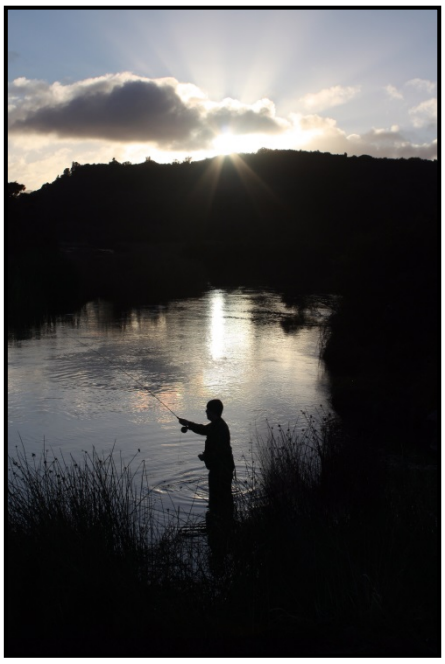
NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP


Foresthill Bridge
American River, CA



Come Together

Hosted by: The Larkspur Landing Hotel - Sacramento, CA

Meeting Book for The National Fish Habitat Board

October 20-21, 2015

National Fish Habitat Board Meeting
October 20-21, 2015
Draft Agenda and Board Book Tabs

Larkspur Landing
555 Howe Ave.
Sacramento, California 95825

Conference line: 866-560-0760, **Passcode:** 2832957
Web link: https://mmancusa.webex.com/mmancusa/j.php?MTID=m2dff0c7dbb7c0558104af64d9f4c53eb

Tuesday, October 20

8:00-8:15	Welcome, Introductions, and Housekeeping *Desired outcomes:* • **Board action** to approve draft agenda and draft June call meeting summary. • **Board review** of future meeting schedules and format.	Tab 1	Kelly Hepler (*Board Chair- SD Game, Fish and Parks*)
8:15-8:30	Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board understanding of** ELT National Fish Habitat Board member decisions	Tab 2	David Hoskins (*Board Member Proxy - USFWS*)
8:30-9:30	Secretarial MOU *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness of** Federal agency report highlights • **Board discussion** of the MOU: successes, challenges, and next steps	Tab 3	Laura Dieghan (*USFWS*) and Kelly Hepler (*Board Chair- SD Game, Fish and Parks*)
9:30 – 9:45	Break		
9:45 - 10:00	AFS Symposium Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness of** content, participation, and outcomes.	Tab 4	Gary Whelan (SDC Co-chair – MI DNR) and Tom Bigford (Board Member – AFS)
10:00 – 11:15	2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment *Desired Outcome:* • **Board awareness** of Assessment results and products o Introduction o Presentation of Inland Assessment results o Presentation of Marine Assessment results		Gary Whelan (*SDC Co-chair – MI DNR*), Peter Ruhl (*SDC Co-chair – USGS*), Wes Daniels, Kristan Blackhart (*NMFS contract*), & Daniel Wieferich (*USGS*)

- Presentation of the Data Viewer

11:15- 12:00	<u>Committee Report-outs</u> *Desired outcomes:* • **Board understanding** of committee accomplishments as they relate to 2015 Board Priorities • **Board understanding** of committee priorities and funding needs for 2016	Tab 5	Gary Whelan (SDC Co-chair – MI DNR), Peter Ruhl (SDC Co-chair – USGS), Ryan Roberts (Board Staff- AFWA), Stan Allen (*Board Member – PSMFC*), Jimmy Hague (*TRCP*)
12:00 –1:00	Lunch		
1:15 – 2:15	<u>Board 2016 Priorities and Draft Budget</u> *Desired outcomes:* • **Board understanding** of the draft budget • **Board sets** 2016 Priorities with consideration of the budget and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan Objectives	Tab 6	ALL
2:15 - 2:45	<u>Multi-state Conservation Grant Program</u> *Desired outcomes*: • **Board awareness** of the status of the 2015 grant. • **Board understanding** of the 2016 Multi-state Conservation Grant Program results. • **Board discussion** of Multi-State Conservation Grant for application years 2017 and 2018.	Tab 7	Ryan Roberts (*Board Staff-AFWA*)
2:45 – 3:00	<u>Break</u>		
3:00 - 3:45	<u>501(c)(3) Development and Marketing Update</u> *Desired outcome*: • **Board awareness** of progress to date and next steps. • **Board action** to approve use of Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships terminology and associated logos.	Tab 8	Kelly Hepler (*Board Chair-SD Game, Fish and Parks*) and Mike Andrews (*Board member – TNC*)
3:45 – 4:15	<u>Seeking NFHAP Candidate Status for the Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership</u> *Desired outcome*: • **Board awareness** of the role and activities of the proposed Candidate Partnership	Tab 9	Bob Rose (*Yakama Tribe*), Christina Wang (*USFWS*), and Howard Schaller (*USFWS*)
4:15 – 4:45	<u>California Fish Passage Forum Partnership Presentation</u> *Desired outcome*: • **Board awareness** of the accomplishments and challenges facing the California Fish Passage Forum.		Donnie Ratcliff (*USFWS*)

4:45 – 5:00	NFHP Awards		
5:30 – 6:30	Happy Hour @ Tokyo Fro's 2224 Fair Oaks Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95825 (.2 mile/5min walk)		
Wednesday, October 21			
8:00 – 8:30	FHP Workshop Report-Out *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness of** content, participation, and outcomes.		FHP Representative
8:30 – 9:15	FHP Evaluation Update *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of results and recommendations	Tab 10	Tom Champeau (*Board Vice-chair, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*) and Review Team Members
9:15 – 9:45	FY16 USFWS Funding Methodology *Desired outcome:* • **Board understanding** of USFWS consideration of comments received • **Board understanding and input** regarding FY16 USFWS Funding Methodology	Tab 11	David Hoskins (*Board Member Proxy – USFWS*)
9:45-10:00	Break		
10:00 – 10:45	Project Tracking Database *Desired outcomes:* • **Board consideration and approval** of SDC recommendations regarding future housing and funding of the Project Tracking Database	Tab 12	Robin Carlson (*PSMFC*), Peter Ruhl (*SDC Co-chair – USGS*), & Gary Whelan (*SDC Co-chair – MI DNR*)
10:45 – 11:00	NOAA Fisheries Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan *Desired outcome:* • **Board awareness** of the draft Plan and invitation to provide feedback	Tab 13	Pat Montanio (*Board Member proxy – NMFS*)
11:00 -11:15	National Fish Habitat Board Leadership *Desired outcome:* • **Board action** on National Fish Habitat Board leadership **(elect new chair and vice chair)**	Tab 14	Stan Allen (*Board Member - PSMFC*)
11:15 -11:30	Wrap-up		

11:30 – 12:00 Field trip Presentation

12:00 – 12:30 Lunch

12:30 - 5:00 Field Trip: Fish Screen and American River Habitat Restoration Tour

Draft National Fish Habitat Board Conference Call and WebEx Summary: June 24, 2015

Members present by conference call and/or WebEx:

Stan Allen (PSMFC)
Tom Bigford *for* Doug Austen (AFS)
Doug Boyd (SBPC)
Kelly Hepler (SDGFP)
David Hoskins *for* Dan Ashe (USFWS)
Mike Leonard (ASA)
Bryan Moore *for* Chris Wood (TU)
Kelley Myers (MAFWA)
Kevin O'Donovan (CCA)
Sam Rauch (NMFS)
Ron Skates (NAWS)
Mike Stone (WAFWA)
Leroy Young (NEAFWA)

Members absent:

Mike Andrews (TNC), Tom Champeau (SEAFWA), Whit Fosburg (TRCP), Ellen Gilinsky (EPA), Rob Harper (USFS), Chris Moore (MAFMC), and Ron Regan (AFWA).

Motions approved: March National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary
Motions tabled: Approve the "Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships" terminology
Approved by consensus: June National Fish Habitat Board Conference Call and WebEx Agenda

Updates and discussions:

- Executive Leadership Team Update – The Board discussed approaching NFWF to consider re-joining the Board in addition to potential options for replacing NFWF.
- USFWS-NFHP FY15 Funding – An overview of the FY 2015 USFWS-NFHP funding process was provided to the Board. There was a discussion of feedback received on the methodology and when USFWS would consider this feedback.
- Corporate Engagement Strategy Update – The Board was provided the initial results of an FHP survey pertaining to the "Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships" terminology, viewed a brief presentation by Design and Image on the reasoning behind the proposed terminology, and discussed it's adoption. Discussion included what this would mean for the Board's title and IRS documentation, whether there were drawbacks to postponing a decision for the October meeting, and whether further information and/or discussion with FHPs was warranted before making a decision to adopt the new terminology.
- Demonstration of the Project Tracking Database – The Board was provided a demonstration of the current Project Tracking Database, which includes information in categories such as monitoring, timeline, funding, photos, project costs, and partners. It was noted that the data currently in the database is in draft form. Discussion included how and what information, including USFWS data, would be inputted into the database.
- Demonstration of the 2015 Assessment Online Report – The Board was provided a proof-of-concept demonstration of an interactive website product for the 2015 National Assessment Report which could include pages such as methodology, links to citations, and dynamic maps linked to interactive graphs. In kind development was confirmed and the need for a timeline from the SDC was noted. It was also noted that the hope is that the Board views this as a live report to which data can be added at any time.
- FHP Performance Evaluation Progress – Preliminary results of the FHP Performance Evaluation were provided to the Board in the form of mean score ranges for groups of measures. It was noted that some measures had variations in evaluations and some might need better wording. It was noted that the intent was not to grade one FHP over another. FHPs will have an opportunity to review outcomes and provide responses before the scores and other results are finalized and presented at the October Board Meeting.

- Legislative Update – The focus of efforts has been to introduce a similar bill as last year's version in the Senate and advocate for its inclusion in the Sportmen's Act. Discussions in the House have also begun.
- 501(c)(3) Update – It was noted that the Fund BOD will meet face-to-face in July. Discussion included developing a process for setting up chapters, and it was noted that this can be carried out before IRS approval.
- Multistate Conservation Grant Program Update – An LOI, similar to last years, was submitted. Applicants will be notified of their status at the end of June.

Action items:

- ELT member will reach out to AFWA leadership to consider re-joining the NFHP Board.
- Board members are invited to provide suggestions for a NFWF replacement; ELT will bring back suggestions to the Board for consideration.
- Board staff will consider including a discussion of the USFWS-NFHP funding methodology on the October meeting agenda.
- Board chair would like to discuss Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships terminology with FHPs on an upcoming call.
- Board members are invited to provide Project Tracking Database suggestions.
- Science and Data Committee may bring a proposal for the future of the Project Tracking Database for the Board to consider at the October meeting.
- Project Tracking Database lead and USFWS staff will discuss information needs prior to the October Board meeting.
- Should the Partnership be invited to submit a full MSCG proposal a call may be convened to discuss.

Future Board meetings:

- FHP Workshop October 18-19 and Board Meeting October 20 -21 in Sacramento, California

Board approved documents:

- March Board Meeting Summary

Additional attendees by conference call and/or WebEx:

James Adams (SBPC)
Kristan Blackhart (NOAA contract)
Tripp Boltin (USFWS)
Pat Campfield (ACFHP)
Robin Carlson (PSMFC)
Steve Crawford (FWCC-retired)
Brian Elkington (USFWS)
Pam Fuller (USGS)
Eli Gerson (Design & Image)
Jessica Graham (SARP)
Emily Greene (Board Staff – NOAA contract)
Roger Harding (AKDFG)
Justyna Nicinska (NMFS)
Steve Perry (EBTJV)
Ryan Roberts (Board Staff - AFWA)
Pete Ruhl (USGS)
Kent Smith (ACFHP)
Susan Wells (USFWS)
Gary Whelan (Board Science and Data Co-Chair – MI DNR)
Daniel Wieferich (USGS)

National Fish Habitat Board Meetings 2015 -2016

Year	Date	Location	Comments
2016	January 20 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	Annual budget & priorities
	March 8-9 (Tues-Wed)	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	June 29 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	
	Summer	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members.
	October 26-27 (Wed-Thurs)	Florida Panhandle	Panama City, Pensacola, or Destin.
2017	January 18 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	Annual budget & priorities
	March 7-8 (Tues – Wed)	Washington, DC Area	Reserve room at TNC HQ
	June 28 (Wed)	Tele/web conference	
	Summer	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members.
	October 18 – 19 (Wed-Thurs)	TBD – Staff welcome suggestions from the Board.	There are many places where the Board has not met (e.g. Northern Great Plains and Ohio River Basin). Staff welcome suggestions for specific locations within these regional examples or beyond.

Record of Past Board Meetings 2006 -2014

Year	Date	Location	Facility
2006	September 22	Aspen, Colorado	Hotel
	November 16	Washington, DC	Hall of States
2007	January 16	Teleconference	
	March 1-2	Washington, DC	Environmental Protection Agency
	June 6-7	Washington, DC	Commerce Department
	October 2-3	Arlington, VA	Hotel
2008	February 20-21	St. Petersburg, FL	Tampa Bay Watch
	May 13-14	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	October 7-8	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
2009	March 4-5	Harrisburg, PA	Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
	June 25, 2009	Leesburg, VA	National Conference Center

	October 7-8	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
2010	January 15	Teleconference	
	March 3-4	Memphis, TN	Ducks Unlimited
	June 9-10	Silver Spring, MD	NOAA headquarters
	August 25	Teleconference	
	October 12-14	Portland, OR	Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission
2011	January 13	Teleconference	
	March 11	Teleconference	
	April 12-13	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	July 26-27	Madison, WI	Hotel
	October 19-20	Albuquerque, NM	FWS Regional Office
2012	January 12	Teleconference	
	March 1	Teleconference	
	April 17-18	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	July 10-11	Portland, ME	Hotel
	October 16-17	Ridgedale, MO	Big Cedar Lodge
2013	January 16	Teleconference	
	February 26-27	Arlington, VA	FWS headquarters
	April 15	Teleconference	
	June 25-26	Salt Lake City, UT	Utah State Capitol
	October 22-23	Charleston, SC	SC DNR
2014	January 15	Teleconference	
	March 9-10	Denver, CO	
	June 25	Tele/web conference	
	November 8-9	National Harbor, MD	Held in conjunction w/ RAE Summit
2015	January 14	Tele/web conference	
	March 3-4	Arlington, VA	The Nature Conservancy
	June 24	Tele/web conference	
	September 22	Tele/web conference	Introductory call for new members and interested individuals.
	October 20-21	Sacramento, CA	Hotel

Total: 41 (in-person and teleconference) meetings held to date

Title: Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Update

Desired outcome(s): Board understanding of ELT National Fish Habitat Board member decisions

Background:

The Executive Leadership Team met via conference call on September 9, 2015 to discuss National Fish Habitat Board Membership. The following individuals were re-/appointed:

Leroy Young (NEAFWA)

Ed Schriever (WAFWA)

Kelley Myers (MAFWA)

Tom Champeau (in one of two capacities: SEAFWA or at-large state seat)

Ron Skates (Native American Fish and Wildlife Society)

Rob Harper (US Forest Service)

AFS representative to be determined

Sean Stone (CCA) to serve out Kevin O'Donovan's term

On the September 9th call, the ELT also agreed to keep the NFWF seat open until further conversation could be had with their leadership. The ELT also discussed items pertaining to Board leadership and the October Board meeting update.

Since the September call, AFS has selected Tom Bigford as their representative.

While it was not discussed on the ELT call, Kelly Hepler continues to serve according to the Bylaws clause which states that "Members whose terms have expired shall serve until replaced".

Briefing Book Materials:

Board Member List and Terms

NFHP Board Membership *(October 2015)*

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Representing	Next Review
Allen	Stan	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission	At large- Commercial fishing	June 2016
Andrews	Michael	The Nature Conservancy	At large - Conservation	June 2016
Beard	Doug	US Geological Survey	Federal Agency	July 2018
Bigford	Tom	American Fisheries Society	American Fisheries Society	July 2018
Boyd	Douglass	Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council	At large- Sportfishing	July 2017
Champeau	Tom	FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	State Agency - SEAFWA	July 2015
Fosburgh	Whit	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership	At large- Sportfishing	July 2017
Gilinsky	Ellen	US Environmental Protection Agency	Federal Agency	June 2016
Harper	Rob	USDA Forest Service	Federal Agency	July 2018
Hepler	Kelly	South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks	State Agency	July 2015
Leonard	Mike	American Sportfishing Association	At large-Sportfishing	June 2016
Moore	Chris	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	At large- Commercial fishing	October 2016
Myers	Kelley	IA Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau	State Agency - MAFWA	July 2018
Schriever	Ed	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	State Agency - WAFWA	July 2018
Skates	Ron	Native American Fish and Wildlife Society	Tribal	July 2018
Stone	Sean	Coastal Conservation Association	At large - Sportfishing	July 2017
Wood	Chris	Trout Unlimited	At large - Conservation	July 2017
Young	Leroy	PA Fish and Boat Commission	State Agency - NEAFWA	July 2018
NA		National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	July 2015
Board members serving by virtue of their offices				
Ashe	Dan	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Federal Agency	
Rauch	Sam	NOAA Fisheries Service	Federal Agency	
Regan	Ron	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	AFWA – Executive Director	

Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The U.S. Department of the Interior
And
The U.S. Department of Agriculture
And
The U.S. Department of Commerce
For
Implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to promote collaborative, science-based conservation by ensuring that the component agencies, bureaus, and offices of the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Commerce (Departments), with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation, protection, and restoration, support efforts to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations and subject to the availability of funds.

The Action Plan is a science-based, voluntary, and non-regulatory effort providing a nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise, and existing programs of Federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, foundations, and individuals.

II. BACKGROUND

Aquatic habitat supports fish, shellfish, amphibians, and other aquatic life that is important to the Nation's biological diversity, the economies of local communities and the Nation, and recreational use and enjoyment by millions of Americans. However, coastal, marine, and freshwater habitats have been damaged and destroyed by human activities. These losses have caused significant declines in fish populations throughout the United States, and have resulted in substantial economic losses. Our Departments have substantial interests in reversing declines in aquatic communities and habitats by working with partners in state and tribal government, local government, not-for-profit organizations, private entities, and individuals.

The Action Plan provides a national strategy to address aquatic habitat from the interior to the oceans. It supports cooperative, proactive, aquatic habitat protection, and restoration goals at multiple geographic scales. Through fish habitat protection and restoration, jobs are created and

recreational and commercial fishing communities will benefit. The Action Plan's voluntary partnership approach complements Federal and state regulations that protect aquatic habitat. The Action Plan supplements, but does not replace the existing foundation of statutory authority and associated regulatory programs implemented by the Departments that presently serve to protect aquatic habitats from degradation. Communication and coordination among our Departments, whose activities affect aquatic habitat, will help to improve the quality of our stewardship and the health of our Nation's aquatic habitat.

III. AUTHORITIES

This MOU is issued by the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Commerce (Secretaries), pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1801 *et seq.*), Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 *et seq.*), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 661-666c.), Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. § 6401 *et seq.*), Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1451 *et seq.*), Estuary Restoration Act of 2000 (33 U.S.C. § 2901 *et seq.*), Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*), and the Coastal and Estuarine Lands Conservation Program (16 U.S.C. §§ 1456-1456d), and other Federal laws. These statutes provide the Agencies with authority to, among other things:

- Conserve and manage the fishery resources of the United States;
- Cooperate with state and other public or private agencies and organizations in the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- Protect, restore, and enhance the coastal and estuarine resources of the United States, and;
- Provide for the conservation of species that are endangered or threatened, and the ecosystems on which they depend.

IV. DEFINITIONS

As used in this MOU the following terms are specifically defined:

A. National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). The *National Fish Habitat Action Plan* dated April 24, 2006, and any subsequent revisions or amendments.

B. National Fish Habitat Board. A governing board established by the Action Plan to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the Action Plan.

C. Federal Caucus. A working group open to all Federal agencies, chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, organized to coordinate Federal participation in implementation of the Action Plan.

D. Fish Habitat Partnership. An entity designated by the National Fish Habitat Board as a "Fish Habitat Partnership" that coordinates the implementation of the Action Plan at a

regional level. A Fish Habitat Partnership may include among its members Federal, state, tribal, local, non-profit, or private entities or individuals.

E. Aquatic communities. Aquatic organisms living or growing in, on, or near freshwater, estuarine or marine habitats and co-occurring with one another under relatively similar environmental conditions.

F. Aquatic habitat. Any area on which an aquatic organism depends, directly or indirectly, to carryout the life processes of the organism, including an area used by the organism for spawning, incubation, nursery, rearing, growth to maturity, food supply, or migration, including an area adjacent to the aquatic environment if the adjacent area:

(1) Contributes an element, such as the input of detrital material or the promotion of a planktonic or insect population providing food, that makes fish life possible;

(2) Affects the quality and quantity of water sources;

(3) Provides public access for the use of fishery resources; or

(4) Serves as a buffer protecting the aquatic environment.

G. Aquatic organism. Species that depend upon aquatic habitat for one or more stages of their life cycle, such as spawning, incubation, nursery, rearing, growth to maturity, food supply, or migration, including but not limited to fishes, shellfish, amphibians, turtles, and aquatic invertebrates.

