



NATIONAL  

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**FISH HABITAT**

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**ACTION PLAN**

**STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS**

**A report of an *ad hoc* Work Group to the National Fish Habitat Board**

**May 13, 2008**

## 1 **Introduction**

2  
3 Since the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) was adopted in April 2006 and the  
4 National Fish Habitat Board (Board) issued its *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat*  
5 *Partnerships*<sup>1</sup> (Guidance) in January 2007, there has been a growing interest across the U.S. in  
6 organizing Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs). Five FHPs have been approved by the Board. Fifteen  
7 “Candidate” FHPs have notified the Board of their intention to seek recognition as FHPs (Appendix  
8 1.)

9 The growth in the number of Candidate FHPs is a positive development, indicating the high level of  
10 energy and enthusiasm for the Action Plan across the nation. However, Board members and others  
11 are concerned that the rapid proliferation of FHPs under the current Guidance may set in place  
12 relationships and structures that are confusing, contradictory, and ultimately unworkable. There is a  
13 need for the Board to take an active role in clarifying FHP issues in light of pending legislation (the  
14 draft *National Fish Habitat Conservation Act*, hereinafter referred to as Action Plan legislation).  
15 Taking action now will help to maintain and guide the momentum that is building among  
16 stakeholders across the U.S. to engage in aquatic habitat protection, restoration and enhancement.

17 Since the inception of the Action Plan, key partners have debated the merits of a national framework  
18 for FHPs against a more organic, bottom-up approach to FHP development. Advantages of a  
19 national framework include complete geographic coverage and potential efficiencies for travel and  
20 staffing. A national framework could be based on the four existing regional Fish and Wildlife  
21 Associations or Federal agency regions. Advantages of a bottom-up approach include greater buy-in  
22 and enthusiasm among local and regional stakeholders who help to organize the FHPs. Comments  
23 on a draft of this report supported both perspectives. The recommendations in this report attempt to  
24 strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, to address national goals while  
25 encouraging local participation and innovation.

## 26 ***Ad hoc* Work Group on Fish Habitat Partnerships**

27 An *ad hoc* Work Group was appointed by Board Chairman John Cooper and convened on March 13,  
28 2008 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, pursuant to action of the Board at its February 20-21, 2008  
29 meeting. The Work Group’s task was to report to the Board with recommendations on the structure  
30 and function of FHPs. Work Group members are listed in Appendix 2.

31  
32 The Work Group addressed the following aspects of FHP structure and function:

- 33 • **Fish Habitat Partnerships vs. Joint Ventures:** How do they compare? Which title is  
34 appropriate?
- 35 • **Distribution and Location:** number of partnerships, priority places, optimum size,  
36 geographic coverage, overlap
- 37 • **Roles and responsibilities:** science and planning, flow of funds, prioritizing places and  
38 projects, interactions with the Board and with local partnerships and projects

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<sup>1</sup> The *Guidance* is online at [http://fishhabitat.org/?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=144:partnership-guidance&catid=47:partner-info](http://fishhabitat.org/?option=com_content&view=article&id=144:partnership-guidance&catid=47:partner-info).

- 1 • **Native American government role in FHPs:** Clarify guidance regarding involvement and  
2 representation.

3  
4 This white paper presents 17 recommendations that, if enacted, will foster a rational set of FHPs  
5 throughout the United States without diminishing the bottom-up and self-organizing principles that  
6 are at the core of a successful FHP. The recommendations also clarify existing guidance under  
7 which recognized and Candidate FHPs are organizing.

8 Comments received from key agency leaders on the first draft of this white paper raised fundamental  
9 issues that face the Board with respect to FHPs, including some that are not covered by the 17  
10 recommendations. The status of these issues is summarized in Appendix 3.

11 At the February 2008 Board meeting, staff of the Board provided policy and technical  
12 recommendations on revising the FHP *Guidance* (Appendix 4). The Board did not act on those  
13 recommendations, which remain on the record for possible future action. The February  
14 recommendations are largely complementary to the recommendations in this white paper.

