

# National Fish Habitat *Action Plan*



*Cooperation*



*Investment*



*Stewardship*



NATIONAL  
FISH HABITAT  
ACTION PLAN



April 24, 2006

The United States is blessed with a remarkable abundance and diversity of waterways and fisheries. Their health is vital to our well-being as individuals and as a nation. Unfortunately, our collective efforts to conserve aquatic habitats have not kept pace with their decline. Without prompt and effective conservation action, our waters will continue to suffer, as will the opportunities they provide.

Galvanized into action by the threat of aquatic habitat losses, an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies and industry leaders forged the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The plan's principal aim is to better protect, restore and enhance fish habitat through partnerships that foster conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

The plan encompasses all of the nation's waters that provide fish habitat. It is science-based, voluntary and non-regulatory and offers a carefully wrought nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise and existing partnerships of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, foundations and others. It recognizes that in aquatic systems across the country, fisheries professionals and their partners propose to build on these and other model efforts through a network of Fish Habitat Partnerships to focus energy, skill and dollars on key fish habitats as never before.

The plan is a rallying point for a wide range of fish and aquatic habitat interest groups. It contains extensive input from numerous partners and stakeholders. It is endorsed by state fish and wildlife agency leaders, and 19 federal agencies have formed a caucus to better coordinate their activities in support of the plan. With its strong base of support, its focus on the use of existing and emerging science, and its emphasis on the importance of partnerships, the plan presents a historic opportunity to launch a new era in fisheries conservation.

We enthusiastically endorse the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and commit to playing an active role in its implementation.

  
Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior

  
President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

  
Secretary, Department of Commerce

  
Executive Vice President, Association of  
Fish and Wildlife Agencies

## A Case for Action

Healthy waterways and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of our society. They provide clean water and sustainable fisheries. They also are vital for less tangible reasons, as anyone who has fished wild waters or canoed a tranquil stream can attest. Unfortunately, in many waters around the country, fish and the habitats on which they depend are in decline. This is of huge concern to the 44 million anglers who pursue fish recreationally and countless others who depend on them for subsistence and commerce. The contribution of recreational and commercial fisheries alone surpassed \$116 billion in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

The value of fish habitat—freshwater and marine—goes well beyond angling for and harvesting of fish. The biological diversity of America’s aquatic habitats is astonishing, while the ecological importance of water supply and flood control are incalculable in value—a fact brought into sharp relief by storm and hurricane devastation to the Gulf Coast in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

A tremendous amount of work has been undertaken to protect, restore and enhance these aquatic habitats. Since 1970, regulatory programs have reduced pollution and slowed the physical degradation of aquatic habitats.

Thousands of river rehabilitations, reservoir enhancements, salt-marsh protection efforts and other conservation projects have been conducted from the Great Lakes to the Laguna Madre, from the Everglades to Alaska’s Bristol Bay. Although significant gains have been made, they have not kept pace with impacts resulting from population growth and land-use changes. Finally, given the diverse array of federal, state, tribal, local and private jurisdictions, the need never has been greater for increased action and improved coordination of fisheries conservation actions across boundaries and jurisdictions.

<sup>1</sup> Sportfishing in America, American Sportfishing Association (2002). Commercial landings represent dockside values from Fisheries of the United States 2004, National Marine Fisheries Service, (Current Fisheries Statistics, #2004, November 2005).

<sup>2</sup> For example, it is estimated that every radial mile of intact coastal wetlands reduces potential storm surge heights by 1 vertical foot (Source: GAO Report GAO-06-244T, Army Corps of Engineers: History of the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Projection Project).



JAMIE WILKINSON/B. A. S. S.

### NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN ATTRIBUTES

- Action oriented.
- Science based.
- Identify priority needs and acknowledge gaps.
- Identify and achieve measurable outcomes.
- Build on existing collaborative efforts.
- Focus resources and funding where they will make a measurable difference.
- Encourage public-private partnerships.
- Monitor and disseminate results.
- Don't stop until the job is done.

## A Strong Partnership Based on Experience

Determined to reverse the declines of America’s fish habitats, a growing number of fisheries professionals, state and federal agencies, tribes, foundations, conservation and angling groups, businesses and industries have joined together in support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (See Exhibit 1 for list of partners.).

- Monitor and be accountable for scientifically sound and measurable results.
- Share information and knowledge at all levels from local communities to Congress.

Development of the plan began in 2001 when an ad hoc group of fisheries interests, led by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, explored the concept of developing a partnership for fish habitat similar to that undertaken for waterfowl and their habitat in the 1980s through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. (See Exhibit 2 for a history of the initiative). Forged from past conservation successes and failures, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is built on a set of principles that are integral to its mission and goals. The plan is:

### CASE STUDY

#### BLACKFOOT RIVER RECOVERY

In 1992, Robert Redford put Norman Maclean’s classic “A River Runs Through It” on film. Maclean centered his novel on the Blackfoot River of his youth in western Montana. But Redford was forced to shoot many fishing sequences on the Gallatin, Boulder and Yellowstone rivers due to the poor condition of the Blackfoot. Years of mining, grazing, timber harvest and water withdrawals had taken their toll on the river and its fish. Individually, none of these actions were fatal to the river’s health, and none had been undertaken expressly to harm fisheries, but collectively they degraded the Blackfoot River.

National attention from the film spurred local interest in restoring the Blackfoot. With help from a wide variety of donors, a coalition of landowners and communities formed the Blackfoot Challenge. Twelve years later, barriers have been removed, providing fish access to 300 miles of habitat, 51 miles of riparian habitat restored, and 54,500 acres of perpetual conservation easements secured. Pride in the river has been restored, as have the fish, including cutthroat and bull trout.

#### PARTNERSHIP-DRIVEN

The plan works at federal, state, tribal and local levels to target new and existing funding and technical resources for fish habitat projects.

#### SCIENCE-BASED ON A LANDSCAPE SCALE

The plan uses existing and emerging science-based tools to target priority areas and implement needed projects, address causative factors and use best practices. Project outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.

#### NON-REGULATORY

The plan funds and supports projects that are developed voluntarily by willing partners and stakeholders. These voluntary projects will supplement the existing foundation of regulatory programs that protect aquatic habitats from pollution and degradation.

In its design, the plan encompasses five important lessons that emerge from America’s past efforts to protect and restore fish habitat:

- Be strategic rather than merely opportunistic.
- Address the causes of and processes behind fish habitat decline, rather than the symptoms.
- Provide increased and sustained investment to allow for long-term success.