H. Conservation. Activities that protect, sustain, and, where appropriate, restore, and enhance populations of fish, wildlife, or plant life or a habitat required to sustain fish, wildlife, or plant life or its productivity.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

To achieve the objectives of this MOU, the heads of all agencies, bureaus, and offices within the Departments with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation, protection, and restoration shall be responsible for ensuring that the following principles are followed:

A. Principle 1. The Departments Shall Support Implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

(1) The Departments recognize that the Action Plan is a partnership with state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, local agencies, not-for-profit organizations, private entities, and individuals to improve the quality and quantity of aquatic habitat.

(2) The Departments shall ensure their actions, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, and in accordance with their respective agency

missions, policies, and regulations, are consistent with and support the priorities of the Action Plan. In so doing, the Departments can improve the efficiency of Federal Government operations and ensure effective coordination with state, tribal, and local agencies, not-for-profit organizations, private entities, and individuals.

B. Principle 2. The Departments Shall Participate in National Fish Habitat Action Plan Forums.

(1) The Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Chief, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall participate as members of the National Fish Habitat Board.

(2) Each of the component agencies, bureaus, and offices of the Departments with direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation, protection, and restoration, shall as appropriate, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, and in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations:

(a) Participate as members of the Federal Caucus at policy and technical levels to coordinate Federal participation in implementation of the Action Plan in support of state agency-led efforts to achieve the goals of the Action Plan.

(b) Review its policies, procedures, resources, and capabilities to further the goals of the Action Plan, and make revisions, where appropriate during regularly scheduled reviews of same, to support the goals.

(c) Incorporate the goals of the Action Plan in its own plans for managing Federal lands and water resources, during regularly scheduled reviews of such plans.

(d) Contribute materials, technical assistance, services, or matching funds to projects that support the goals of the Action Plan and Fish Habitat Partnerships established under the Plan.

(e) Coordinate and contribute technical assistance, services or funds for the science and data initiatives of the National Fish Habitat Board.

(f) Consider the goals of the Action Plan when awarding loans, grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements.

(g) Consider the goals of the Action Plan when issuing permits to states or private entities when such permits may influence aquatic habitat.

(h) Collect, manage, analyze, and share data and contribute information technology expertise to build or integrate databases to assess aquatic communities, habitat conditions and outcomes of projects.

(i) Encourage and support affiliated efforts by non-Federal partners to implement the Action Plan, including the fulfillment of the Federal trust responsibilities to Native American governments.

(j) Contribute to the development of informational materials for stakeholders and the general public to raise awareness of the values of aquatic habitat and the Action Plan.

(k) Coordinate its activities in support of the Action Plan with other interagency efforts, including but not limited to America's Great Outdoors, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Coral Reef Task Force, the National Action Plan for Freshwater Resources, the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan, and the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy.

(l) Coordinate its activities with states, territories, tribes, and local governments to meet the goals of the Action Plan.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

This MOU shall be implemented by all agencies, bureaus, and offices of the Departments, as applicable.

VII. REPORTING

Within 180 days from the date of this MOU, and at 2-year intervals thereafter, all bureaus, agencies, and offices implementing this MOU will report to their respective Secretary on agency accomplishments and progress in support of state-led efforts to achieve the goals of the Action Plan.

VIII. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Nothing in this MOU shall obligate the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, or the Department of Commerce to obligate or transfer any funds. This MOU is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Any endeavor involving reimbursement, contribution of funds, or other transfer of anything of value between the Parties will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures, including those for government procurement and printing. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the Parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority.

B. Changes to this MOU shall be made in writing by mutual consent of all Parties, through an issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all Parties.

C. Documents furnished to a Party under this MOU may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552). A Party shall not release to a FOIA requester documents originating with another Party. Rather, the Party that received the FOIA request shall forward such document(s) to the originating Party for review, determination, and response directly to the requester.

D. This MOU is not intended to, and does not create any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity, by any party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.

IX. EXPIRATION

This MOU becomes effective on the date that the last party to this agreement signs and shall remain in effect for 5 years from the date of execution. This MOU may be extended upon written request of any of the Departments and the subsequent written concurrence of the others. Any of the Departments may terminate participation in this MOU with a 60-day written notice to the others.

SIGNATURES

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto executed this Memorandum of Understanding on the date(s) set forth below:

Ken Salazar — MAR 05 2012

Secretary
Department of the Interior — Date

MAR 07 2012

Secretary
Department of Agriculture — Date

Jon E. Bryson — MAR - 5 2012

Secretary
Department of Commerce — Date

Title: AFS Symposium Update

Desired outcome: Board awareness of content, participation, and outcomes.

Background: 145th Annual AFS meeting was held in Portland, Oregon August 16-20, 2015. The NFHP symposium titled "Implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan: Progress in Protecting, Restoring and Enhancing Fish Habitats, Fish and Fisheries in the United States" occurred 1:20-4:00 on Wednesday, August 19th and 8:00-5:20 on Thursday, August 20th. The symposium was organized by Tim Birdsong (SDC and SARP member – TX Parks and Wildlife Department) with assistance from Gary Whelan (SDC Co-Chair) and Tom Bigford (Board member).

In direct support of Objective 5 of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, the symposium was intended to: communicate outcomes and accomplishments of the partnerships; highlight the latest regional and national fish habitat assessments; share successful voluntary conservation strategies; identify meaningful and cost-effective approaches for restoring, protecting and enhancing fish habitats; and promote emerging best management practices for the conservation of our nation's fish habitats. Furthermore, the symposium attempted to offer context for these conservation efforts by characterizing the condition of the aquatic landscape in the US and identifying regional conservation challenges and needs for a broad range of fish habitats including headwaters streams, large rivers, natural lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, and near-shore marine environments. Other NFHP-related events at the AFS Annual meeting included: a WNTI Symposium; a Film Festival hosted by the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership; a NFHP Booth; NFHP presentations in other conference sessions; and a post-NFHP symposium gathering.

Update:

The NFHP symposium was well attended with frequently over 70 in attendance, and most of the partnerships were represented. The Assessment Teams gave engaging talks, followed by outstanding partnership presentations. SDC Co-chair Gary Whelan and Board Vice Chair Tom Champeau provided an opening presentation and closing remarks, respectively. Some of the papers/projects presented in the AFS-Portland NFHP symposium will be included as case studies in the 2015 Assessment report.

The NFHP booth had high traffic and interest, led by Ryan Roberts with help from Board members, Board staff and Committee members, and FHP representatives.

The post-symposium gathering was well attended and provided an opportunity to cement relationships.

Reference Materials:

Presentation titles and abstracts from the Day 1 of the Symposium: https://afs.confex.com/afs/2015/webprogram/Session3514.html

Presentation titles and abstracts from Day 2 of the Symposium: https://afs.confex.com/afs/2015/webprogram/Session3936.html

Title: Partnership Committee

Desired outcome: An informational briefing to the Board on the Partnership Committee's 2015 accomplishments and to highlight the issues it will address in 2016.

Background: At the October 2014 Board Meeting, the Partnership Committee suggested that it address the following issues in 2015:

Higher Priority

- 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.
- 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.
- Development of an approach that demonstrates the linkages among FHP conservation priorities and the Board's National Conservation Strategies.

Lower Priority

- Assessment of the need to develop a standard business planning template for use by FHPs.
- Establishment of a process for estimating the costs for achieving FHP conservation priorities.

2015 Accomplishments

Task: 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. Outcome: The Partnership Committee reviewed the criteria used for both processes that resulted in five (5) recommendations being presented to the Board for their considerations and actions during its January 2015 meeting (see Tab 5a in the January 2015 Board Book).

Task: 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. Outcome: Based on a survey of FHPs, the Partnership Committee made seven (7) recommendations to the Board for their considerations and actions at its March 2015 Meeting (see Tab 4 in the March 2015 Board Book).

Task: Development of an approach that demonstrates the linkages among FHP conservation priorities and the Board's National Conservation Strategies. Outcome: The Partnership Committee discussed the fact the Board's Fish Habitat Partnership (FHPs) Performance

Evaluation included a question (#1) that asks FHPs to describe both the FHP's conservation priority and national conservation strategy being addressed by each of its fish habitat conservation projects that were implemented during federal fiscal years 2011-2013. Compiling FHP responses for this portion of Question 1 would result in demonstrating the linkages between FHPs conservation priorities and the National Conservation Strategies. However, the Partnership Committee has not yet made this a formal recommendation to the Board for its considerations and actions.

The Partnership Committee did not address the two (2) lower priority tasks during 2015.

Suggested Issues to be addressed in 2016

- Review current NFHP National Conservation Need and amend as needed.
- Development of a process that provides a priority ranking of multiple FHP project proposals that are combined for submission to a funding source.
- Review FHP performance evaluation response forms and identify the scale and scope of the linkages between FHP priorities and the NFHP National Conservation Strategies.

Title: Legislative Update

Desired outcome: Board awareness of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act status

Background:

Versions of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA), which will codify and strengthen the National Fish Habitat Partnership, have been introduced in the previous three sessions of Congress. The most recent version, S. 2080, was introduced in the Senate in the 113th Congress on March 5, 2014, but failed to gain traction before the end of the year. NFHCA was introduced by co-sponsors Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Mike Crapo (R-ID). Previous versions of NFHCA have enjoyed broad bipartisan support in Congress, including bipartisan approval by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in two different Congresses. S. 2080 included modifications to language in earlier versions of NFHCA that were made in consultation with several Senators and their staffs from both sides of the aisle.

2015 Legislative Priority and Accomplishments:

Board 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)*

Accomplishments: The NFHP legislative coalition includes representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the American Sportfishing Association, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Coastal Conservation Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. The primary focus of the coalition has been to introduce a similar bill as last year's version and advocate for its inclusion in the Sportsmen's Act, which is a package of various legislative provisions supported by the recreational fishing and hunting community. The coalition has been working actively with Congressional staff who has been working on the Sportsmen's Act in the Senate to introduce a streamlined bill that achieves the core goals of the legislative effort. While the Sportsmen's Act was introduced in the Senate on Feb. 5 without inclusion of NFHP legislation, the primary sponsors, Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) have made commitments to work with the coalition and Senators Cardin and Crapo to address the lingering concerns with the bill and have it included in the Sportsmen's Act during the forthcoming legislative process. The coalition is hopeful that when the Sportsmen's Act is marked up in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, NFHP legislation will be amended into the bill. In the House of Representatives, a version of the Sportsmen's Act (HR 3147) has been introduced that includes a "Sense of Congress" provision that expresses support for the National Fish Habitat Initiative. The political landscape in the House is not favorable for a full NFHP authorization bill, but the coalition is optimistic that should it be included in the Senate Sportsmen's Act, the NFHP provision would make it out of the bill conference committee.

2016 Legislative Priority and Approach:

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

Approach: The coalition (TNC/TU/AFWA/ASA/TRCP) will continue to push for passage of NFHP legislation, with the most likely vehicle being the Sportsmen's Act. The coalition will also continue to work with offices that have raised concerns about the bill to clarify the purposes and intent of the legislation and, as appropriate, offer changes to address any lingering concerns.

Title: Communications Committee Report

Desired outcome: An informational briefing to the Board on the committee's 2015 work plan and consensus on Board's priorities for the committee in 2016.

Background: At its November 2014 Meeting, the Board tasked the communications committee with addressing the following priority issues during 2015:

2015 Priority Recommendations:

Task A: 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.

Task B: Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Task C: Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act.

Task D: NFHP website re-development.

Task E: Increase outreach of Waters to Watch Campaign

Task F: Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and re-branding efforts for NFHP.

Task G: PR and Marketing Resources for the NFHP 2015 Status Report

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

Task I: Review and make any needed changes to the communications strategy (Board approved 2011and updated in 2013 and 2014) to ensure that it remains a guide for committee work and maintained as a living document.

2015 Priority Progress:

Task A – We made significant progress through social media and targeted marketing events to grow our Partner Coalition. Our single biggest outreach event for the year was the 2015 meeting of the American Fisheries Society. We had nearly 200 individuals come by our booth that we had set up in the expo hall and sign up for our partner coalition. Our outreach to state fish chiefs and state fish and wildlife agencies through AFWA was enhanced in 2015 through meetings of state fish and wildlife agency personnel in March and September and several of our Fish Habitat Partnerships participated in regional AFWA meeting this year across the country. In 2016 The National Fish Habitat Board is planning the rollout of the 2016 assessment at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March.

Task B – We reutilized our videos shot in 2014 and displayed them in different places in 2015 reaching a broader audience. We were tight with time for producing videos in 2015 and need to plan for utilizing our funding for videos in 2016 for our National Fish Habitat Fund website that is under development.

Task C – In 2015 we had completed an update to our National Fish Habitat Legislation Fact Sheet in preparation for the National Fish Habitat bill being reintroduced. We have been working closely with the Government Affairs team on monitoring progress of the bill and the possible inclusion in the Sportsmen's Package. Fish Habitat Legislation received a sense of Congress in early August of 2015.

Task D - We anticipate entering into a contract with 303 software, a website development company by the end of 2015. There was a consensus among members of the marketing team and communications committee members to closely relate the look and feel of the websites between the National Fish Habitat Fund and the National Fish Habitat Partnership website. 303 has begun working on elements of the National Fish Habitat Fund website and it made sense to hold off on making any decisions on the fishhabitat.org website until now.

Task E – In 2015 we saw similar results to 2014 for our Waters to Watch Campaign. We received 30 media mentions of our Waters to Watch National release projects and 4 individual projects received media placement in regional newspapers. We utilized Meltwater media to help send the releases out for 2015 and there was a bit of a learning curve for using the service the first time around. Activities for the NFHP non-profit took up some time to truly improve the campaign for 2015.

Task F - Efforts for remarketing NFHP in 2015 was where a majority of time was utilized in 2015, with the IRS Approval of the National Fish Habitat Fund being designated in June. The marketing team has spent time each week collaborating on what is needed for a viable website and several partners in the National Fish Habitat from business and organizations provided testimonials for the website that were organized for use in our website planning. The National Fish Habitat Fund also held its first Board meeting in Jackson, WY in late July and worked through a plan for actions over the next year for the fund centered around our marketing efforts.

Task G – This task has been a bit delayed, but a contract is in place for the writing of the status report and tools are being planned to correspond with the rollout of the 2015 assessment in March of 2015.

Task H – Conference calls with the communications committee have been on an individual basis mostly in 2015 due to a large concentration of time with the marketing team being concentrated on enhancing the National Fish Habitat Brand and 501c3 development.

Task I – The Communications Committee will review the communications strategy in early 2016 and tie in elements of the work of the marketing team.

Tentative list of priority issues to be addressed in 2016:

- PR and Marketing Resources for the NFHP 2015 Status Report (Budget Need: $2,000)
- NFHP website re-development. (Budget need: $20,000)
- Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and re-branding efforts for the NFHP program and the FHPs.
- Continue building database for newsletter distribution to increase engagement with partner coalition.
- Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships. (Budget need: $5,000)
- Continue coordination with legislative affairs team in supporting developments of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act
- Increase outreach of Waters to Watch Campaign for its Ten Year Anniversary (Budget need: $3,000)
- 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.

Title: Science and Data Committee Report for FY2015

Desired outcome: An informational briefing to the Board on the Science and Data Committee's 2015 work plan outcomes and Board concurrence for the Science and Data Committee's proposed priority tasks it will address in 2016. The briefing will include a preliminary FY2016 Board funding request for those tasks and an identification of external funding needs.

Priorities and Outcomes: At the November 2014 Meeting, the Board approved Science and Data Committee priorities for 2015 and the Committee have been implementing these tasks as follows:

1. The Science and Data Committee will 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).
    a. Status – The Science and Data Committee convened bi-weekly to month conference calls along with a single committee meeting to focus on and assist the Assessment Teams in completing their products. While the frequent conference calls were essential to maintaining the committee operation, it was clear from all meeting attendees that an annual committee was essential to ensure the smooth functioning of the committee on its many tasks. Work on LCC and FHP activities and actions will be deferred until after the National Assessment is complete.
2. Develop coordinated delivery of the 2015 assessment, including adding new online capabilities following Science and Data Committee direction to help partners and stakeholders understand and best use the new National Assessment data and products.
    a. Status – Work is currently in progress and will be reported on at the October Board Meeting.
3. Continue to catalogue 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. Dedicated data management workflow strategies following the NFHP Data Standard Operating Procedures will be implemented to ensure data access, understanding, and re-use currently and in the future.
    a. Status – Work was deferred in this area to allow focus on the National Assessment and the National Project Database.
4. Continue development of standard effectiveness measures for conservation actions used to address nationwide fish habitat focus areas. Strengthening the science foundation of the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board's National Assessment by developing standardized effectiveness measurements for FHPs' connectivity projects which will include developing

new methods to incorporate fine-scale system process information from FHP projects. This task was requested by the Board.

   a. Status – Work initiated on this priority in coordination with the American Fisheries Society although additional resources were not made available. Initial discussions on a MOU are in progress and this work will increase in priority in FY2016.

5. The inland assessment lead by Michigan State University will refine and update fisheries, aquatic nuisance and invasive species, dam inventory, land conservation status, and water quality status information as data become available. Improved river fragmentation analyses and national calculation of fragmentation metrics will be completed. Development of lakesheds and lake assessments will begin. Demonstration project areas will be identified and implemented with interested Partnerships. Approaches to improve hydrology and temperature incorporation and to refine the marine-inland linkages between the inland and marine assessments will be evaluated.
   a. Status – Inland Assessment products are complete and will be reported on at the October FHP Workshop and Board Meeting. Work on lakesheds and lake assessments will be deferred until FY2016 with full incorporation in the 2020 National Assessment along the inclusion of a selected set of processes, likely hydrology and some aspects of water quality.
6. Completion of the marine assessment for all coastal waters of the U.S. as lead by NOAA Fisheries. Complete a full assessment of estuaries in the northern Gulf of Mexico, building on the results of the recently concluded demonstration project in the region to develop the new marine assessment methodology. Continue data collection, processing, and initial analysis for West Coast estuaries. Begin data collection and processing to support additional regional estuarine assessments starting in the Pacific Northwest, including datasets on fish/shellfish abundance and diversity, physical habitat, anthropogenic stress, and biological response.

   When resources become available, refine the existing marine geospatial framework for estuaries in the contiguous United States and complete initial development of a geospatial framework for all estuaries across Alaska. Explore methodologies to improve linkages between the inland and marine components of the National Assessment.
   a. Status – Marine Assessment products to include a full assessment of northern Gulf of Mexico estuaries and an updated 2010 assessment of the other coasts is complete and will be reported on at the October FHP Workshop and Board Meeting. Additional work on the West Coast is continuing with leadership from Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership and on the Great Lakes with leadership from the Great Lakes Basin FHP. Resources were not available to make process on other areas

of the Marine Assessment or to fully complete an assessment for all coastal waters of the U.S.

7. Science and Data Committee outreach efforts will: ensure coordination of assessment and data actions among all interested entities including FHPs and LCCs; inform Board and key audiences of the direction and products of the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its integral data system; and seek new resources and partnerships from appropriate entities and groups to increase efficiency and the quality of the National Fish Habitat Assessment.
    a. Status – This priority is a continuing effort that was handled by the Committee Chairs and Committee members who are associated with FHPs. The Committee Chairs attended and presented at a range of meetings including: the North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference; American Fisheries Society Meetings (Annual, Chapter (Michigan, Indiana and Ontario), and Fisheries Administration and Management Sections); Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; the USFS/USGS Big Data Workshop; the USGS Water Census Project Coordination Meeting; and the North American Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Annual Conference. Additionally, the chairs fielded a range of inquiries and requests from FHPs and a broad range of the public. Committee members facilitated communications directly with FHPs and the Committee meeting and numerous conference calls ensured that they had the most up to date information.
8. Continue to develop selected socioeconomic data and analyses to support decision making by the Board and FHPs. This work will focus on continuing and expanding the currently funded work to attribute and incorporate appropriate socioeconomic data into the existing Board Data System.
    a. Status – No progress was made on this priority as resources were not available.
9. Develop new science and data products from existing and new Fish Habitat Partnership assessment databases to further support FHP habitat analysis and the Board's 2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment. Key FHP datasets will be identified by the Science and Data Committee and these data along with appropriate analytical tools will be integrated into the Board's Data System for wider inter-FHP habitat assessment efforts.
    a. Status – No progress was made on this priority as resources were not available.
10. Strengthening the science foundation of the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board's National Assessment by determining the best approaches for incorporating data on connectivity, hydrology and marine fish and shellfish. These were all gaps in the Assessment that were consistently identified by reviewers and FHPs.
    a. Status – While no resources were available to greatly increase capacity in this area, progress was made to determine what the likely process candidates should be for the 2020 Assessment during external meetings noted above and during the Committee meeting.

