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| **Draft National Fish Habitat Board Meeting Summary: October 18-19, 2017** |
| **Members present:**  Mike Andrews (TNC) Pat Montanio *for* Sam Rauch (NOAA Fisheries)  Peter Aarrestad (NEAFWA) Bryan Moore *for* Chris Wood (TU)  Stan Allen (PSMFC) Chris Moore (MAFMC)  Doug Beard (USGS) Christy Plumer (TRCP)  Tom Champeau (At-Large State Seat) Ron Regan (AFWA)  Tom Lang (AFS) *by phone* Ed Schriever (WAFWA) *by phone*  Ross Melinchuk (SEAFWA) Dan Shively *for* Rob Harper (USFS) |
| **Members absent:**  Benita Best-Wong (EPA), Doug Boyd (SBPC), Jim Kurth (USFWS), Jim Leach (MAFWA), Mike Leonard (ASA), Fred Matt (NAFWS), and Sean Stone (CCA). |
| **Approved by consensus:**   * Hold October 2018 Board meeting in San Antonio, Texas.   **Approved by motion:**   * June Webinar Summary and October Board meeting agenda; motion by Bryan Moore, second by Chris Moore. * Request that the Beyond The Pond Board develop fundraising action plan; motion by Ross Melinchuk, second by Ron Regan. Federal agencies abstain. * Nominate Tom Champeau as Chair [of the National Fish Habitat Board]; motion by Stan Allen, second by Mike Andrews. * Nominate Chris Moore as Vice Chair [of the National Fish Habitat Board]; motion by Stan Allen, second by Bryan Moore. |
| **Updates and discussions:**   * Welcome – John Lott of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks welcomed everyone and presented on the work of the agency. Following this presentation, the Board discussed the merits of crafting a letter to DOI highlighting the importance of NFHP in relation to the recent Secretarial Orders (Federal members would abstain from decision). The Board also discussed potential Texas meeting locations for October 2018, and potential places for fall of 2019 such as Michigan or the Northeast. * Executive Leadership Team Update – It was noted that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) met via conference call the week prior to the Board meeting, during which they approved Tom Lang as the new AFS representative, serving out Tom Bigford’s term through July 2018. Prior to the call, the ELT agreed over email that a nominating committee should be formed to vet Board leadership options. It was also noted that the MAFWA rep has signaled his intent to step down. The Board discussed the merits of executive level leadership on the Board with proxy participation. * Project Tracking Database – Kate Sherman provided an update on the status of the NFHP project tracking database including next steps and funding needs for the upcoming year. The group discussed the utility of the database to FHPs and to the Board, working with USFWS and FIS data, and funding in the short and long term. * FHP Performance Evaluation – A summary of past FHP performance evaluations, current revisions under consideration for the 2018 FHP Performance Evaluation, and timeline for next steps was presented to the Board. Highlights of follow-up comments included a statement regarding the importance of engagement with state wildlife action plans and the importance of on-the-ground conservation. There was some discussion of how this process relates to the USFWS evaluation process. * American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting – The Board was provided with a brief overview of NFHP involvement at the recent AFS Annual meeting. A workshop was held prior to the AFS meeting, which focused on how to use the 2015 National Assessment and was attended largely by graduate students. There was a NFHP presence at a symposium focused on large-scale data analysis for species evaluation. NFHP also hosted a successful film festival at the meeting. Follow-up discussion centered around how individual FHPs and Beyond the Pond was represented at the AFS annual meeting and the possibility of having a NFHP presence at other meetings including ICAST and American Sportfishing Association. * FHP Presentation – The Southeast Aquatic Restoration Partnership coordinator, Jessica Graham, provided a remote presentation focused on the Partnership’s connectivity, coastal, and native black bass initiatives. Follow-up discussion focused on if the Partnership is involved in freshwater mussel work, if there is involvement from groups like Department of Transportation or Fishery Management Councils, how the Partnership evaluates passage, and if they are conducting valuation of connectivity and flow. The coordinator also responded to a question regarding the Partnership’s overall operational status. * Science and Data Committee Report – A summary of the committee’s activities with respect to the Board’s 2017 priorities was provided, including: work on a permanent streams feature, improved data retrieval, and outreach and education for the 2015 Assessment; maintaining the Assessment data system and dynamic querying work; and initial scoping for future Assessment. The Science and Data Committee’s proposed 2018 priorities were