Proposal for a performance evaluation of the National Fish Habitat Board

Background

In 2010, the National Fish Habitat Board retained a consultant, Bill Dann of Professional Growth Systems, to develop and administer a review of the Board's performance. The purpose of the review was to provide information to the Board to help improve the Board's performance in carrying out its roles and responsibilities as identified in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

A 14-question survey was designed and distributed to people associated with Fish Habitat Partnerships. Forty-nine individuals representing 17 FHPs were asked to respond to the survey. Thirty people representing 16 FHPs completed the survey. In each question, respondents were asked to rate the Board's performance on a scale of 1 to 10 on a facet of the Board's responsibilities. Respondents were also asked to provide comments and recommendations for improvement. The Board received a report of results dated September 20, 2010.

At its meeting in October 2010 in Portland, Oregon, the Board held a one-day facilitated strategy session to follow up on the survey. Invited participants included Board members and staff, FHP representatives and coordinators, state fish chiefs and other state representatives, FWS Fisheries ARDs and NOAA Fisheries ARAs, and Regional NFHAP coordinators from FWS and NOAA. A 7-page report was compiled from three breakout sessions focused on Board roles, performance criteria, and communications.

The Board followed up by appointing Board member Steve Perry to lead an *ad hoc* Criteria Development Committee to address two of the areas where the Board scored lowest on the survey: criteria for allocating funding, and evaluation criteria for FHPs. The Board and staff also adopted operational recommendations arising from the breakout sessions, such as development of a Board member handbook.

The work of the Criteria Development Committee led to Board approval of an FHP performance evaluation protocol that will be implemented on a 3-year cycle. The first full-fledged FHP evaluation will be done in 2015, covering the years 2012-2014.

Proposed Board performance evaluation in 2014

At its June 2013 meeting, the Board approved a staff proposal to initiate a second review of Board performance covering the years 2011-2013. The Board directed staff to propose a detailed plan for the review at the October 2013 Board meeting.

The proposed timeline for the evaluation is as follows:

- October 2013 – Present detailed plan to the Board for feedback and approval
- November-December 2013 – Make final edits to survey per Board decisions
- January 2014 – Distribute survey online to FHP representatives and other stakeholders
- February 2014 – Tabulate survey results, prepare report
- March 2014 – Present results at Board meeting in Denver

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The period of evaluation (2011-2013) encompasses the final period under the original 2006 Action Plan, and the initial period under the 2nd Edition Action Plan approved in July 2012. A set of rating factors has been developed that reflect the roles of the Board as described in both versions of the Action Plan, as well as the implementation strategies in both versions, shown below.

Category	Board roles in the original Action Plan (2006)	Board roles in the Action Plan 2nd Edition (2012)	Strategies in the original Action Plan (2006)	Strategies in the Action Plan 2nd Edition (2012)
Lead & coordinate	Coordinate agency and stakeholder involvement at the national level	Provide national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats	Provide national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats	Provide national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats
Support FHPs	Develop appropriate policies and guidance for recognizing partnerships and criteria for allocating national funding and related resources	Approve and support Fish Habitat Partnerships and foster new efforts	Support existing Fish Habitat partnerships and foster new efforts	Support Fish Habitat Partnerships and ensure their effectiveness
Deliver funding	Work to establish national partnerships that provide funding and other resources to the Fish Habitat Partnerships and other efforts of the plan Develop processes to prioritize and deliver National Fish Habitat Action Plan funds to the partnerships	Mobilize and focus national, regional, and local support	Mobilize and focus national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals	Mobilize and focus national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals
Measure & communicate	Establish national measures of success and evaluation criteria guidelines for partnerships Report to Congress, states and other partners on the status and accomplishments of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan	Measure and communicate the status and needs of fish habitat Establish long term national fish habitat conservation goals and supporting regional goals	Measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habitats	Measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habitats

Respondents will be asked to rate the Board's performance on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) for each of 26 rating factors. Respondents will also be asked to provide free-form comments and recommendations. A list of products and accomplishments of the Board during 2011-2013 will be provided to survey respondents, identifying those that were responsive to the 2010 evaluation.

The survey and background information will be sent to Board members and staff, principal contacts for each recognized and candidate FHP (who may distribute the survey to key steering committee members or other highly engaged partners), state fish chiefs (freshwater and marine),

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and principal contacts for key federal agency partners, including regional NFHP coordinators for FWS and NOAA Fisheries. (In 2010, only FHP leaders and coordinators were surveyed.)

