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## Coordinator Comments

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The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) was recognized by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board as a Fish Habitat Partnership in October, 2009. Since that time, the RFHP leadership has focused on a national assessment of the status of reservoir fisheries habitats, creating an effective infrastructure to assure a nationwide focus and establishing a long-term funding structure.

The habitat assessment is ongoing and is comprised of a survey of professional reservoir managers on the status of over 100 habitat variables in over 1300 reservoirs nationwide. In addition, a database is being consolidated from on-line databases on reservoir and watershed metrics. Information from the survey and metric database will be useful in creating a reservoir classification system and to determine common habitat impairments in similarly classified reservoirs. The assessment is being jointly conducted by Dr. Steve Miranda at

Mississippi State University and Dr. Reed Green of USGS.

RFHP covers the largest geographic area of all of the Fish Habitat Partnerships. This provides both opportunities and challenges. RFHP focus will be to improve aquatic habitats in reservoir systems for the benefits of the aquatic organisms dependent on those habitats and to the human users of the resource. The wide array of reservoir users, i.e., boaters and anglers, homeowners, communities that depend on the water for development and the recreational dollars generated by the local reservoir and industry, provide a tremendous array of potential partners. A looming challenge is the fragmentation of authorities over the use and management of the nation's reservoirs. The Executive Committee of RFHP consists of senior level staff from all of the major federal agencies responsible for natural resource management, state agency fisheries chiefs, representatives

from the angling industry, hydropower, and the tribes. Bringing this diverse array of interests together will open new avenues of communication and hopefully lead to a shared vision for the importance of protecting and enhancing reservoir habitats.

Project selection and coordination will be accomplished via Regional Working Groups. The Working Groups are geographically based on the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies regions and are comprised of largely of state fisheries biologists, those professionals with the best working knowledge of fisheries habitats in reservoirs. RFHP received a two-year Multi State Conservation Grant from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to hire a coordinator to help ensure that all of this works smoothly.

Adequate funds to accomplish the work needed will never be fully available. The need to prioritize projects and focus efforts will be an ongoing reality. Federal

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RFHP members presenting \$20,000 check to Seven Coves Bass Club for habitat work on Lake Conroe, TX

programs fund the granting opportunities but majority of aquatic habitat restoration work in existence today and will likely continue to do so. However, given the current political climate expansion of these programs will be a difficult sell. RFHP has established a non-profit foundation, "Friends of Reservoir" that will provide the public an opportunity to provide financial assistance in our habitat restoration efforts. RFHP will continue to pursue

feel that the Foundation will be the financial engine of our work in the future. Details on the foundation can be found in the next article.

RFHP was able to fund one project in 2010. RFHP participated in the Toyota Texas Bass Classis held last October at Lake Conroe, TX. Thanks to the assistance of Bass Pro Shops and Texas Parks and Wildlife, RFHP was able to present a \$20,000 check to the

Seven Coves Bass Club to assist in an ongoing project to reestablish native vegetation in Lake Conroe. RFHP funded five projects in 2011 (one of which is highlighted later in the newsletter). We hope to have adequate funds to continue to build on the number of projects funded annually.

*"Friends of Reservoirs (FOR) provides the means for the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) to reach out to the private sector to partner with reservoir management agencies for assistance with habitat restoration projects."*

## FRIENDS OF RESERVOIRS FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED

Thanks to the efforts of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership Steering Committee and, in particular, Bass Pro Shops, Friends of Reservoirs, a 501(c)(3) foundation has been established to accept tax-deductible donations to fund habitat restoration and protection projects in reservoir systems nationwide. Friends of Reservoirs (FOR) provides the means for the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) to reach out to the private sector to partner with reservoir management agencies for assistance with habitat restoration projects. Federal and State programs invest millions annually in aquatic habitat restoration projects. These programs have yielded impressive results to date; still the

threats facing healthy aquatic habitats in the future are larger than the government-funding sources can address alone. Given the current federal and state budget issues and the political climate surrounding those issues, continued funding for these programs even at current levels is in jeopardy. Reservoir users have a vested interest in maintaining and/or restoring water quality and fish habitat in reservoir systems. There are more than 70 million boaters in the U.S. and 25 million anglers that fish in lakes and reservoirs annually. These individuals and the industries that support them are the target for fund-raising efforts by FOR. FOR is established to improve public under-

standing and knowledge of fish habitat conservation in the reservoirs of the United States, and to support and better enable government agencies, and other partners at all levels, to manage fisheries and fish habitat in the reservoirs and associated watersheds of the United States for the benefit of the American people. To meet its mission, FOR provides:

- technical assistance and financial support to agencies and others having management jurisdiction over or interest in reservoirs;
- outreach and education to the public on health and



## Friends of Reservoirs (con't)

- conservation of fisheries and fish habitat in reservoirs and reservoir systems; and
- support for implementation of reservoir conservation activities

FOR established a tiered-membership system that allows for individuals, sporting groups and clubs, lake associations, watershed groups, and industry to provide monetary and in-kind assistance to local reservoir habitat projects as well as donations to further reservoir habitat restoration on a national scale. Small groups, such as fishing clubs, with the goal of working on a local or a reservoir-specific scale can become a "Chapter" member of FOR. Groups with a broader approach to reservoir habitat restoration, such as watershed groups, can join FOR as a "Partnership for Fish Friendly Waters (PFFW)". PFFW's would likely focus on one or more reservoirs at a watershed scale.

These groups are more suited to tackle water quality issues which have their root cause in land stewardship issues in the watershed. Groups of Chapters with a common goal could band together to form PFFW's. FOR offers two levels of "Affiliate" memberships, one for individuals and another for organizations. Affiliate memberships are for those who wish to contribute to FOR's mission without having a vested interest in any particular habitat restoration project.

FOR members will be required to work closely with the management agencies (municipal, state, federal) that have jurisdiction over the target reservoir. This will help ensure that Best Management Practices are used in the restoration projects and that any proposed project fits into the broader management plan for that reservoir. In addition to qualifying to use FOR's non-profit status, members will receive technical assist-

ance in project design and a variety of outreach services.

FOR will have a website established in the near future ([www.waterhabitatlife.org](http://www.waterhabitatlife.org)) Membership information will be available on the website along with a secure "Donate" button for those inclined to provide financial assistance. A receipt for any donation will be automatically sent to the donor.

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## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES Lake Restoration Program



The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Lake Restoration Program focuses on restoring impaired lakes to improve the quality of life for Iowa citizens. Communities in Iowa place a high value on their water resources as they seek population growth and economic success. Citizens value water quality and desire safe healthy lakes that provide a full complement of aesthetic, ecological and recreational benefits. A recently completed water-based recreational use survey by Iowa State University found that in 2009 there were 11,977,623 household trips to Iowa lakes, spending on the average \$49.60 per household on single day trips and \$262.96 per household on multiple day trips. This translates to six of ten Iowans visiting the

state's lakes multiple times each year, spending \$1.6 billion annually, in their pursuit of outdoor lake recreation.

In response to the high public interest in outdoor recreation the Iowa General Assembly passed HF 2782 in 2007, creating the Lake Restoration Program. Since inception of the program, \$41 million (average of \$8.2 million annually) has been legislatively appropriated to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for projects selected as part of the Lake Restoration Program (LRP).

This funding allowed for a significant expansion of the aquatic habitat work that the DNR was able to accomplish with the previous level of funding (~\$1 million annually from 2002-2006).

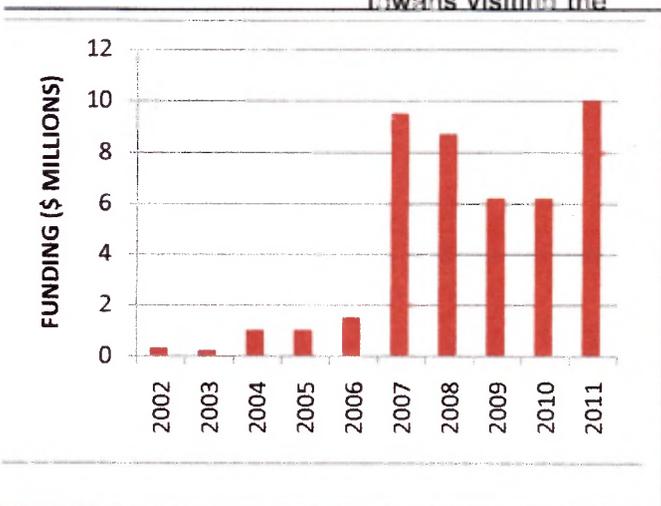
The Lake Restoration Program is modeled after the Federal Clean Lakes Program established in the 1970's. Program goals are:

- Ensure a cost effective, positive return on investment for the citizens of Iowa.
- Ensure local community commitment to lake and watershed protection.

- Ensure significant improvement in water clarity, safety, and quality of Iowa lakes.
- Provide for a sustainable, healthy, functioning lake system.
- Result in the removal of the lake from the impaired waters list.