## 15 “Fish Habitat Partnerships” vs. “Joint Ventures”

16 In the 1980s, a crisis in waterfowl populations led to development of the *North American Waterfowl*  
17 *Management Plan*, and establishment of the first *joint ventures* (JVs) – public-private partnerships  
18 working to conserve waterfowl and their habitats in “waterfowl habitat areas of major concern.”  
19 Conservationists concerned about landbirds, shorebirds, and colonial waterbirds adopted a similar  
20 model, and some JVs integrated the conservation of other migratory birds into their planning. New  
21 JVs, not associated with the Waterfowl Plan, were organized in areas of habitat needing  
22 conservation where JVs did not exist. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued policy to guide the  
23 establishment and organization of JVs, last updated in September 2007<sup>2</sup>. From the long-established  
24 JVs to those in various stages of development, 18 geographically-based partnerships are at work  
25 across the U.S. In addition, three species-specific JVs are addressing the needs of the black duck,  
26 Arctic geese, and sea ducks throughout their international ranges. The Action Plan owes much of its  
27 success to applying lessons learned from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and its  
28 JVs.

29 FHPs are the aquatic equivalents of JVs; however, they are not identical, because of jurisdictional  
30 differences between birds and fish, and distinct ecological features of aquatic systems. There is  
31 confusion among partners and policy-makers because FHPs are using various terms to name their  
32 partnerships – including, in one case, “Joint Venture.” The Action Plan calls FHPs the ‘primary  
33 work units’ of the Action Plan. They were not named “Joint Ventures” in order to avoid confusion  
34 with the bird conservation JVs and to establish a recognizable identity for the fish habitat efforts.  
35 Consistent use of the term “Fish Habitat Partnership” will help to prevent confusion with JVs and  
36 foster identity and communication.

37  
38 **Recommendation 1:** *The Board should reaffirm through its FHP Guidance that*  
39 *“Fish Habitat Partnership” is the term to be consistently used, and should encourage*

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manual 721 FW6 at <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/JointVentures/DefineJV.shtm>

1 *FHPs to include “Fish Habitat Partnership” in their names or in an accompanying*  
2 *tagline if another name is already established.*

### 3 **Distribution and Location of Fish Habitat Partnerships**

4  
5 Given the recent development of Candidate FHPs, the Work Group is confident that the Board can  
6 meet the Action Plan objective of 12 or more FHPs by 2010 and that most or all of the U.S. can be  
7 geographically covered by the current slate of FHPs and Candidates. Most local partners and  
8 projects are likely to fall within the scope of one or more of the current FHPs or Candidates. The  
9 Board also has an interest in ensuring there are not too many FHPs, to contain operational costs and  
10 to ensure effective communication. Each FHP will have science, data, outreach and administrative  
11 responsibilities, requiring adequate financial and staffing support. An efficient structure is as  
12 important as ensuring appropriate geographic coverage.

13  
14 Many key partners in the Action Plan have expressed concern about geographic overlap of FHPs and  
15 the potential for competing or conflicting conservation goals that could lead FHPs to work  
16 duplicatively or at cross-purposes. The *Guidance* specifically allows FHPs to overlap  
17 geographically. However, some State agencies are concerned about their ability to provide adequate  
18 representation on multiple FHPs. There is also concern about duplication of assessment efforts for  
19 fish and habitat resources. Geographic overlap does not always pose a problem; for example, the  
20 Western Native Trout Initiative and the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership have complementary, not  
21 competing, conservation goals, and the habitats themselves generally do not overlap, even if they  
22 occur in the same state or watershed. The Board has strongly encouraged FHPs to work through  
23 these coordination issues prior to seeking recognition or (in the future) funding from the Board.

24  
25 There are also concerns about the geographic size of FHPs. The Action Plan says that FHPs must  
26 “address fish habitat conservation at a scale necessary to make a difference” (Appendix 5). The  
27 *Guidance* says, “FHPs may be of any spatial scale, but a size on the order of 50,000 to 500,000  
28 square miles is preferred to allow an FHP to achieve effective regional prioritization...” Clearly,  
29 FHPs may be too small (unable to address regional habitat needs) or too large (precluding effective  
30 communication among partners and prioritization of habitat needs). The Work Group expects that  
31 FHPs may change their boundaries as they learn what size works best. The Work Group also  
32 understands that most FHPs, especially larger ones, will need to identify sub-units and priority areas  
33 for assessment, planning, and implementation of projects.