11. Refinement of the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board's National Assessment by initiating the filling analytical gaps on connectivity, hydrology and in the marine assessment identified by National Fish Habitat Board (Board) and Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) in the 2010 National Fish Habitat Assessment (Assessment).
    a. Status - While no resources were available to greatly increase capacity in this area, progress was made to determine how to move these areas forward for the 2020 Assessment during external meetings noted above and during the Committee meeting.
12. Continued development of a National FHP Project Database to include a plan for future refinements.
    a. Status – The National FHP Project Database maintenance and minor improvements were implemented through NOAA funding. A plan for future development of this system has been developed and will be presented at the October Board Meeting.

Draft Science and Data Priorities for FY2016:

1. Complete and publish 2015 National Assessment
    a. SDC review process and products then develop recommendations for 2020 National Assessment
        i. **Budget need** - $20,000 for SDC meeting travel for this item and others below
    b. SDC leadership, membership and Assessment Teams to communicate results to a broad audience to include AFWA, AFS and other entities
        i. **Budget need** - $12,000 for SDC co-chair travel
2. Complete refinement and implement National Project Database (plan will be presented at October Board Meeting)
    a. **Minimum Budget need** - $35,000
    b. **Total Budget needed** - $115,000
3. Reinstitute work on a set of evaluation standards for a range of habitat projects
    a. Complete MOU with AFS and AFS Habitat Section
4. Begin work on 2020 Assessment
    a. Reinstitute work to capture FHP data and assessments for future incorporation into 2020 National Assessment
        i. Continue work to find new datasets for 2020 National Assessment
    b. Initiate incorporation of lakes into the National Assessment
        i. Detailed scoping of process and data needs by SDC
        ii. Review of geospatial framework of lakesheds by SDC
    c. Select 1 to 2 system processes for full integration into 2020 National Assessment and begin process of integration
        i. Best candidates are hydrology and connectivity

   ii. Start regionally with incorporation of process data

d. Marine assessment review
   i. Develop a strategic vision and workplan for marine assessment
   ii. Determine how to implement Gulf Coast assessment for other coasts
   iii. Develop plan on how to integrate inland assessment scores into estuary assessment scores.
      1. Evaluate procedures being considered for Chesapeake Bay (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies/strategy/fish_habitat)

e. Ensure that SDC is fully informed of progress on all marine coasts including Great Lakes

f. Continue discussion on how to effectively measure habitat condition in AK considering the low species diversity and recovered landscape

g. Budget needs
   i. Inland Assessment – Continued USFWS funding support of $160,000 for Michigan State University – Continued enhancement of existing assessment and to start lakes assessment incorporation
   ii. Marine Assessment - $200,000 for 2 FTEs at NOAA
   iii. Incorporation of FHP datasets and process information - $100,000 for 1 FTE

Report Prepared By:

Gary Whelan, MI Department of Natural Resources
Peter Ruhl, US Geological Survey
October 8, 2015

REVENUES	AFWA/FWS Coop (2102)	MSCG Operations 3 - (2154A)	MSCG - FHP Coordination (2154B)	MSCG - FHP Coordination (2155)	MSCG - FHP Coordination (2156)	NFWF State Funds	TOTAL
Program Income	$ 64,000	$ 90,000	$ 40,616		$ 86,000	$ -	$ 280,616
Carryover	$ 85,500			$ 363,400		$ 32,000	$ 480,900
SUBTOTAL	**$ 149,500**	**$ 90,000**	**$ 40,616**	**$ 363,400**	**$ 86,000**	**$ 32,000**	**$ 761,516**
EXPENSES							
Coordination of Board and FHPs							
Salaries and Benefits				$ (5,500)			$ (5,500)
Travel - BoD	$ (8,000)						$ (8,000)
Travel - Staff	$ (6,000)						$ (6,000)
Supplies		$ (9,300)					$ (9,300)
Contractual to FHPs			$ (40,000)	$ (340,000)	$ (81,000)		$ (461,000)
Consultants (Effectiveness Measures)							$ -
FHP Org Development Needs							$ -
SUBTOTAL	**$ (14,000)**	**$ (9,300)**	**$ (40,000)**	**$ (345,500)**	**$ (81,000)**	**$ -**	**$ (489,800)**
Communications							
Website							$ -
Salaries and Benefits	$ (70,000)	$ (32,518)					$ (102,518)
Awards	$ (3,000)						$ (3,000)
Annual Report	$ (1,500)						$ (1,500)
Communications Products	$ (1,500)						$ (1,500)
Telephone	$ (1,000)						$ (1,000)
Travel - Staff General	$ (10,000)	$ (20,000)					$ (30,000)
Travel - Program: Expand Grassroots Outreach							$ -
Contractual		$ (20,000)					$ (20,000)
SUBTOTAL	**$ (87,000)**	**$ (72,518)**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ (159,518)**
Science & Data							$ -
Science Assistance to FHPs	$ -						$ (64,000)
Socioeconomic Data Needs							$ -
Travel	$ (13,000)						$ (13,000)
SUBTOTAL	**$ (13,000)**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ (77,000)**
TOTAL DIRECT	**$ (114,000)**	**$ (81,818)**	**$ (40,000)**	**$ (345,500)**	**$ (81,000)**	**$ -**	**$ (662,318)**
						$ -	$ -
IDC	$ (30,780)	$ (8,182)	$ (616)	$ (17,900)	$ (5,000)	$ -	$ (62,478)
TOTAL INDIRECT	**$ (30,780)**	**$ (8,182)**	**$ (616)**	**$ (17,900)**	**$ (5,000)**	**$ -**	**$ (62,478)**
NET	**$ 4,720**	**$ 0**	**$ (0)**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ 32,000**	**$ 36,720**

Cell: B1
Comment:

Cell: E1
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Third year funding for three year project awarded to AFWA for FHP needs.

Cell: F1
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Third year funding for three year project awarded to AFWA for FHP needs.

Cell: B2
Comment: John Bloom:
Half of the expected $128,000 co-op agreement from USFWS. Funds are available over 12 months covering 2016 & 2017. Estimating half will apply ot 2016.

Cell: B9
Comment: Matt Menashes:
8 Board member trips at $2000 ea.

Cell: B10
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Roberts, Menashes and Regan to BoD.

Cell: B14
Comment: Matt Menashes:
These three lines will support an FHP meeting in conjunction with RAE/TCS

Cell: B17
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Pd DJ Case $2256 Jan 2014

Cell: G24
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Sponsorship at RAE/TCS for NFHP

Cell: C25
Comment: Matt Menashes:
Will include any board meeting room contracts, etc. at the North American and RAE/TCS

Cell: B30
Comment: Matt Menashes:
13k Whelan

Unfunded Needs - Science & Data

2020 Assessment Needs	20,000.00
National Project Database	37,000.00
Marine Assessment Assistance	200,000.00
FHP Data Incorporation	100,000.00
Total	357,000.00

Unfunded Needs - Communications & Marketing

National Fish Habitat Fund Development	50,000.00
Total	50,000.00

Draft 2016 Board Budget

This document provides some information to help relate expenses presented in the 2016 draft budget to (1) the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan, 2nd Edition* and to (2) board and committee priorities. Specific budget notes are provided to help clarify spending plans.

Relationship of Budget to 2nd Edition 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.

Activity: 2014 Multi-State Conservation Grant (2154)
Funding: $121,818 ($81,818 – S&D), ($40,000 - FHP)
Lead Committee or Partner: AFWA
This funding will be used to support specific deliverables from FHPs for both conservation (Objectives 1 and 2) and science and data (Objective 4) needs. AFWA has sub-award contracts in place with five regional organizations to support projects conducted by 11FHPs. Project funding will be targeted in regional breakdowns as indicated in the Multi-State Conservation Grant.

Activity: 2015 Multi-State Conservation Grant (2155)
Funding: $363,400 (FHP)
This funding will be used to support specific deliverables from FHPs for both conservation (Objectives 1 and 2) and science and data (Objective 4) needs. AFWA has sub-award contracts in place with five regional organizations to support projects conducted by 11FHPs. Project funding will be targeted in regional breakdowns as indicated in the Multi-State Conservation Grant

Objective 2. Establish a consensus set of national conservation strategies as a framework to guide future actions and investment by FHPs by 2013.

Activity: None (Objective Met)
Funding: $0

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.

Activity: Communications

Funding: $149,000 (2102)

Lead Committee or Partner: AFWA

This objective is anticipated to be a continued emphasis for the Communications Coordinator in 2016. The coordinator will continue to focus on increasing the size of the Partner Coalition, the Partnership's grassroots network and build the capacity of the National Fish Habitat Fund's marketing campaign. It is anticipated that the Communications Coordinator will continue to attend events with the express purpose of soliciting new members for the Partner Coalition; improve the management and maintenance of the Partner Coalition database; increase the level of communications to the Partner Coalition; further the Partnerships social media efforts; and increase the use of video in grassroots network development. The Communications Coordinator will focus on collaborating with the NFHP non-profit in development of a new website for the overall partnership effort. This focus area will also include work on the Partnership's awards program. Other communications needs included are:

- NFHP annual report
- media outreach
- NFHP Awards
- website hosting, re-development
- NFHP Marketing Campaign Development
- Development for FHP project videos for both the NFHP and non-profit marketing functions

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.

Activity: The Science and Data Committee will Complete and publish 2015 National Assessment. The Science and Data Committee will review process and products then develop recommendations for 2020 National Assessment.

Funding: $13,000 to support state agency Science and Data Committee Co-Chair travel for six trips @ $2,000 each to include 2 NFHP Board meetings, 2 AFWA meetings and 2 other trips to be determined by need.

Lead Committee or Partner: Science and Data Committee

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.

Activity: 10 Waters to Watch. This program is our principal public outreach campaign and is designed to call attention to the work of the FHPs and the NFHP. We will be building upon earlier efforts to increase attention to the list; expand media opportunities for FHPs; and generate additional awareness of the NFHP.

Funding: $4,000

Lead Committee or Partner: Communications Committee

(Needs Outside of the Scope of the 2016 Budget)

Key Areas without known resources for 2016 (Science and Data):

- Complete and publish 2015 National Assessment
- SDC review process and products then develop recommendations for 2020 National Assessment

  Resources Needed - $20,000 for SDC meeting travel for this item
- Complete and implement National Project Database (plan will be presented at October Board Meeting)

  Resources Needed - $37,000

- Reinstitute work on a set of evaluation standards for a range of habitat projects
- Complete MOU with AFS and AFS Habitat Section
  - Begin work on 2020 Assessment
    a. Reinstitute work to capture FHP data and assessments for future incorporation into 2020 National Assessment
       i. Continue work to find new datasets for 2020 National Assessment
    b. Initiate incorporation of lakes into the National Assessment
       i. Detailed scoping of process and data needs by SDC
       ii. Review of geospatial framework of lakesheds by SDC
    c. Select 1 to 2 system processes for full integration into 2020 National Assessment and begin process of integration
       i. Best candidates are hydrology and connectivity
       ii. Start regionally with incorporation of process data
    d. Marine assessment review
       i. Develop a strategic vision and workplan for marine assessment
       ii. Determine how to implement Gulf Coast assessment for other coasts
       iii. Develop plan on how to integrate inland assessment scores into estuary assessment scores.
          1. Evaluate procedures being considered for Chesapeake Bay (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies/strategy/fish_habitat)
    e. Ensure that SDC is fully informed of progress on all marine coasts including Great Lakes
    f. Continue discussion on how to effectively measure habitat condition in AK considering the low species diversity and recovered landscapes

Resources Needed*

-Inland Assessment - $160,000 for MSU – Continued enhancement of existing assessment and to start lakes assessment incorporation

- Marine Assessment - $200,000 for 2 FTEs at NOAA

- Incorporation of FHP datasets and process information - $100,000 for one FTE

*($160,000) Inland Assessment expected to be funded by US FWS in 2016.

Key Areas without known resources for 2016 (Marketing):

- Continued development of NFHP Marketing Campaign with Fishpond, D & I – Denver, CO. Provide additional deliverables for use by the FHPs.
  Resources Needed: $50,000 based on original contract deliverables.

Budget Notes

Note 1. Budget Accounts.
The NFHP Board's budget includes a series of "accounts" as listed below. The accounts that are numbered (e.g. 2100) are held by AFWA and the numbers are internal to AFWA's accounting system.

1. AFWA/FWS Cooperative Agreement (2102). This cooperative agreement has generally been funded at $128,000. The 2102 Agreement funds science travel and salary and salary and travel for Communications Coordinator. Carryover from prior years is anticipated to be $85,500. The new agreement allocation for 2016 is $64,000 to fund communications priorities. The rest of the cooperative agreement funding will be utilized for 2017 priorities.

2. Multi-state Conservation Grant – FHP Coordination. The remaining funds in this grant are at line item (2154 A – Science and Data) (2154 B – FHP Coordination)

3. Multi-state Conservation Grant - FHP Coordination. The remaining funds in this grant are at line item (2155)

4. Multi-state Conservation Grant- FHP Coordination. The funds to be awarded in 2016 for this grant are at line item (2156)

5. NFWF State Funds. This account is a "holding" account for the NFHP Board and includes funds received from state fish and wildlife agencies. This line item is expected to be mostly expended with the Fish Habitat Partnership workshop taking place in October.

Title: 2016 Draft Board Priorities

Desired outcome: Board sets 2016 Priorities with consideration of the budget and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan Objectives

Proposed Priority Tasks and Funding Need by Committee

Legislative Team

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

Partnership Committee

Priority B: Review current NFHP National Conservation Need and amend as needed.

Priority C: Development of a process that provides a priority ranking of multiple FHP project proposals that are combined for submission to a funding source.

Priority D: Review FHP performance evaluation response forms and identify the scale and scope of the linkages between FHP priorities and the NFHP National Conservation Strategies.

Communications Committee

Priority E: PR and Marketing Resources for the NFHP 2015 Status Report

Priority F: NFHP website re-development.

Priority G: Continue development of the NFHP Marketing Campaign and re-branding efforts for the NFHP program and the FHPs.

Priority H: Continue building database for newsletter distribution to increase engagement with partner coalition.

Priority I: Increase usage of video and further campaign to document work of Fish Habitat Partnerships.

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

Priority K: Increase outreach of Waters to Watch Campaign for its Ten Year Anniversary

Priority L: 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.

Science and Data Committee

Priority M: Complete and publish 2015 National Assessment

a. SDC review process and products then develop recommendations for 2020 National Assessment
b. SDC leadership, membership and Assessment Teams to communicate results to a broad audience to include AFWA, AFS and other entities

Priority N: Complete and implement National Project Database (plan will be presented at October Board Meeting)

Priority O: Reinstitute work on a set of evaluation standards for a range of habitat projects

a. Complete MOU with AFS and AFS Habitat Section

Priority P: Begin work on 2020 Assessment

a. Reinstitute work to capture FHP data and assessments for future incorporation into 2020 National Assessment
    i. Continue work to find new datasets for 2020 National Assessment
b. Initiate incorporation of lakes into the National Assessment
    ii. Detailed scoping of process and data needs by SDC
    iii. Review of geospatial framework of lakesheds by SDC
c. Select 1 to 2 system processes for full integration into 2020 National Assessment and begin process of integration
    iv. Best candidates are hydrology and connectivity
    v. Start regionally with incorporation of process data
d. Marine assessment review
    vi. Develop a strategic vision and workplan for marine assessment
    vii. Determine how to implement Gulf Coast assessment for other coasts
    viii. Develop plan on how to integrate inland assessment scores into estuary assessment scores.
        1. Evaluate procedures being considered for Chesapeake Bay (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies/strategy/fish_habitat)

e. Ensure that SDC is fully informed of progress on all marine coasts including Great Lakes
f. Continue discussion on how to effectively measure habitat condition in AK considering the low species diversity and recovered landscape

Title: Multi-State Conservation Grant Update

Desired outcomes: Board awareness of the status of the 2015 grant and Board understanding of the 2016 Multi-state Conservation Grant Program results. Board Discussion of Multi-State Conservation Grant for application years 2017 and 2018.

Background:

In 2015, the National Fish Habitat Partnerships completed their 3-year grant application cycle for the Multi-State Conservation Grant Program through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). In December of 2015 the Fish Habitat Partnerships once again agreed upon a 3-year (2016-2018) application for the Multi-State Grant. The original request for 2016 to benefit the work of 10 FHPs was $300,000. However, due to costs associated with the National Survey on Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation that took up approximately 65% of the funding in 2016, the FHP Grant was awarded at a reduced level of $86,000. Despite the reduced funding in 2016, there is optimism that the funding will improve for 2017 and 2018 and there is also an effort underway to look for alternative funding sources for the National Survey. One discussion item that should be brought to the Board's attention is that we could apply in 2017 for a Multi-State Conservation Grant through the National Fish Habitat Fund.

Reference Materials: Revised 2016 MSCGP Application

2016 Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Grant Proposal

Executive Summary

1. **Project Title:** Advancing the objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan through regional and collaborative science and priority setting.

2. **Full Legal Name of Organization:** National Fish Habitat Board. If awarded, the grant will be administered on behalf of the National Fish Habitat Board by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 1100 First Street NE, Washington DC, 20002

3. **Organization Information:**
   - **a.** Applicant Classification: Nongovernmental Organization
   - **b.** Nongovernmental Organization Classification (if applicable): 501(c)(6)

4. **Lead Applicant's Contact Information:**
   Mr. Kelly Hepler, Secretary, South Dakota Game Fish & Parks
   Chair, National Fish Habitat Board
   c/o Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
   444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 725
   Washington, DC 20001
   Email: Kelly.hepler@state.sd.gov
   Phone Number: 605-773-3718

5. **Name and Affiliation of Co-Investigator(s)/Partner(s) (if applicable):**
   Gary Whelan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
   Ryan Roberts, National Fish Habitat Board Communications Coordinator

6. **Project Length:** 3 years. **Will re-apply for year 2&3 funding.**

7. **Funding Requested:**
   $86,000 (seeking in 2016)
   *Seeking in 2017 ($250,000)
   *Seeking in 2018 ($250,000)
   3 year total: ($800,000)

8. **Estimate of Partnership Funds to be Leveraged (if applicable):** $ 1,300,000

9. **Funding Source.**
   - **a.** Funding Source: 100% Sport Fish Restoration Fund

10. **State Benefit Requirement:** The outcomes of this project will benefit all 50 states through regional-based Fish Habitat Partnerships.

11. Primary National Conservation Need (NCN) Addressed: NCN 2: Strengthening the National Fish Habitat Partnership

12. Summary Statement (200 words or less):

Through regional collaboration, Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHP) will compile biological and watershed process-level information on fish habitats to meet FHP needs and supplement the National Fish Habitat Assessment; establish new or improved strategic goals, objectives, and priorities for conserving fish species and habitats; expand the scope of partners complementary projects; and develop best management practices for implementing fish habitat conservation actions across the U.S. Building capacity is critical to the success and sustainability of Fish Habitat Partnerships and expanding opportunities for collaboration is an essential element to continue meeting the remaining goals and objectives set forth in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2nd Edition).

13. Terms and Conditions. *Use of MSCGP Grants - All applicants must ensure that their proposed project does not fund, in whole or in part, an activity that promotes or encourages opposition to the regulated hunting or trapping of wildlife or taking of sport fish.*

☒ I agree with the above terms and conditions.

Project Narrative

Title Advancing the objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan through regional and collaborative science and priority setting.

Objective(s) Priority information needs identified by FHPs vary across regions, several of which this project will help address. In Hawaii this grant will support improving hydrography data, building upon an assessment of island estuaries and developing freshwater flow and sediment yield variability on nearshore coastal habitats. In the Midwest, this grant will help launch a basin-wide mussel initiative in the Ohio River Basin incorporating this key group of aquatic species into existing habitat assessment work. In the East, this grant will help achieve measurable habitat conservation results through strategic actions of the Eastern 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 angling opportunities through habitat improvement projects implemented by the regional fish habitat partnerships. Overall, this grant will substantially improve data resources that are required set restoration and protection priorities for aquatic habitats across the U.S. This project would address several of those needs, ensuring the continued progress that the FHPs are making on the ground and enhanced greatly recently by Multistate Conservation Grants.

Through regional collaboration among FHPs, this grant will:

- Collectively advance FHP habitat assessments through identification of mutual data needs, data acquisition and landscape-level analysis for the benefit of fish, mussels, and other aquatic animals;
- Provide region and system-specific fish population, habitat, and human impact data to fill regional data gaps and to assist the Board's Science & Data Committee in the continual improvement of the National Status of Fish Habitats Report;
- Help achieve conservation results through strategic actions that improve the ecological condition of intact systems, rehabilitate natural processes in systems currently degraded, or prevent the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions, increased numbers of self-sustaining fish populations, and increased fishing opportunities; and
- Allow further critical collaboration to occur among FHPs on projects and initiatives, especially in regions with shared habitat and species interests amongst partners.

Problem Statement

Conservation (protection, restoration and enhancement) of intact and degraded fish habitat across the nation is recognized as a critical issue for fish and natural resource managers and stakeholders. Lost habitat undermines the health and productivity of aquatic systems and dependent fish populations and the socioeconomic benefits derived from these resources. Healthy fish habitat is essential to effectively sustaining our nation's recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishery resources and providing benefits to the American public.

