Draft National Fish Habitat Board Conference Call Summary: February 26-27, 2013

Members Present:

Steve Perry, Vice Chair (NEAFWA)
Stan Allen (PSMFC) – for Randy Fisher
Mike Andrews (TNC)
Doug Boyd (SFBPC)
Jim Estes (FLFWCC) for Nick Wiley
Brad Gentner (Gentner Consulting Group/CCA rep)
Rowan Gould (US FWS)– for Dan Ashe
Chris Horton (CSF)
Stan Moberly (AFS)
Steve Moyer (TU) – for Chris Wood
Eric Schwaab (NOAA Fisheries)
Ron Regan (AFWA)
Gordon Robertson (ASA)
Eric Schwaab (NOAA Fisheries)
Mike Stone (WAFWA rep)
Chris Savage (US FS) for Anne Zimmerman
Krystyna Wolniakowski (NFWF)
Libby Yranski (ASA for Gordon Robertson)
Gary Whelan (MAFWA for Joe Larscheid)

Members Absent:

Fred Matt

Motions Approved by Consensus:

- Agenda and January Board Meeting Minutes: Approved
- Project Prioritization Criteria: Approved with revision. The Board included language on socioeconomic factors.
- FHP Performance Evaluation: Approved with revisions. The Board added socioeconomic language to the second paragraph of the introduction.
- National Habitat Conservation Strategies: Approved
- Board Representative to Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC): The Board approved the Chair as the representative to the LCC National Council, with the ability for the Chair to identify a proxy.

Updates and Discussion:

- Ron Regan encouraged Board staff to think strategically about scheduling upcoming meetings, identifying opportunities to meet with Fish Chiefs and others who strategically align with the National Fish Habitat Partnership
- Staff provided background information and highlighted issues associated with 501(c)(3) entities. The Board requested that staff present a set of three options to the Board in advance of the June Board meeting for decision. Some Board members shared the sentiment that Board should focus on NFHP legislation, and that the passage of legislation may not be consistent with benefits of becoming a 501 (c)(3)
- The Board approved the minimum benchmark project prioritization criteria with additional language reflecting social and economic outcomes. The intent was to provide language that referenced these benefits without having a negative impact on those projects that may be more focused on non-consumptive uses. Language was added to criteria 3 that now reads: "Project identification of specific habitat measures of success and performance targets that are observable and amenable to pre- and post-project monitoring and include social, economic and biological benefits such as enhanced recreational [and]commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities, increased public visitation, or innovative project designs that address specific fish conservation challenges."
- The Board did not take action on adding a Board seat for FHPs. Various perspectives and opinions were shared. One issue raised was concern with the challenge of having one FHP representative represent the views of all FHPs. Others noted that there may not be consensus among the FHPs that a seat is needed, while the sentiment was shared that if the system is working well as is, a change is not needed at this time.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) indicated that they are performing a national review of the

Hatchery Program, and that the review will be available once the Directorate reviews in April. In addition, the FWS realignment started in the spring, and the strategic planning effort is near completion. An update will be provided to the Board in at the June meeting. With respect to FHP funding allocations, the FWS indicated that for FY13 allocations will remains as is using the current method, however the future intent is to have allocations be competitive and performance based. Board involvement in FWS budget and allocation discussions was highlighted, and the FWS indicated that there may be an opportunity to make revisions to the current process, and that the time may be coming to identify Board volunteers to assist.