**SUSTAINED & ACCOUNTABLE**

The plan recognizes the need to support regional fish habitat initiatives on a long-term, sustained basis. It also understands the need to evaluate and report each project’s performance and demonstrate overall results to Congress, partners and the general public.

The plan offers an unprecedented opportunity to meet the challenges of protecting, restoring and enhancing aquatic habitats on a national scale. The plan’s vision of healthy habitats, healthy fish, healthy people and healthy economies will be achieved through cooperation, investment and stewardship. This vision will result in local actions that yield measurable social, economic and ecological benefits—and more fish!

**Mission, Goals & Objectives**

**MISSION**

The mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is to protect, restore and enhance the nation’s fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

This mission will be achieved by:

- Supporting existing fish habitat partnerships and fostering new efforts.
- Mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals.
- Setting national and regional fish habitat conservation goals.
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of fish habitats.
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats.

**GOALS**

- Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems.
- Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected.
- Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms.

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

**OBJECTIVES**

- Conduct a condition analysis of all fish habitats within the United States by 2010.
- Identify priority fish habitats and establish Fish Habitat Partnerships targeting these habitats by 2010.
- Establish 12 or more Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout United States by 2010.
- Prepare a “Status of Fish Habitats in the United States” report in 2010 and every five years thereafter.
- Protect all healthy and intact fish habitats by 2015.
- Improve the condition of 90 percent of priority habitats and species targeted by Fish Habitat Partnerships by 2020.



**DEFINITIONS**

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan focuses on fish and their habitats as keystones for the full range of aquatic biodiversity and aquatic habitats in the United States.

A focus on fish includes the protection, restoration and enhancement of freshwater and marine species, including shellfish and crustaceans.

A focus on habitat encompasses the protection, restoration and enhancement of freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats.

CHRIS KENNEDY/USFWS



## Science & Data Strategy

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan's science and data strategy is built on four associated activities conducted cooperatively with plan partners:

- Identify causative factors for declining fish populations in aquatic systems.
- Use an integrated landscape approach that includes the upstream/downstream linkages of large-scale habitat condition factors.
- Assess and classify the nation's fish habitats.
- Provide partners easy access to information to support their work.

The plan will assist all partners in understanding priorities for projects and how to prevent and reverse declines in both freshwater and marine systems. It will use an integrated landscape approach to link upland and marine systems. It will further the ongoing effort to determine the condition of the nation's waters by classifying waters based on published landscape classification systems. Please see Exhibit 3 for more information.

## Implementation Strategy

The plan will be implemented through four key activities. Together, these approaches will lead to actions that are strategically employed and results that can be measured against protection, restoration and enhancement goals. The National Fish Habitat Action Plan will:

### Support existing Fish Habitat Partnerships and foster new efforts.

- Organize a system of regional Fish Habitat Partnerships around important aquatic habitats and species. Partnerships will be focused on efforts that engage a wide range of partners to protect, restore and enhance fish habitats.
  - Support Fish Habitat Partnerships in identifying priority habitat areas within focus areas, developing action plans and conservation strategies, and implementing projects. The plan will help local and regional efforts garner the necessary resources and provide decision analysis and other evaluation tools necessary to succeed. Working with partnerships to demonstrate successful on-the-ground habitat improvement projects is recognized as critical to the success of the national effort.
  - Provide science-based methods and tools to help partnerships measure and demonstrate progress. Existing and established state, federal, tribal and local agency monitoring programs will be used to the greatest extent possible.
- ### Mobilize and focus national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals.
- Build strong grassroots support that places fish habitat conservation high on the public agenda. Partners at all levels—federal, tribal, state and local—will help bring new and sustained

attention to the need for action and will mobilize diverse stakeholder groups to advocate for fish habitat protection, restoration and enhancement.

- Increase funding for fish habitat conservation efforts at the national, regional and local levels by cultivating sufficient public and private fund sources to achieve necessary action. National and regional fundraising campaigns, corporate sponsorships, restitution and settlement funding, and other approaches will be used to increase the amount of funding available for cost-effective fish habitat conservation.
- Focus existing resources to increase effectiveness in achieving results. Act as a catalyst for increased cooperation among federal, state, tribal and local agencies and increased collaboration with conservation organizations, landowners and other stakeholders.

#### Measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habitats.

- Continue to refine quantitative metrics to track the progress toward improving the nation's fish habitats with a national "Status of Fish Habitats" report issued every five years.
- Encourage and promote regional habitat planning guided by the best available information and science.
- Enhance existing data networks for use by habitat conservation partners. Create linkages to share data, conservation approaches and other habitat information among partners.
- Assist partnerships in developing baselines, indicators and measures of success. Promote objective and consistent assessment of projects allowing successful and cost-effective strategies to be repeated

## CASE STUDY

### RESTORING BAHIA GRANDE

Bahia Grande is an 11,000-acre complex of three estuarine basins on the Texas coast that were once a highly productive shallow water system. In the 1930s, the Port of Brownsville dredged the Brownsville ship channel, and the resulting spoil banks cut off the water supply for this tidal system. Bahia Grande changed into an arid ecosystem that no longer provides extensive aquatic nursery areas for diverse aquatic organisms and valuable fisheries. Instead, its drifting sands are the source of numerous health and industrial problems in the Brownsville area.

The Bahia Grande Estuary Restoration project is bringing together a significant public-private coalition to support one of the largest restoration projects in the United States. The wide array of partners and the various restoration techniques used to implement this project have made it noteworthy in the eyes of the local community and the conservation community. Everyone is working toward the common goal of restoring a productive nursery for recreationally and commercially important fish and shellfish species, birds and wildlife.



NOAA

As early as 2000, Ocean Trust began working with federal partners to cut a system of channels and re-flood this estuary, returning it to its natural state and relieving Brownsville of its blowing dust. The first of several planned channels was opened in July 2005. In addition, a plant nursery has been constructed to provide native vegetation, such as mangroves and marsh grasses, for the restoration effort. To date, 100 local community members and students have volunteered more than 400 hours

to plant mangroves. The planting events will be an ongoing effort once the channels are reopened and the location begins to return to an estuarine area abundant with fish and wildlife.

and replicated and less successful strategies to be improved upon or abandoned.

- Communicate project results and lessons learned. Enable and facilitate learning among all partners about aquatic ecosystems and how to be good stewards of aquatic resources.

CRAIG SPRINGER/USEFWS



### ACTION PLAN BENEFITS

- Clean and sufficient amounts of water, a critical measure of landscape health and the well-being of people.
- Healthy, resilient habitats that are critical to fish and wildlife, water conservation, flood control and people.
- Improved recreational, commercial and subsistence fishing, boating and other uses of aquatic resources.
- Targeting of limited funding to produce measurable benefits to fish and people.
- Improved understanding of habitat connectivity and how aquatic systems function and are maintained.

