National Fish Habitat Board
June 25-26, 2013
Tab 13

Title: Communications Committee Report

Desired outcome: An informational briefing update to the Board on the committee's 2013 work plan and update the Board on progress of Board priorities for the committee in 2013.

Background: Following the communications committee update to the Board in February, the Board approved the 2013 communications strategy update and set objectives for the communications committee to work towards in 2013. The communications committee priorities as they relate to the relevant objectives in the second edition of National Fish Habitat Action Plan are as follows:

Action Plan Objective 3: 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.

Priority Task D: Review 2012 Communications Strategy, and revise as necessary, to ensure there is a principal focus towards raising public awareness on the role healthy fish habitats play in the economic well-being of local communities; (Communications Committee)

Priority Task E: Increase the size of the Partner Coalition and improve the management and maintenance of the Partner Coalition database; (Communications Committee)

Priority Task F: Develop a comprehensive congressional and administration outreach strategy; (Congressional Affairs Team and Communications Committee)

Action Plan Objective 5: Communicate the conservation outcomes produced collectively by Fish Habitat Partnerships as well as new opportunities and voluntary approaches for conserving fish habitat to the public and conservation partners.

Priority Task N: Broaden the visibility of the 10 Waters to Watch list by selecting waters that reflect key fish habitat conservation priorities/needs, track advancements associated with current and past 10 Waters to Watch, and utilize these waters as a means to tell the story and increase awareness of bold efforts to reverse persistent declines in aquatic habitat; (Communications Committee)

2013 Work Plan Updates/Accomplishments

o ***Priority Task D:*** (Complete) The Communications Strategy has been reviewed by the communications committee and revised to further incorporate priorities of raising public awareness of the importance of healthy fish habitats through the work of our FHPs.

National Fish Habitat Board February 26-27, 2013 Tab 9a

o ***Priority Task E:*** (ongoing) The Partner Coalition has increased by 800 individuals/groups in 2013 and now sits at 2,800 currently. This increase was due in large part to targeted marketing opportunities by the communications committee to raise awareness of the Partnership as stated in objective 3. Increasing the size of our database has helped our messaging reach a broader audience and spurned additional interest and page visits to our website and social media platforms. Our newsletter click through rate is on average 22%. A rate of 10% - 20% is considered desirable according to wordstream.com. Continuing to grow this database in 2013 will be an important function of the committee and a priority as the communications committee expands audience reach through targeted events in 2013.

o ***Priority Task F:*** (In Progress) The framework of a congressional outreach strategy was developed and presented to the Board in October 2012 (112th Congress). The strategy is currently being revised for the 113th Congress. This strategy is a work in progress pending new legislation and identification of priority members and committees. Elements of a larger toolkit are in place, including a Partner Letter and general talking points of the benefits and value of the National Fish Habitat Partnership and the work of the FHPs. An overall legislative strategy will be discussed by the Congressional Affairs Team during the June 2013 Board meeting. The Congressional Affairs Committee and the communications committee are coordinating on this effort for (113th Congress).

o ***Priority Task N:*** (In Progress) The "Waters to Watch" guidance for FHPs was revised for 2013 and included some new criteria and a new timeline for the 2013 submissions and announcements as well as a campaign to better highlight the individual projects. There has been 20 blog mentions/newspaper articles picked up on the 2013 campaign based mostly on individual projects. Publications from TX, NC have been most notable. Social media has increased significantly with many projects being mentioned on twitter and facebook. As a result of the Waters to Watch announcement our Facebook page received nearly 50 more likes in the span of 3 weeks and now sits at 536.

Documents to be developed in 2013:

☐ Annual Report- (in progress – completion date August)
☐ Partner toolkit
☐ Videos highlighting FHP work- (Contract in place)
☐ NFHP Fact Sheet - (Updated in May 2013)

2012 Work Plan Outcomes

o Coordinated the rollout strategy for the second edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Over half of the printed copies have been distributed.

o New website was launched in 2012 in conjunction with the second edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.