Title: Communications Committee Report

Desired outcome: An informational briefing to the Board on the committee's 2013 work plan and consensus on Board's priorities for the committee in 2014.

Background: At its September 2013 Meeting, the Board tasked the communications committee with addressing the following priority issues during 2014:

2014 Priority Recommendations:

Task A - Expand the public relations campaign for the 10 Waters to Watch program.

Task B - Establish a working group with the Board, the USFWS, and industry to develop messaging related to the core principles of NFHP. This is the first step in developing a national campaign to connect the National Fish Habitat Partnership and the FHPs with anglers.

Task C - Create web resources to share Fish Habitat Partnership information and activities including FHP project summaries.

Task D - Expand reach of social media reach through targeted post promotions.

Task E - Expand the NFHP presence at select events.

2014 Priority Progress:

Task A – We allocated $500 to utilize a news release service for the 2014 Waters to Watch Campaign through (E-Releases). For a minimal investment this was worthwhile as a summary of the full news release was distributed through 293 websites and was viewed over 135 times. There were also 103 Media views from the distribution of this release. The Waters to Watch press release was also picked up by other outlets through independent outreach from the FHPs and Communications Committee for NFHP. A full Wirewatch Report from E-Releases can be viewed at: https://visibility.prnewswire.com/vr3/release_overview.jsp. The Waters to Watch Campaign also utilized a boost in social media through retweets from partner organizations and FHPs (Twitter), and targeted post promotions on Facebook that reached 56,000 people on the platform. This targeted post generated more followers to the page and the release post than we have achieved through any single post in the history of the Facebook page for NFHP. There was an emphasis placed on video in 2014 to highlight the work of the FHPs. The Communications Committee successfully produced 2 quality videos highlighting Waters to Watch projects from the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) and the California Fish Passage Forum. These videos received a high number of views on YouTube in comparison to other conservation related videos, with the EBTJV receiving nearly 400 views in the first week of its release.

Task B – The Board approved a marketing/rebranding strategy for NFHP at its March 2014 Board Meeting. NFHP received some base funding to begin developing the campaign and will be conducting a comprehensive analysis of NFHP FHPs in November to get a baseline analysis of where the FHPs are currently at in terms of capacity and understanding of marketing. A marketing team through Design & Image in Denver, CO. and Fishpond fly fishing are leading up the marketing campaign in coordination with Board members and NFHP Board Staff and members of the communications committee. Deliverables of the marketing campaign will begin rolling out in early 2015.

Task C – The NFHP Newsletter was improved in 2014 and included FHP features and news and was distributed on a more consistent monthly timeline. The newsletter subscriber list increased by 300 individuals in 2014 through direct web signups and marketing events NFHP was present at in 2014. A continuing effort is being made through the communications committee to obtain individual project reports from the US FWS that detail out all of the FHP projects that are funded through NFHP. Several of the FHPs are doing collaborative newsletters (ex. Coastal FHP Newsletter) and individual newsletters that are helping to build content for the NFHP website and monthly newsletter.

Task D – The social media presence for NFHP was expanded in 2014 through targeted post promotions on Facebook. The communications committee highlighted a few select news items to promote to Facebook subscribers that having interest in fishing or conservation. This effort led to increased likes and followers to the NFHP Facebook page. It was successful for the small investment and is a successful tool to increase traffic on social media.

Task E – in 2014 NFHP had marketing tables at the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting (February), River Rally (May) and the RAE/TCS Summit (November). The Summit and the National Association of Conservation Districts were new events for NFHP in 2014. These events helped to get the NFHP message out to a wider audience and the traffic at these events was good. We will look to target different events in 2015.

Tentative list of priority issues to be addressed in 2015:

- Continue building database for newsletter distribution to increase engagement with partner coalition. Utilize AFWA to reach out to State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to increase engagement.

- Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships. (Budget need: $10,000)

- Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act

- NFHP website re-development. (Budget need: $10,000)

- Increase outreach of Waters to Watch Campaign (Budget need: $750.00)

- Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and re-branding efforts for the NFHP program and the FHPs.
  (Resources Needed: $80,000 - $90,000)

- PR and Marketing Resources for the NFHP 2015 Status Report (Budget Need: $2,000)

- Establish a regular schedule of meetings for the communications committee and work to include more FHP members on the committee.

- Review and make any needed changes to the communications strategy (Board approved 2011 and updated in 2013) to ensure that it remains a guide for committee work and maintained as a living document.