### Provide national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats.

- Work with states and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to identify, coordinate and focus incentives at the state level to protect, restore and enhance aquatic habitat.
- Work with states and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to identify and ensure linkages, consistency between plan-supported fish habitat efforts and linkages with State Wildlife Action Plans and other similar programs. Specifically use the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to leverage and implement appropriate fish habitat conservation programs outlined in the State Wildlife Action Plans and other relevant programs.
- Work with other habitat conservation programs, such as North American Wetlands Conservation Act Joint Ventures, to promote cooperation and coordination leading to enhanced protection of fish habitats.
- Through a Federal Caucus, coordinate existing federal program efforts to benefit fish habitat. Federal agencies have an important role as land, water and wildlife managers through a wide array of federal actions and responsibilities. Awareness of fish habitat opportunities, coordination of agency actions and follow-through on successful strategies will enable federal agencies to maximize program benefits for fish habitat.
- Establish a National Fish Habitat Board to promote, support and coordinate implementation of the plan. This board will oversee action and follow through on all strategies of the plan.

### Fish Habitat Partnerships

Fish Habitat Partnerships are the primary work units of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. These partnerships are formed around important aquatic habitats and distinct geographic areas (e.g., Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership,) “keystone” fish species (e.g., eastern brook trout and western native trout) or system types (e.g., large lakes, impoundments, estuaries.)

Fish Habitat Partnerships:

- Provide leadership and help to develop fish habitat projects at regional and local levels.
- Work with other regional habitat conservation programs to promote cooperation and coordination leading to the enhanced protection of fish habitats.
- Engage the grassroots to build support for fish habitat conservation.
- Involve diverse groups of public and private partners and focus them on conservation of fish habitat.
- Collaboratively develop a compelling strategic vision and implementation plan that is scientifically sound and achievable.
- Leverage National Fish Habitat Action Plan and other sources of funding by building local and regional partnerships.
- Use adaptive management principles.
- Have the ability to develop appropriate regional habitat evaluation measures and criteria that are compatible with national measures.
- Address fish habitat conservation at a scale necessary to make a difference.

## Governance

Through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the states led development of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), NOAA Fisheries Service and other key partners. The two federal agencies with lead fishery management responsibility, FWS and NOAA Fisheries Service, served as the primary liaisons with other federal agencies and the Federal Caucus. Federal, state and private organizations provided personnel to assist in the development and implementation of the plan. Tribal governments also were invited to participate.

The adopted plan will serve as the basis for implementation. A governing board and small staff will be established to provide the support structure necessary for effective implementation of the plan at the national level.

### GOVERNING BOARD

A National Fish Habitat Board (Board) will be established with responsibility to promote, oversee and coordinate implementation of the plan. The Board will consist of up to 20 members drawn equally from the following stakeholder groups:

- State/Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies representatives (regional and at-large).
- Federal agency representatives. (Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Interior)

- Conservation/science/academic members, including one representative from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- At-large members representing tribal governments, interstate management agency representatives, industry (fishing, boating, ecotourism, etc.), elected officials and other interests.

The initial Board will be appointed jointly by the leadership of Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in consultation with FWS and NOAA Fisheries Service. A state representative will serve as the chairperson. Terms, processes, succession and other details will be laid out in bylaws developed by the Board and action plan partners.

Roles of the Board include:

- Coordinate agency and stakeholder involvement at the national level.
- Develop appropriate policies and guidance for recognizing partnerships and criteria for allocating national funding and related resources.
- Work to establish national partnerships that provide funding and other resources to the Fish Habitat Partnerships and other efforts of the plan.
- Develop processes to prioritize and deliver National Fish Habitat Action Plan funds to the partnerships.
- Establish national measures of success and evaluation criteria guidelines for partnerships.
- Report to Congress, states and other partners on the status and accomplishments of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.



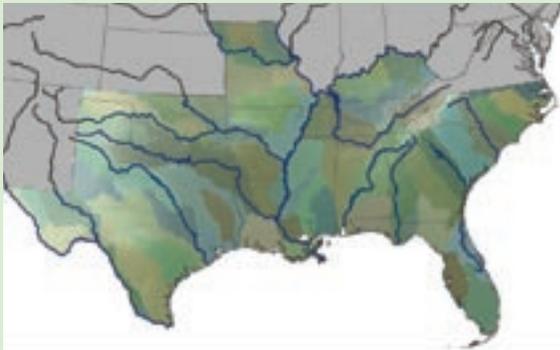
TIM WATTS

## CASE STUDY

### SOUTHEAST AQUATIC RESOURCES PARTNERSHIP

The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) was initiated in 2001 to address issues related to the management of aquatic resources in the southeastern United States. These issues include significant threats to the aquatic resources and habitats of the Southeast, as illustrated by the fact that 34 percent of North American fish species and 90 percent of the native mussel species designated as endangered, threatened or of special concern are found in the Southeast. Given these realities, and the predicted increased pressure on southeast aquatic resources in the future, SARP was established with the following mission:

*With partners, protect, conserve and restore aquatic resources including habitats throughout the Southeast, for the continuing benefit, use and enjoyment of the American people.*



This partnership builds on relationships developed between state and federal agencies, private organizations, conservation groups and other stakeholders that extend beyond the

traditional boundaries of aquatic resource management agencies and establish a commitment to truly work together for the benefit of the resource. SARP is currently developing a regional aquatic habitat plan for the Southeast that will help guide the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan efforts on a regional scale. Pilot watershed conservation action plans already have been developed for four major southeast river systems (Duck River, TN; Roanoke River, NC; Altamaha River, GA; and Pascagoula River, MS) that detail specific actions to improve and protect aquatic habitats and biological integrity in these systems. SARP actively seeks funding and local partners to implement specific local actions that are prioritized on a regional and national scale.

### STAFF

Core administrative staff from states (through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), FWS and NOAA Fisheries Service will be co-located and initially assist the Board in administering all federal and related funds and implementing programs designed by the Fish Habitat Partnerships. Additional federal agency staff will be provided to operate and maintain the Geographic Information System (GIS) and other data systems required to ensure proper plan implementation, the production of “Status of Fish Habitat” reports (every five years,) the Conservation and Habitat Priorities Data Base, and to report on the success of the plan’s efforts. Staff will be supplemented by additional agency and stakeholder representatives working through interagency personnel agreements. Funding for these staff positions will be provided by federal appropriations and partner contributions.