In 2003 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies took a leadership role in the development of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, which was completed in 2006. The 2nd edition of the

plan (Action Plan) was published in 2012 with new objectives focused on meeting the needs and priorities for conserving fish habitat at a landscape scale, as well as providing the over-arching principles that guide the collaborative efforts of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) was established to administer the actions needed to carry out the Action Plan and support FHPs in implementing on the ground fish habitat conservation actions. The Board has identified the following operational roles for FHPs:

- Assemble the scientific assessment data needed to conserve fish habitats within their partnership areas,
- Establish strategic goals and objectives that define desired outcomes for fish species and habitats within their partnership areas,
- Identify priority places and/or issues to focus conservation action, and prioritize fish habitat conservation projects to meet goals and objectives,
- Coordinate and compile information on outputs (conservation actions) and outcomes (changes in habitat condition) for reporting to the Board and stakeholders, and
- Collaborate with other FHPs where appropriate to carry out these responsibilities.

This grant request is needed to supplement other state, federal and partner funds that are required to more fully support successful implementation of the Action Plan and further the priority work of the Fish Habitat Partnerships identified through strategic plans.

State fish and wildlife agencies benefit through:

- continued leadership on the National Fish Habitat Board, Through AFWA regional representation;
- increased collaboration between FHPs and state fish and wildlife agencies;
- increased engagement with groups working to conserve fish habitat;
- increased coordination on marine resource issues;
- increased habitat available for fish and other aquatic organisms throughout the United States; and,
- increased capabilities to build science and data capacity.

Experience

The National Fish Habitat Partnership is a state-led effort to address the nation's fish and aquatic habitat conservation needs. The National Fish Habitat Board, organized in 2006, is responsible for developing policies and guidance for recognizing Fish Habitat Partnerships, and for establishing national measures of success and evaluation criteria for FHPs. Since 2007, the Board has recognized 19 FHPs and in 2012 completed its first performance evaluation of FHPs. The second performance evaluation of the FHPs will be completed in 2015. Kelly Hepler has chaired the Board since May 2008, and is supported by an interagency staff from state and federal agencies and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies provides significant services to NFHP and the Board and AFWA have been successful in receiving and administering a number of MSCGP Grants that have supported the Communications and Science and Data work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, along with priority projects of the regionally-based Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Approach

Based on our previous experience, the distribution of funds among FHPs within each region will be flexible to meet specific and evolving needs of the collaborating FHPs; the distribution of funds across regions is not expected to change from that shown in the budget table. Regional sub-agreements will be structured around the four stated objectives of the Action Plan, and will identify specific tasks that will further the objectives. Sub-awards will be made to the Fish Habitat Partnerships broken down by regions, with fiscal agents administering funds on behalf of FHPs. These fiscal agents are long-term managing partners for the FHPs and provide services to the FHPs under partnership agreements therefore no competition is required for these services.

Expected Results or Benefits

The project will achieve results compatible with desired outcomes identified in NCN #2. All of the expected results build upon prior work of the FHPs, much of which was supported by MSCGP funds previously awarded. Expected results and benefits include:

- Enhanced regional coordinating efforts benefiting aquatic habitat condition assessments and landscape-scale conservation design for coastal habitats on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts (including Hawaii), coldwater habitats in the Appalachians and interior west, and the southeastern United States through collaborative efforts of FHPs.
- In three eastern FHPs, increased coordination on white water to blue water priorities set by the FHPs.
- Across the U.S., facilitation and coordination of prioritized, on-the-ground, partner-led fish habitat conservation projects that achieve measurable results towards Action Plan goals and strategies.
- Build capacity to identify geographic focus areas and improve strategic prioritization of conservation actions and reporting of outcomes by FHPs across the United States.
- Assistance in increasing mussel habitat through a priority initiative in mid-western states.
- Expanded coordination among 4 Alaska FHPs on priority efforts of FHPs and the state of Alaska.
- Increasing capacity of the Western Native Trout and Desert Fish Habitat Partnership in collaborating on an integrated aquatic assessment in the Rio Grande Basin in FY16. The University of Texas has assembled data on and completed predictive distribution models for all fish species in the Rio Grande Basin (in the United States), including projected distribution under climate change.
- Coordination on developing spatial framework that delineates key nursery habitats on the Pacific coast, overlaying existing datasets describing potential threats to habitats and the fish inhabiting them, and integrating these analyses to set priorities for restoration and protection.

Outcomes/Benefits

The National Fish Habitat Partnership brings a focused and coordinated approach to conserving, rehabilitating, and enhancing the nation's aquatic habitats under the objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. This proposal strengthens that approach by linking the oversight responsibility of the Board and the operational responsibility of the FHPs to achieve national and regional science and data driven conservation goals.

In general, this project will support activities of the Fish Habitat Partnerships that will help to achieve four of the objectives in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, 2nd Edition:

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.
2. *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 well-being of local communities.
3. *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.
4. *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.

More specifically, the project will:

- Improve strategic prioritization of conservation actions and reporting of outcomes by FHPs across the United States.
- In three eastern Fish Habitat Partnerships, collectively define and communicate the scientific basis of river restoration through connectivity improvement throughout the Eastern U.S. Develop, update and share connectivity assessment tools and resources specific to FHP state needs.
- In Alaska, the Kenai Peninsula FHP, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, Southeast Alaska FHP will coordinate on priorities including the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD+) in Southcentral Alaska. This data is imperative for FHPs to fully implement a complete fish habitat assessment and make sound science-based conservation decisions.
- In the Midwest, coordination on a basin-wide Mussel Initiative through the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership will be implemented in the Ohio River Basin (ORB) that will cover 9 states. This initiative will look to broaden partner involvement in the Ohio River Basin and Identify challenges, opportunities, and path forward for the protection and restoration of mussel populations in the ORB that has large implications for water quality and fish populations in this area.
- In the West, continue a successful collaboration between the Western Native Trout Initiative and Desert Fish Habitat Partnership to coordinate on an integrated aquatic assessment in the Rio Grande Basin in FY16.
- In Hawaii, build upon a newly developed spatial framework and habitat assessment for island estuaries and also develop freshwater flow and sediment yield variability model for nearshore coastal habitats across Hawaii that will great inform decisions on priority habitat work.
- Enhance regional aquatic habitat condition assessments and landscape-scale conservation design for coastal habitats on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts (including Hawaii), coldwater habitats in the Appalachians and interior west, and the southeastern United

States through cooperative efforts of FHPs by developing new process level and fisheries datasets.

- In California, the CA Fish Passage Forum will continue to refine APASS Optimized Fish Passage Barrier Prioritization Tool. Coordination on this effort will further describe habitat quality attributes, document unknown barriers and develop improved cost criteria to enhance the utility and reliability of APASS barrier optimization algorithms supporting the operations of California's Fish Passage Assessment Database. The Forum will also initiate developing a stream temperature network database that has become an issue that is increasingly important with long-term drought.
- The Pacific Marie and Estuarine Partnership will coordinate to develop an improved inshore fisheries spatial framework that will be the foundation for inshore-offshore fisheries management, oil spills, and a variety of other uses. A West Coast-wide classification and inventory of fish and habitat databases will be improved, including the collection, attribution and assimilation of fish and habitat datasets for the West Coast, and chart the course for next steps in achieving FHP strategic plan goals associated with identifying and prioritizing juvenile fish habitat on the West Coast.

Certification Regarding Fishing/Hunting

"By submitting this proposal, the organization's primary contact and/or authorized representative identified in this grant application certifies that the (National Fish Habitat Partnership) (1) will not use the grant funds to fund, in whole or in part, any activity of the organization that promotes or encourages opposition to the regulated hunting or trapping of wildlife or the regulated taking of fish; and (2) that the grant funds will not be used, in whole or in part, for an activity, project, or program that promotes or encourages opposition to the regulated hunting and trapping of wildlife or the regulated taking of fish."

Certification Regarding Partnership Funds (if applicable)

"By submitting this proposal, the organization's primary contact and/or authorized representative identified in this grant application certifies that the (National Fish Habitat Partnership): 1) understands that partnership fund contributions are assessed in the Association's review and selection of its priority list of MSCGP projects, but are not considered by the USFWS to be an official non-federal match/cost-share; 2) will provide the partnership funds identified in order to complete the proposed project; 3) understands that if the promised partnership funds are not provided, and there is not a sufficient explanation, potential consequences could include a poor "quality assurance" evaluation by the National Grants Committee for the organization's future MSCGP applications; the imposition of "special award conditions" on this proposed grant and/or future grants (pursuant to 43 CFR 12); and if the failure to provide partnership funds affects the scope/objective or deliverables or other terms and conditions of the grant, then the USFWS could take necessary enforcement and termination actions (pursuant to 43 CFR 12).

Budget

Funding Requested: $300,000

Expenses		2016	Total MSCGP

Region	Fish Habitat Partnerships	MSCPG	P.F.*	Costs Only
AFWA	Personnel Costs			
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Coastal FHP, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership	11,944.44		11,944.44
Midwest U.S.	Ohio River Basin FHP	11,944.44		11,944.44
Western U.S.	Desert FHP Western Native Trout Initiative	11,944.44		11,944.44
Pacific Coast	Pacific Marine & Estuarine Partnership, California Fish Passage Forum	11,944.44		11,944.44
Alaska	Kenai Peninsula FHP, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, Southeast Alaska FHP	11,944.44		11,944.44
Hawaii	Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership	11,944.44		11,944.44
Total direct costs		71,666.67		71,666.67
Indirect costs		14,333.33		14,333.33
Total Expenses		86,000		86,000

*** Estimate of Partnership Funds to be leveraged: $ 1,300,000**

Qualifications of Key Personnel

Kelly Hepler, Chairman, National Fish Habitat Board

Kelly Hepler was appointed the Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks in January 2015. Hepler began working at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in 1979 as a fisheries biologist and has held increasingly complex positions throughout his career. Kelly served as director of the Division of Sport Fish and most recently as a special assistant for the previous commissioner. He represents the department in numerous national forums and is presently chair of the National Fish Habitat Board. Kelly holds a B.S. in Fish and Wildlife Management from Montana State University.

Ryan Roberts, Communications Coordinator, National Fish Habitat Board
Ryan Roberts is the Communications Coordinator for the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Mr. Roberts has 8 years of experience in public relations/communications and has worked on the National Fish Habitat Partnership since 2008. Mr. Roberts created several communications toolkits for use by National Fish Habitat Partnerships and created an overall communications strategy for the partnership. Mr. Roberts' contributions were key in the development and release of the Status of Fish Habitat Partnership 2010 Assessment and the 2nd Edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2012).

Gary Whelan, NFHP Board Science and Data Committee Co-Chair
Gary Whelan is one of the two co-chairs of the NFHP Board Science and Data Committee and has worked on NFHP since its inception. Mr. Whelan is a Program Manager for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Fisheries Division where he manages the Research Section and a Habitat Management Unit. His fisheries career has spanned over 32 years and he has worked in nearly every aspect of fisheries in the State of Michigan. In his role for NFHP, he has been responsible for all of the Board's Science and Data efforts including the development and release of the Status of Fish Habitat Partnership 2010 and 2015 Assessments. He was also deeply involved in the development of the 1st (2006) and the 2nd Editions of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2012). Mr. Whelan holds a B.S. in Zoology (Fisheries Management focus) from the University of Wyoming and a M.S. in Fisheries Management from the University of Missouri.

Staff level leadership and management support of the work of the Board group will be provided by AFWA, USFWS, NOAA, state agencies and other partners such as NGO's.

National Fish Habitat Board Members August 2015
http://fishhabitat.org/contacts/board

Title: 501(c)(3) Development and Marketing Update

Desired outcomes:

- Board awareness of progress to date and next steps.
- Board action to approve use of Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships terminology and associated logos.

Background:

The National Fish Habitat Fund, Inc. Board of Directors, which held one in-person meeting in 2015, is made up of Kelly Hepler (South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks) – Chair; Rich Rosengren (The Nature Conservancy, retired) – Secretary; Matt Menashes (Society of American Foresters) – Treasurer; Jon Johnson (Sustainability Consortium, University of Arkansas) – Vice-Chair; Steve Moyer (TU); Dick Ludington (The Conservation Fund - retired, La Foresta Plantacion, and Carbon Ceramics Company, LLC); Mike Andrews (The Nature Conservancy); and Johnny LeCoq (Fish Pond, LLC). The National Fish Habitat Fund has submitted paperwork to the IRS for 501(c)(3) status on an expedited track.

At the Board's March meeting, the Marketing Team presented a brand approach to help the National Fish Habitat Fund bring additional resources to the Fish Habitat Partnerships benefitting on-the-ground conservation. This brand will be the foundation from which to market The Fund and enhance the capacity of the Fish Habitat Partnerships as it works towards IRS approval of the 501(c)(3) organization. It will also serve as a way to translate the National Fish Habitat Partnership, its conservation outcomes, and its subsequent connection to the 19 individual Fish Habitat Partnerships and their on-the-ground work, as a vehicle for corporate and citizen involvement.

One of the strategic recommendations made in March was as follows:

• Evolve to **Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships**.

- "Network" communicates the relationship and association between the 19 individual partnerships more clearly than "National"
- Sounds less governmental
- Removes ambiguity between the umbrella organization (which is actually a board of directors) and what it does relative to individual partnerships
- The Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships is overseen by a board of directors
- Still enables use of the NFHP acronym, if needed

On its June call/webinar, the Board was provided the initial results of an FHP survey pertaining to the "Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships" terminology, viewed a brief presentation by Design and Image on the reasoning behind the proposed terminology, and discussed its adoption. Discussion included what this would mean for the Board's title and IRS documentation, whether there were drawbacks to postponing a decision for the October meeting, and whether further information and/or discussion with FHPs was warranted before making a decision to adopt the new terminology. The

following motion was tabled: approve the "Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships" terminology. The following action was generated: Board chair would like to discuss Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships terminology with FHPs on an upcoming call.

Update:

The Board chair discussed the Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships terminology with the Fish Habitat Partnerships on their August 4th call. One concern noted was with regard to loss of the word 'National'.

The Marketing Team has developed a draft framework for a National Fish Habit Fund, Inc. website which is expected to launch this fall. The website will include an easily viewable list of FHPs, each of which will have a photo and list of projects they would like to fund, which a potential donor can scroll through and choose to support. The website will complement the fishhabitat.org website, which tells more about all of the FHPs in detail and explains NFHP to the public.

Proposal:

The Marketing Team seeks approval from the National Fish Habitat Board on the following two items:

1. Approve use of the "Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships" terminology for branding and marketing the 19 Individual Fish Habitat Partnerships.
2. Approval of the attached Network of Fish Habitat Partnerships logos (Primary Identity) and NFHP Member logos (Secondary Affiliate Lockups).

Reference Materials:

The Marketing Team Presentation from the March Board meeting can be found online at the following link: http://static.fishhabitat.org/sites/default/files/www/Marketing_Presentation.pdf

Primary Identity

Secondary Affiliate Lockups

Pacific Lamprey Candidate Fish Habitat Partnership

September 29, 2015

Mr. Kelly Hepler
Chair, National Fish Habitat Board
C/o Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
444 N. Capitol Street NW, Suite 725
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Hepler:

The Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative requests recognition as a candidate partnership known as the Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership (PLFHP) under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). We are requesting recognition now to create a relationship that explores becoming an approved partnership in the NFHAP.

The NFHAP identifies the importance and value of increasing the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species. One method to greatly enhance the protection and restoration of these aquatic habitats is through the creation of Fish Habitat Partnerships. Formation of the PLFHP would address gaps in habitat restoration that would widely improve Pacific Lamprey populations. Because of lampreys' unique life history and ecological role the effort should broaden the natural diversity and improve habitats for other aquatic species. Consistent with national NFHAP goals, the PLFHP would focus on: 1) increasing access to and improving spawning habitat; 2) improving connectivity and condition of larval rearing habitat; 3) increasing access to and improving overwintering habitat; and 4) improving migration conditions for all life stages of lamprey throughout West Coast Rivers from California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska. There is keen interest by numerous Native American tribes in the conservation and restoration of Pacific Lamprey throughout the U.S. range. The critical ecological role that lamprey play in these rivers and the strong tribal cultural importance, supports the candidacy of Pacific Lamprey for a Fish Habitat Partnership. Because of these unique strengths, we believe the PLFHP would also benefit the NFHAP program and existing partnerships.

The formation of this partnership was solidified in 2012, when 11 tribes; the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California and Alaska; seven federal agencies; and multiple regional entities signed the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Agreement. The approach of the Initiative is a three part process: an Assessment and Template for Conservation Measures (Assessment); the Conservation Agreement (Agreement); and Regional Implementation Plans.

The Agreement is a voluntary commitment to collaborate on efforts that reduce or eliminate threats to Pacific Lamprey to the greatest extent possible. The goal of the Agreement is to achieve long term persistence and support traditional tribal cultural use of Pacific Lamprey throughout their U.S. range. The Agreement provides a mechanism for interested parties to pool available resources to expeditiously and effectively implement conservation actions identified in Regional Implementation Plans. The PLFHP would greatly enhance the ability to effectively implement habitat actions. The PLFHP will use the existing infrastructure of the Agreement, which is comprised of tribal, state, Federal, regional and local representatives, to manage and coordinate this effort. Please see Appendix 1, which describes how the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative is working towards meeting the requirements for establishing the Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership.

Goals of the PLFHP:

1. To achieve formal recognition as a NFHAP partnership that focuses on the restoration and conservation of Pacific Lamprey habitats throughout their U.S. range.
2. The PLFHP will augment existing Fish Habitat Partnerships such as the Western Native Trout Initiative and the Pacific Marine Estuarine Partnership to:
    a. identify the gaps in existing salmonid restoration efforts to restore Pacific Lamprey habitat;
    b. implement habitat restoration that improves lamprey populations to support traditional tribal cultural use of Pacific Lamprey;
    c. implement habitat restoration that restores Pacific Lamprey populations to accomplish ecosystem function;
    d. take advantage of the relatively low cost and efficiency of lamprey habitat improvement projects when integrated with salmonid restoration efforts. Past experience has shown high funding match on projects when coordinated with existing partnerships;
    e. consider habitat action prioritization through the lens of climate change by taking advantage of established connections with the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative who is funding a Pacific Lamprey climate change vulnerability assessment; and
    f. fill geographic gaps not filled by existing partnerships.

The goals of the PLFHP are consistent with the NFHAP Goals:

1. Protect and maintain healthy aquatic systems;
2. Prevent further declines of fish habitat;
3. Reverse declines in the quantity and quality of fish habitats; and

4. Increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species.

Partner Support for the PLFHP:

1. Conservation Agreement signatories and supporters includes 11 tribes; the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California and Alaska; seven federal agencies, and multiple regional entities.
2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Regions 1, 7, and 8.
3. A number of tribes, NGOs, and local organizations that are collaborating with the Conservation Agreement.

Next steps for the development of this candidate partnership include:

1. Integrate the PLFHP with the restoration strategies identified in the Initiative's Regional Implementation Plans to accomplish the identified goals.
2. Use the Pacific Lamprey Assessment and Regional Implementation Plans to identify gaps in restoration for guiding habitat conservation actions.
3. Pursue funding for a set of habitat restoration actions through the synthesis identified above, consistent with the NFHAP mission.
4. The Conservation Team, composed of signatories and supporters of the Agreement, will serve as the PLFHP steering committee to develop material for potential nomination as a full partnership.

In summary, the formation of the PLFHP will be a key component in helping prioritize and assist in funding conservation actions for Pacific Lamprey. This is an important phase for supporting the partnership of the fishery management agencies of five Pacific states, tribes and other organizations to help fund high priority habitat restoration actions for Pacific Lamprey.

Restoration efforts for Pacific Lamprey will directly benefit other lamprey species throughout US Fish and Wildlife regions 1, 7, and 8. Healthy Pacific Lamprey populations will improve ecosystem function that will support the restoration of the other native fish, and aquatic species. By engaging numerous tribes in lamprey restoration and directly recognizing tribal cultural, religious, and subsistence importance; the partnership will continue to receive strong support. The tribes of California and the Pacific Northwest have the ability to influence political decisions for fish and habitat restoration. The tribal support of and investment in the PLFHP has the potential to elevate the importance of the NFHAP program nationally, and benefit the NFHAP program and other existing partnerships.

As required by the "Guidance for establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan" we have addressed how the PLFHP is working to meet the criteria in the Guidance (Appendix 1). We hope you will consider the PLFHP as a candidate partnership and we look forward to working with the Board and members of the NFHAP.