- The Board was provided an update on the FHP Organization Development Project. The Board noted the value in the effort to build key relationships, and that face to face meetings for FHPs should be budgeted for annually.
- Gordon Robertson provided an overview on the fate of the Sportsmans bill that contained National Fish Habitat legislation. Despite a good deal of support, the bill did not pass, and its future in 2013 is unclear. The recommendation was made that the Board and others associated with FHPs talk to district staff about the work of FHPs and the value that fish and habitat bring to communities. The Board also identified the need for a strategy for moving forward in 2013 and beyond.
- During the discussion on the national set of Conservation Strategies, it was noted that measureable objectives are needed. Another comment shared was that a periodic review of Board strategies should occur. Looking forward, the intent is that the Board, working with FHPs, will develop a set of meaningful and measureable targets over time.
- During the Science and Data committee report, Mike Andrews posed the question to the Board on whether or not the Board could do something to obtain resources from the Natural Resources Damage Assessment associated with Deepwater Horizon to help complete the marine component of the Gulf assessment, and it was suggested that there should be a discussion on how to engage in this effort more broadly.
- The Communications Committee Chair provided an update on current efforts associated with improving communications and outreach. The Chair noted nominations for the Waters to Watch initiative are due in mid-March, and there will be a follow-up Board call to approve and an announcement slated for April or May. The Chair also noted that efforts are being taken to develop a legislative strategy and toolkit for the 113th Congress. In addition, the Chair is working on developing a video to tell the story of FHP's on the ground work. Board members commented on the need to develop and tell real stories on the process and work that the FHPs are doing. There was also discussion on using the Waters to Watch initiative strategically, and the need to look at previous waters and update and communicate their status.
- Federal agency representatives provided an overview of content included in the reports developed in accordance with the NFHP MOU and highlighted the benefits of working with NFHP. Stan Moberly provided comments and reflections, sharing the observation that efforts are moving in the right direction, and also provided a history of NFHP and efforts to conserve aquatic Stand expressed the opinion that there is a strong need for an Executive Order. Steve Moyer indicated that the Board should consider putting together a collection of projects that highlights the good work that is being done by the FHPs.
- Russ Dunn, NOAA Fisheries Service Recreational Fisheries Advisor provided an update on NOAA's recreational fishing initiative. Brad Gentner indicated that the FHPs should be used as a vehicle to involve saltwater interests. Eric Schwaab indicated that engaging local anglers in FHP is a key driving force of success.
- Doug Austin provided an overview of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), highlighting LCC funding, benchmarks, and the LCC National Council. Doug indicated that the National Council helps identify national challenges that may be addressed by the LCCs, and offered the Board a seat on the Council. The Board decided the Board Chair will be the representative.

Action items:

- The Board requested that staff draft letters of thanks to federal agency directors and consider recognizing the efforts of Secretary Salazar.
- A request was made by Eric Schwaab that Stan Moberly's notes and comments on the history of NFHP be turned into an article or memorialized in some manner.

- Virgil Moore and Kelly Hepler will bring a resolution to Annual Meeting in September to recognize NFHP and state commitments to NFHP.
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Future 2013 and 2014 meetings:

- October 22 & 23 – Charleston, SC
- January Call
- March 4 & 5 – Washington, DC

Board approved policy and/or technical documents:

- Project Prioritization Criteria
- FHP Performance Evaluation
- National Conservation Strategies

Additional attendees:

Chris Meaney, NOAA Fisheries-HQ and Board staff
Tom Busiahn, FWS-HQ and Board staff
Matt Menashes, AFWA Director of Ops and Board Staff
Andrea Ostroff, USGS, Co-chair, Science and Data Committee
Ryan Roberts, AFWA and Board Communications Director
Cecilia Lewis FWS HQ and Board Staff
Amy Unthank USFS Board Staff
Susan Wells, USFWS
Maureen Gallagher, USFWS
Jaime Geiger, USFWS
Mark Hudy, USGS
Joe Starinchak, FWS
Katie Haws, MWGL FHP
Jeff Underwood, FWS- HQ
Robin Knox, WNTI (phone)
Craig Goodwin, NRCS
Lindsay Gardner, SARP
Katherine Smith, USFS
Kirk Otey, NFFR
Michael Duval, MGLP
Terra Lederhouse, NOAA Fisheries
Lew Gorman, FWS
Arpita Chendusy, AFWA
Michelle Wheeler, FWS
Tom Bigford, NOAA
Sue Rodman, ADG&G
Stephanie Carman, BLM
Russell Dunn, NOAA Fisheries
Danielle Rioux, NOAA Fisheries
Janine Harris, NOAA Fisheries