### FEDERAL CAUCUS

The FWS chairs the Federal Caucus, consisting of federal agencies with an interest in contributing to development and implementation of the plan. The caucus provides a mechanism through which federal partners can:

- Jointly identify strategies and resources to support actions under the plan.
- Ensure that the plan is responsive to resource priorities of the participating agencies.

- Provide communication links among federal agencies cooperating under the plan.

The caucus also serves as a conduit for information flow between federal partners and the National Fish Habitat Board.

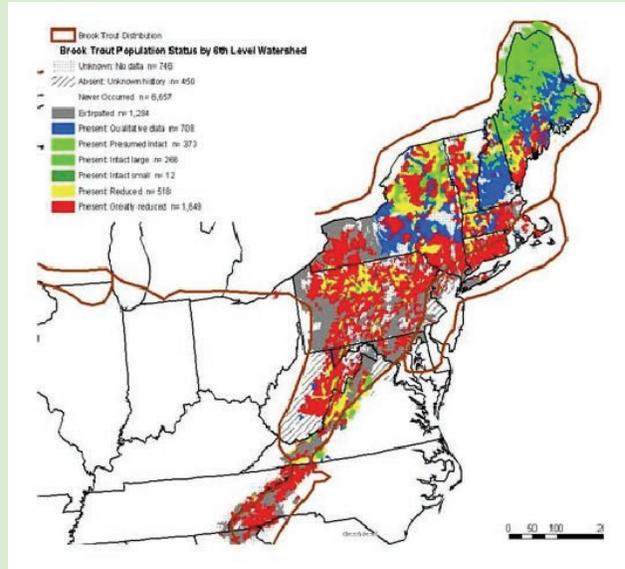
(See Exhibit 4.)

### SCIENCE & DATA COMMITTEE

The role of the Science and Data Committee is to provide timely recommendations to the Board and partnerships on technical or science policies, processes, methodology or issues as requested by the Board related to the plan. Chaired by a state representative, membership will consist of two state agency representatives, two federal agency representatives, two non-governmental agency representatives, and two academic representatives. All committee members will have demonstrated knowledge of plan's science foundation. Terms, processes, succession and other details will be laid out in the committee's Terms of Reference to be developed by the Board and the Science and Data Committee within the first year of establishment.

## CASE STUDY

### EASTERN BROOK TROUT JOINT VENTURE



The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture is another example of partnerships associated with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The joint venture was born out of a common concern, from Georgia

to Maine, for the health of numerous populations of the only native trout of the eastern United States. Recognizing that many common threats existed across the range, state fishery managers joined together with federal agency representatives, private conservation groups and scientists to assess the problem and plan action.

Strong voluntary participation has been driven by the recognition of an excellent opportunity to share scientific resources, collaborate on corrective strategies and work together to raise the public profile of this popular species, which is an excellent indicator of healthy stream habitats. To date, the joint venture has developed the first ever range-wide assessment of eastern brook trout, initiated development of strategic action plans, and communicated its efforts to other partners.

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture is a great example of the power of collaborative Fish Habitat Partnerships. It brings together the collective scientific, management and communication resources of diverse agencies and organizations. Based on a careful scientific assessment of priority problems, partners are joining to develop strategic action plans that will be implemented at the local level and through regional work. Ultimately, by bringing together interested partners working on commonly agreed upon priorities, resources are leveraged and focused to maximize benefits on the ground for fish and people. The difference will be measurable.

JOHN NAUGHTON/NOAA



## Exhibits

- 1: Sample of Partners Coalition Members
- 2: National Fish Habitat Action Plan Milestones
- 3: Science and Data Strategy
- 4: Strategies and Resources of Federal Agencies
- 5: National Fish Habitat Action Plan Leadership, Support and Report Authorship

JOHN AND KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH/USFWS



## Exhibit 1: Sample of Partners Coalition Members

as of April 2006\*\*

### FEDERAL/TRIBAL

American Heritage Rivers Initiative\*

Coastal America\*

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

Council on Environmental Quality

Department of Agriculture

*Farm Service Agency\**

*Natural Resources Conservation Service\**

*U.S. Forest Service\**

Department of Defense\*

Department of Housing and

Urban Development\*

Department of the Interior

*Bureau of Land Management\**

*Bureau of Reclamation\**

*National Park Service\**

*Office of Surface Mining\**

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service\**

*U.S. Geological Survey\**

Department of State

Department of Transportation

*Federal Highway Administration\**

Environmental Protection Agency\*

Federal Emergency Management Agency\*

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Klamath River Inter-Tribal Fish & Water Comm.

Lac Courte Oreilles Fisheries

National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration\*

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

National Science Foundation\*

Nisqually Tribe

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fisheries

U.S Army Corps of Engineers\*

### INTERSTATE/STATE/CITY/UNIVERSITY

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Resources Library & Information Services

Allegheny Soil Conservation District

Arizona Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit

Arizona Game and Fish Department

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

California Resources Agency

California State University

Central Valley Project

Chelan County Public Utility District (WA)

Chickaloon Village, Alaska

Colorado Division of Wildlife

Colorado River Fish and Wildlife Council

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Connecticut Department of

Environmental Protection

Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Cornell University

Delaware Department of Natural Resources

District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration

Elkhart, Indiana, City of

Florida Fish & Wildlife

Conservation Commission

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation (PA)

Grant County Public Utilities District (WA)

Great Lakes Fishery Commission

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Hawaii Department of Land and

Natural Resources

Holyoke Gas & Electric Department (MA)

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Illinois Natural History Survey

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Indiana University-Purdue University

Fort Wayne

International Boundary & Water Commission, US Section

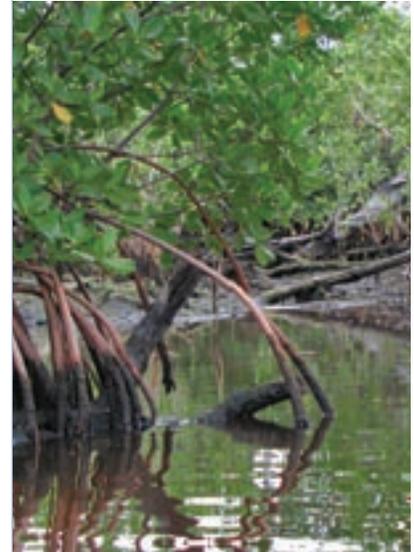
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Lake Champlain Basin Program



