Conceptual proposal: Performance evaluation of the National Fish Habitat Board

Background

In 2010, the performance of the National Fish Habitat Board was evaluated with assistance from a contractor and (then) 17 recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships.

- A 14-question survey was developed based on the Board's role as described in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (1st edition).
- Respondents rated the Board's performance on a scale of 1 to 5 for each question, and provided comments and recommendations for improvement. Thirty individuals from 16 FHPs responded to the survey (61% response rate).
- The survey was followed up by breakout sessions at the Board's October 2010 meeting to flesh out ideas for improvement.
- The evaluation resulted in several actions to fill gaps in the Board's performance, and operational changes to improve performance.

In 2012-2013, the Board tested and approved a performance evaluation methodology for Fish Habitat Partnerships. It will be implemented for the first time in 2015, evaluating FHP performance for the period 2012-2014.

Situational analysis

Since the Board's establishment in 2006 – and since the Board performance evaluation in 2010 – the role of the Board has shifted, as have external conditions.

- FHPs are established across the nation, and now require sustenance more than development.
- NFHP has contributed significantly to measuring and communicating fish habitat conditions and needs across the U.S.
- The prospect for authorizing legislation and increased appropriations has dimmed with changes in the political landscape.
- Efforts to broaden the funding base for NFHP have produced few results.
- Climate change and other threats pose an uncertain future for fish and aquatic habitats, potentially overwhelming restoration efforts.

Proposal

The staff proposes that the Board initiate a second review of its performance in 2013. A 3-year review cycle for the Board will align with the 3-year cycle that will apply to FHPs. Criteria for the review should be based on the Action Plan, 2nd Edition. The evaluation should be designed to help the Board adapt proactively to internal and external threats and opportunities.

If the Board approves, staff will initiate detailed planning for a survey that will engage FHP representatives and perhaps include Federal agency partners and Board committee members. The review would be conducted in early 2014, and cover the period 2011-2013.

Prepared by Tom Busiahn, tom_busiahn@fws.gov, 703-358-2056