The initial hurdle to overcome was to answer the inevitable question "What needs to be done where and for how much?" The DNR contracted with Iowa State University to rank Iowa's 128 "Significant Public Lakes" on the basis of assessment of water quality, technical feasibility of restoration, potential economic benefits, use by Iowans, and local support. The list was further refined into the highest priority 35 lakes.

LRP staff members work with representatives of the local community to develop a joint restoration plan. An essential part of each plan is the formation of effective watershed partnerships at both the local and administrative levels of government. A comprehensive plan requires a thorough analysis of the restoration potential of both the watershed and the lake to ensure that water quality goals can be met.



## Lake Restoration Program (con't)

At a minimum, each joint action plan shall document the causes, sources, and magnitude of lake impairment, evaluate the feasibility of the lake and watershed restoration options, establish water quality goals and a schedule for attainment, assess the economic benefits of the project, identify the sources and amounts of any leveraged funds, and describe the community's commitment to the project, including local funding.

Plan guidelines include:

- Biologic controls will be utilized to the maximum extent, wherever possible.
- If proposed, dredging of the lake will be conducted to a mean depth of at least 10 feet to gain water quality benefits unless a combination of biologic and structural controls is sufficient to assure water quality targets will be achieved at a shallower average water depth.

- The costs of lake restoration will include the maintenance costs of improvements to the lake.
- Delivery of phosphorous and sediment from the watershed will be controlled and in place before lake restoration begins.

Measures of success include:

- Clarity. A 4.5 foot secchi depth will be achieved 50% of the time from April 1 through September 30.
- Safety. Beaches will meet water quality standards for recreational use.
- Biota. A diverse, balanced, and sustainable aquatic community will be maintained.
- Sustainability. The water quality benefits of the restoration efforts will be sustained for at least 50 years.

Since program inception an additional 11 lakes have either successfully petitioned or been added to the group of 35 high priority lakes. Major water quality improvement initiatives are completed or near completion at eight lakes. Current program activities are in progress at 27 lakes throughout the state and either in the planning or initial community outreach stage at an additional 11 lakes.

The success of the LRP can be measured by the increasing number of household trip visitations to Iowa lakes; lake use in 2009 was 26.6% greater than visitation rates from 2002 through 2005. In addition, visitations at lakes that have completed watershed and lake improvements efforts exceed state average and their own pre-renovation visitation levels.

For more information on the program, go to: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/water/lakerestoration/>



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## HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT Lake Havasu Lake Restoration Program

The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership provided funds for five projects in 2011. RFHP contributions to these projects were in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range. Each issue of this newsletter will feature a reservoir habitat restoration project. The first in this series will feature the Lake Havasu Fisheries Restoration Project.

Lake Havasu is situated on the lower Colorado River inundating 30 miles of the border between California and Arizona. This 21,000 acre reservoir was built by the Bureau of Reclamation and formed by the construction of Parker Dam in 1940 to serve as a point of diversion for the Southern California Aqueduct, and now serves a similar purpose for the Central Arizona Project. Today, nearly 30 million Americans depend on this water and reside within a four-hour drive of this reservoir that arguably accommodates the highest recreational boating usage of any water in the west.

Reservoir managers noted angler access issues along with significant declines in angler catch rates and native fish abundance. A Partnership was formed in 1993 to help address these issues. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

has been the lead in this Partnership that focused on restoration of 875 acres of fish habitat at 42 sites. Structures installed to date include 67,482 bass shelters, 54,724 catfish houses, 3,484 bass ambushing cover structures, 1,050 tire towers and 11,800 brush bundles. Five of the six free public fishing areas with associated amenities originally proposed have been completed. One of the more challenging facets of the program was to address the declining native fish population. To this end 30,000 each of 12" endangered razorback sucker and bonytail chub have been stocked. One of the few reproductive populations of razorback sucker in the basin has been established. The cost to reach these goals was estimated at \$28 million. The goals have been met to date at a cost of \$17 million making it one of few projects of this magnitude to come in under budget.

Since this investment, angler-use days have quadrupled and user-satisfaction has improved all while stocking no sport fish. A 2001 economic study determined that the improved fishery conservatively benefits the regional economy by \$38 million annually.

This BLM-led partnership has been officially supported by Arizona Game and Fish, California Fish and Game, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the non-profit organization, Anglers United. The community has supported this work with over 200,000 volunteer hours and contributions from many other industries, private and public organizations.

The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership will be contributing \$20,000 in 2011 to help fund an additional angler-use survey and outreach assistance for future fundraising efforts. For more information on the Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program go to <http://www.blm.gov/volunteer/feature/1998/az/lake.html>



Volunteer view of Lake Havasu, AZ.

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