NOAA

NOAA



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
 Louisiana Sea Grant College Program  
 Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
 Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
 Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
 Metro Wastewater Reclamation District (CO)  
 Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
 Michigan State University  
 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
 North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission  
 North Central Educational Service District (WA)  
 North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
 Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
 Northwest Indian College  
 Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
 Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 Oregon State University  
 Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board  
 Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission  
 Penn State University  
 Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
 Pennsylvania Game Commission  
 Plattsburgh State University  
 Potomac River Fisheries Commission  
 Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
 South Burlington High School, VT  
 South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
 South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks  
 Mississippi Interstate Resource Association  
 Missouri Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit  
 Missouri Department of Conservation  
 Mono County (CA)  
 Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
 Montgomery County, Maryland  
 Nebraska Game & Parks Commission  
 Nevada Department of Wildlife  
 New England Fishery Management Council  
 New England Interstate Pollution Control Commission  
 New Hampshire Fish and Game Department  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

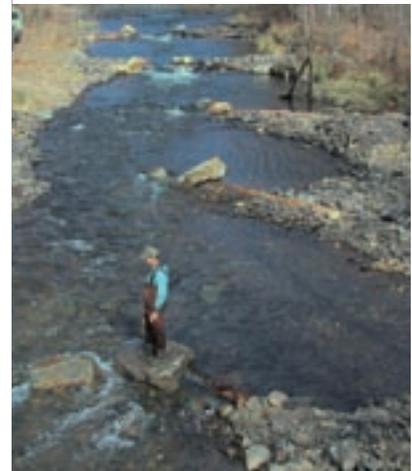
St. Croix International Waterway Commission  
 State University of New York  
 Susquehanna River Basin Commission  
 Tehama County Resource Conservation District (WA)  
 Tennessee Cooperative Fishery Research Unit  
 Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  
 Texas Wildlife Department  
 Trinity Management Council (CA)  
 University of Georgia  
 University of Houston Clear Lake  
 University of Kentucky  
 University of Maine  
 University of Maryland Eastern Shore  
 University of Massachusetts  
 University of Minnesota  
 University of Rhode Island  
 University of Southern Mississippi  
 Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife  
 Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries  
 Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
 Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
 Virginia Tech  
 Washington Association of Conservation Districts  
 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 Washington Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office  
 West Virginia Division of Natural Resources  
 Western Shasta Resource Conservation District  
 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
 Wyoming Game & Fish Department

**PRIVATE**

Adams County Trout Unlimited  
 Alabama B.A.S.S. Federation  
 Allegany Soil Conservation District  
 Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay  
 American Fisheries Society  
 American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
 American Land Conservancy  
 American Rivers  
 American Sportfishing Association  
 Anglers Unlimited  
 Ann Lake Sportsman’s Club  
 Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited  
 Association of Northwest Steelheaders  
 Atlantic Salmon Federation  
 Bass Anglers Sportsman Society  
 B.A.S.S. Federation Nation of Virginia Inc.  
 B.A.S.S. Federation Nation of Washington  
 Bass Pro Shops  
 Bass Federation Nation of Washington  
 The Bay Institute  
 Beaver Creek Watershed Association (MD)  
 Blackhawk Bassmasters  
 Blue Hill Hydraulics Incorporated  
 BOAT/U.S.  
 Botanical Developments  
 Brightwood Improvement Group  
 Buckeye Angler Multimedia  
 Bucks County Chapter of Trout Unlimited  
 California BASS Federation  
 California Trout  
 Canaan Valley Institute

Catoctin Land Trust  
 CH2M HILL Inc.  
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
 Clark-Skamania Flyfishers  
 Coastal Conservation Association  
 Coldwater Heritage Partnership Program  
 Collegiate Bass Anglers Association  
 Colorado Bass Federation Nation  
 Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation  
 Common Ground for Conservation Inc.  
 Connecticut River Watershed Council  
 Conservation Fisheries Inc.  
 The Conservation Fund  
 Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association  
 Crappie Unlimited  
 Dauphin Wildlife Rescue  
 Denver Trout Unlimited  
 Desert Fishes Council  
 Ducks Unlimited Inc.  
 Eastern Buckeye Crappie Club  
 Ecosystem Solutions Inc.  
 ENSR  
 Federation of Fly Fishers  
 Federation of Fly Fishers, Mid-Atlantic Council  
 Fish America Foundation  
 Fisheries Forever  
 FoodSource Lure Corporation  
 Friends of Big Hunting Creek  
 Friends of the Rappahannock  
 Friends of the River  
 Friends of the Upper Mississippi  
 Fishery Services  
 Front Range Anglers  
 G.Loomis Inc.  
 Garcia and Associates  
 Georgia Power Company  
 God’s Green Earth  
 Gomez and Sullivan  
 Granite Ecological Services  
 Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council  
 HandMade in America  
 Hatchmatcher Guide Service  
 HDR/LMS Engineering  
 Hoh River Trust  
 Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group  
 Horizons Engineering



MOUNTAIN VISIONS



Hudson River Foundation  
 Icicle Creek Watershed Council  
 Idaho BASS Federation  
 Idaho Conservation League  
 Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association  
 Idaho Power Company  
 Idaho Rivers United  
 Idaho Salmon and Steelhead United  
 Illinois Smallmouth Alliance  
 Indianapolis Flycasters  
 Inland Aquaculture Group LLC  
 International Paper

Land Trust Alliance  
 Loftus Associates  
 Luhr Jensen  
 Little Juniata River Association  
 Long Live The Kings  
 Louisiana B.A.S.S. Federation Nation  
 Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center  
 Maine B.A.S.S. Federation Nation  
 Maine Pulp & Paper Association  
 Maine Wood Products Association  
 Management Systems International  
 Marine Fish Conservation Network  
 Maryland Saltwater Sportfisherman's Association  
 Maryland Waterman's Association  
 Michigan Natural Features Inventory  
 Mid-Atlantic Council-Federation of Fly Fishers  
 Minnesota B.A.S.S. Chapter Federation  
 Mississippi B.A.S.S. Federation Nation  
 Missouri Smallmouth Alliance  
 Moldy Chum  
 Monocacy & Catoctin Watershed Alliance  
 Montana B.A.S.S. Federation Nation  
 Montana Council of Trout Unlimited  
 Montana Watershed Coordination Council  
 Muskies Inc.  
 National Aquarium in Baltimore  
 National Association of Conservation Districts  
 National Audubon Society  
 National Energy & Gas Transmission Inc.  
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
 National Marine Manufacturers Association  
 National Wildlife Federation  
 National Wild Turkey Federation  
 Native American Fish & Wildlife Society  
 Native Fish Conservancy  
 Native Fish Society  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 The Nature Conservancy-  
 Eastern U.S. Freshwater Program  
 The Nature Conservancy in Alaska  
 The Nature Conservancy of Montana  
 NatureServe  
 NEIWGCC  
 New Hampshire Bass Federation  
 Nooksak Salmon Enhancement Association  
 Normandeau Associates Inc.