also presented-- highlights included continued 2015 Assessment outreach and planning for 2020 assessment; maintaining the Assessment data system and project tracking database; and developing evaluation standards for FHP projects. Follow-up discussion focused on what the Committee’s top priority is and if there is a back-up plan if funding for the assessment doesn’t come through. A three-tiered prioritization was provided: 1 - project tracking database and 2020 assessment; 2 - science and data operations and maintaining maintain the project tracking database; and 3 - evaluation standards for FHP projects. * Communications Committee Report – Staff provided the Board with an overview of the Communication Committee’s 2017 accomplishments. It was noted that in 2017 a story map was developed for the National Fish Habitat website, the legislative fact sheet was updated, a 2016 NFHP Annual Report was developed, and the newsletter email list grew. A NFHP video will be developed, and a list of Waters to Watch projects for Board review is anticipated in December. Highlights from the Committee’s 2018 priorities include updating the NFHP website, developing Beyond the Pond reports, and creating an integrated marketing strategy between NFHP and Beyond the Pond. Follow-up comments included a note about the successful NFHP segment on the Outdoor World radio show and the strong utility of the NFHP infographic when meeting with BassPro. Discussion around Waters to Watch challenges in developing a full list included suggestions for the chair to encourage FHPs to submit projects, widening the criteria to include projects funded in the year prior, and using the project tracking database to identify projects. Discussion around the NFHP Annual Report included a suggestion to change the report title, ensuring that the new format is compatible with FHP submissions, and developing a postcard that directs readers to a full web-based report. With respect to legislative outreach, there was a suggestion to have a Hill day and to develop a legislative outreach template that can be tailored to specific members. Hiring an intern was also suggested for assistance with social media. * Partnerships Committee Report – A presentation on the Partnerships Committee’s 2017 activities was provided to the Board including: completion of the NFHP Document of Interdependence; review of the 2018 Multistate Grant NCN; review of USFWS FY17 FHP submissions and follow-up conversations; initial discussion regarding identification of funding sources outside of MSCGP; and revisions to the FHP Performance Evaluation measures. Priorities for 2018 are largely a continuation of those priorities that were not completed in 2017. Follow-up discussion centered around providing feedback on USFWS FHP submissions. Decisions regarding 2017 funded projects have not been made available to the Board. * Legislation – The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA) was included in the Sportsmen’s package developed by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee entitled the HELP Act. The NFHCA could also be included in a Senate Energy Committee package. It was noted that the legislative team will need to update the legislative fact sheet and ramp up education on the House side (House Natural Resources Committee). The team plans to meet with key people in the upcoming weeks. Follow-up discussion centered on the timing of site visits and educating key members, and developing a detailed legislative communications strategy that includes bringing in key Partnerships. An open house on the Hill, in March, was also suggested.   • Secretarial MOU Update – In light of the DOI order preventing USFWS from participating in NFHP meetings, and continued progress with NFCA legislation, redrafting the MOU has not been a focus of staff efforts. When the DOI order is lifted, staff will review, make any needed updates to the MOU, and discuss next steps. Follow-up discussion included consideration of moving the MOU up to the Secretary of DOI for approval through another avenue.   * Multistate Conservation Grant Program – A brief history of previous Multistate Conservation Grant cycles and a timeline for the upcoming grant cycle was presented to the Board. The Board discussed approaches for the upcoming round and the potential to include the project tracking database, FHP workshop, and Assessment work. Highlights included taking a modular approach that includes Board and FHP projects, with the understanding that the full ask may not be awarded; and the importance of noting that these are new, unique projects, that they benefit many states. It was noted that the Partnerships Committee would take the lead on this issue and that finding consensus with the FHPs on this matter is important. * Beyond the Pond – Staff provided the group with a summary of the organization’s recent activities, noting that the Beyond the Pond Board meets on an as needed basis and that the lack of