Title: Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Evaluation Progress Report

Desired outcome: An informational update to the Board on the initial outcomes from the FHP Performance Evaluation "test drive."

Background: The Board conditionally approved a set of Fish Habitat Partnership performance measures at its July 27, 2011 meeting and requested a "test drive" of the evaluation process. The primary purposes of the test drive are to:

A. Assess the relevance of the measures and the performance level rating criteria associated with each measure; and,

B. Determine how well the evaluation process works.

The findings from the test drive are to be reported back to the Board with recommendations to finalize the process for evaluating Fish Habitat Partnership performance.

Although the test drive process has not been fully completed, this briefing is intended to keep the Board informed on the progress that has been made to date. Final recommendations will be presented to the Board for considerations and actions at the July 2012 meeting.

Reference material: See below for "Progress Report: Performance Evaluation of Fish Habitat Partnerships"

PROGRESS REPORT

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS

National Fish Habitat Board
Kelly Hepler, Chair

Prepared by: Performance Review Team

Background

The National Fish Habitat Partnership (National Partnership or NFHP) is an unprecedented effort to build and support partnerships that are strategically focused on fish habitat conservation. The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) guides this initiative and establishes processes for bringing partners together, challenging them to collaboratively advance strategic priorities, as well as measure and report on the outcomes of their conservation actions. A high level of commitment to these principles distinguishes the National Partnership from other fish habitat conservation programs.

To uphold the high standards set by the Action Plan, the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) tasked its Criteria Development Committee (Committee) with developing a set of measures that would evaluate Fish Habitat Partnership performance levels for core operational functions (i.e. coordination, scientific assessment, strategic planning, data management, project administration, communications, and outreach). The Committee presented ten performance measures for the Board's considerations and action during its meeting on July 27, 2011.

Direction from the National Fish Habitat Board

The Board conditionally approved the set of Fish Habitat Partnership performance measures, as presented (Appendix A), and requested a "test drive" of the evaluation process. The primary purposes of the test drive were to:

1. Assess the relevance of the measures and the performance level rating criteria associated with each measure; and,

2. Determine how well the evaluation process works.

The findings from the test drive are to be reported back to the Board with recommendations to finalize the process for evaluating Fish Habitat Partnership performance.

Performance Review Team

The Board Chair established a Review Team charged with implementing and assessing the performance evaluation of Fish Habitat Partnerships. The Review Team members were: Steve Perry (Board member), Krystyna Wolniakowski (Board member), Tom Busiahn (Board staff), Andrea Ostroff (Board staff), and Karen Abrams (Board staff).

Performance Evaluation Process

Performance evaluation forms, along with instructions for completing the forms, were sent to the coordinator or Steering Committee Chair of each Fish Habitat Partnership on September 14, 2011. Five regional conference calls were held with representatives of each Fish Habitat Partnership to answer questions about the performance evaluation process and completing the forms. Completed performance evaluation forms were received from all seventeen recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships by January 10, 2012; covering their activities during the 2011 calendar year (January 1-December 31). The Performance Review Team met by conference call on January 9, 2012 to discuss the process it would follow to complete its assessment of each Fish Habitat Partnership's responses to the 10 performance measures. The first part of the process entailed having each team member review and rate the performance level independently, using a rating scale of 1 to 4, and then the scores were averaged (n=5 for each Fish Habitat Partnership response) to determine the final rating. The lowest possible composite score for a Fish Habitat Partnership was 10, and the highest possible score was 40. The Performance Review Team collectively discussed each Fish Habitat Partnership's performance evaluation outcome by teleconference on March 7, 2012 and then the performance evaluation outcomes were sent to the respective Fish Habitat Partnerships for their review and considerations. The Performance Review Team is currently receiving Fish Habitat Partnership feedback on all aspects of the performance evaluation process.

Performance Evaluation Outcomes

Overview

Fish Habitat Partnerships cooperated very well with the Performance Review Team. Responses by Fish Habitat Partnerships on the Evaluation Form were filed in a timely manner, but varied widely in their depth and completeness. Members of the Performance Review Team used somewhat different approaches in evaluating responses; some considered only the content of the responses, and others supplemented the responses with their personal knowledge of Fish Habitat Partnerships. The final report will include recommendations to achieve more uniform responses from Fish Habitat Partnerships and more uniform evaluations by reviewers.