Iowa BASS Federation  
 Iowa Conservation Alliance  
 Izaak Walton League of America  
 James River Association  
 Jersey Shore Trout Unlimited  
 Kansas Bass Chapter Federation  
 Kaplan Associates  
 Katmai Fishing Adventures LLC  
 Kenai River Sportfishing  
 Kimley-Horn  
 Kinzua Fish & Wildlife Association  
 Knik River Watershed Group  
 Kooskooskie Commons (WA)  
 Lake Champlain Walleye Association  
 Lake Gaston Striper Club  
 Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Partnership

- Northeast Generation Services
- Northeast Utilities
- Northeast-Midwest Institute
- Northwest Power and Conservation Council
- North American Lake Management Society
- Northwest Marine Technology Inc.
- Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
- Oklahoma B.A.S.S. Federation Nation
- Old Pueblo Trout Unlimited
- The O'Neal School
- O.N.E.W.I.L.D.W.O.R.L.D.
- The Orvis Company
- Outdoor Heritage Education Center
- Outdoor Specialty Products
- Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
- Pacific Coast Joint Venture
- Pacific Rivers Council
- The Pantagraph
- Patagonia
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- Pennsylvania Institute for Conservation Education
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- QEA LLC
- Quail Unlimited
- REC Components
- Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
- Restore America's Estuaries
- Richmond Times-Dispatch
- Sacramento River Discovery Center
- Samuel Tisdale Society
- Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum
- Sierra Club
- Silver Steep Partners
- Simms Fishing Products
- Smith River Advisory Council
- South Burlington High School, Vermont
- South Dakota Bass Federation
- Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
- Southeast Watershed Forum
- Southern Company
- Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition
- Southwest Walleye Anglers of Arizona
- Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council
- Spring Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- Steward and Associates
- Streamside Systems Inc.
- St. Croix Rods
- Texas B.A.S.S. Federation
- Texas Black Bass Unlimited
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- ThorpeWood
- Trout Unlimited
- Trout Unlimited, Arizona Chapter
- Trout Unlimited-Forks of the Delaware Chapter 482
- Trout Unlimited-Long Island Chapter 069
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- WDawsons Inc.
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- Western Maryland RC&D
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- Wildlife Forever
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Wolfree Inc.
- World Wildlife Fund



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\*Member agencies of the Federal Caucus

\*\*Partners list as of April 4, 2006. This list provides an illustration of the variety of partners who pledge their interest and energy to the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. This list is anticipated to grow into a large and diverse conservation coalition.

## Exhibit 2: National Fish Habitat Action Plan Milestones

The National Fish Habitat Initiative, which preceded the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, began in 2001 when an ad hoc group, initially led by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, explored the concept of developing a partnership effort for fish habitat on the scale of what was done for waterfowl in the 1980s through the North American Waterfowl

attended regional meetings and unanimously supported action. Subsequently, momentum for developing a National Fish Habitat Action Plan surged. Milestones include:

- The Southeastern Aquatic Resources Partnership begins work on developing comprehensive habitat plans in 2001. Regional fish partnerships such as the White River Fisheries Partnership and Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture also begin to emerge at this time.
- In 2004, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (then the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) votes to take the lead role in the initiative and applies for a multistate conservation grant to develop and begin implementation of the plan.
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and private partners, such as Bass Pro Shops, pledge funds and align grant-making in support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to ensure that the plan's conservation priorities and innovative approaches result in on-the-ground actions.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service convenes a Federal Caucus comprised of major federal agencies to coordinate federal efforts to develop and implement the plan.
- Beginning in 2004, the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council works with a variety of industry, conservation and agricultural groups to expand a partnership coalition dedicated to helping develop and ensure the success of the plan.

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Management Plan. Since its creation in 1986, the waterfowl plan successfully has forged partnerships and invested more than \$3.2 billion to protect, restore and enhance more than 13.1 million acres of waterfowl habitat.

By 2004, after a series of meetings around the country, fisheries professionals and stakeholders were discussing a partnership-driven, non-regulatory, science-based, landscape-scale fish habitat conservation effort. Hundreds of individuals from the fisheries management community, conservation organizations and angling groups

- A website, [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org), provides a communication link between plan working groups and a growing list of partners and stakeholders, which currently numbers more than 250 organizations.
- In 2005, the United States Geological Survey provides \$100,000 to fund fish habitat data collection efforts at the IAFWA.
- In 2005, five Multistate Conservation Grants are awarded to fund about \$1.8 million for on-the-ground projects and continue development of the plan.
- In 2005, IAFWA initiates the National Fish Habitat Initiative Project with multistate grant funds. The National Fish Habitat Initiative Core Work Group and supporting teams are created and charged with leading development of an action plan by March 2006.
- Congress appropriates \$1 million in FY 2006 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for five recognized pilot partnerships to implement fish habitat initiative projects and to further develop the plan. The five recognized pilot fish habitat partnerships are: Southeast Aquatic Resources Plan, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, Western Native Trout Initiative, Midwest Driftless Area Restoration Effort, and Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership.
- The Bush Administration requests \$3 million for the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in the President's formal budget proposal to Congress for Fiscal Year 2007 to support fish habitat partnerships envisioned under the plan.
- Plan approved for implementation by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on March 24, 2006.
- Plan endorsed by the secretaries of Commerce and Interior along with Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies leadership on April 24, 2006.



DAVE WITTING

## Exhibit 3: Science & Data Strategy

The science and data strategy is built on four associated activities conducted cooperatively with partners:

1. Identify causative factors for declining fish populations in aquatic systems.
2. Utilize an integrated landscape approach that includes the upstream/downstream linkages of large-scale habitat condition factors.
3. Assess and classify the nation's fish habitats.
4. Provide partners easy access to science and data information.



The plan will assist all partners in understanding the causative factors behind the decline in fish and aquatic resources in both freshwater and marine systems.

It will work with partners to focus on process-level issues and work to reverse the decline in fisheries and aquatic resources by directly addressing controlling factors.

The key larger-scale causative agents that will be included are:

- Connectivity of habitats that can be thought of as whether fish can reach all of the habitats they need to complete their life cycle and maximize their production.
- Hydrologic alteration that refers to how the annual and daily flow cycles that many aquatic organisms key in on and need to maximize production have been changed by our actions.
- Direct habitat alteration that examines the amount of aquatic habitat that has been physically changed on a large scale by our actions.