Sincerely,

Howard Schaller and Bob Rose

Co-Chairs of the Conservation Team of the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative

Randy Fisher

Executive Director of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Appendix 1 - Requirements for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships – Section 2 of Policy and Guidance for Fish Habitat Partnerships

Strong and Diverse Partnerships

1. The Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative (PLCI) is a self-run collaboration of partners working to conserve Pacific Lamprey (an ecological significant species to the rivers of the west coast of the U.S.) throughout its U.S. range (California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska).
2. The PLCI is comprised of a diverse group of public partners including federal, state, municipal, and local agencies and Native American Tribes and private organizations such as watershed councils and landowners. The partners are organized into a Conservation Team which operates the PLCI across the U.S range of Pacific Lamprey.
3. The PLCI Conservation Agreement (USFWS 2012) was signed by fish and wildlife agencies from California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Alaska Fish and Game sent a letter of support. Eleven Native American Tribes and 7 federal agencies also signed the Agreement.
4. See #3 regarding signing of Conservation Agreement. Regional implementation plans are under development throughout U.S. range of Pacific Lamprey. Signatories and supporters of the Agreement serve on regional implementation plan teams.
5. The PCLI is organized into four committees (Policy Committee, Conservation Team, Regional Management Unit Groups and Lamprey Technical Workgroup) that carry out Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) planning for Pacific Lamprey across the U.S. range of Pacific Lamprey and partners (see Figure 1 below).
6. The PLCI seeks a NFHAP partnership under the name of Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership (PLFHP).

Geographic Focus

1. The geographic scope of the PCLI is California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska. Habitats included in the PLCI are freshwater tributary and mainstem habitats including migration corridors, estuaries and marine environments. The PLCI augments existing NFHAP partnerships because: 1) the Pacific Marine Estuary Partnership focuses on estuaries so there is no coverage upstream or in Alaska or Idaho; 2) the California Fish Passage Forum does not include Alaska, Washington, Oregon or Idaho; 3) the Western Native Trout Initiative focuses on native trout species and large areas of California are not included; and 4) the PLFHP will include habitats unique to lamprey.

2. The scope of issues and priorities for Pacific Lamprey are: geographically large; unique in cultural importance to Native American Tribes; and ecologically significant to ecosystem health.
3. The geographic scope of the PCLI greatly exceeds 50,000 square miles.

Strategic Planning

1. The PLCI Assessment (Luzier 2011; Goodman and Reid 2012) identified major and minor threats in all regional management units throughout the U.S. range of Pacific Lamprey. The Regional Implementation Plans identify needed actions and research to address those threats by life stage and habitat. The needs identified in Regional Implementation Plans are consistent with NFHAP national goals: 1) protect and maintain healthy aquatic systems; 2) prevent further declines of fish habitat; 3) reverse declines in the quantity and quality of fish habitats; and 4) increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species.
2. The PLCI completed Assessments (Luzier 2011; Goodman and Reid 2012). The Assessment describes the risk of Pacific Lamprey in 17 regional management units and identifies demographic and threat information. The Conservation Agreement (USFWS 2012) and supporting Interim Operating Guidelines (2015; see attachment) provide a goal for the collaborative agreement and strategic plan for implementation of regionally based conservation actions and research, monitoring and evaluation. The Regional Implementation Plans currently in development outline specific conservation actions and research needs prioritized based on alignment to identified threats, feasibility, benefit and partner engagement. Draft plans already exist for 8 of 17 regional management units.
3. The PLCI will augment existing FHPs (see #1 under Geographic Focus) and PLCI restoration efforts should benefit other FHP species and shared geographic areas. However, we will schedule regular meetings with neighboring FHPs to ensure synchrony of conservation goals. Representatives from other FHPs will be invited to attend PLCI Conservation Team meetings.

Capabilities for Scientific Assessment

1. The PCLI is based on Strategic Habitat Conservation principles (Figure 2). The organizational structure (see #5 under Strong and Diverse Partnerships) and products (Assessment, Conservation Agreement and Regional Implementation Plans) are designed in an adaptive management framework so regular evaluation of progress and necessary corrections are possible.

References

Goodman, D. H. and S. B. Reid. 2012. Pacific Lamprey (Entosphenus tridentatus) Assessment and Template for Conservation Measures in California. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arcata, California. 117 pp. http://www.fws.gov/arcata/fisheries/reports/technical/PLCI_CA_Assessment_Final.pdf

Luzier, C.W., H.A. Schaller, J.K. Brostrom, C. Cook-Tabor, D.H. Goodman, R.D. Nelle, K. Ostrand and B. Streif. 2011. Pacific Lamprey (Entosphenus tridentatus) Assessment and Template for Conservation Measures. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. 282 pp. http://www.fws.gov/columbiariver/publications.html

USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 2012. Pacific Lamprey Conservation Agreement. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. 57 pp. http://www.fws.gov/pacific/Fisheries/sphabcon/Lamprey/lampreyCI.html

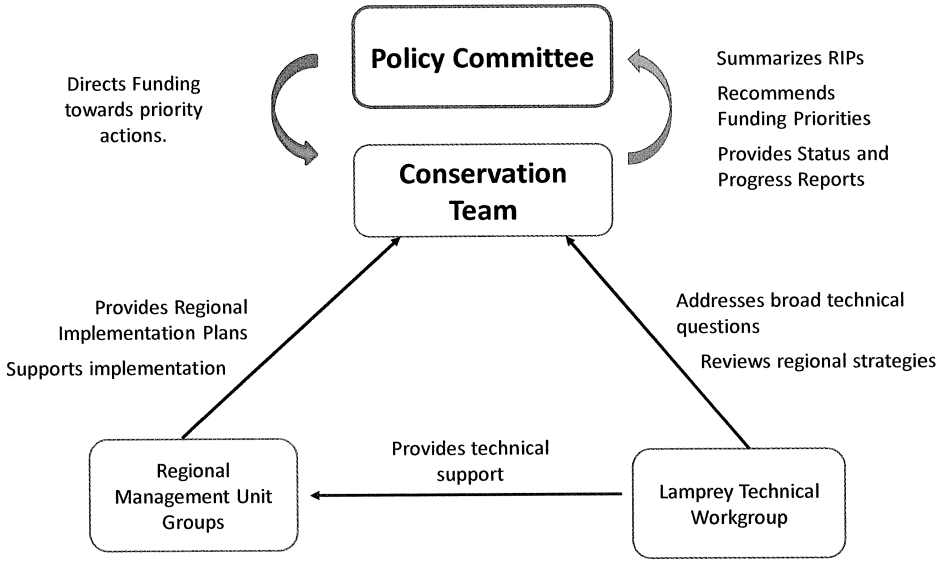


Figure 1. Organizational chart for the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative.

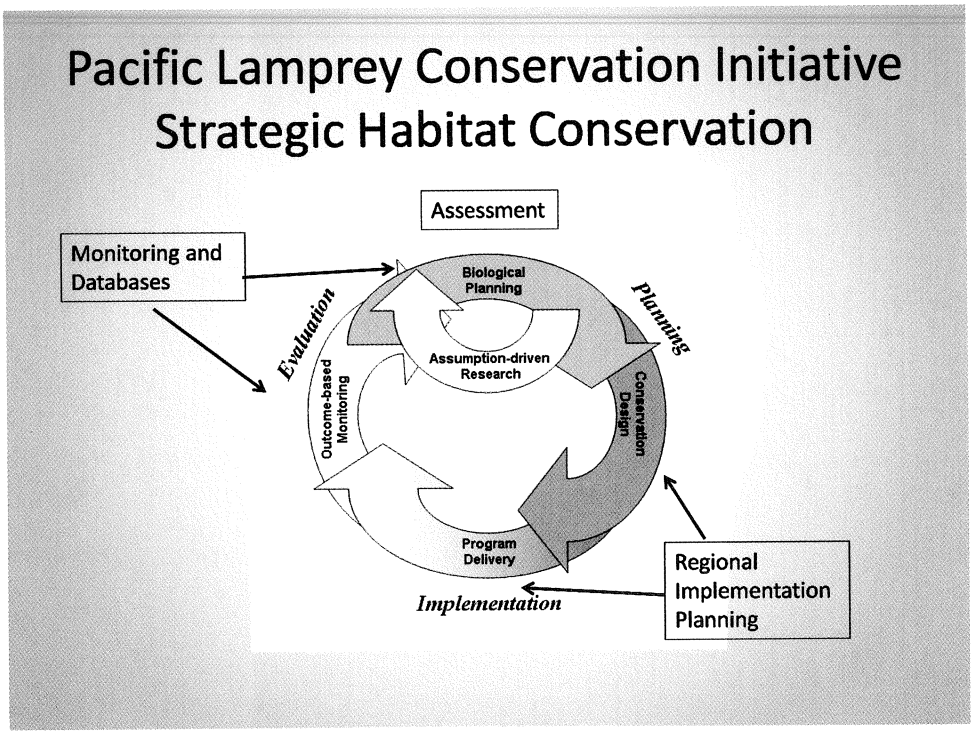


Figure 2. Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative and the application to Strategic Habitat Conservation principles.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pacific Lamprey

August 2012

Conservation Initiative

Credit: USFWS

Adult Pacific Lamprey (Entosphenus tridentatus)

Pacific Lamprey in Decline

Pacific Lamprey are a native anadromous species that, like salmon, historically returned to spawn in large numbers into watersheds along the West Coast of the United States, but populations have declined in abundance and become restricted in distribution throughout Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California. Threats to Pacific Lamprey occur in much of the range of the species and include restricted mainstem and tributary passage, reduced flows and dewatering of streams, stream and floodplain degradation, degraded water quality, and changing marine and climate conditions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes the need for a comprehensive plan to conserve and restore Pacific Lamprey in collaboration with Native American tribes; Federal, State, and local agencies; and other entities. The Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's strategy to improve the status of Pacific Lamprey throughout their range by helping implement research and conservation actions.

Conservation Initiative Approach

The approach of the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative is a three part process: an Assessment and Template for Conservation Measures (Assessment); a Conservation Agreement; and Regional Implementation Plans. The Assessment was completed in October 2011 and the Conservation Agreement signed in June 2012. The next steps in the Conservation Initiative are to work with partners to develop regional plans for implementing conservation actions.

Assessment

The Assessment tracks the current knowledge of Pacific Lamprey habitat requirements; abundance; historic and current distribution; describes threats and factors for decline; and identifies conservation actions and research, monitoring, and evaluation needs. To systematically characterize the conservation risk of Pacific Lamprey across its range, an assessment was conducted with a diagnostic tool adapted from NatureServe by using existing demographic and threat information. This information was collected through a series of regional meetings attended by our partners. Individual watersheds were analyzed to rank the relative risk of extirpation, and these risks were summarized by region. Pacific Lamprey populations are declining in abundance and becoming restricted in distribution throughout Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California due to key threats such as mainstem and tributary obstacles to passage, reduced flows and dewatering, stream and floodplain degradation, and water quality. The majority of watersheds are at relatively high risk, with very few that are relatively secure.

For More Information, Contact:
Howard Schaller, Western Lampreys Conservation Team Leader
Columbia River Fisheries Program Office
1211 SE Cardinal Court, Suite 100
Vancouver, WA, 98683
360/604-2500; howard_schaller@fws.gov
Or Visit: http://www.fws.gov/pacific/Fisheries/sphabcon/Lamprey/lampreyCI.html

CONSERVING AMERICA'S fisheries

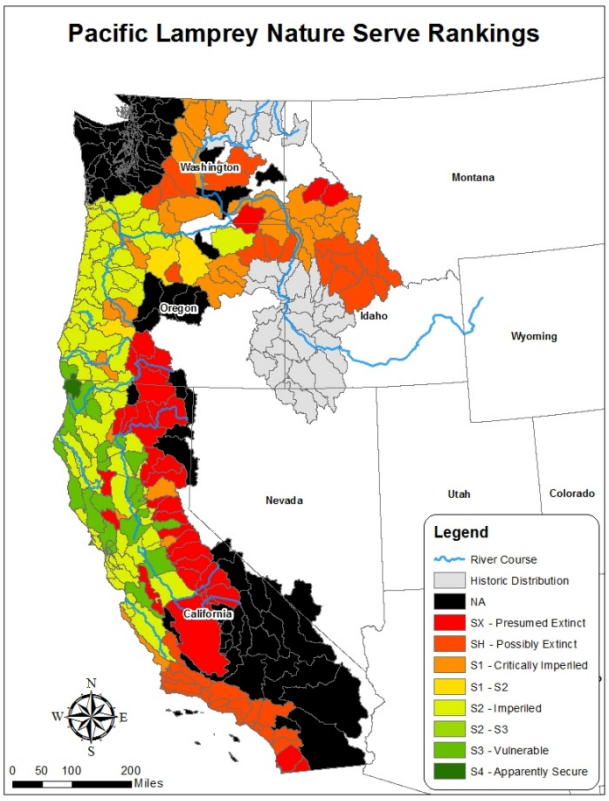
Conservation Agreement

The Conservation Agreement (Agreement) is a voluntary commitment by the interested parties to collaborate on efforts that reduce or eliminate threats to Pacific Lamprey to the greatest extent possible. The goal of this Agreement is to achieve long term persistence and support traditional tribal cultural use of Pacific Lamprey throughout their range. This Agreement provides a mechanism for interested parties to collaborate and pool available resources to expeditiously and effectively implement conservation actions.

Regional Implementation Plans

Through the Agreement conservation will be advanced by the development of Regional Implementation Plans, which will prioritize implementation of conservation actions and evaluate action effectiveness. The Regional Implementation Plans will build upon existing restoration plans that include conservation actions such as: modifying fish ladders and entranceways at dams, constructing lamprey passage structures at tributary barriers, restoring lamprey habitat, and consideration of lamprey during in-stream work. However, gaps in addressing threats to Pacific Lamprey remain. The Regional Implementation plans will identify additional conservation actions needed at the watershed scale to address threats and issues identified by local experts.

Juvenile Pacific Lamprey *Credit: USFWS*



Relative risk ranks for Pacific Lamprey. SX and SH = highest risk; S1 –S2 = medium risk; S3 and S4 = lowest risk.

Pacific Lamprey Summit III

The Pacific Lamprey Summit III built upon the progress made at the first two Summits, which identified the importance of Pacific Lamprey and called for implementing conservation actions. The Summit held in Portland, Oregon on June 20th and 21st, 2012, was attended by over 200 partners. At Summit III the partners solidified their commitment to Pacific Lamprey by signing the Conservation Agreement and answering the call for restoration actions through the development of Regional Implementation Plans.

For More Information, Contact:
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Or Visit: http://www.fws.gov/pacific/Fisheries/sphabcon/Lamprey/lampreyCI.html

CONSERVING AMERICA'S Fisheries

Title: Fish Habitat Partnership Evaluation Update

Desired outcome: Board awareness of results and recommendations.

Background: On the January 2015 Board call, revisions to the Fish Habitat Partnership Performance Measures, the 2015 FHP Performance Evaluation Timeline, and Review Team membership were approved. The timeline articulated a stepped process beginning on January 16, 2015 with the distribution of FHP Performance Evaluation materials, and concluding with finalized scores presented to the Board via teleconference/webinar on June 24, 2015. Performance Evaluation materials were distributed to the Fish Habitat Partnerships on January 23, 2015, and submitted by 16 of the 19 FHPs. Preliminary scores were presented during the June 2015 Board call.

Update: The Review Team finalized scoring and sent each FHP coordinator their score and reviewer comments. The Review Team then discussed the process and results with each FHP coordinator (one FHP provided written feedback). These discussions provided FHP coordinators an opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification, and provide feedback about the results and process. Calls will be completed in mid-October 2015. The review process and results will be discussed at the FHP Workshop preceding the October Board Meeting.

Results: While many FHPs thought the review process was duplicative of the USFWS scoring used in ranking projects for funding, the follow up calls between Review Team members and FHP coordinators were very useful to discuss differences in the goals of the NFHP review. Ranking and comparing achievements and progress of FHPs were not the Review Team's goals and could not be effectively done considering the wide diversity and tenure of all FHPs. The process provided the Review Team with a good understanding of FHPs individual progress based on when they were established and their specific focus and goals. Areas of common strengths were identified and these findings may help some younger FHPs. Progress highlights were identified that will be helpful for the Board to understand and communicate progress made towards goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (e.g. Legislative Team, Communications Team, and 501(c)3 board).

Recommendations: No Board actions are presented at this time. The Review Team is currently completing their discussions from the follow up calls. When review of the evaluations and FHP feedback is complete, the Review Team may recommend changes to the Performance Measure process. These potential changes will be discussed with the Partnership Committee, and any changes will be presented at a future Board Meeting.

Mr. David Hoskins, Assistant Director
Fish and Aquatic Conservation
Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW, Room 3331
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Re: NFHAP Project Funding Allocation Method

Dear Mr. Hoskins:

Fish Habitat Partnerships are greatly appreciative for the funding the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been allocating to these partnerships in support of their strategic work, which is targeted towards achieving the goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. These funds have been instrumental in addressing many priority fish habitat conservation actions across the country. The Fish Habitat Partnerships also recognize the difficulties associated with allocating these funds among the partnerships, particularly since the amount of funding falls well short of meeting the needs. We understand the Service has put forth a good deal of effort in developing a competitive, performance-based process to allocate project funds among Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Upon completion of the second year of the Service's NFHAP Funding Allocation Method (Methodology), a majority of Fish Habitat Partnerships feel it's important to provide their collective feedback in an effort to raise Service awareness about several common concerns we have with the Methodology and to offer potential solutions for addressing these mutual concerns. Specifically, we offer our concerns for the following three criteria in Section II of the Accomplishment Report:

Criterion 3 – Execute projects that benefit FWS priority species/trust resources. What percentage of all projects initiated in the specified three fiscal years addressed habitat issues for FWS priority or trust resources?

Concerns:

- It's unclear how species were determined to be a priority for the Service and whether each region followed the same process in identifying priority species.

- There is a large discrepancy in the number of species identified as priorities among Service regions, with some listing a fair number of popular sport fish. This would give an advantage to Fish Habitat Partnerships working in a Service Region with a large list of priority species versus one that works in a Region with relatively few priority species identified.

Potential Solutions:

- Clarify the process used in establishing Service priority species among the regions.

- Describe how these priority species fit within the context of Fish Habitat Partnerships and the strategic relationship they have to the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Criterion 4 – Project Completion and Success. What percentage of projects, funded in whole or in part, with FWS NFHAP funds in the specified three fiscal years have been completed consistent with project design?

Note: A project is complete when fully constructed or implemented consistent with the project design and performance measures (i.e., number of stream miles enhanced or restored) are reported in FIS-Accomplishments; and, basic implementation monitoring is also completed; however, long-term, 1-2 year monitoring and evaluation need not be completed to consider the project complete.

- Projects funded during the third FY for the time period being evaluated must be completed within 18 months under the best of circumstances, and if getting a Service's Project Agreement in place is delayed for any reason, it has less time to be completed. This may push Fish Habitat Partnership project selection towards the types of projects that can be done quickly rather than those that are aimed at producing landscape level conservation impacts or addressing the root causes of fish habitat degradation.

- Historically, the Fish Habitat Partnership's role has been limited to recruiting, ranking, and recommending project proposals for Service NFHAP funding. It has been the Service's responsibility for getting the projects entered into FONS, executing Project Agreements, tracking project status, and soliciting final reports for entry into FIS-Accomplishments. Fish Habitat Partnerships have no control over the pace or timing of these administrative tasks, nor events like weather, fire, or sequestration, which cause unforeseen delays in completing projects.

Potential Solutions:

- Eliminate this criterion from the Funding Allocation Methodology since the role of Fish Habitat Partnerships is limited to recommending projects for funding and traditionally the Service has had the responsibility for the rest of the project implementation process.

- Increase the amount of time allotted for project completion.

- Provide copies of executed Project Agreements to the pertinent Fish Habitat Partnerships.

- Add a requirement in the Service's Agreement that the Project's Principal Investigator provides the pertinent Fish Habitat Partnership with a copy of interim and final reports.

Criterion 6 – Leveraging of FWS Project Funds. Over the specified three year period the FHP leveraged FWS NFHAP funding at what ratio?

Note: The intent is to measure actions by Fish Habitat Partnerships to secure additional partner funds to supplement projects that receive NFHAP funding. Leverage is measured as a ratio of the total FWS NFHAP funds (including the 30% indirect charge) to the total non-FWS cash or in-kind contributions the Fish Habitat Partnership secured to supplement the NFHAP funds it received during the specified three year period.

Concerns:

- There are other significant Service funding sources (e.g. National Fish Passage Program) that local project partners utilize to put a funding package together in support of a project. With "other" Service funds no longer being eligible for leveraging calculations, projects that utilize multiple sources of Service funding are at risk of ranking lower on the priority list in lieu of a project that isn't leveraged with other Service funding sources, even though the project may be more worthy.

- There are Fish Habitat Partnerships that do not use FWS NFHP funds to cover their operational costs even though that is an allowable expense. The current leveraging criterion doesn't allow Fish Habitat Partnerships to include other sources of funding they've obtained to cover their operational costs unless they also allocate of portion of the FWS NFHAP funds for this purpose, which can serve as a disincentive to direct all allocated FWS NFHAP funds towards on-the-ground fish habitat conservation projects.

Potential Solutions:

- Include all matching funds associated with a FWS NFHAP project when calculating the leverage ratio.

- Include the amount of all funds Fish Habitat Partnerships obtain to support their operational costs, even when the Fish Habitat Partnership does not use FWS NFHAP funds for this purpose. In essence they are leveraging these other operational funds so they can direct the total amount of their FWS NFHAP funds towards implementation of on-the-ground projects.

