Modified Draft National Fish Action Plan Objectives

Desired Outcome:

- Board approval of modified Draft National Fish Action Plan Objectives (see below) to replace the 2006 Action Objectives.
- Update on proposed modified timeline and recommended next steps.

Background:

- At the April 2011 National Fish Habitat Board meeting, Board approved the creation of a Work Group to update the 2006 National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The Board's guidance was to:
  - Replace the "Objectives" section on page 5 with new objectives. To the extent possible new objectives will be specific, measurable, and time-bound.
  - Replace or update text/graphics boxes on pages 4,5,7,10 and 11.
  - Update Exhibits 1-5.
  - Create a new "look" with graphics on the cover and inside.
  - Consider other changes to the text of the Action Plan only if a very strong justification is made. Avoid change for the sake of change.

- At the April 2011 Board meeting, the Board also approved a schedule to complete the Action Plan revision by October 2011.

- At the October 2011 Board meeting, the Work Group presented the Board with modified draft objectives. The Board provided comments and requested further refinement of the modified draft objectives. The following "Modified Draft National Fish Habitat Objectives" reflect those refinements requested in October.

- At the October 2011 Board meeting, the Work Group also provided the Board an extensive list of measurable and specific actions for the Partnership to undertake over the next several years. After considering the Board's thinking during the Albuquerque meeting, however, there was concern raised about the level of detail that should be published in the revision.

- Over the past several weeks, the Board staff has worked with the Board chair and the Action Plan Revision Work Group chair to refine objectives and address how and when to identify detailed, measurable activities. The recommendation is that the revised Action Plan should lay out high level objectives only. The Board should then establish more detailed, measurable activities on an annual basis in the form of a workplan. The Board chair should establish a team to provide details on how annual workplans will be developed; how they will be tied to budgeting; and how those plans can be effectively measured. This small team will also work to
  - define what the Board means by "key priorities of national significance (see below)"
  - build on the work of Steve Perry to identify commonalities in FHP priorities, and
  - develop a proposal on how to come to consensus on those key priorities of national significance.

Proposed Modified Draft National Fish Habitat Objectives to replace 2006 Action Plan Objectives:

1. Implement conservation actions that address key priorities of national significance by measurably improving ecological condition, rehabilitating natural processes, or preventing the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions and increased fishing opportunities.

2. Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of local communities – especially young people – 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.

3. Fill gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its associated database to empower strategic conservation action supported by broadly available scientific information, and integrate socio-economic data in the analysis to improve people's lives in a manner consistent with fish habitat conservation goals.

4. Identify and communicate to the public and to conservation partners' successful voluntary, non-regulatory approaches and opportunities to conserve fish habitat.

Proposed Next Steps:

- Complete the Action Plan according to the following timeline
- Concurrently initiate the development of annual workplans for each objective to include specific and measurable actions.
- Identify "key priorities of national significance" in the development of a workplan for Objective #1.

Proposed Modified Action Plan Revision Timeline:

- Complete first draft: 12/12/11 (complete)
- Staff review and approval of draft: 1/3/12
- Copy editing: 1/16/12
- Staff review and approval of final: 1/23/12
- Board final review: 1/30/12

Additional Information:

The following table represents a compilation Fish Habitat Partnership priorities indicated in current Strategic Plans. N = the number of FHPs that indicate this category of priority in their plan. Board staff propose using this type information to identify "key priorities of national significance" as stated for Objective #1 above.

FHP Habitat Priorities	**N**
Habitat connectivity	12
Water quality and quantity	10
Healthy intact habitat	6
Sediment and nutrient loading	6
Ecosystem functions and processes	6
Early life history habitat	5
Riparian habitat	5
Surface and groundwater hydrological functions	4
Habitat that supports recreational fishing opportunities	3
State Wildlife Action Plan identified habitat priorities	3
Habitat with the highest number of imperiled and/or at risk species, federally listed threatened and endangered species for each faunal group (fishes, crayfishes, mussels, snails, amphibians, turtles), and total richness of each major group	3
Estuarine and coastal habitat	3
Wetland habitat	2
Habitat that supports native fish	2
Habitat supporting species with the greatest conservation needs	1
Riverine bottom habitat	1
Submerged aquatic vegetation habitat	1
Tidal vegetation habitat	1
Habitat that supports shellfish beds	1
Coral and live/hardbottom habitat	1
Mangrove habitat	1
Channel geometry/processes	1