The most prominent general observation is that older Fish Habitat Partnerships achieved higher scores. This may be due to a greater maturity among older Fish Habitat Partnerships in their strategic planning, resource assessment, and outreach. However, the older Fish Habitat Partnerships also receive a higher level of funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service, a factor that may contribute to their higher scores. At this point in time, the younger Fish Habitat Partnerships have a very short track record, so drawing definitive conclusions from this observation is probably not fully justified.

Performance Measures

When the scores for each performance measure are averaged among all Fish Habitat Partnerships, five measures (#1, #3, #4, #5, and #6) received ratings that were ≥ 2.8 points (2.8 represents 70% of the available points) while five measures (#2, #7, #8, #9, and #10) fell below this point total (Figure 1). Performance measures #1 (addressing strategic priorities) and #3 (focusing on the causes of fish habitat decline) had the highest average scores (3.7 and 3.6, respectively), whereas performance measures #9 (coordination with NFHP Science and Data Committee), #7 (use of resource condition assessments), and #10 (measuring progress) had the lowest average scores (1.5, 2.0, and 2.1, respectively). The average scores for performance measures #2 (use of project effectiveness measures), #4 (leveraging NFHP funds), #5 (prioritizing projects for funding), #6 (level of engagement with other FHPs), and #8 (quality and quantity of outreach) ranged from 2.4 to 3.2.

For three of the performance measures (#2, #7, and #8) that had consolidated average scores that were less than 2.8, the older Fish Habitat Partnerships (recognized 3.6 years or more) generally received higher ratings than the younger partnerships (recognized for 2.7 years or less). With performance measure #2 (use of project effectiveness measures), five of six (83%) older Fish Habitat Partnerships received a score ≥ 3.0, while only three of eleven (27%) younger partnerships received a similar score (Figure 2).

For performance measure #7 (use of resource condition assessments), three of the six (50%) oldest Fish Habitat Partnerships received scores that were ≥ 3.0, whereas just one of the eleven (9%) younger partnerships scored a 3.0 or higher (Figure 3). Likewise, with performance measure #8 (quality and quantity of outreach), three of six (50%) of the older Fish Habitat Partnerships received scores of ≥ 3.0 for this measure; only four of eleven (36%) of the younger partnerships achieved scores this high (Figure 4). Age of the Fish Habitat Partnership did not play a discernable role for the scores received for performance measures #9 (coordination with NFHP Science and Data Committee) and #10 (measuring progress), as none of the partnerships received a score that was 3.0 or more for former measure (Figure 5) and only one partnership scored as high as 3.0 for the latter measure (Figure 6).

Fish Habitat Partnerships

Seven of the seventeen (41%) Fish Habitat Partnerships received ≥ 70% of the total number of performance rating points available (28 points or higher); two of these seven had total scores that exceeded 80% of the available points (Figure 7). Of the ten Fish Habitat Partnerships that received less than 70% of the available points, only one fell below the 50% point total (20 points). It was evident that the number of years a Fish Habitat Partnership has been recognized was linked to their level of performance, though there were exceptions. The average age (years recognized) for the Fish Habitat Partnerships who received a total score of 28 points, or more, is 3.7 years (range = 2.7 to 4.2 years) and for those partnerships whose scores were < 28, the age averaged 2.3 years (range = 1.8 to 3.6 years).

