of the upper reaches of the White River. Rochester was one of those towns ravaged by sudden and historic rain falls that swept across Vermont on August 2011. Roads and infrastructure where destroyed by the unprecedented stream flow. The town was stranded from the surrounding communities. There is still much work left to be done to secure infrastructure throughout affected parts of the state.

2012 outcomes:

Funding from the National Fish and Habitat Action Plan's Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture made possible the purchase of a 34 foot bridge, spanning the river. The bridge will be placed in spring 2012.

Partners:

White River Partnership
Town of Rochester, VT
Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Trout Unlimited (TU)