Board products and accomplishments during 2011-2013
to be provided to survey respondents to aid in evaluating Board performance

Items in bold italics were responsive to input received in the 2010 evaluation of Board performance and/or the follow-up facilitated breakouts

- Rolled out first national assessment of fish habitats, 2011
- Served data from the national assessment on the online map viewer, 2011, and enhanced the map viewer to include additional data themes and to serve FHP data needs, 2013
- Named 10 "Waters to Watch" each year, 2011-2013
- Gave out four National Fish Habitat Awards in 2011 (vision, extraordinary action, scientific achievement, outreach & education) and two awards in 2012 (scientific achievement, extraordinary action)
- ***Sponsored a NFHP trade show booth at the American Fisheries Society annual meeting 2011-13, River Rally 2012-13, TU National Capital Chapter 2011-13, Land & Wildlife Expo 2011***
- ***Established a presence on online media sites: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Scoop.it***
- Developed estimates of economic impact of NFHP projects conducted 2006-2011
- Re-branded NFHAP as the "National Fish Habitat Partnership" with new logo
- ***Developed new web site with more flexibility and functionality***
- ***Began a practice of posting draft Board meeting minutes on the web within 30 days***
- ***Held a joint session with Fish & Wildlife Service ARDs and NOAA Fisheries ARAs, April 2011, and planned a joint session with ARDs again in October 2013***
- ***Approved method of allocating funds to FHPs, October 2011***
- ***Developed first edition of the Board Manual, a reference for Board members, November 2011, and updated the Manual in January 2013***
- Recognized the 18th Fish Habitat Partnership (Pacific Marine & Estuarine Partnership), January 2012
- Worked with Federal agencies to promote a Secretary-level Memorandum of Understanding in support of NFHP, signed March 2012 by the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Interior
- Approved 2nd Edition of Action Plan, July 2012
- ***Approved FHP performance evaluation method and schedule, July 2012***
- ***Implemented improved Board priority and budget planning system including a greater and better defined role for committees, October 2012***
- Sponsored first national FHP workshop, facilitated by River Network, January 2013
- ***Approved national conservation strategies, February 2013***
- Approved development of a not-for-profit corporation to support NFHP, June 2013
- ***Sponsored webinars and peer learning networks targeted to meet developmental needs of FHPs, utilizing expertise of River Network, 2013***

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Proposed survey questions to be distributed via online questionnaire

General questions:

- Who is your employer? (Select one: State/tribe, federal agency, non-governmental organization, other)
- What is your role in NFHP? (Select one: Board/staff, FHP, Board committee, other)
- How long have you been engaged with NFHP? (Select one: less than 1 year, 1-3 years, more than 3 years)
- How many meetings of the National Fish Habitat Board have you attended? (Select one: none, 1-3, more than 3)

Please rate on a scale of 1 to10 (with 10 being the highest rating) the National Fish Habitat Board's performance in the following areas during the years 2011-2013. If you aren't sure, check "Don't know or no opinion".

Also rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest importance) how important each of the factors is to you and your organization.

Each category of questions also has a box to provide narrative comments and suggestions.

Lead & coordinate

1. Coordinating agency and stakeholder involvement at the national level
2. Mobilizing national support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals
3. Providing national leadership to conserve fish habitats
4. Overseeing action and follow-through on all strategies of the Action Plan

Support Fish Habitat Partnerships

5. Establishing measures of success for Fish Habitat Partnerships
6. Adding value to Fish Habitat Partnerships through the NFHP brand
7. Taking action to address FHP concerns
8. Improving effectiveness of FHPs through training and peer interaction

Deliver funding

9. Developing criteria for allocating national funding and related resources to FHPs
10. Developing processes that prioritize the use of National Fish Habitat Action Plan funds
11. Developing expanded sources of funding to address needs and priorities of FHPs
12. Developing fiscal management tools to assist FHPs

Measure & communicate status & needs of habitat

13. Advancing the scientific basis of measuring fish habitat condition
14. Collating information to measure threats and condition of fish habitat on multiple scales
15. Promoting the collection of new information on the status of fish habitats
16. Communicating the status and needs of fish habitat to stakeholders and the public

Board operations

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17. Using a transparent decision-making process
18. Holding effective Board meetings that meet the needs of the broader partnership
19. Monitoring the progress of achieving National Fish Habitat Action Plan objectives
20. Using and managing its standing committees by defining roles, assigning tasks, and holding committees accountable (respond for each Committee separately)
    a. Science and Data Committee
    b. Communications Committee
    c. Partnership Committee
    d. Funding Committee

Board leadership

21. Clarity of direction
22. Clarity of priorities
23. Clarity of expectations
24. Clarity of measures of success
25. Accountability for results
26. Promoting awareness and support for fish habitat conservation

Summary question (narrative)

Overall, are your expectations being met by the National Fish Habitat Board? Why or why not? Where do you suggest the Board focus its efforts over the next three years to improve its overall effectiveness?

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