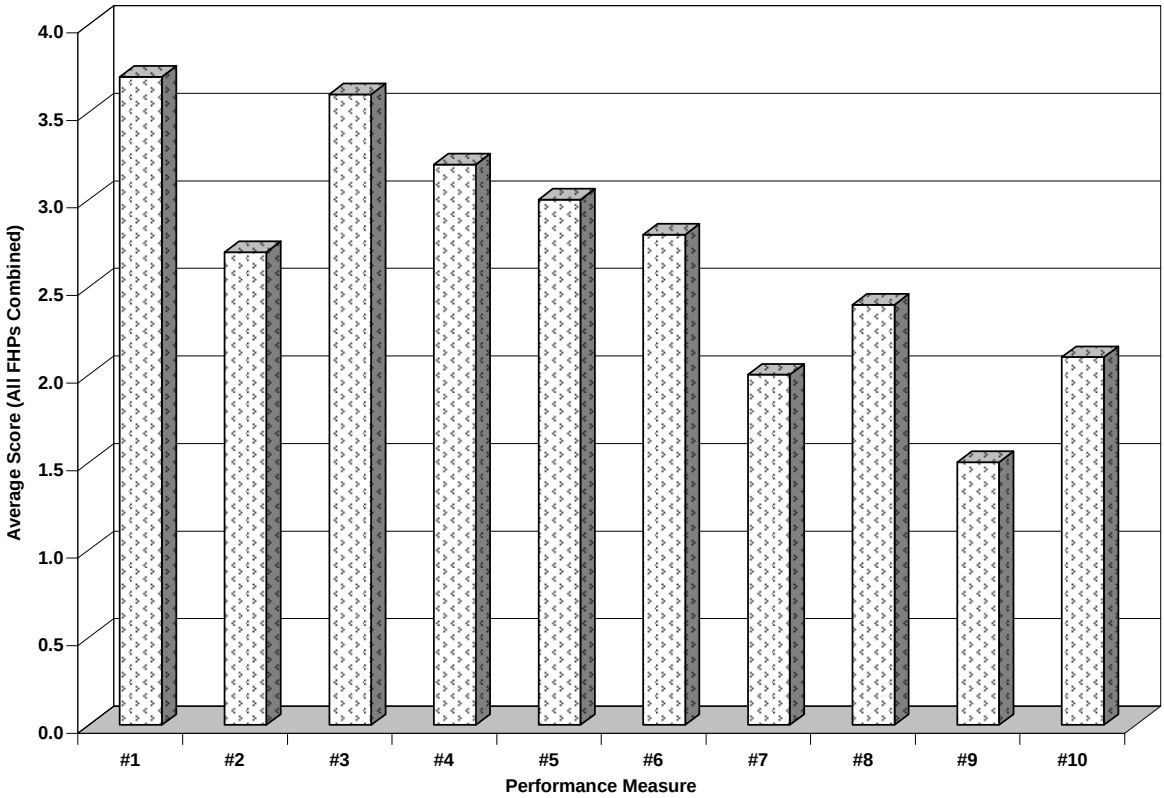

Figure 1. Average scores for the ten measures used to evaluate Fish Habitat Partnership performance levels.