- Riparian zone alteration that is the amount of land adjacent to our waters no longer intact or in a natural state<sup>3</sup>.
- Water quality alteration that is the change in key water quality parameters from system norms that result in reduced aquatic productivity. These are all process-level factors that are the underpinning of most of the fisheries and habitat problems we see today but are and have been unable to address by just treating local habitat conditions.

The plan will use an integrated landscape approach that will allow appropriate linkages to occur between upland and marine systems. Thus, what happens upstream in connected systems will affect downstream systems to the sea. To facilitate this approach, a map-based interactive data system will be built using web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) technology so any partner can see what the current status of their local waters is, what is impairing their local waters, possible approaches to improve their waters, who has similar restoration approaches so they can learn from them, and to learn how their waters are changing in response to activities of the plan.

To properly determine the condition of the nation's waters, all waters will be classified into similar groups based on published landscape classification systems from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Aquatic GAP Programs for upland systems and from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, TNC and NatureServe for

<sup>3</sup> The riparian zone protects aquatic systems from many impairments and when altered often result in lower fish and aquatic production.

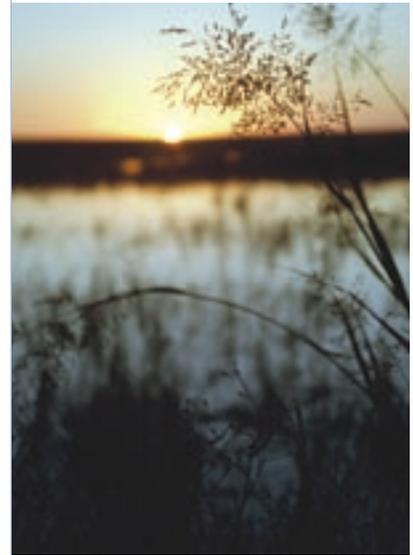
marine systems. All waters will be assessed with respect to their habitat condition using a suite of factors that address the process-level factors described above along with some of the biotic indicators of ecosystem stress. Waters within a particular group will be compared on a 100-point scale with the best possible score in their classified group and to the best current waters in their group so all waters have a target for our partners to achieve. All of the factors will have direct linkages to rehabilitation measures so improvements from plan project activities should change the score of the system.

This method will allow for:

- The direct and rapid assessment of the condition of the nation's waters.
- The evaluation of plan project success using a standardized approach.
- The ability to compare and learn from activities of others on similar systems within their classified group.
- The ability to integrate data from all levels into one information system. The plan will provide a mechanism to classify all waters and grade all waters with respect to their condition, insights into how to change the trajectory of their scores, provide options to address key factors, and provide methods and mechanisms to properly evaluate their projects along with summing these evaluations nationally as a scoring of the effectiveness of the plan as a whole.

One key component of the plan's data system will be to provide our partners ready access to existing conservation and habitat priorities. Information on existing priorities can help guide partners in designing projects. Examples are found in the State Comprehensive Wildlife Action Plans, State Fisheries Management Plans, Marine Fisheries Council Plans, Watershed Assessments and TNC Conservation Plans, to name a few. Much of this information is currently unavailable to our partners, thus integrating these priorities into a GIS system will allow partners access to this information along with their source materials. Plan partners can then consider existing priorities as they design their partnership action plans and associated projects, which will increase the timeliness and effectiveness of their efforts.

Ensuring successful implementation of the plan's science and data system will require a detailed structural system design and computer system requirements. The data system is currently being designed to integrate distributed information and data systems into a single accessible gateway of National Fish Habitat Action Plan information, such as the state of fish habitat report, tracking of individual plan projects, access to conservation priorities and information about current habitat restoration projects.



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## Exhibit 4: Strategies & Resources of Federal Agencies

### BACKGROUND

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan addresses cooperative conservation of the nation’s fish and aquatic communities and the habitat that supports them. Many federal agencies have direct or indirect responsibilities for aquatic habitat conservation. These agencies have diverse missions and stakeholders. Conservation is not a primary goal of all agencies with a role in the plan; however, the benefits of effective conservation contribute to the needs of each agency and the American public they serve.

- Provide communication links among federal agencies cooperating under the plan.
- Serve as a conduit for information flow between federal partners, the National Fish Habitat Board, and other partners implementing the plan.

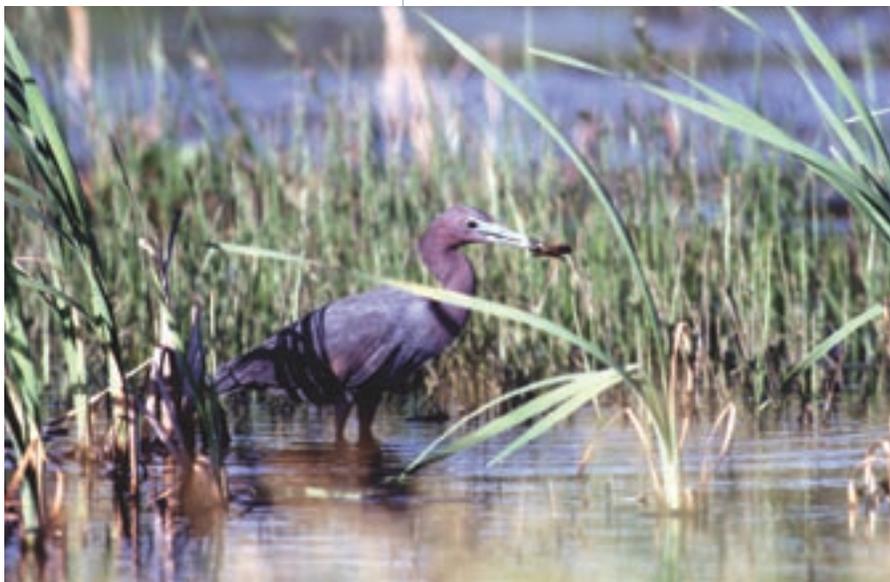
The Federal Caucus also provided a means for federal partners to offer input to the Core Work Group as the plan was drafted.

### FEDERAL CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP

Since its inception, interest among Federal Caucus agencies in the plan has been high. Agencies have contributed ideas for making aquatic habitat conservation more effective, and some have committed on-the-ground resources. The following agencies have participated, and others may join the caucus as it develops.

- American Heritage Rivers Initiative
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Coastal America
- Department of Defense
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Farm Service Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Highway Administration
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Park Service
- National Science Foundation
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Office of Surface Mining
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (chair)
- U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Forest Service

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Coordination among agencies to achieve common goals is a challenging task. To facilitate interactions among federal agencies and with other partners, the Federal Caucus was created to:

- Provide a mechanism through which federal partners can jointly identify strategies and resources to support the plan.
- Ensure that the plan provides benefits to all agencies involved.

