Title: 2015 Draft Board Priorities

Desired outcome: Board action to approve its priority tasks for 2015 and assignment of these priorities to the appropriate Committee for task completion.

Background: Board Committees have proposed a number of tasks that address different components of the Second Edition of the Action Plan's objectives as potential Board priorities for 2015. These proposed priority tasks have been bundled under the respective Action Plan Objective, to bring more clarity to what the Committees are proposing.

Recommendation: Consider the proposed priority tasks for 2015 and Committee assignments as presented below, for approval in January 2015.

Proposed Priority Tasks and Committee Assignments

Action Plan Objective 1: Achieve measurable habitat conservation results through strategic actions of Fish Habitat Partnerships that improve ecological condition, restore natural processes, or prevent the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions and increased fishing opportunities.

Priority Task A: Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act; (assign to eligible Board members and legislative team)

Priority Task B: Development of a process for building consensus support among FHPs for funding proposals (e.g. MSCGP and other sources) submitted by the Board on their behalf; (assign to Board staff and Partnership Committee)

Priority Task C: Identification of redundancies between the Board's FHP Performance Evaluation criteria and the criteria the FWS uses to allocate NFHAP funds to FHPs and provide guidance to the Board on ways to minimize overlap between the two processes; (assign to Board staff and Partnership Committee)

Priority Task D: Continue development of a 501(c)(3) Board of Directors and policies to be used as a financial tool by the National Fish Habitat Board and FHPs; (assign to Board staff and leadership)

Priority Task E: Continue development of standard effectiveness measures for conservation actions used to address nationwide fish habitat focus areas; (assign to American Fisheries Society, Board Science and Data Committee, and Partnership Committee)

Action Plan Objective 2: Establish a consensus set of national conservation strategies as a framework to guide future actions and investment by the Fish Habitat Partnerships by 2013.

Priority Task F: **Objective achieved. Next step:** Develop an approach that demonstrates the linkages among FHP conservation priorities and the Board's National Conservation Strategies; (assign to the Partnership Committee)

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 G: Consider potential avenues for collaboration with Restore America's Estuaries (assign to Board Leadership, Communications Committee, and Legislative Team)

Priority Task H: Continue building database for newsletter distribution to increase engagement with partner coalition; and continue to utilize AFWA to increase engagement with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies; (assign to the Communications Committee)

Priority Task I: Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and re-branding efforts for the NFHP program and the FHPs; and re-develop the website in order to raise greater public awareness of the role healthy fish habitats play in quality of life and economic well-being, in order build a broader community of support for fish habitat conservation; (assign to the Communications Committee and marketing team)

Priority Task J: 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. (assign to the Communications Committee and marketing team)

Action Plan Objective 4: Fill gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its associated database to empower strategic conservation action supported by broadly available scientific information, and integrate socio-economic data in the analysis to improve people's lives in a manner consistent with fish habitat conservation goals.

Priority Task K: Examine and review National Assessment products produced by Marine and Inland Assessment Teams along with activities underway by the Fish Habitat Partnerships and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs); (assign to the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task L: Develop coordinated delivery of the 2015 assessment, including adding new online capabilities to help partners and stakeholders understand and best use the new National Assessment data and products; (assign to the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task M: Continue to catalog science data products and assessments completed and underway within each of the established Fish Habitat Partnerships and the national assessment team via the NFHP Data System. (assign to the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task N: Refine and update fisheries, aquatic nuisance and invasive species, dam inventory, land conservation status, and water quality status information as data become available; (assign to the Inland Team of the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task O: Improve river fragmentation analyses and national calculation of fragmentation metrics and initiate development of lakesheds and lake assessments; (assign to the Inland Team of the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task P: Evaluate approaches to improve hydrology and temperature incorporation and to refine the marine-inland linkages between the inland and marine assessments; (assign to Inland Team of the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task Q: Refine and improve the 2010 National Marine Assessment by incorporating updated datasets; complete a full assessment of estuaries in the northern Gulf of Mexico; continue data collection, processing, and initial analysis for West Coast estuaries; (assign to the Marine Team of the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task R: Conduct Science and Data Outreach to FHPs, LCCs, Board, and other key audiences; (assign to the Science and Data Committee)

Priority Task S: Seek funding sources that will provide the funds needed to accomplish the following National Assessment activities; (assign to Board Staff and 501(c)(3)

- Implementation and delivery of 2015 habitat assessment product – TBD after Board direction on requested product production gaps.
- Continue to develop selected socioeconomic data and analyses to support decision making by the Board and FHPs - $35,000
- Develop new science and data products from existing and new FHP assessment databases to further support FHP habitat analysis and the 2015 National Assessment - ~~$70,000~~ $60,000

- Strengthen the science foundation of the National Assessment by determining the best approaches for incorporating data on connectivity, hydrology and marine fish and shellfish - $400,000
- ~~Refine the National Assessment by initiating the filling analytical gaps on connectivity, hydrology and in the marine assessment – $370,000~~
- Develop standardized effectiveness measurements for FHPs' connectivity projects which will include developing new methods to incorporate fine-scale system process information from FHP projects - $~~383,500~~ 400,000 or equal in-kind services
- Fully develop and attributing of detailed socioeconomic data and analyses on the same geospatial scale as habitat assessment - $100,000 annually, over several fiscal years

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 T: Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships; (assign to the Communications Committee)

Priority Task U: Broaden the visibility of the 10 Waters to Watch Campaign as a means to tell the story and increase awareness of FHP efforts to conserve fish habitat and consider prioritizing outreach to younger generations through social media and smart phones; (assign to the Communications Committee with potential support from FHPs)