The last issue deals with the funding allocation formula. Currently, a Fish Habitat Partnership can achieve a Level 3 performance score on 7 of 8 criteria and a Level 1 score on 1 criterion, which results in the FHP being allocated Level 1 funding. Another FHP can achieve a Level 1 performance score for all 8 criteria and it too is allocated Level 1 funding. When evaluating performance, most processes would rate the FHP under the first scenario at a higher level than the second scenario, an inequity that should be addressed. One potential solution is to assign a corresponding funding level based on a Fish Habitat Partnership's cumulative score. As an example, under the first scenario stated above, the Fish Habitat Partnership would have accumulated a score of 22 points (3 points for each of the 7 criteria + 1 point for the 8^{th} criterion). For the second scenario, the Fish Habitat Partnership would earn an accumulated score of 8 points (1 point for each of the 8 criteria). To maintain a high standard, to earn Level 3

funding the minimum score could be set at 23 points, which means an FHP would have to earn 3 points for at least 7 of criteria and a minimum of 2 points for 1 criterion. A similar threshold standard could be set for Level 2 Funding.

It is our collective hope the Service considers our expressed concerns, and the potential solutions, as it seeks to improve the process for allocating NFHAP funds among Fish Habitat Partnerships. Ultimately we are looking to ensure the same outcome, strategic conservation delivery that effectively improves priority fish habitats across the United States.

Sincerely,

Stephen G. Perry, Coordinator
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture

Jeff Boxrucker, Coordinator
Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership

Therese Race Thompson, Coordinator
Western Native trout Initiative

Jessica Speed
Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership

Lisa Havel, Coordinator
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Kayla Barrett, Coordinator
Desert Fish Habitat Partnership

Tim Troll, Coordinator
SWAK Salmon Habitat Partnership

Jessica Graham, Coordinator
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

Title: NFHP Project Tracking Database

Desired outcome: Board consideration and approval of Science and Data Committee recommendations regarding future housing and funding of the Project Tracking Database

Background:

In 2010, a grant of $100,000 was provided to PSMFC from USGS via National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a NFHP project tracking database. In 2015, a grant of $10,912 from NOAA funded basic operation and maintenance of the system through the end of the calendar year. This database will:

- Allow the Board, FHPs, and all partners to exchange project information.
- Visualize locations of implemented projects in a map interface.
- Allow online submission of project information; management, search, and retrieval of information; geographic information system (GIS) outputs; and project progress reporting.
- Allow expansion and modification as the national program and the regional partnerships evolve.

At the March 2015 National Fish Habitat Board meeting, PSMFC provided a presentation on the development of the project tracking database, and its expected status by June 30, 2015. At the June 2015 National Fish Habitat Board meeting, PSMFC presented a demonstration of the beta NFHP Project Tracking Database.

Update:

Since June, PSMFC has continued to work with partnerships to review and update their data in the system; all partnerships have now been contacted and most are actively in the process of developing and testing a plan for uploading and editing data in the system. In this time period, PSMFC has also developed a work plan for longer-term development and housing of the data system. The work plan and budget options will be presented to the Board during the October meeting.

The work plan contains the following tasks: 1) Convening conference calls for a monthly database workgroup; 2) Evaluating current NFHP data fields and completing development of remaining data categories; 3) Working with partnerships to identify and implement improvements to the functionality of the online forms to make it easier to find, review, edit, and add new data to the system; 4) Expanding the reporting capabilities of the system to assist partnerships and NFHP staff with summarizing project progress and performance measures and demonstrating progress toward NFHP goals; 5) Assisting partnerships with data management plans and maintaining a help service for partnerships working with their data on the system; and 6) Maintaining the database on PSMFC servers, including server maintenance, server updates, and data backups.

Funding for the above tasks totals $112,000. The work can be completed in one year ($112,000), two years (approximately $56,000 per year), or three years (approximately $37,000 each year). PSMFC is able to continue to house the Project Tracking Database.

Reference Materials:

PSMFC Project Tracking Database Functionality slides from the June 2015 National Fish Habitat Board meeting are available at: http://fishhabitat.org/sites/default/files/www/NFHPProjectDatabaseFunctionality_2015June_1.pdf

PSMFC Project Tracking Database slides from the March 2015 National Fish Habitat Board meeting are available at: http://static.fishhabitat.org/sites/default/files/www/Project_tracking_database_presentation.pdf

Emily Greene - NOAA Affiliate <emily.greene@noaa.gov>

Fwd: NOAA Habitat Strategic Plan for review

1 message

Pat Montanio - NOAA Federal <pat.montanio@noaa.gov> Tue, Oct 6, 2015 at 10:06 PM
To: kelly.hepler@state.sd.us, tom.champeau@myfwc.com
Cc: Carrie Selberg - NOAA Federal <carrie.selberg@noaa.gov>, Helen Chabot - NOAA Federal <helen.chabot@noaa.gov>, Summer Morlock - NOAA Federal <summer.morlock@noaa.gov>, Sean Corson - NOAA Federal <sean.corson@noaa.gov>, emily.greene@noaa.gov

Dear Kelly and Tom,

As we enter the new fiscal year, I am pleased to share with you the draft NOAA Fisheries Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2016-2020. This planning effort is one component of a national initiative directed by NOAA Fisheries to ensure the agency's programs are consistent, transparent, efficient, and effectively aligned with our mandates. The plan was jointly developed by the Habitat Enterprise—the NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation and the habitat-related components of our regional offices.

The plan encompasses both national and regional habitat management activities and brings our activities together under a set of unified goals and objectives. While the plan is not intended to capture everything that the Habitat Enterprise will accomplish during the next 5 years, it identifies key strategies to help us accomplish our core mandates and agency priorities.

NOAA Fisheries supports the mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, and we view partnerships as essential to addressing fisheries habitat needs on the ground. With this in mind, we welcome the National Fish Habitat Board's feedback on this draft plan. As you'll see, the plan sets out fairly high-level goals and objectives, so we are looking primarily for your comments on major gaps or issues. In addition to comments on the plan itself, we value the Board's input now and continued dialogue in the months and years to come on its strategic execution. And of course we look to you for help in implementing these actions, and identifying other partners we can work with to achieve our mutual goals.

Please send your comments or any questions to NMFS.HQ.Habitat.SP@noaa.gov by Tuesday, October 27. Your feedback will inform the development of the final plan, which we expect to have ready in late fall of 2015.

I look forward to building on our past work together to move forward in the next five years. Thank you for your continued support for NOAA's habitat work.

Sincerely,
Pat Montanio

NOAA Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan 10.6.15.pdf
1039K

NOAA FISHERIES

Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan

2016–2020

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Introduction

Habitat provides the foundation for life in oceans, estuaries, lakes, and rivers, and is critical to supporting the NOAA Fisheries mandates of sustaining fisheries and recovering protected resources. NOAA Fisheries supports habitat protection and restoration through its Habitat Enterprise—the NOAA staff who work on habitat management at headquarters and in the regions. The Habitat Enterprise works across NOAA and with external partners to protect, maintain, and restore (i.e., conserve; see definition below) habitats that provide important ecological and societal benefits.

The NOAA Habitat Enterprise defines **conservation** as encompassing a continuum of activities from protection to restoration.

This strategic plan for the NOAA Fisheries Habitat Enterprise identifies our habitat management priorities for the next 5 years (fiscal years 2016 to 2020). This tool will be used to prioritize habitat conservation activities around the country, align those activities with department and agency goals and mandates (see Appendix 1), and measure our progress. This plan is not intended to encompass everything we do. Rather, it outlines our near-term priorities and identifies key programmatic and operational strategies that will help the Habitat Enterprise accomplish its goals more effectively and efficiently. By coordinating agency programs, people, and budgets into a stronger effort grounded in shared interests, NOAA will leverage internal assets while also guiding opportunities to engage with external partners on areas of mutual interest.

The Habitat Enterprise is composed of NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation, the Habitat Conservation Divisions located in the Regional Offices, and the habitat management-related components of the West Coast Region Area Offices. Our work focuses on sustaining and rebuilding fisheries, recovering protected resources, and improving the resiliency of coastal communities (see Appendix 2 for more detailed information on the Habitat Enterprise and its programs).

Background

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the stewardship of the nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources and the habitat on which they depend; habitat protection and restoration also provides socioeconomic and community benefits. Habitat is the foundation for resilient fishing-based communities and industries. In 2012, the U.S. commercial and recreational saltwater fishing industries generated more than $199 billion in sales and supported 1.7 million jobs[1]. Healthy habitat is also key to supporting and recovering NOAA's protected resources. In addition, coastal communities rely on habitat for recreation, tourism, and as natural infrastructure that protects life and property by reducing effects of storm damage, erosion, and coastal flooding. Habitat restoration projects also result in additional benefits for communities, such as improved infrastructure (e.g., bridges, culverts, agricultural levees) and enhanced public safety (e.g., removal of obsolete dams that have become safety hazards).

However, with continued widespread loss and deterioration of coastal and marine habitats, it is becoming increasingly difficult to foster and sustain healthy and resilient coastal ecosystems and communities. Recent trends reflect the challenge: increased coastal wetlands loss; increased risks to communities in the face of

[1] National Marine Fisheries Service. 2014. Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2012. U.S. Dept. Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/SPO-137, 175p. Available at: https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/index.html.

coastal storms and sea level rise; habitat damage caused by toxic spills; degraded water quality; and continued loss of natural shorelines and vital habitats for managed fisheries as well as threatened and endangered species.

For example, we are losing coastal wetlands—prime nurseries for many species—at the rate of about 80,000 acres per year. This rate of loss is 20,000 more acres per year than was lost during the 6-year period of 1998–2004[2]. Other habitat types have also experienced significant losses. More than 60 percent of coastal rivers and bays are moderately to severely degraded by nutrient runoff[3], and there are over 6 million barriers to fish passage within the rivers of the United States[4]. In addition, each year as many as 150 oil spills and hazardous substance releases occur across the nation.

This plan outlines NOAA Fisheries' role in addressing these, and other, habitat challenges.

NOAA Habitat Blueprint

In 2011, NOAA developed the Habitat Blueprint principles to increase the effectiveness of our habitat conservation efforts for the benefit of fisheries, protected resources, coastal and marine life, and the coastal communities and economies they support. These principles emphasized strengthening internal and external partnerships, implementing habitat conservation activities for multiple benefits, and focusing work where it can have the greatest impact. In 2015, the Habitat Blueprint principles were formalized as an agency-wide approach for habitat conservation in the NOAA National Habitat Policy.

NOAA uses the Habitat Blueprint principles to direct habitat conservation planning and decision-making. The following principles inform the decisions necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan:

- Prioritize resources and activities across NOAA to monitor, understand, and improve habitat conditions.
- Implement innovative place-based habitat solutions to address coastal and marine resource challenges.
- Make natural resource decisions and recommendations in an ecosystem context that considers competing priorities.
- Foster and leverage partnerships.
- Integrate and improve the delivery of habitat science across disciplines to facilitate conservation actions.
- Anticipate and address changes to coastal and ocean habitats due to environmental change, including development, climate, and other pressures.

The NOAA Habitat Focus Area (HFA) effort is a prime example of how we apply the Habitat Blueprint principles. Working with partners both internally and externally, we have established 10 HFAs across the country. These serve as demonstration areas to enhance targeted, collaborative habitat conservation and science. The HFAs bring together a wide variety of partners to leverage resources and make measurable progress toward discrete habitat-related objectives. Our work in the HFAs, along with other priority areas, is reflected in several goals and objectives of this strategic plan.

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[2] T.E. Dahl and S.M. Stedman. 2013. Status and trends of wetlands in the coastal watersheds of the Conterminous United States 2004 to 2009. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service. (46 p.) http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/Coastal_Watershed.pdf.

[3] Boesch, D.F., R.H. Burroughs, J.E. Baker, R.P. Mason, C.L. Rowe, and R.L. Siefert. 2001. Marine Pollution in the United States. Prepared for the Pew Oceans Commission. Arlington, VA.

[4] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. National Fish Passage Program Annual Report and Future Outlook.

Overview of the Strategic Plan

This strategic plan identifies four goals and six cross-cutting strategies to conserve habitat in support of NOAA's trust resources and coastal community resilience, as well as to enhance organizational excellence. The four goals of the plan are:

1. Conserve habitat for managed fisheries and protected resources.
2. Restore NOAA trust resources impacted by oil and other hazardous substance releases.
3. Increase resilience of coastal ecosystems, communities, and economies through habitat conservation.
4. Invest in staff development and improve the impact of people, programs, and services.

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat for Managed Fisheries and Protected Resources

Goal 1 is focused on strengthening how the Habitat Enterprise addresses its core mandates of supporting managed fisheries and protected resources. We target six key habitat types depended on by NOAA trust resources and their prey: coastal wetlands, rivers, coral reefs (deep and shallow), natural hard bottom (e.g., oyster reefs), and submerged aquatic vegetation. Our strategies to advance conservation for each of these habitat types share the themes of refining priority conservation areas, implementing targeted protection and restoration measures, and developing best practices and conservation policies. Our work under this goal supports the continued development of ecosystem-based fishery management measures, and the recovery of protected resources whose populations are limited by habitat loss and degradation, such as many of the "Species in the Spotlight." The Habitat Enterprise will work with the NOAA Fisheries Offices of Sustainable Fisheries, Protected Resources, Aquaculture, Science and Technology, and regional Science Centers, the National Ocean Service, other NOAA offices, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and many other partners to plan for and implement these strategies.

Goal 2: Restore NOAA Trust Resources Impacted by Oil and Other Hazardous Substance Releases

Goal 2 is centered on enhancing our work to restore injured NOAA trust resources in the wake of an oil spill or other hazardous substance releases through the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. Our strategies focus on activities such as preparedness for spills, especially in high risk areas, and developing innovative, streamlined, and coordinated restoration options to incentivize settlements and expedite on-the-ground restoration. We will also enhance oversight, public involvement, and publicly transparent decision-making. Our significant and unique restoration expertise and tools will advance both NRDA and non-NRDA conservation priorities.

Our work will also focus on maintaining NRDA-specific scientific and policy skills to effectively and efficiently implement the program and our mandates through time, as frequencies and locations of spills vary. This will enable NOAA to maximize responsiveness to spills, and target and leverage restoration activities for the greatest benefit to NOAA trust resources and the public. The Habitat Enterprise will work closely with our partner offices in the National Ocean Service and Office of General Counsel to coordinate and implement these actions through the Damage Assessment Remediation and Restoration Program, as well as with other NOAA offices; federal, state, and tribal agencies; industry; and many others.

Goal 3: Increase Resilience of Coastal Ecosystems, Communities, and Economies through Habitat Conservation

Goal 3 advances innovative habitat conservation approaches to achieve the NOAA-wide priority of increasing resilience of ecosystems, communities, and economies. The work under this goal also supports Goals 1 and 2. This goal is designed to increase our ability to aid recovery from natural disasters and evolve in the face of a changing climate by ensuring climate science is considered in habitat conservation work.

This goal also promotes collaborative, place-based conservation in a landscape-scale context through regional ecosystem-based partnerships and HFAs to showcase the benefits of targeted and coordinated conservation. The Habitat Enterprise will work closely with NOAA Fisheries partners, the National Ocean Service, other NOAA line offices, federal and state partners, coastal communities, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions to promote the role of habitat in coastal resilience.

Goal 4: Invest in Staff Development and Improve the Impact of People, Programs, and Services

Goal 4 demonstrates the Habitat Enterprise's commitment to our workforce and to improving the way in which they carry out their work. It is focused on enhancing training and career development, clarifying roles and responsibilities, highlighting connections between day-to-day work and long-term strategic goals, and measuring progress along the way. This goal is designed to create a culture of empowerment and success throughout the organization.

Cross-Cutting Strategies

In developing this plan, we recognized that several strategies are essential for achieving virtually all of our goals and objectives. Rather than listing them under each objective, they are called out as cross-cutting strategies to highlight their importance. They include:

1. Prioritize conservation actions
2. Develop conservation targets
3. Advance habitat science needed for management
4. Strengthen partnerships
5. Improve communications and stakeholder engagement
6. Develop national policy and guidance

All of these strategies are forward-looking, and will need further planning and discussion with internal and external partners to guide their implementation. For example, further prioritizing our actions is essential given the significant need and demand for habitat conservation in the context of limited resources, so there are references throughout this plan to identifying priorities. While the Habitat Enterprise identifies and coordinates priorities in a number of ways (such as HFAs, ecosystem-based conservation partnerships, and alignment with recovery plans and fishery management plans), we will work with partners over the coming months and years to find intersections among current prioritization efforts and potentially identify new priorities. Complementing these prioritization efforts is our strategy to develop conservation targets to better plan for, measure, and message the impact of our work. We will work with partners to define consistent habitat protection and restoration endpoints for key habitat types and specific areas. This strategy, along with the others listed above, will be an ongoing process, strengthening conservation work nationwide.

Partnerships

The goals and cross-cutting strategies in this plan rely on partnerships to be successful. Ecosystems frequently cross geographic as well as jurisdictional boundaries, so effective habitat conservation efforts must also cross these boundaries and engage relevant partners at every level. We foster partnerships to develop and advance priorities and solutions, leverage and coordinate resources, and maximize the impact of our habitat protection and restoration actions. Our partnering also focuses on adding to the scientific understanding of habitats and ecosystem services valuation, increasing public understanding of habitat value, communicating habitat conservation challenges and best practices, and enhancing stakeholder engagement.

To carry out this type of ecosystem-based management, the Habitat Enterprise works with a broad array of partners including regional fishery management councils and interstate marine fisheries commissions; federal, state, and local agencies; tribal nations; private and business sectors; academia; and non-governmental organizations. In addition, the Habitat Enterprise works across NOAA and supports the agency in using its full array of habitat-related missions, mandates, and resources.

Table of Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Trust Resources	**O1: By 2020, contribute to reducing the rate of wetland loss in priority coastal watersheds.**
	S1 Prioritize areas for conservation
	S2 Restore 10,000 acres of tidal wetlands in priority areas
	S3 Strengthen wetland protection measures
	S4 Increase partnerships
	S5 Develop national coastal wetlands policy
	O2: By 2020, increase access to historic riverine rearing and spawning habitat for targeted diadromous fish species in at least five high-priority watersheds.
	S1 Prioritize fish passage actions
	S2 Address fish passage barriers and other riverine conservation needs
	S3 Align conservation efforts
	O3: By 2020, protect and restore priority shallow coral areas, including preventing 80,000 metric tons of sediment from reaching shallow coral reefs downstream of five priority watersheds.
	S1 Identify and support implementation of priority conservation actions
	S2 Develop improved techniques for coral propagation
	S3 Enhance mitigation approaches
	O4: Conserve deep-sea habitats by implementing conservation measures to reduce deep-sea coral and sponge bycatch in fisheries in Alaska and the West Coast Region, and cumulatively protecting 50,000 square miles of deep-sea habitat containing coral and sponge ecosystems nationally by 2020.
	S1 Locate and characterize deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems
	S2 Work with partners to protect the ecological function of deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems
	O5: By 2020, protect and/or restore hard bottom habitat (e.g., rocky reef, oyster reef, cobble/boulder) at five priority sites.
	S1 Identify priority hard bottom sites for conservation
	S2 Implement targeted conservation
	S3 Improve conservation techniques
	S4 Implement the National Shellfish Initiative
	O6: By 2020, through NOAA Fisheries authorities manage for no net loss of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV).
	S1 Investigate SAV populations.
	S2 Develop conservation best practices
	S3 Implement targeted restoration
	S4 Strengthen SAV protection and mitigation
NRDA	***O1: Settle 25 Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) cases by 2020 resolving responsible party liability to fully restore injured NOAA trust resources at priority sites.***
	S1 Be prepared for spills in high risk areas
	S2 Incentivize responsible parties to settle
	S3 Ensure settlements account for full restoration
	S4 Focus on settlements in priority areas
	O2: Advance the restoration of NOAA trust resources by finalizing 25 NRDA restoration plans and completing implementation of 10 plans by 2020.
	S1 Streamline restoration planning
	S2 Enhance public involvement in restoration planning
	S3 Innovate to expedite on-the-ground restoration
	S4 Ensure coordinated oversight of the full restoration cycle
	O3: Capitalize on NRDA-related expertise and tools to benefit NOAA trust resources for five local/regional habitat priorities (e.g., geographies, topic areas) by 2020.
	S1 Support trust resource regulatory processes
	S2 Align NRDA restoration with trust resource priorities
	S3 Support significant non-NRDA incidents
	S4 Benefit trust resource restoration in state-led cases
	S5 Collaborate in local and regional restoration prioritization

Resilience

O1: By 2020, identify and implement targeted conservation approaches to build resiliency of coastal ecosystems and communities threatened by climate change and extreme weather events in each region.

- S1 Conduct risk assessments and prioritizations
- S2 Develop climate adaptation best practices
- S3 Implement climate adaptation measures

O2: By 2020, demonstrate measurable progress towards achieving the objectives for each Habitat Focus Area (HFA), and use the HFAs as models to promote collaborative habitat conservation for multiple benefits.