34  
35 Reservoirs provide much of the recreational fishing opportunity in the U.S. and serve many other  
36 functions. The National Reservoir Partnership (NRP) has stated its intent to seek recognition as a  
37 FHP. The NRP plans to address reservoir habitats on a national basis. However, the Action Plan  
38 states repeatedly that FHPs operate at a “regional” scale (Appendix 5). The *Guidance* says, “FHPs  
39 will be place-based, i.e. have geographically defined boundaries.” This conflict must be reconciled  
40 to bring the reservoir interests under the Action Plan. The NRP recognizes the need to address its  
41 organizational structure so that it operates at a regional scale as it works on National habitat  
42 priorities. The NRP will be discussing its organizational issues with the Board as a part of the  
43 overall discussion related to FHPs.

44

1 **Recommendation 2:** *The Board should adopt a temporary moratorium until September*  
2 *2010 on acceptance of new Candidate FHPs, and utilize the current pool to meet the*  
3 *objective of 12 or more FHPs across the United States by 2010. Exceptions to the*  
4 *moratorium should be made for FHPs focused on marine/coastal/estuarine systems, which*  
5 *are currently under-represented.*

6  
7 **Recommendation 3:** *The Board should reaffirm through its FHP Guidance the*  
8 *Action Plan's intent that FHPs have geographic boundaries and operate at a*  
9 *regional scale.*

10  
11 **Recommendation 4:** *The Board should amend its Guidance to require FHPs to*  
12 *resolve competing or conflicting conservation goals before applying to the Board for*  
13 *recognition or funding. The Board should require that neighboring FHPs consult*  
14 *with each other regarding their boundaries to maximize geographic coverage and*  
15 *minimize overlap.*

16  
17 **Recommendation 5:** *The Board should reaffirm through its FHP Guidance that*  
18 *FHPs should be of a size and partnership diversity that can meet operational*  
19 *responsibilities and address the causes of and processes behind habitat decline*  
20 *rather than the symptoms. The Board should work with current Candidate FHPs to*  
21 *encourage merger or other form of consolidation where appropriate.*

22  
23 **Recommendation 6:** *The Board should devote staff time to help the reservoir*  
24 *interests identify appropriate partnership options. These could include separate*  
25 *regional partnerships or being included as a priority focus area within existing or*  
26 *potential FHPs.*

## 27 **Roles and responsibilities of FHPs**

28  
29 FHPs will have responsibilities for coordinating the assessment of fish habitats, and prioritizing  
30 habitats, issues and projects. They will also rank grant proposals within their geographic areas and  
31 track the results of projects that are funded, in much the same way that JVs do. To fulfill these  
32 responsibilities, FHPs will require an operational funding and staff, clearly defined geographic  
33 boundaries, and agreements with overlapping FHPs on their respective roles and goals.

34  
35 The roles and responsibilities of FHPs are misunderstood by some. FHPs are *not* responsible for  
36 conducting on-the-ground projects. Individual on-the-ground projects to protect, restore, and  
37 enhance fish habitat are conducted by agencies, landowners, conservation groups, and others  
38 working through local partnerships. FHPs work on a regional scale to set conservation goals, focus  
39 local conservation efforts on high-priority issues and geographic areas, facilitate cost-share funding  
40 for projects, rank proposals for funding, and track results of projects within their geographic scope.

41  
42 The Board's current *Guidance* accurately describes the roles and responsibilities of FHPs, but  
43 recommendations provided here will provide greater clarity and specificity. The roles and  
44 responsibilities will likely evolve further as lessons are learned, especially if the proposed Action  
45 Plan legislation is enacted. The existing *Guidance* calls for the Board to re-evaluate FHPs every five

1 years to confirm that they continue to meet FHP criteria; the Board needs more flexibility to ensure  
2 on an ongoing basis that FHP operations are effective, without imposing onerous reporting  
3 requirements.  
4

5 A long-term source of funding support for FHP operations has not been identified. Each FHP,  
6 depending on size and scope, will need, at a minimum, a dedicated full-time coordinator, and larger  
7 FHPs will need additional staff to carry out responsibilities outlined in this report. To date, FHPs  
8 and Candidate FHPs have used a variety of grants and contributions from public and private sources  
9 to fund their operations. Operational costs can be contained by limiting the number of FHPs, or by  
10 having FHPs share administration, science, data management, and other functions.  
11