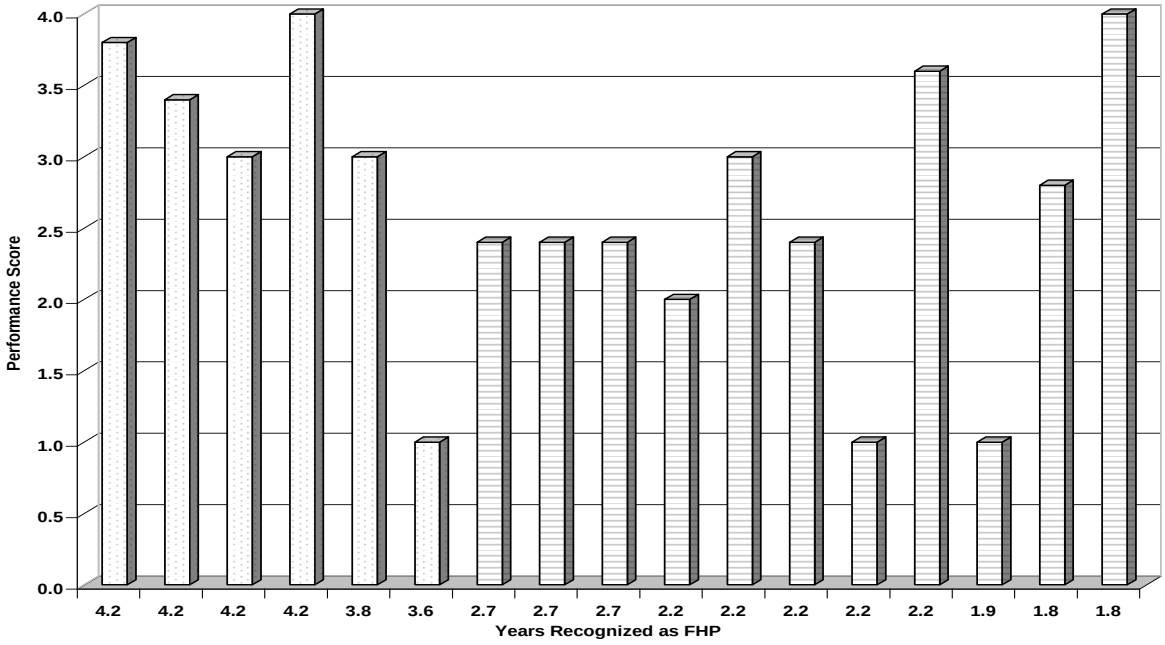

Figure 2. Fish Habitat Partnership scores for their use of project effectiveness measures (performance measure #2). Fish Habitat Partnerships are ranked from the oldest on the left to the youngest on the right.

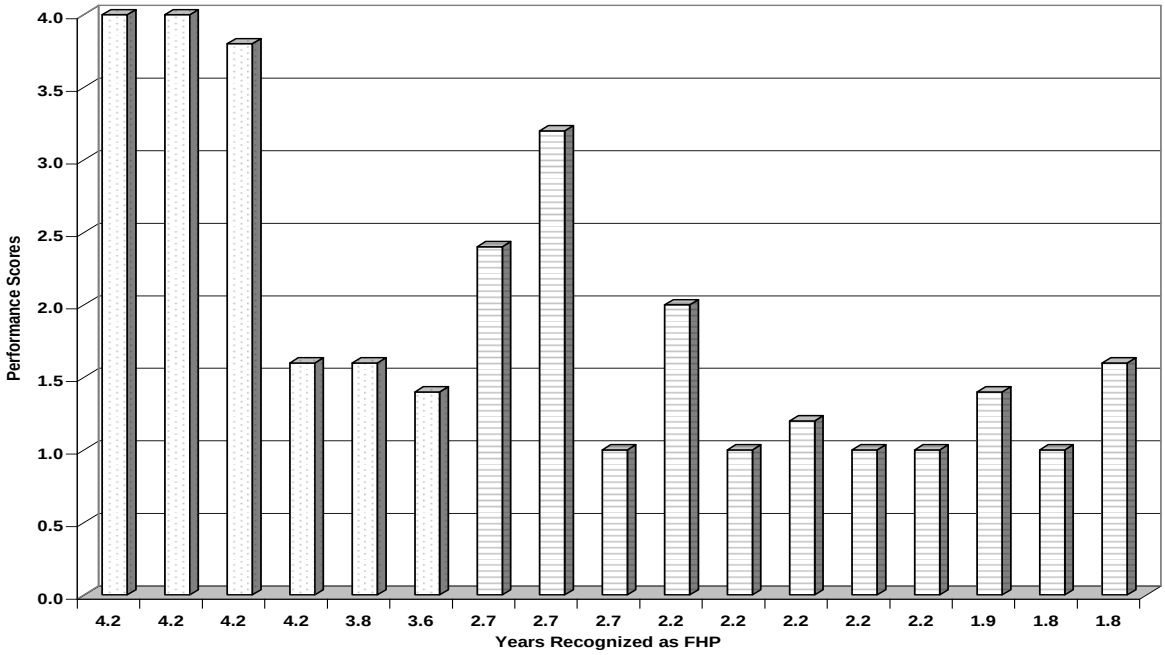

Figure 3. Fish Habitat Partnership scores for their use of resource condition assessments (performance measure #7). Fish Habitat Partnerships are ranked from the oldest on the left to the youngest on the right.