- S1 Implement priority actions in HFA implementation plans
- S2 Develop a results-based accountability evaluation process to measure HFA progress and guide future funding decisions
- S3 Maximize community engagement to ensure long-term sustainability
- S4 Share lessons learned

O3: Leverage our participation and leadership in regional (landscape-scale) ecosystem-based conservation partnerships to achieve the Habitat Enterprise's strategic goals and objectives.

- S1 Gulf of Mexico
- S2 Chesapeake Bay
- S3 Puget Sound
- S4 Great Lakes
- S5 San Francisco Bay/Delta

Organizational Excellence

O1: By 2020, become the best place to work in NOAA.

- S1 Create a Habitat employee viewpoint survey
- S2 Improve professional development and training
- S3 Recognize employees
- S4 Improve communication

O2: Use the Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan to direct staff and budget resource allocation on an annual basis.

- S1 Develop annual implementation plans
- S2 Align staff resources with strategic priorities
- S3 Develop budget initiatives

Cross-Cutting Strategies

These Strategies below apply to multiple goals and objectives

- S1 Prioritize conservation actions
- S2 Develop conservation targets
- S3 Advance habitat science needed for management
- S4 Strengthen partnerships
- S5 Improve communications and stakeholder engagement
- S6 Develop national policy and guidance

Habitat Enterprise Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat for Managed Fisheries and Protected Resources

Objective 1: By 2020, contribute to reducing the rate of wetland loss in priority coastal watersheds.

- ***Strategy 1: Prioritize areas for conservation.*** Identify priority areas for wetland protection and restoration in regions where priority sites have not yet been identified.
- ***Strategy 2: Restore 10,000 acres of tidal wetlands in priority areas.*** Restore wetlands in areas identified under Strategy 1 and in known priority sites such as the Gulf of Mexico, Whidbey Basin (Puget Sound), Outer Oregon Coast, San Francisco Bay Delta, and the Southern California Bight. Conservation actions could include levee removal or setbacks, tide gate removal or modification, fill removal, sediment replenishment, invasive species control, and revegetation.
- ***Strategy 3: Strengthen wetland protection measures.*** Strengthen wetland protection by enhancing coordination between essential fish habitat (EFH) consultations and other regulatory actions, and through measures to address topics such as: requesting compensatory mitigation that replaces lost acreage as well as ecological function in a timely fashion; creating upland buffer areas for anticipated wetland migration; and the beneficial reuse of sediment sources for protecting and creating estuarine wetlands.
- ***Strategy 4: Develop national coastal wetlands policy.*** Develop a NOAA Fisheries national policy on coastal wetland conservation (in conjunction with a planned national NOAA Fisheries mitigation policy, see Cross-Cutting Strategies) to establish a priority for conservation of wetlands in coastal watersheds. The policy will direct NOAA Fisheries programs to work with partners to target conservation efforts where they will achieve gains in coastal wetlands. The policy would address topics such as focusing wetland conservation programs to locate at least 33 percent of all wetland protection and restoration acres in coastal watersheds, prioritizing wetland restoration as the preferred use for appropriate dredged material, and replacing wetland acres as well as function in wetland mitigation or compensation plans.

Objective 2: By 2020, increase access to historic riverine rearing and spawning habitat for targeted diadromous fish species in at least five priority watersheds.

- ***Strategy 1: Prioritize fish passage actions.*** Identify fish passage priorities and other riverine restoration and protection needs (e.g., off-channel habitat) in regions where priorities have not yet been identified.
- ***Strategy 2: Address fish passage barriers and other riverine conservation needs.*** Improve fish passage in priority areas and implement projects to address other priority riverine habitat conservation needs. Conservation actions may include removing or modifying dams and culverts, constructing fish ladders, capturing and hauling fish around barriers, repairing stream bank and upland erosion sites, reestablishing off-channel habitat, and modifying project operations (e.g., flows).
- ***Strategy 3: Align conservation efforts.*** Identify opportunities to improve alignment of targeted restoration with Federal Power Act (FPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) related conservation efforts.

Improving Fish Passage in the Penobscot River

The Penobscot River is home to 11 migratory fish species, three of which are listed under the Endangered Species Act, including Atlantic salmon (a NOAA Species in the Spotlight). Since 2003, we have provided significant funding and technical assistance to the Penobscot River Restoration Trust and other partners for an ecosystem-level effort with the goal of improving fish access to more than 1,000 miles of habitat. These efforts will rebuild migratory fish runs that will benefit the larger Gulf of Maine and improve water quality, recreation, and tribal cultural resources.

The two lowermost dams on the river, Great Works and Veazie, have been removed with significant NOAA support. We continue to work with partners to identify and implement dam and barrier removal and fish passage projects, and explore opportunities for restoration aligned with four hydropower dams in the watershed that will be undergoing FERC relicensing over the next 10 years. As a part of these efforts with partners developing an online, map-based tool that draws on existing data to guide prioritization of fish passage projects, based on factors such as proximity of valuable fish spawning and rearing habitat, type of barrier, and project feasibility.

Objective 3: By 2020, conserve priority shallow coral areas, including preventing 80,000 metric tons of sediment from reaching shallow coral reefs downstream of at least five priority watersheds.

- ***Strategy 1: Identify and support implementation of priority conservation actions.*** Identify priority watersheds, as needed, and conduct high-priority habitat restoration and protection activities identified in the elkhorn/staghorn coral (*Acropora)* recovery plan, sanctuary, monument, and watershed management plans, and HFA implementation plans to address key stressors (e.g., land-based sources of pollution, fishing, climate, invasive species, and physical impacts).
- ***Strategy 2: Develop improved techniques for coral propagation.*** Investigate and implement new techniques for propagation of ESA-listed and other coral species to restore coral habitat.
- ***Strategy 3: Enhance mitigation approaches.*** Continue to develop innovative mitigation approaches (e.g., mitigation banks, in-lieu fee programs, tool for defining a unit of credit for coral, programmatic approach for corals on man-made structures) to protect and restore shallow corals from impacts resulting from permitted activities and unplanned events.

Objective 4: Conserve deep-sea habitats by implementing conservation measures to reduce deep-sea coral and sponge bycatch in fisheries, and cumulatively protecting 50,000 square miles of deep-sea habitat containing coral and sponge ecosystems nationally by 2020.

- ***Strategy 1: Locate and characterize deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems.*** Identify priority areas for conservation by conducting surveys of areas suspected or known to contain deep-sea corals and sponges, monitoring bycatch, and developing scientific modeling and other methods to improve our ability to predict the location of deep-sea coral and sponge communities.

- ***Strategy 2: Work with partners to protect the ecological function of deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems.*** Work with regional fishery management councils as well as marine national monument and national marine sanctuary managers to protect areas known and predicted to contain deep-sea coral and sponge communities in the Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico.

Objective 5: By 2020, protect and/or restore hard bottom habitat (e.g., rocky reef, oyster reef, cobble/boulder) at five priority sites.

- ***Strategy 1: Identify priority hard bottom sites for conservation.*** Identify priority sites for targeted conservation, such as sites within the southern California Bight for white abalone recovery, the Atlantic cod Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) for groundfish, and the Gulf of Mexico and the Chesapeake Bay for oysters.
- ***Strategy 2: Implement targeted conservation.*** Protect and restore priority hard bottom habitats through techniques such as abalone outplanting and sea urchin control for the recovery of rocky reef and kelp forests; oyster reef restoration and construction; fishing gear restrictions; and EFH consultations.
- ***Strategy 3: Improve conservation techniques.*** Develop improved conservation measures and restoration techniques for hard bottom habitats based on the most recent scientific research (e.g., assessments of HAPC efficacy and restoration success, development of abalone spawning methodologies, development of larger-scale oyster restoration techniques).
- ***Strategy 4: Implement the National Shellfish Initiative.*** Work with the Office of Aquaculture and other internal and external partners to advance shellfish conservation, and improve coordination with aquaculture and science efforts (e.g., ecosystem service research).

Restoring Rocky Reefs and Abalone in California

Once iconic in southern California, abalone fisheries have been closed for decades due to massive population declines caused by overfishing and disease. Two abalone species are federally endangered (including white abalone, a NOAA Species in the Spotlight) and five species are protected from fishing. The State of California and NOAA abalone recovery plans indicate that increasing abalone densities in key areas, coupled with rocky reef restoration projects, will help accelerate abalone recovery.

NOAA is working with partners along the West Coast to recover abalone. The first step is to restore kelp forest and rocky reef habitat, which involves transforming areas known as "urchin barrens" back to functioning kelp forests. Urchins devour any kelp or algae in their path, creating barrens devoid of kelp. More than 28 acres of kelp forest and rocky reefs off the Palos Verdes coast in southern California have been restored by removing approximately 2 million urchins. Captive breeding and outplanting of abalone to these restored sites ensures the long-term stability of the restored kelp forest. Recent successes in spawning and rearing white abalone in the lab and outplanting green abalone suggest that larger-scale projects are feasible in the future.

Objective 6: By 2020, through NOAA Fisheries authorities manage for no net loss of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV).

- ***Strategy 1: Assess SAV population status and health.*** Expand current knowledge of SAV habitat population status, trends, and supporting habitat, and reasons for loss or growth in targeted areas. Develop and maintain historical, current, and future data documenting changes in the areal extent and health of SAV habitat.
- ***Strategy 2: Develop conservation best practices.*** Develop and recommend improved SAV conservation techniques with science partners. Complete national restoration and protection guidelines to increase SAV habitat conservation success.
- ***Strategy 3: Implement targeted restoration.*** Restore SAV in targeted areas using conservation best practices, such as seeding, transplanting, prop scar restoration, water quality improvements, and reducing turbidity and wave energy to improve conditions necessary for successful SAV establishment and expansion.
- ***Strategy 4: Strengthen SAV protection and mitigation.*** Protect SAV from negative impacts, including both physical disturbance and degraded water quality from local and watershed-based sources, through regulatory authorities such as Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) EFH provisions, ESA, and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA). Improve integration and coordination of regulatory authorities and partners, including cumulative impacts analyses of federal actions and enforcement capacity.

Goal 2: Restore NOAA Trust Resources Impacted by Oil and Other Hazardous Substance Releases

Objective 1: Settle 25 Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) cases by 2020 resolving responsible party liability to fully restore injured NOAA trust resources at priority sites.

- ***Strategy 1: Be prepared for spills in high-risk areas.*** Increase the efficiency of spill response, damage assessment, settlement, and restoration planning by supporting activities such as risk assessments to identify key areas at high risk for oil spill, improved baseline resource information in those areas (e.g., Arctic), and a national database of sampling protocols and techniques.
- ***Strategy 2: Incentivize responsible parties to settle.*** Enhance collaboration with industry on cost-effective restoration that maximizes NOAA trust resource benefits by developing innovative approaches, including early/up-front restoration (e.g., restoration before full case resolution), restoration banking (e.g., conservation land banks, fee-credit purchase policies), and combined settlements with multiple small responsible parties.
- ***Strategy 3: Ensure settlements account for full restoration.*** Ensure all aspects of NOAA trust responsibilities, such as resource monitoring and long-term stewardship, are fully reflected in settlements.
- ***Strategy 4: Focus on settlements in priority areas.*** As part of the annual prioritization of all NRDA cases, focus settlement in priority areas (e.g., Hudson/Raritan Estuary, Puget Sound, northern Gulf of Mexico).

Objective 2: Advance the restoration of NOAA trust resources by finalizing 25 NRDA restoration plans and completing implementation of 10 plans by 2020.

- ***Strategy 1: Streamline restoration planning.*** Streamline NRDA restoration plan development and implementation through actions, including conducting programmatic consultations (e.g., ESA and EFH), increasing participation in regional planning, and exploring restoration actions that address multiple cases and leverage non-NRDA funding sources.
- ***Strategy 2: Enhance public involvement in restoration planning.*** Facilitate restoration planning, including public review of restoration plans, by improving use of tools such as social media, GIS-based mapping, and program websites.
- ***Strategy 3: Innovate to expedite on-the-ground restoration.*** Identify and expand the use of innovative and creative approaches to expedite restoration of NOAA trust resources, such as expanding the targeted use of early/up-front restoration and restoration banking and leveraging non-NRDA funding.
- ***Strategy 4: Ensure coordinated oversight throughout all restoration stages.*** Enhance restoration management, fiscal oversight, and publicly transparent decision-making by developing and expanding use of tools that facilitate collaboration across federal and state cotrustees (e.g., interagency agreements, project tracking and reporting, and administrative record repositories).

Advancing Coordinated Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Recovery and Resilience

NOAA remains heavily involved in the restoration of the Gulf of Mexico following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. We provide expertise in science, natural resource management, and policy to restore, protect, and sustain a resilient Gulf of Mexico ecosystem through three unique restoration programs.

- Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA): As a trustee agency for the NRDA, we are working with the Gulf states and other federal trustee agencies to help restore fisheries, wetlands, and wildlife impacted by the spill—and bring lasting benefits to the Gulf region for generations to come.
- Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF): We serve in an advisory role to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). We are helping to shape priorities and project selection, and to provide a holistic perspective on comprehensive restoration.
- Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act): We provide technical and scientific support to the RESTORE Council in both program and project development.

Objective 3: Capitalize on NRDA-related expertise and tools to benefit NOAA trust resources for five local/regional habitat priorities (e.g., geographies, topic areas) by 2020.

- ***Strategy 1: Support trust resource regulatory processes.*** Support and provide staff training on the use of tools, such as the Habitat Equivalency Analysis, to aid in determining appropriate mitigation requirements (e.g., for wetlands, SAV, and coral).
- ***Strategy 2: Align NRDA restoration with trust resource priorities.*** Where appropriate under NRDA procedures, implement NRDA restoration that addresses ESA recovery and MSA planning, or similar regional/ecosystem priorities.
- ***Strategy 3: Support significant non-NRDA incidents.*** Capitalize on rapid response and restoration capacity for incidents of high national or regional significance (e.g., non-NRDA vessel groundings on coral).
- ***Strategy 4: Benefit trust resource restoration in state-led cases.*** Explore opportunities to further support state-led NRDA cases where important benefits to impacted NOAA trust resources can be realized.
- ***Strategy 5: Collaborate in local and regional restoration prioritization.*** Coordinate with key programs that can have synergistic benefits to NOAA trust resources in areas of oil spills and other hazardous releases and impacts (e.g., RESTORE, Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, Department of Justice community service programs, and state and local enforcement actions).

Goal 3: Increase Resilience of Coastal Ecosystems, Communities, and Economies through Habitat Conservation

Objective 1: By 2020, identify and implement targeted conservation approaches to build resiliency of coastal ecosystems and communities threatened by climate change and extreme weather events in each region.

- ***Strategy 1: Conduct risk assessments and prioritizations.*** Work across NOAA line offices, regional fishery management councils, and external partners to evaluate risks and prioritize habitat conservation actions to address key climate threats to both NOAA trust resources and communities, such as flooding, drought, storm surge, sea level rise, and sedimentation.
- ***Strategy 2: Develop climate adaptation best practices.*** Develop best practices and guidance for incorporating climate and extreme weather adaptation considerations into habitat conservation actions, such as restoration, EFH consultations, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing/relicensing agreements, and fishery management actions.
- ***Strategy 3: Implement climate adaptation measures.*** Implement conservation techniques in each region directly or through consultation, including natural and nature-based infrastructure projects, floodplain restoration, levee setbacks, upland buffers, removing or modifying stream and tidal barriers, and freshwater management (e.g., modified reservoir operations, off-channel storage, and groundwater injection/retention).

Objective 2: By 2020, demonstrate measurable progress toward achieving the objectives for each Habitat Focus Area (HFA), and use the HFAs as models to promote collaborative habitat conservation for multiple benefits.

- ***Strategy 1: Implement priority actions in HFA implementation plans.*** Implement priority actions that support achieving the objectives of each HFA.
- ***Strategy 2: Develop an evaluation process to measure HFA progress and guide future funding decisions.*** Design and implement an evaluation process to support the evaluation of progress within HFAs and their effectiveness at improving habitat conservation outcomes.
- ***Strategy 3: Maximize community engagement to ensure long-term sustainability.*** Establish collective objectives and strengthen local capacity and commitment within the community to ensure long-term sustainability of conservation actions in HFAs.
- ***Strategy 4: Share lessons learned.*** Develop a strategy to share successes and lessons learned from the HFAs within NOAA and externally to promote habitat conservation for multiple benefits and to inform other conservation efforts.

Objective 3: Leverage our participation and leadership in regional (landscape-scale) ecosystem-based conservation partnerships to achieve the Habitat Enterprise's strategic goals and objectives.

- ***Strategy 1: Gulf of Mexico.*** Influence and implement restoration and conservation actions through the Gulf ecosystem restoration initiatives to conserve coastal wetland, oyster, and SAV habitat; replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources; and enhance community resilience.
- ***Strategy 2: Chesapeake Bay.*** Use leadership roles in the Chesapeake Bay Program to restore native oyster habitat, support well-managed fisheries and improve fish passage, enhance environmental literacy, and use coastal observations to evaluate the health and status of the ecosystem.

Promoting Collaborative Conservation in the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area

This 25-mile stretch on the northwestern coast of the Island of Hawai'i contains one of the state's longest contiguous coral reefs. It is also home to federally listed endangered and threatened species (including the Hawaiian monk seal, a Species in the Spotlight), and supports an abundance of corals and fish of which nearly a quarter are found nowhere else in the world. NOAA is collaborating with many state, non-profit, and community-based partnerships in the area to conserve the healthy reef system and address threats and impacts to this economically and culturally important place. The cumulative impact of multiple threats—including development, sedimentation, drought, fires, aquarium fisheries, and invasive species—threatens the reefs and forests, and the animals that depend upon them. A delicate balance is required between the needs of humans and those of the natural resources. NOAA is working with partners to:

- Reduce sediment and measurably improve the condition of priority ecological targets.
- Reduce vulnerability of communities (human and natural) to localized effects of climate change.
- Engage communities in managing regional coastal resources.

Collaborating in a Formal Partnership to Protect and Restore the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay watershed, which spans six states and the District of Columbia, is the nation's largest and most productive estuary. The Bay's vast network of more than 180,000 miles of streams, creeks, and rivers holds tremendous ecological, cultural, economic, historic, and recreational value for the nearly 18 million people who live in the region. NOAA has been a partner in the Chesapeake Bay Program since 1984. In June 2014, NOAA joined the states and other partners in committing to a new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which established 10 goals to advance the restoration and protection of the Bay watershed. NOAA identified four of these goals on which to focus its activities: Sustainable Fisheries, Vital Habitats, Environmental Literacy, and Climate Resiliency. NOAA will also support monitoring and research to inform decision-making, track progress, and evaluate effectiveness of management actions.

- ***Strategy 3: Puget Sound.*** Coordinate resources and efforts with agency, tribal, and non-governmental partners through the Puget Sound Coordinated Investment Initiative to accelerate salmon recovery and implement large-scale projects that provide additional benefits such as flood risk reduction, agricultural viability, and community resilience.
- ***Strategy 4: Great Lakes.*** Work with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to implement habitat conservation projects that will remove habitat-related Beneficial Use Impairments leading to the delisting of Areas of Concern.
- ***Strategy 5: San Francisco Bay/Delta.*** Participate in the California Eco-Restore initiative to advance habitat protection, enhancement, and restoration for migratory salmonids and green sturgeon.

Goal 4: Invest in Staff Development and Improve Impact of People, Programs, and Services

Objective 1: By 2020, become the best place to work in NOAA.

- ***Strategy 1: Create a Habitat Enterprise employee viewpoint survey.*** Develop and implement an employee survey instrument based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey for the Habitat Enterprise. Identify the key elements of an ideal work environment and ensure they are evaluated and acted upon.
- ***Strategy 2: Improve professional development and training.*** Assess staff training needs and implement individual development plans to align staff training with Habitat Enterprise priorities. Establish a rotational exchange program for Habitat Enterprise staff to gain experience and meet programmatic needs.
- ***Strategy 3: Recognize employee performance.*** Recognize performance differences meaningfully.
- ***Strategy 4: Improve communication.*** Improve two-way information flow with leadership regarding decision-making, Habitat Enterprise vision, and progress toward goals and priority actions.

Objective 2: Use the Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan to direct staff and budget resource allocation on an annual basis.

- ***Strategy 1: Develop annual implementation plans and budgeting/spend plans.*** Develop annual implementation plans to measure progress by quarter toward the goals and objectives of this Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan. Use the Strategic Plan to inform annual budgeting and spend plans.
- ***Strategy 2: Align staff resources with strategic priorities.*** Incorporate actions from the annual implementation plans into staff performance plans, where appropriate.
- ***Strategy 3: Develop budget initiatives.*** Develop FY 2018–2022 budget initiatives based on Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan goals.

Cross-Cutting Strategies

As noted in the Introduction, we recognize that the strategies below are essential for achieving virtually all of our goals and objectives. More focused application of these strategies to particular objectives appears in Goals 1-4.