12 Enactment of the Action Plan legislation will require the Board and its staff to quickly develop grant  
13 guidelines, application forms, technical review questions, and procedures for administering the  
14 anticipated grant program to be established under Section 5 of the legislation. These procedures will  
15 define the key responsibility of FHPs to rank all grant proposals within their geographic areas.  
16

17 **Recommendation 7:** *The Board, in collaboration with existing FHPs, should*  
18 *develop more detailed operational guidance for FHPs that defines recommended*  
19 *staffing levels to carry out their responsibilities for science, planning, reporting*  
20 *outputs and outcomes, prioritization of places and issues, and ranking projects.*  
21

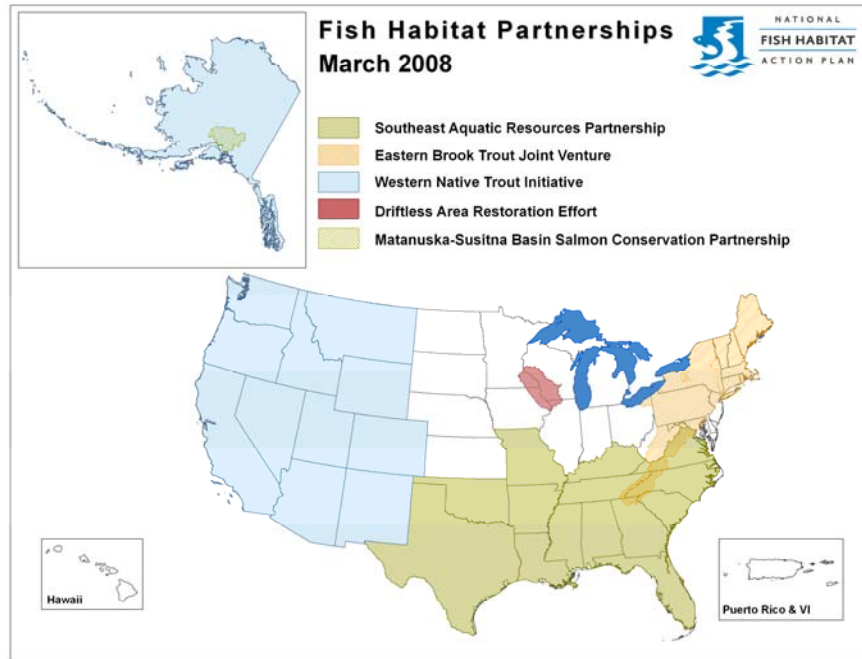
22 **Recommendation 8:** *The Board's operational guidance to FHPs should include*  
23 *examples of multiple-scale conservation activities to help all partners understand*  
24 *how on-the-ground projects are "nested" within the FHPs' strategic planning*  
25 *framework, and conducted by members of the FHPs, but not by FHPs themselves.*  
26

27 **Recommendation 9:** *The Board should monitor the operational performance and*  
28 *needs of FHPs nationwide, and update its guidance to FHPs as needed to address*  
29 *changing conditions. Monitoring should be at a level that allows the program to*  
30 *operate efficiently, that is not burdensome to FHP staff, and that does not discourage*  
31 *participation or innovation.*  
32

33 **Recommendation 10:** *The Board should modify its Guidance to provide for re-*  
34 *evaluation of FHPs as needed, at an interval of five years or less.*  
35

36 **Recommendation 11:** *The Board should seek solutions to the need for long-term funding*  
37 *support of FHP operations.*  
38

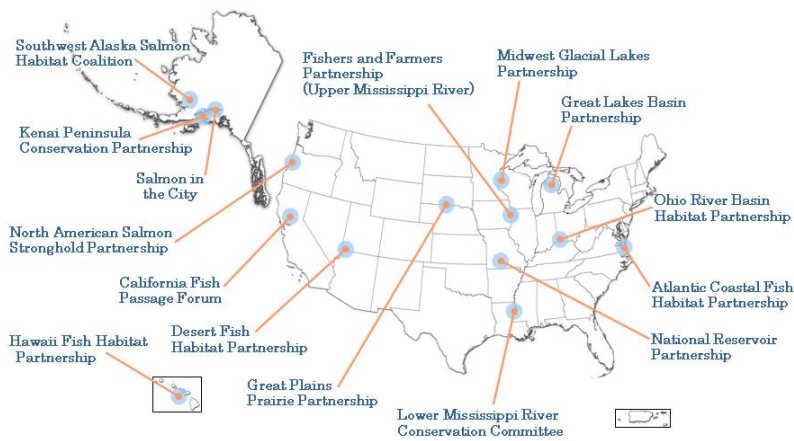
39 **Recommendation 12:** *The Board should direct its staff to begin development of*  
40 *grant administration procedures in anticipation of new Action Plan legislation and*  
41 *appropriations, including the responsibility of FHPs to rank grant proposals within*  
42 *their geographic areas.*