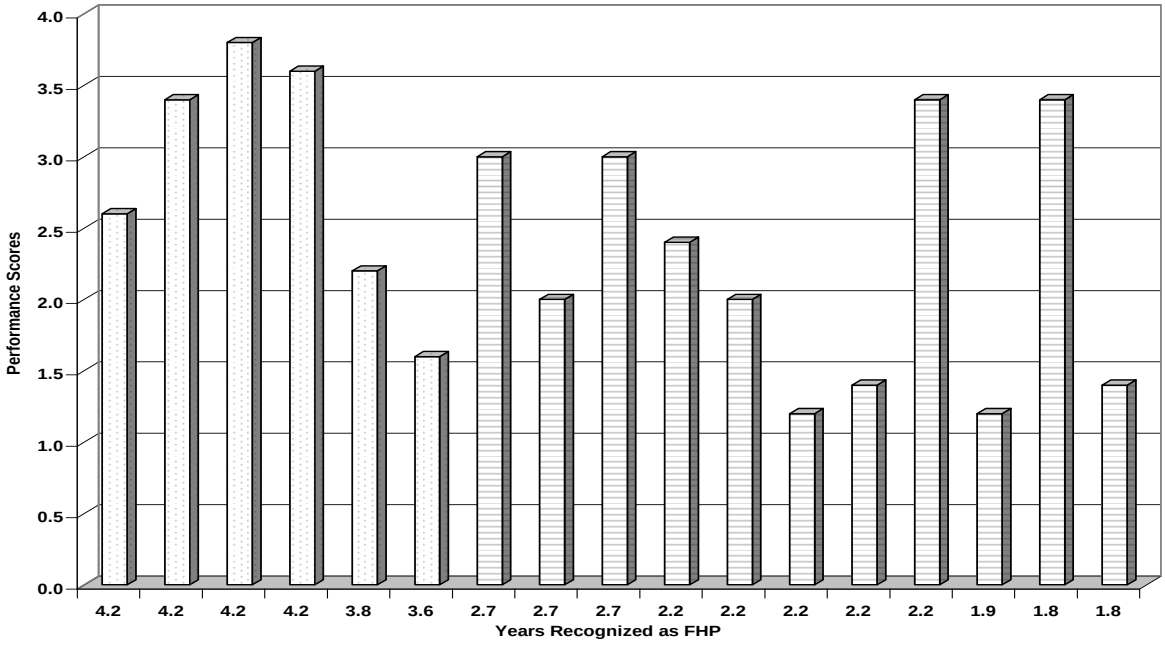

Figure 4. Fish Habitat Partnership scores for their quality and quantity of outreach (performance measure #8). Fish Habitat Partnerships are ranked from the oldest on the left to the youngest on the right.