- ***Strategy 1: Prioritize conservation actions.*** Work with our partners to further identify priority habitats, geographies, and habitat-limited species, and target conservation efforts on these priorities. Prioritization efforts will be integrated and coordinated across strategic plan goals (e.g., NOAA trust resources, NRDA, and resilience). Includes activities such as:
  - Implement priority recovery plan habitat-related actions, including a focus on Office of Protected Resources' "Species in the Spotlight."
  - Identify priority habitat-limited fishery species.
  - Implement priority actions identified in HFAs, within our regional ecosystem-based conservation partnerships, and other priority areas.
- ***Strategy 2: Develop conservation targets.*** Continue to work with our partners to further define near- and long-term restoration and protection targets within habitat types and priority areas (e.g., how much habitat needs to be protected and restored, where, for what ultimate ecosystem service goals) and the incremental steps needed to achieve the targets. This strategy will include working with regional fishery management councils to develop habitat conservation objectives for habitat-limited species and incorporating them into Fishery Ecosystem/Management Plans.

Developing Habitat Conservation Objectives with Regional Fishery Management Councils

The Habitat Enterprise is working with the regional fishery management councils to implement ecosystem-based fisheries management and to focus habitat conservation actions where they will have the greatest benefit to fish stocks. NOAA is working with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to evaluate the relative risk of anthropogenic stressors, such as nutrient input and offshore oil development, on habitats used by bocaccio, lingcod, black rockfish, and English sole at different life stages.

The results of the risk assessments will allow NOAA to develop specific management objectives and actions to decrease the species' exposure to priority habitat stressors. NOAA is also working with partners in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to develop policies and measurable objectives for habitat areas that are ecologically important to multiple fish species (e.g., key nursery habitats in specific geographic areas), and to integrate habitat considerations into the Council's ecosystem approach to fisheries management. These efforts will help NOAA, the regional fishery management councils, and other federal agencies ensure that the most important habitat areas support resilient fisheries and productive ecosystems.

- ***Strategy 3: Advance habitat science needed for management.*** Continue efforts to build on and implement the Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan (HAIP) and other science plans, working with NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology, Science Centers, and other partners to identify and address key science needs for habitat management decisions, such as:
  - Measuring the effectiveness and ecosystem service benefits and values of habitat conservation actions.
  - Increasing understanding of the relationship between habitat and managed/protected species (ecosystem linkages).
  - Determining climate and extreme weather effects on habitat and species.

- ***Strategy 4: Strengthen partnerships.*** Promote internal and external partnerships to advance shared habitat priorities and solutions, leverage and coordinate resources, maximize our impact, and enhance stakeholder and community engagement. As noted in the Partnerships section of the Introduction, we rely on partners to be successful in all our endeavors. In addition to continuing our existing partnerships we see the following as key opportunities for strengthening and expanding partnerships in the next 5 years:
  - *Strengthen linkages with the commercial and recreational fishing and aquaculture industries:* Enhance collaboration with regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, fishermen, seafood farmers, and the broader fishing industries to conserve habitat.
  - *Improve water quality:* Strengthen partnerships with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and others to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, and other areas where addressing land-based sources of pollution is a priority action.
  - *Improve flows and freshwater management:* Strengthen partnerships with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Bureau of Reclamation, states, and other partners to address water quantity and quality issues in coastal systems.
  - *Ensure energy development considers potential habitat impacts*: Enhance relationships with alternative and fossil fuel energy industries in Hawaii, the Greater Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and other priority areas to ensure habitat is conserved alongside energy development and production.
  - *Enhance fish passage and coastal fisheries:* Work with the National Fish Habitat Partnership to open additional river miles to diadromous fish and to improve additional river and nearshore

Using Science to Assess Habitat Important for Fisheries

The intensity and distribution of Norton Sound seabed mining operations off Nome, Alaska have increased rapidly since 1996, due to high gold prices and the success of a reality television series. Because of a lack of site-specific information, it was unknown whether the mining boom was harming seafloor habitat for the commercially important red king crab.

In response to concerns raised by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and Crab Plan Team, the Alaska Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) funded research and established collaborative partnerships to investigate the issue. Methods typically used to assess marine habitat would not work in Nome due to extreme environmental factors. HCD worked closely with the researchers from Florida International University, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Norton Sound Economic Development Commission, and local residents—including members of the crab and mining industries—to test an Unmanned Surface Vessel equipped with multibeam sonars and imaging sonar. More than 70 kilometers of transects were surveyed near Nome and benthic structures were readily apparent.

The results from this study will be used to identify important crab habitat and inform subsequent permit reviews to ensure adequate protection is in place in Norton Sound.

habitat conditions for trust resources and their prey.
    - *Align NOAA Fisheries' regulatory and non-regulatory habitat conservation mechanisms:* Enhance targeted coordination between EFH and ESA consultations, FERC licensing/relicensing agreements, restoration projects, and other conservation actions.
    - *Enhance cross-NOAA coordination on habitat issues:* Use the NOAA Habitat Conservation Team, NOAA's Regional Collaboration Teams, and matrix programs such as the Coral Reef Conservation Program to increase coordination for habitat conservation and science.

- ***Strategy 5: Improve communications and stakeholder engagement.*** Develop improved techniques with NOAA partners (e.g., Coastal Coalition) to:
    - Increase stakeholder engagement.
    - Communicate the value of habitat conservation.
    - Communicate habitat conservation issues, challenges, solutions, and best practices.
    - Improve understanding of why habitat is important to key stakeholders and potential partners.

- ***Strategy 6: Develop national policy and guidance.*** Develop and/or influence national policy, regulations, or guidelines to encourage consideration of habitat issues and increase the effectiveness of habitat conservation activities.
    - Implement the NOAA National Habitat Policy by supporting NOAA's sharpened focus on habitat utilizing the full array of habitat-related missions, mandates, and resources.
    - Work across NOAA offices to develop a NOAA Fisheries compensatory mitigation policy to provide recommendations and set guidelines for compensation of habitat loss subject to NOAA programs and authorities such MSA EFH provisions, ESA, and NRDA (e.g., provide guidelines for establishing listed species habitat banks, in-lieu fee programs).
    - Assist the agency in revising the NOAA National Artificial Reef Plan, as needed, to clarify the agency's position on the purpose, siting, and design of artificial reefs based on the most recent bathymetric and benthic data available.
    - Complete the Guidance for Considering the Use of Living Shorelines to help increase understanding of different living shorelines approaches, the permitting and consultation processes, and the different NOAA programs involved.
    - Implement the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS) for benthic habitat data collected by the Habitat Enterprise.

Implementation Strategy and Evaluation

The Habitat Enterprise will develop an annual implementation plan specifying the activities that will take place to achieve the objectives of this strategic plan. Each year, the Enterprise will also evaluate progress toward accomplishing the objectives and adjust planned activities for the subsequent year accordingly.

Commitments identified in the annual implementation plan will be reflected in the performance plans of Habitat Enterprise staff where appropriate to ensure a close alignment between daily work, annual plans, and 5-year goals.

Appendix 1: Alignment with Department of Commerce and NOAA Priorities

NOAA Fisheries is a line office of NOAA, which is located within the Department of Commerce (DOC). The Habitat Enterprise's strategic plan was informed by the strategic plans and planning documents of DOC, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries, as well as strategic plans developed by Regional Offices, Science Centers, and other NOAA Fisheries headquarters offices.

Strategic plans and planning documents that currently guide NOAA Fisheries:

- Department of Commerce Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2014–2018 (2014)
- NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010)
- NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum (2015)
- NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for FY 2016 (2015)

The priorities relevant to the Habitat Enterprise are identified below.

Department of Commerce Strategic Plan

The DOC is comprised of 12 bureaus that work in five key areas: trade and investment, innovation, environment, data, and operational excellence. NOAA furthers the Department's mission with stewardship of the ocean's resources, which contribute more than $250 billion annually to the nation's economy. Specifically tied to the NOAA mission in the Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014) are the following goal, objective, and key strategies:

The DOC Strategic Goal, Objective, and Strategies Most Relevant to NOAA Fisheries

Environmental Goal
Ensure communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment.

DOC Objective 3.4
Foster healthy and sustainable marine resources, habitats, and ecosystems through improved management and partnerships.

DOC Strategies for Objective 3.4

- **Strengthen capabilities to assess and monitor fish and protected resources:** Ensuring sustainable populations of living marine resources is a key Departmental mandate. NOAA will increase the precision of stock assessments, and perform more robust monitoring. NOAA will use ecosystem management to ensure sustainable living marine resources. Integrated biological, physical, and chemical data and ecosystem modeling will be incorporated into fish stock and protected species assessments. More advanced technologies for monitoring living marine resources and ecosystems will be developed.
- **Improve recovery of listed species through innovative partnerships:** International, federal, state, local, tribal, and non-governmental organizations play a role in conservation. NOAA will strengthen partnerships with these stakeholder groups to ensure greater collaboration toward the recovery and conservation of protected species in marine and coastal ecosystems. Greater collaboration will improve the quality and execution of conservation plans.

- **Enhance place-based conservation:** Through its coastal management and place-based conservation programs, NOAA will expand protections at current sites and add protections at new sites. This approach preserves the economic and environmental benefits of these special places.
- NOAA initiatives such as the Habitat Blueprint framework will employ partnerships to improve habitat conditions for fisheries and for coastal and marine life.

NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (NGSP)

The NGSP (2010) conveys NOAA's mission and future vision, as well as the road map for achieving the vision as laid out through the long-term goals and objectives. With the release in 2010 of NOAA's Strategic Plan and Executive Summary, and in the 2013 Addendum, Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, then Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, called on NOAA to focus on the following areas:

- ***Climate:*** Through collaborative strategies, continue to advance the observations, modeling, and research necessary to understand climate change and its impacts; and transition mature climate science into regular, reliable, and relevant information services.
- ***Weather:*** NOAA will build a "Weather-ready" nation by preserving and improving its ability to provide timely and accurate forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property through science, technology, infrastructure improvements, and collaborative efforts with partners.
- ***Oceans:*** NOAA will advance our efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries and recovery of protected species and their habitats.
- ***Coasts:*** NOAA will deliver integrated data, information, products, and services needed to support resilient coastal communities and economies.
- ***Science and Technology:*** NOAA will focus on developing systems-level understanding of ecosystems and phenomena—across missions and disciplines—with the goal of increasing the resilience of ecosystems, economies, and communities.
- ***Engagement:*** NOAA will expand efforts to listen and respond to our customers' and stakeholders' concerns and better relate NOAA mission responsibilities and activities to those concerns.
- ***Organization and Administration:*** NOAA will further capitalize on recent initiatives to cut costs and improve effectiveness.

As one of five NOAA line offices, NOAA Fisheries' mission is most closely tied to the goal for Healthy Oceans identified in the Draft Goal Implementation Plan, 2012:

> *Healthy Oceans Goal: Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems.*

The Healthy Oceans goal is to ensure that ocean, estuarine, and related ecosystems—and the NOAA trust resources that inhabit them—are resilient and sustainable in the face of increasing threats and changing conditions. A sound understanding of these ecosystems, communication of this knowledge to decision-makers and stakeholders, and the capacity and resources to support key NOAA programs are critical to achieving this goal. Strategic objectives for this goal:

- Improved understanding of ecosystems to inform resource management decisions.
- Recovered and healthy marine and coastal species.
- Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities.

- Sustainable fisheries and safe seafood for healthy populations and vibrant communities.

NOAA's FY 2016 Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM)

The purpose of the AGM is to focus the agency's corporate attention on near-term execution challenges and a balanced implementation of NOAA's strategy across mission areas, given our mandates, stakeholder priorities, and the fiscal outlook. The AGM is released on an annual basis, so the annual implementation plans for this strategic plan will reflect the most current guidance.

From the FY 2016 AGM Priorities:
NOAA Priority: Provide information and services to make communities more resilient.

- Implement Next Gen stock assessments for species within NOAA's jurisdiction through advancements in monitoring and data collection.
- Make measurable progress on recovery protected species.
- Increase operational services that promote coastal resiliency.

NOAA Priority: Achieve organizational excellence

- Under the direction of the Chief Scientist, strengthen alignment of research and development activities to effectively and efficiently support NOAA's operational missions, including accelerating research advances to application.

NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for FY 2016 (2015)

NOAA Fisheries' annual guidance memo provides guidance to all NOAA Fisheries employees in executing our mission responsibilities by establishing a framework for development of annual priority milestones. These priorities consider the core mission functions in context of current fiscal conditions.

For FY 2016, NOAA Fisheries will focus on the following core priorities:

- Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.
- Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.
- Improve organizational excellence.

All other NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments should be designed and conducted in a manner that supports these two core mission functions. NOAA Fisheries' approach to these priorities and supporting functions will be guided by the following overarching principles:

- **Advance innovative solutions to emerging challenges (science and stewardship):** NOAA Fisheries will lead innovation and serve as a catalyst to spur innovation.
- **Cultivate our partnerships:** NOAA Fisheries will engage the expertise and capabilities of our partners from the international, federal, tribal, and state communities; academia; and non-governmental sectors.
- **Improve internal and external communications and raise awareness of the NOAA Fisheries mission:** We will strive toward a "no surprises" approach to communicating with our stakeholders and, where practicable, build consensus on expectations and the identification of

critical factors to measure success.

- **Improve our decisions and knowledge by transforming data capabilities and access in order to support our mission**. NOAA Fisheries will provide robust data and science utilizing the best available infrastructure and by anticipating customer's needs.

Appendix 2: Habitat Enterprise Organizational Structure, Core Mandates, and Programs

NOAA Fisheries supports habitat protection and restoration through its Habitat Enterprise. The Enterprise works across NOAA and with external partners to protect, maintain, and restore habitats that provide important ecological and societal benefits. Our work focuses on sustaining managed fisheries, recovering protected resources, and improving the resiliency of coastal communities.

Organizational Structure

The Habitat Enterprise is composed of the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation (three divisions: Habitat Protection, Restoration Center, and the Chesapeake Bay Office); the Habitat Conservation Divisions located in the Regional Fisheries Offices; and the habitat management-related components of the four West Coast Region Area Offices. In 2014, the leadership of these offices and divisions came together to establish the National Habitat Leadership Team (NHLT). The NHLT works collaboratively to build support, articulate priorities, and drive implementation of habitat management initiatives designed to meet national and regional habitat needs. The NHLT uses the Habitat Blueprint principles to direct its conservation planning and decision-making. This Strategic Plan was spearheaded by the NHLT.

Mission

The NOAA Fisheries Habitat Enterprise protects and restores habitat to sustain fisheries, recover protected species, and maintain resilient coastal ecosystems and communities.

Vision

Healthy ecosystems, sustainable living marine resources, and resilient coastal communities thrive through innovative solutions, management flexibility, adaptability, and science excellence.

Core Mandates

The core mandates and authorities for the Habitat Enterprise include:

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)
- Federal Power Act (FPA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA)
- Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA)
- Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration Executive Order (CBEO)
- Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA)
- Estuary Restoration Act (ERA)
- Oil Pollution Act (OPA)
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)
- NOAA Authorization Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-567), reauthorized in 2002 (Public Law 107-372).

Programs

The major programs and activities of the Habitat Enterprise include:

- ***Protecting essential fish habitat (EFH):*** In coordination with the regional fishery management councils, the EFH program describes and identifies EFH for all federally managed fish during each stage of their lives from eggs to adults, and evaluates the effects of proposed federal fishery management actions on such habitats. The program also provides NOAA with thousands of opportunities each year to guide coastal development in a manner that protects vital fish habitat while supporting economic opportunity. Through required consultations NOAA provides recommendations to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or otherwise offset adverse effects of federal activities on marine, coastal, and riverine EFH for federally managed species. A federal activity is classified as a federally authorized, funded, permitted, or proposed action. Actions requiring EFH consultations may include proposed coastal construction projects, applications for dredging and filling wetlands, waste discharge permits, military activity, renewable and traditional energy proposals, and other federal funding and permit activities that may adversely affect EFH.
- ***Providing fish passage at hydroelectric dams:*** This program promotes passage for migratory fish past hydroelectric dams that block valuable upstream river habitats or downstream passage to the ocean. NOAA can require fish passage through the development of mandatory conditions under the Federal Power Act for the safe, timely, and effective passage of migrating fish at hydropower dams licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). NOAA can also recommend broader measures for the protection, mitigation, or enhancement of migratory fish and their habitat (e.g., instream flows). These unique roles and responsibilities granted to NOAA also present a limited window of opportunity for NOAA action, because license renewals are generally approved for 30 to 50 years.
- ***Protecting deep-sea corals:*** NOAA implements the MSA Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program to identify and map locations of deep-sea corals and to analyze and provide regional fishery management councils with scientific information needed to manage and protect these habitats. The MSA also provides the councils with discretionary authority to designate zones to protect deep-sea corals identified by the program from physical damage from fishing gear. NOAA implements this work in coordination with other federal agencies and research institutions.
- ***Conserving shallow-water coral reefs:*** The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program's (CRCP) mission as authorized by P.L. 106-562 is to preserve, sustain, and restore the condition of coral reef ecosystems; to promote the wise management and sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems to benefit local communities and the nation; and to develop sound scientific information on the condition of coral reef ecosystems and the threats to these ecosystems. Over the past 5 years, CRCP has emphasized its efforts on understanding and addressing the top three recognized threats to coral reef ecosystems: climate change impacts, fishing impacts, and impacts from land-based sources of pollution. The CRCP also maintains national level responsibilities that include mapping, monitoring, and education/outreach in support of these three threats. The CRCP is implemented through internal NOAA partners across the Line Offices and external partners via grants and cooperative agreements.

- ***Targeting restoration of priority habitats:*** We work closely with partners to implement restoration of priority coastal, marine, and riverine habitats for rebuilding fisheries, recovering protected species, and improving the resiliency of coastal communities. We provide financial assistance and a full range of restoration expertise and services for habitat restoration projects nationwide. Our services support regional and local strategic planning, project design, engineering, environmental compliance and permitting, implementation, oversight, and project evaluation. Our staff leads and supports coordination efforts across NOAA, and a large variety of other federal and non-federal partners, to identify shared habitat priorities and focus resource investments. We implement this work through several programs coordinated across NOAA, including the Community-based Restoration Program; Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act; Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; and Coral Reef Conservation Program.
- ***Restoring habitat injured by oil and other hazardous substance releases:*** Every year, NOAA responds to as many as 150 oil spills and other hazardous substance releases across the nation through our Damage Assessment Remediation and Restoration Program (DARRP). Following the model of providing broad expertise and services noted above, we plan and implement restoration for coastal and marine resources threatened or injured by oil spills, other hazardous substance releases, or vessel groundings. This work involves restoration activities for Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) and natural resource trustee responsibilities for all active cases. The DARRP includes our partner program offices, the Office of General Counsel for Natural Resources, and the Office and Response and Restoration (within the National Ocean Service).
- ***Protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay:*** The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (NCBO) applies expertise in oyster restoration, fisheries, environmental literacy, and environmental observations to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. NCBO programs are integrated to provide an ecosystem-based approach to management. NCBO implements NOAA's mandate, authorized by P.L. 107-372, to coordinate programs and activities of the agency to support the Chesapeake Bay Program, including the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Executive Order 13508. NCBO carries out programs in: 1) habitat assessment and characterization supporting oyster restoration, 2) fisheries research and ecosystem modeling, 3) environmental literacy and community engagement, and 4) ecosystem observations.

Appendix 3: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AKRO	Alaska Regional Office
CRCP	NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program
CWPPRA	Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act
DOC	Department of Commerce
EFH	Essential fish habitat
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FPA	Federal Power Act
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
FY	Fiscal year, October 1 through September 30
GARFO	Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
HAIP	Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan
HAPC	Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
HCD	NOAA Fisheries Regional Habitat Conservation Division
HFA	Habitat Focus Area
HP	Habitat Protection Division
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
NCBO	NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NGO	Non-governmental organization

NHLT	National Habitat Leadership Team
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Fisheries	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
NOS	NOAA National Ocean Service
NRDA	Natural Resources Damage Assessment
NWS	NOAA National Weather Service
OAR	NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research
OHC	NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation
PIRO	Pacific Islands Regional Office
PR	NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources
RC	NOAA Restoration Center
RESTORE Act	Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act
SAV	Submerged aquatic vegetation
SERO	Southeast Regional Office
SF	NOAA Fisheries Office of Sustainable Fisheries
WCRO	West Coast Regional Office

Title: National Fish Habitat Board Leadership

Desired outcome(s): Board action on National Fish Habitat Board Leadership (elect new chair and vice chair)

Background: According to National Fish Habitat Board Bylaws, no chair shall serve more than 3 consecutive terms. Additionally, Bylaws state that the Chair shall be elected by the Board from among the state government representatives. Kelly Hepler succeeded John Cooper of chair of the National Fish Habitat Board in May of 2008. Having served three two year terms, at the November 2014 Board meeting the following motion was approved: retain Kelly Hepler as Chair for the term of one year (terminating Fall 2015) and elect Tom Champeau to Vice Chair.

In September 2015 a nomination committee for both the Chair and Vice chair positions with the National Fish Habitat Board, composed of Chris Moore, Mike Andrews, and Stan Allen was formed. The findings of this committee will be provided at the October 2015 Board meeting.