1

*“Candidate” Fish Habitat Partnerships*

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN



April 2008

\*Locations are very general approximations

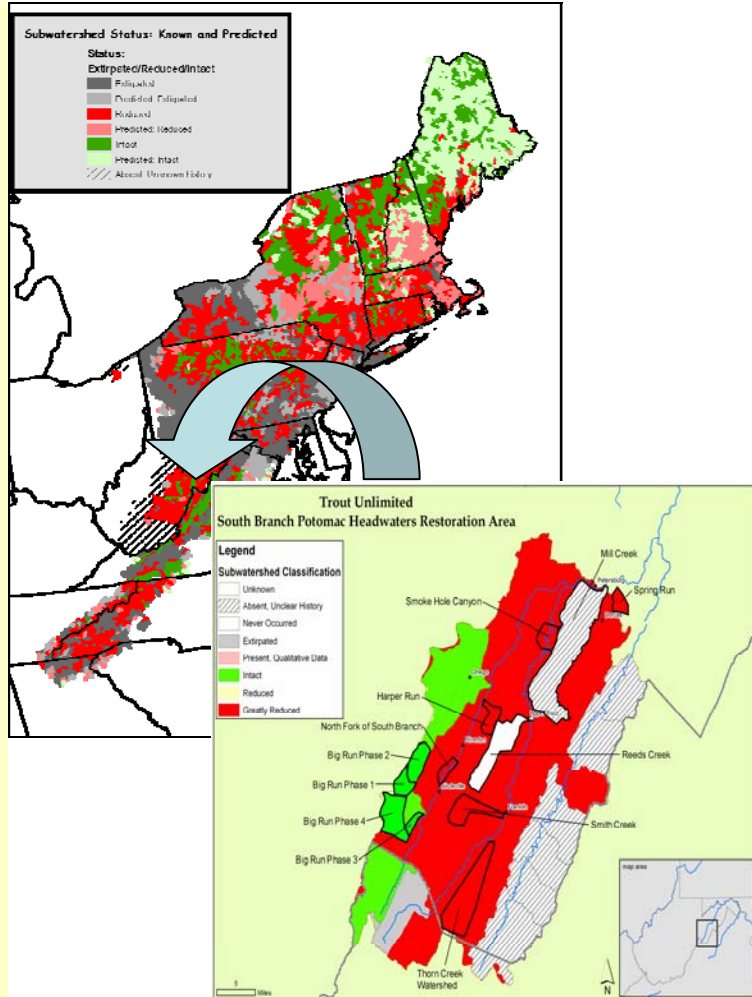
2

## Working at multiple scales in a Fish Habitat Partnership

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) is an example of local partnerships “nested” within a regional Fish Habitat Partnership. Similar to the Joint Ventures of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the EBTJV develops regional habitat goals and objectives, directs assessment and other scientific needs, and sets criteria for prioritizing projects conducted by local partnerships.

The EBTJV refines its habitat conservation priorities at the sub-regional level through strategic planning teams for 3 sub-regions: northeast, mid-Atlantic, and southeast. This level of organization allows involvement of mid-level managers in priority setting, and greater oversight and support of local projects conducted under the Action Plan.

A local partnership, the South Branch Potomac Headwaters Restoration Area, conducts restoration projects that address priorities of the EBTJV. The South Branch is part of Trout Unlimited’s Potomac Headwaters Home Rivers Initiative. As long as the efforts of the local partnership are aligned with the priorities of the EBTJV, Action Plan resources will assist in these efforts. If local priorities diverge from those of the EBTJV, local partners will seek other support and/or reprioritize to meet the priorities of the EBTJV.