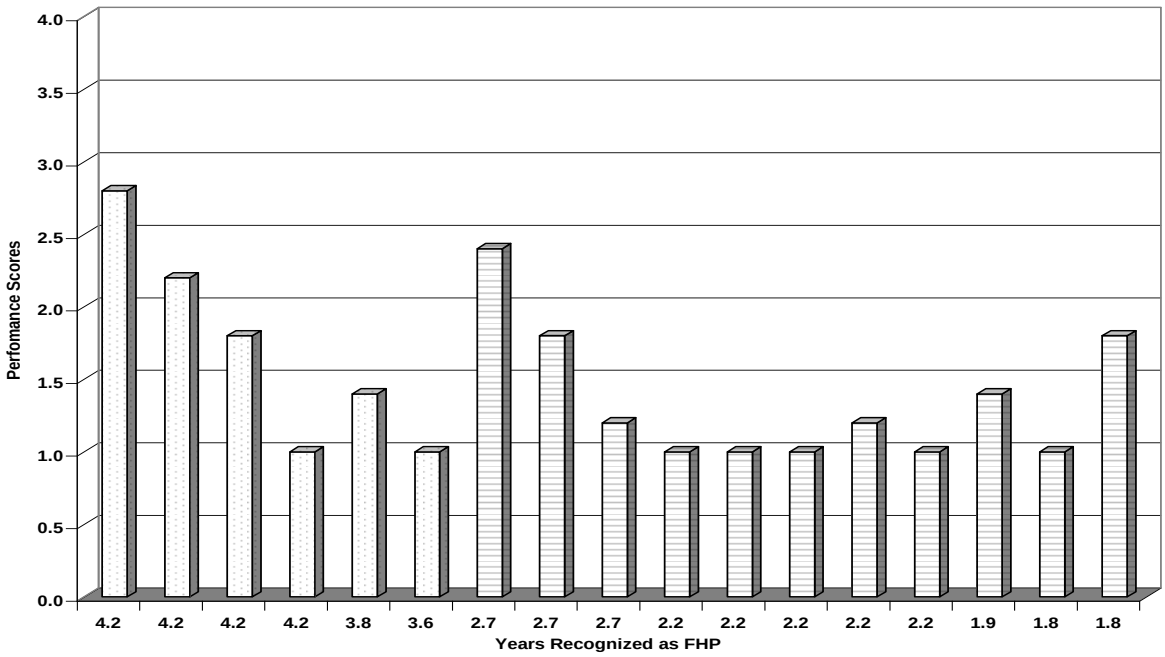

Figure 5. Fish Habitat Partnership scores for their coordination with NFHP Science and Data Committee (performance measure #9). Fish Habitat Partnerships are ranked from the oldest on the left to the youngest on the right.

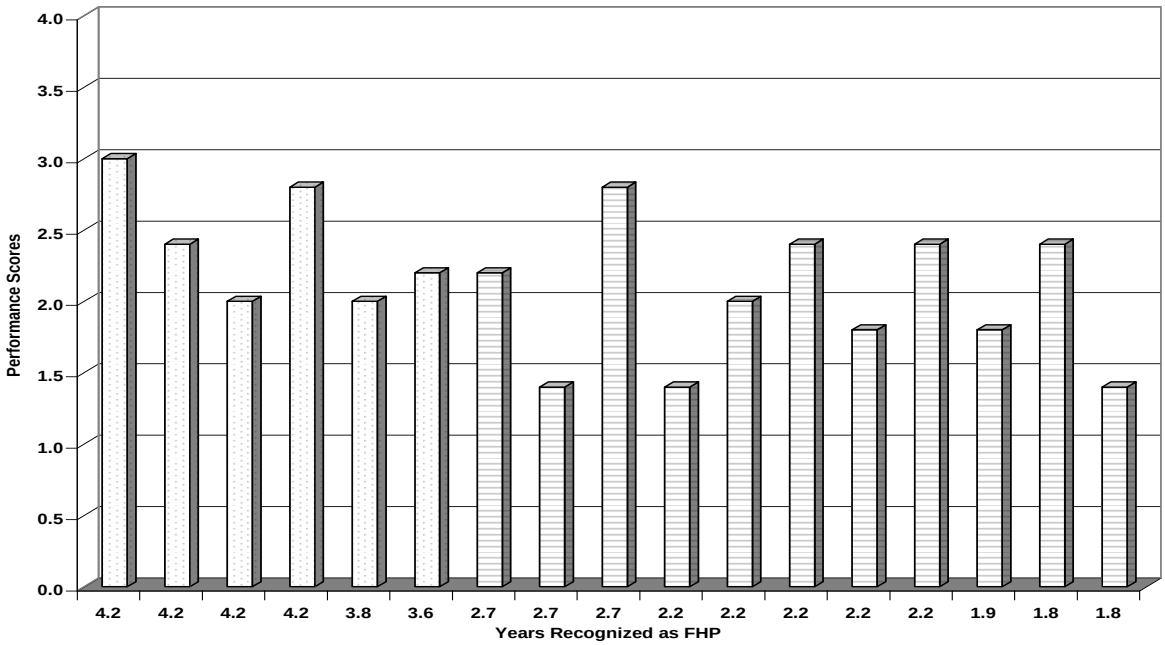

Figure 6. Fish Habitat Partnership scores for measuring their progress (performance measure #10). Fish Habitat Partnerships are ranked from the oldest on the left to the youngest on the right.

