

**National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

Hall of the States  
444 North Capitol Street, NW,  
Suite 725, Washington, DC 20001  
Tel: 202/624-7890 ♦ F: 202/624-7891

Web [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)

---

To: National Fish Habitat Board

From: Staff

Date: May 13, 2008

Subject: Recommendations for Board approval of Fish Habitat Partnership application – Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership

**Background**

On October 22, 2007, the National Fish Habitat Board invited Pilot and Candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships to apply for Board recognition, pursuant to the *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships*, approved by the Board on January 16, 2007 and amended on March 2, 2007, and the process and schedule for recognizing Fish Habitat Partnerships, approved by the Board on June 7, 2007.

Three completed applications with supporting materials were submitted by the December 21, 2007 due date, including the application of the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Coalition. At its meeting of February 20-21, 2008, the Board approved the application of the Western Native Trout Initiative, and deferred action on the two other applications. The Board invited the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Coalition to remedy the deficiencies identified by staff for re-consideration of its application at the May 2008 Board meeting.

After consultation with Board staff, the re-named Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership submitted supplemental material on April 4, 2008. The material included:

- Cover letter to Board chairman John Cooper
- Strategic action plan
- Letters from the Partnership formally inviting public agencies to serve on the Partnership's Board, addressed to:
  - Alaska Department of Fish and Game
  - National Park Service
  - National Marine Fisheries Service
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Letters accepting the invitation to serve on the Board from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The cover letter stated

that the Department of Fish and Game has indicated it will join the Board. The National Park Service is still considering the invitation, but has agreed to participate on the Partnership's Technical Committee.

### **Recommendations**

Based on its initial application as amended by supplemental material, the staff recommends that the Board recognize the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership as a Fish Habitat Partnership under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

The staff further recommends that the Board communicate the following points in its letter of recognition:

- The Board is pleased to recognize an established and effective partnership that has already conserved 79,000 acres of high value salmon habitat in 65 tracts through acquisition and easement throughout Southwest Alaska. With its proven track record of raising more than \$30 million for conservation action, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership is a valuable addition to the national effort to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities.
- The Board expects the Partnership to implement a rigorous, inclusive strategic planning process to identify priorities and targets for accomplishment. As indicated in its Strategic Action Plan, the Partnership's actions are opportunistic, and directed to priorities established in management plans of State and Federal conservation units, or plans developed by partners for areas outside those conservation units. Prioritizing the needs of sub-regions or watersheds is not considered necessary in the short term. Nevertheless, the Partnership should begin to work with a diverse set of partners to identify its own strategic priorities to focus future conservation actions. Continuing recognition by the Board should be contingent on completing a strategic planning process within the next three years.
- The Partnership should follow through on re-activating its Technical Committee, as it has committed to do. The U.S. Geological Survey – Alaska Science Center should be invited to serve on the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee should establish a working relationship with the Board's national Science and Data Committee.
- The Partnership should initiate and maintain communication with other recognized and candidate Fish Habitat Partnerships, for example to participate with them in raising awareness of wild Pacific salmon and supporting scientific projects that address Pacific salmon habitat.