## 1 **Native American government role in Fish Habitat Partnerships**

2  
3 There are 561 Federally recognized Native American governments<sup>3</sup> in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>, including 227  
4 Native villages in Alaska. Native American governments have unique and special roles based on  
5 history, treaties, and law. Native American governments retain attributes of sovereignty that must  
6 be recognized in any forum that includes governmental partners. Many Indian reservations include  
7 lands and waters that are critically important to fishery resources. Alaska Native interests privately  
8 own over 40 million acres of lands and waterways. Many Native American governments hold  
9 treaty-reserved rights to use fishery resources in off-reservation areas, and a concomitant  
10 responsibility to protect those resources. Traditional knowledge in Native American communities  
11 can contribute to conservation of fishery resources, and many Native American governments have  
12 sophisticated technical capabilities for fish and wildlife management that will be integral to  
13 achieving the goals of the Action Plan.

14  
15 Special care must be made to distinguish between tribes in Alaska and other states. There is only  
16 one reservation in Alaska, but hundreds of tribes. Most tribes in Alaska do not own, manage, or  
17 have jurisdiction over land. “Native” lands in Alaska are owned by corporations established under  
18 the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. FHPs in Alaska should include tribes as partners,  
19 but to achieve conservation on “Native” lands in Alaska requires that Alaska Native corporations  
20 also be partners.

21  
22 To date, though a Native American government official serves on the National Fish Habitat Board,  
23 Native American governments have had limited involvement with some FHPs and Candidates,  
24 despite outreach by individual FHPs and efforts on a broader scale, for example through the Native  
25 American Fish and Wildlife Society. Involvement by Native American governments is greater in  
26 localized partnerships and projects, but some Native American leaders feel that Native American  
27 governments are being bypassed in the implementation of the Action Plan. The Board has  
28 acknowledged these factors by proposing specific recognition of Native American government  
29 interests and dedicated funds in the draft Action Plan legislation.

30  
31 In recognition of the government-to-government relationship that Native American governments  
32 enjoy, and consistent with the draft Action Plan legislation, Native American governments should  
33 have the opportunity to participate as partners in FHPs or to choose a different level of involvement  
34 in the Action Plan, as appropriate.

35  
36 The draft Action Plan legislation proposes to set aside 5% of grant funds for Native American  
37 government projects. Outreach efforts are needed to make effective use of these funds for Native  
38 American government projects that are also linked to FHP priorities. However, Native American  
39 governments should have the option to create a specific working relationship with the Board in the

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<sup>3</sup> ***Native American Governments***—Governing bodies, including executive and legislative branches, of Federally recognized tribes as regarded by Federal law and formally identified by the Department of the Interior. Does not include other entities representing Native interests such as corporations, societies, commissions, committees, associations or other groups not officially designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a “Government.”

<sup>4</sup> Federal Register Notice (72 FR 13648; March 22, 2007)

1 event projects cannot be coordinated at the FHP level. As a last resort, Native American  
2 governments should develop one or more distinct FHPs if necessary and appropriate to ensure their  
3 involvement consistent with Board guidelines.

4  
5 **Recommendation 13:** *The Board should require FHPs that apply for recognition to*  
6 *seek and encourage involvement by Native American governments in their*  
7 *governance structures, and to document these contacts as part of the application for*  
8 *Board recognition. In the same way, the Board should require FHPs to seek and*  
9 *encourage involvement in governance structures by State fish and wildlife agencies*  
10 *and federal agencies that manage fish resources (FWS, NOAA). The Guidance*  
11 *should make clear that FHPs that cannot document such efforts will not be approved.*

12  
13 **Recommendation 14:** *The Board should charge its Communications Committee to*  
14 *develop an outreach program to encourage Native American government*  
15 *involvement in FHPs and/or projects.*

16  
17 **Recommendation 15:** *The Board should be prepared to work directly with Native*  
18 *American governments in administering grant funds that may be available through*  
19 *future legislation in the event it is mutually determined by the Board and Native*  
20 *American government interests that specific projects cannot be coordinated at the*  
21 *FHP level.*

## 22 23 **Next Steps**

24  
25 The recommendations in this white paper will be presented at the May 13-14, 2008 meeting  
26 of the Board, to be held at The Nature Conservancy's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.  
27 The agenda will include informational presentations and interactive discussions intended to  
28 provide Board members with a comprehensive understanding of the issues, and to enable the  
29 Board to make well-informed decisions with broad support.