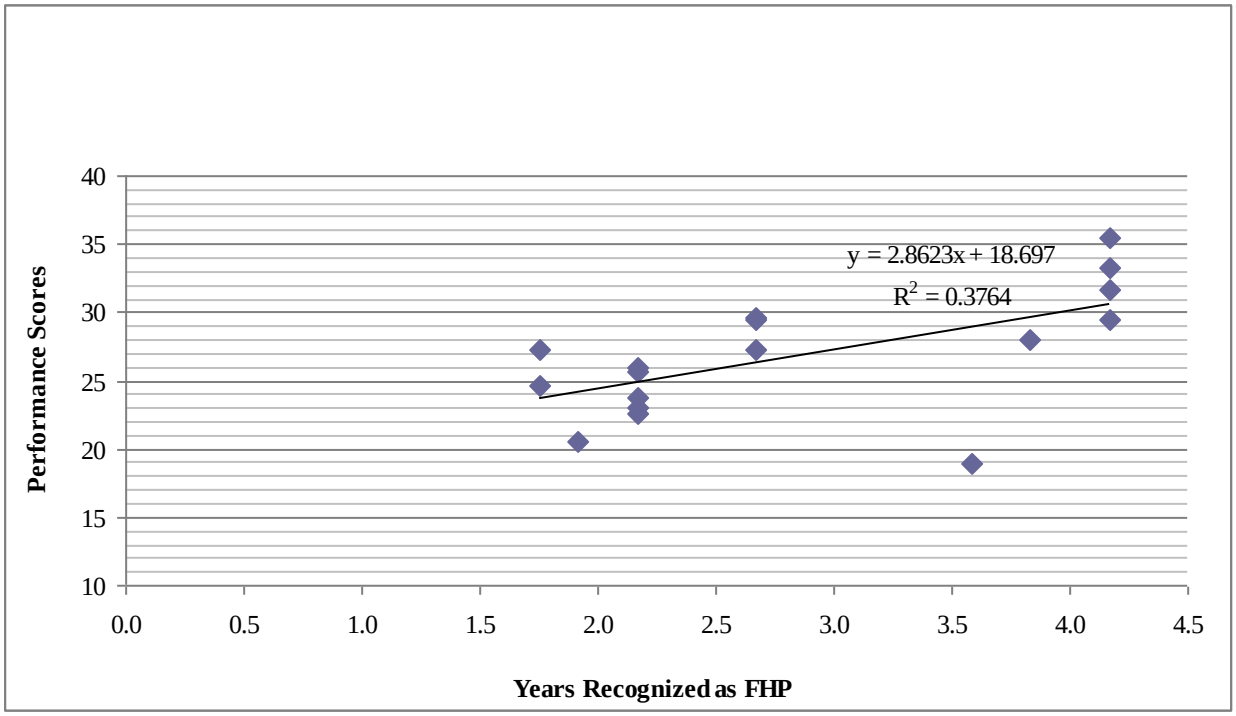

Figure 7. Fish Habitat Partnership performance scores (all measures combined).

Appendix A

Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Measures (adopted by the Board on July 27, 2011)

1. Addressing FHP strategic priorities (i.e. geographic focus areas, habitat types, key stressors or impairments) and/or NFHAP Final Interim Strategies & Targets with fish habitat conservation projects.

2. Use of effectiveness measures (i.e. indicators that measure short and long term progress toward achieving desired conservation outcomes) for fish habitat conservation projects.

3. Focus on conservation projects that protect vulnerable fish habitats or address causes and processes behind fish habitat decline.

4. Leveraging NFHAP funds in fish habitat conservation projects recommended for funding.

5. Prioritizing fish habitat conservation projects for NFHAP funding.

6. Level of coordination (i.e. consulting, cooperating, and collaborating) with neighboring or overlapping FHPs and other regional habitat conservation planning entities.

7. Use of science-based resource condition assessments and/or analysis to identify priority conservation actions.

8. The quality and quantity of outreach aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the FHP's strategic priorities, its conservation activities, and changes in habitat conditions.

9. Coordination of FHP aquatic resources data and regional assessment information with the NFHAP Science and Data Committee for use with the national information system.

10. Measuring progress and achieving FHP goals & objectives and/or NFHAP Final Interim Strategies & Targets.