**STRATEGIES & RESOURCES**

Federal Caucus participants will continue to jointly identify opportunities to contribute to the goals of the plan. Table 1 identifies strategies and resources that agencies may commit. These do not necessarily represent new strategies or commitment of resources. Agency actions may already be contributing to aquatic habitat conservation; however, the Federal Caucus will seek ways to share common strategies and resources for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Contributions have been divided into several categories, listed below with examples.

**Funding (Actual / Encourage**

**Leveraging):** An agency’s ability to provide financial support to projects that contribute to meeting the goals of the plan. It also includes an agency’s ability to provide

funds to partners that are matched or leveraged. Under leveraging, stakeholders agree to match a percentage of funds received, either in direct financial resources or in-kind services.

- Example: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was appropriated \$1 million in FY06 to conduct and support activities under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The funding will help establish the National Fish Habitat Board and conduct on-the-ground activities through Fish Habitat Partnerships.
- Example: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center has existing programs that fund fish habitat projects, and these programs can be expected to fund projects under the identified by Fish Habitat Partnerships.



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**Table 1: Strategies and Resources Contributed by Federal Agencies to the National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

Agency	Funding (Actual/Encourage leveraging)	Data-sharing/ data base development	Education	Encourage local participation/ Identify partners (non-federal)	Monitoring of pilot projects/ In-situ help	Committee participation (in addition to Federal Caucus)	Incorporate into internal strategic planning	Technical expertise	Conduct projects on federal lands
American Heritage Rivers Initiative	■		■	■				■	
Bureau of Land Management	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Coastal America	■		■	■					
Department of Defense	■	■			■	■		■	■
Department of Housing and Urban Development			■	■					
Environmental Protection Agency	■	■		■				■	
Farm Service Agency				■				■	
Federal Emergency Management Agency		■	■	■					
Federal Highway Administration	■		■	■				■	
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
National Park Service		■	■	■	■			■	■
National Science Foundation		■		■	■	■		■	
Office of Surface Mining	■		■	■	■			■	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	■	■		■				■	
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation				■	■				
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
U.S. Forest Service	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
U.S. Geological Survey	■	■		■		■		■	
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	■		■	■	■		■	■	

**Data Sharing / Data Base Development:**

Agencies agree to share data they collect, where applicable and appropriate, relevant to assessing habitat conditions and outcomes of projects. Such data may be linked or combined in an integrated data base. Agencies may also contribute information technology expertise to build or integrate data bases.

- Example: The U.S. Geological Survey is a leader in the effort to establish a unified national data base for aquatic habitat conservation.
- The Environmental Protection Agency maintains a number of data bases related to water quality, a key component of aquatic habitat health.

**Education:** Agencies will contribute to the development of materials for students, stakeholders and the general public to raise awareness of the values of aquatic habitat and the plan. Materials may include classroom lesson plans, presentations, websites, and other instructional items.

- Example: NOAA publishes numerous outreach and education documents about the importance of fish and aquatic habitats.
- Example: Coastal America will encourage Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers to share the plan message and themes.

**Encourage local participation / Identify partners (non-federal):**

Federal agencies will help identify partners who can bring ideas and capabilities to implementing the plan and encourage them to become active in its implementation.

- Example: The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has identified contacts in the agricultural community who could become valuable partners in implementing the plan.
- Example: The Federal Highway Administration will help state departments of transportation protect aquatic habitat through technical information and assistance.

**Monitoring of pilot projects / in-situ help:**

Federal agencies with field capabilities will consider participating in on-the-ground monitoring and evaluation of Fish Habitat Partnership projects.

- Example: U.S. Forest Service has provided leadership and staff for the range-wide assessment of brook trout and is working on field projects in support of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture.

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**Committee participation:** Federal agency staff agrees to serve on other plan teams in addition to the Federal Caucus.

- Example: The U.S. Geological Survey chairs the Data Team, which has been critical in identifying opportunities to integrate data bases to assist with implementation of the plan.

**Incorporate into strategic planning:**

Federal agencies will consider incorporating the goals and objectives of the plan, not necessarily by name, into their strategic plans.

- Example: The National Fish Habitat Action Plan arose, in part, as one means through which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can address aquatic habitat conservation and management in its strategic plan.
- Example: The mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is reflected in the Strategic Plan of the NOAA Fisheries Service.

**Technical expertise:** Federal agencies consider committing staff resources to developing processes to effectively implement the plan. Such activities include, but are not limited to, working with project partners to identify best management practices and techniques for aquatic habitat conservation, conducting research needed to reach plan goals, and analyzing data to evaluate project success.



- Example: The Office of Surface Mining will contribute its knowledge to developing projects with partners to effectively address acid mine drainage.
- Example: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will contribute its design and construction expertise to rebuilding aquatic habitats.

**Conduct projects on federal lands:** To the extent possible, federal agencies will support projects conducted under the Fish Habitat Partnerships that need to be carried out on federally administered lands.

- Example: The Bureau of Land Management's 264 million-acre land base includes a considerable amount of impaired fish habitat. The agency will work with plan partners to implement fish habitat restoration projects on its lands.

Click here to view the National Fish Habitat Plan Leadership Structure

## Exhibit 5: National Fish Habitat Action Plan Leadership, Support & Report Authorship

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(See page 22)

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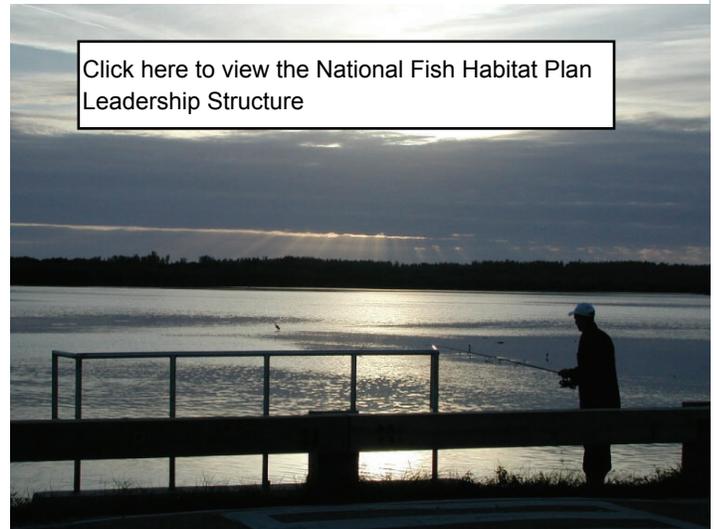
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