30  
31 If the Board chooses to significantly revise the *Guidance* – whether to implement these  
32 recommendations or to take other action – the Board's schedule for inviting and reviewing  
33 applications for recognition of FHPs will be disrupted. Candidate FHPs that plan to apply for  
34 recognition in the third round (scheduled to open in May with a deadline of August 22, 2008) will  
35 not have clear guidance on which to base their applications. The fourth round of applications is  
36 currently scheduled to open in October 2008, with a deadline of December 19, 2008.

37  
38 **Recommendation 16:** *The Board should postpone acceptance of new applications*  
39 *by Candidate FHPs for recognition until revisions to the Guidance are complete.*  
40 *Revisions should be completed for approval at the October 2008 Board meeting or*  
41 *sooner, so that the next scheduled round of FHP applications can take place as*  
42 *scheduled.*

43  
44 This recommendation should not apply to the existing application of the Southwest Alaska Salmon  
45 Habitat Partnership. The Board received the application at its February meeting, and asked the

1 applicant to provide additional information to fill identified deficiencies for re-consideration at the  
2 May Board meeting.

3  
4 The Board has previously established standing committees to deal with Science & Data,  
5 Communications, and Funding. An analogous standing committee dealing with FHPs would help  
6 the Board by providing a forum for preliminary discussion, fact-finding, and formulation of  
7 recommendations for Board action.

8  
9 **Recommendation 17:** *The Board should establish a standing Partnerships Committee consisting of*  
10 *Board members, staff, and representatives of Fish Habitat Partnerships to provide information,*  
11 *analysis, and recommendations for Board action on the full range of FHP issues.*

12

APPENDIX 1.

**Current Fish Habitat Partnerships and Candidates**

<b>FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>Organizing principle</b>	<b>Boundaries determined by</b>	<b>Date of recognition / letter of intent</b>
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership	Geographic area	Political boundaries (states)	October 2007
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture	Keystone species	Species range	October 2007
Driftless Area Restoration Effort	Geographic area	Unglaciaded topography	October 2007
Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership	Geographic area, keystone species (5)	Watershed	October 2007
Western Native Trout Initiative	Keystone species (14)	Political boundaries (states)	February 2008
<b>CANDIDATE FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS</b>			
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership	Geographic area	Watershed (inland) / Ecoregion (marine)	November 2006
Desert Fish Habitat Partnership	Keystone species (175)	Species range / desert habitat	February 2007
Ohio River Basin Habitat Partnership	Geographic area	Watershed	February 2007
Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership	Geographic area	Important fisheries & habitats	April 2007
Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership	Geographic area / system type	Glaciaded topography in Midwest	May 2007
Kenai Peninsula Conservation Partnership	Geographic area	Watershed Political boundary (local)	June 2007
Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee	Geographic area	Mississippi River & floodplain	July 2007
National Reservoir Partnership	System type	None	July 2007
Salmon in the City	Geographic area	Political boundaries (local)	August 2007
Fishers and Farmers Partnership (Upper Mississippi)	Geographic area	Watershed	September 2007
Great Lakes Basin Partnership	Geographic area	Watershed	September 2007
California Fish Passage Forum	Geographic area	Political boundaries (state)	October 2007
North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership	Keystone species	Species range	January 2008
Great Plains Prairie Partnership	Geographic area	Great Plains topography / ecosystem	March 2008
Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership	Geographic area	Hawaiian islands	April 2008

Geographic area – 15 (6 watershed)

Keystone species – 4

System type – 1

## APPENDIX 2.

### **Members of the *ad hoc* Work Group on Fish Habitat Partnership Structure and Function**

- John Cooper, john.cooper@state.sd.us, 605-222-7582
- Doug Austen, dausten@state.pa.us, 717-705-7801
- Mark Smith, mpsmith@tnc.org, 617-542-1908 x237
- Maureen Gallagher, maureen\_gallagher@fws.gov, 660-562-1008
- Jason Stark, jstark@glifwc.org, 715-682-6619 x106
- Scott Robinson, scott\_robinson@dnr.state.ga.us, 770-361-5639 (Scott was unable to attend the meeting and provided written input.)
- Christopher Estes, christopher.estes@alaska.gov, 907-748-1718
- Tom Busiahn, tom\_busiahn@fws.gov, 703-358-2056

Laurel Anders (Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission) was the facilitator and notetaker. Margaret Connelly (on detail to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies from the USDA Forest Service) also participated in the March 13 meeting.

## APPENDIX 3.

### **Fundamental questions on structure and function of Fish Habitat Partnerships**

#### **Should FHPs cover the nation?** (See page 2, line 28)

**Status:** Unresolved. The Action Plan is silent on nationwide coverage of FHPs; rather, the Action Plan refers to establishing FHPs that target “priority fish habitats.” The Board is not on record as seeking nationwide coverage of FHPs; however, comments on the first draft of this white paper indicate that some key partners assume that seamless national coverage by FHPs is a goal of the Board. In February 2008, the Board staff recommended that the Board seek to recognize “Fish Habitat Partnerships that...will eventually encompass all of the United States and territories.” The Board did not act on the recommendation.

#### **How many FHPs should be established throughout the United States?** (See page 2, line 31, and page 3, Recommendations 3 and 5)

**Status:** The Action Plan calls for establishing “12 or more Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout the United States” by 2010. No maximum number of FHPs has been proposed, but a number exceeding 15-20 FHPs is generally considered to be unworkable due to the expense of FHP operations and the need for coordination by the Board. There are 18 geographic bird conservation Joint Ventures in the United States.

#### **Can FHPs overlap geographically?** (See page 2, line 36 and Page 3, Recommendation 4)

**Status:** Currently, overlap of FHPs is specifically permitted in the Board’s *Guidance*. This is distinctly different from geographic bird conservation Joint Ventures, which are never allowed to overlap. Recommendation #4 in this white paper, and staff recommendations in February 2008 propose to “minimize” or “discourage” overlap of FHPs.

#### **Can FHPs be national in scope, for example to address system types?** (See page 3, line 14 and Recommendation 6)

**Status:** Currently, national FHPs are not within the scope of the Board’s *Guidance*, which states that FHPs must “be place-based, i.e. have geographically defined boundaries.”

#### **How will FHPs meet infrastructure needs (staffing and operations) and what will this cost?** (See page 4, line 24 and Recommendation 9)

**Status:** Currently there is no provision to meet FHP operational costs. FHPs and Candidate FHPs have used a variety of grants and agency and private contributions to fund their operations. Multistate Conservation Grants have been the largest single source of support for developing and operating FHPs to date.

#### APPENDIX 4.

### **Recommendations from Board staff for changes to the *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships* and the application process, February 20, 2008**

1. Clarify the Board's long-term vision for Fish Habitat Partnerships by stating that the Board seeks to recognize a set of geographically defined Fish Habitat Partnerships that are regional in scale, that will eventually encompass all of the United States and territories, and that function as delivery systems for regional ecosystem conservation.
  - a. Require that applicant partnerships provide a clear and convincing rationale why their proposed scale will be effective in delivering regional ecosystem conservation. (Note: "Clear and convincing" is adopted from legal terminology; it places the highest level of burden of persuasion on the applicant.)
  - b. Discourage overlap of geographically defined Fish Habitat Partnerships, and require applicant partnerships that overlap to fully document how they will coordinate their priority-setting, resource assessment, and other activities.
2. Clarify expectations for the applicant's strategic plan. Define "significant progress" toward completion of the strategic plan. Incorporate into the *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships* a list of strategic plan elements that are strongly recommended to be included by each Fish Habitat Partnership.
3. Incorporate the Board's four interim priority strategies into the *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships*. We recommend it be incorporated by reference rather than in its entirety, so that the two documents remain free-standing to facilitate future revisions.
4. Emphasize in the *Guidance* that early and frequent coordination with Board staff will save time in the long run and enhance the likelihood that applications will be successful.
5. Bring the *Guidance* up to date by removing reference to "Pilot" Fish Habitat Partnerships, removing the outdated contact list, and modifying definitions to match those in the draft "National Fish Habitat Conservation Act."

## APPENDIX 5.

### **The National Fish Habitat Action Plan on Fish Habitat Partnerships**

[http://www.fishhabitat.org/plan/National\\_Fish\\_Habitat\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.fishhabitat.org/plan/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan.pdf)

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#### *OBJECTIVES*

- *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.*
- *Improve the condition of 90 percent of priority habitats and species targeted by Fish Habitat Partnerships by 2020.*

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#### *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.*