an Executive Director remains a challenge. However, the Beyond the Pond has secured funding from Bass Pro for a video as well as the ability to contribute to their blog and a marketing and trade agreement; it now receives 1% on the purchase of Driftless Area hats from Rep your Water; and it is working with Southeast Alaska FHP on a campaign in the Tongass National Forest. There was some discussion regarding NFWF’s MoreFish campaign. * World Recreational Fishing Conference – The Board viewed a presentation on the 2017 World Recreational Fishing Conference, which included among other items, a summary of NFHP’s presence at the conference and a symposium that was held specific to habitat. The group was also presented with a proposal to participate in an international habitat information-sharing forum. The Board discussed the evolution of the World Recreational Fishing Conference participation over time from scientists, managers, and the fishing community to a more science and management focus. The group also discussed whether presentations and proceedings are available. Additionally, the World Fish Migration Day was briefly discussed. * 2018 Priorities and Budget – The Board discussed it’s currently unfunded 2018 Priorities (M, N, O, P, and L) and potential avenues for funding them including the Multistate Grant Program and potential Board and Beyond the Pond discretionary funding. The group discussed the development of a Beyond The Pond fundraising action plan, potentially selecting project from 2-3 FHPs or one project from each of the regions, to bring before the January meeting that the Board can endorse or modify. The Board also discussed the need for an Executive Director for Beyond the Pond. * Staffing – The Board discussed the need to evaluate the history of NFHP staffing and future staffing needs, initially discussed at the March 2017 Executive Session. An organizational business plan for the National Fish Habitat Board with respect to budget and staffing was suggested. * US Forest Service Fish & Aquatic Strategy Update – The Forest Service is updating its Rise to the Future strategy. It received 50 sets of comments on its draft strategy, including input from NFHP. Goals have largely stayed the same, but the sixth goal was modified slightly to work in a broader community to tell the story of healthy habitats and fish and its benefits. The new policy will be released on November 15th. * Waters to Watch Discussion – The Board discussed several scenarios for moving forward with the 2017 Waters to Watch including: finalizing a list of projects that is less than 10, sending out one more request to the FHPs, requesting that Board members nominate projects, and highlighting the status/results of past Waters to Watch. The Board also discussed whether the title of the program had a negative connotation and should be changed. * National Fish Habitat Board Leadership – The nomination committee met prior to the Board meeting and felt that leadership stability was important. They agreed to ask the current chair and vice-chair to stay on for another term (2 years). They also discussed succession planning, recognizing that the chair must be a state representative and Tom will not be able to run for a third term. It was noted that the terms of the Board’s state representatives will be up for review next summer, so the nomination committee proposes re-examining potential candidates next summer and approaching state representatives to see who is willing to be nominated for chair the following year. The committee also suggested that willing state representative(s) shadow Tom and Chris to get a feel for the roles and responsibilities. It was noted that pending legislation could reformat the board. * Field Trip Presentation – A brief presentation on the history and character of the project site was provided to the Board, including the objectives of the restoration work. |
| **Action items:**   * Proposed by Bryan Moore, a small group with participation from state reps, may develop a letter to the DOI on behalf of the non-Federal members of the Board. * Staff will work with Ross Melinchuk to plan the October 2018 meeting in San Antonio, ensuring it doesn’t conflict with SEAFWA and Commission meeting. October 15-19 is preferred, with a back-up week of October 22nd. * Staff will send out the current board roster and term review dates so members are aware the timeframe of their term. * ELT will consider input provided by the Board with respect to the level of leadership represented on the Board. * FHP Performance Evaluation Working Group will revise language pertaining to legislative outreach. * Staff will consider Board member suggestions for future annual reports and Hill outreach, including a detailed legislative communications strategy. * Partnerships Committee will take the lead on developing an approach for the upcoming MSCGP round. * A Beyond The Pond fundraising action plan will be developed and brought before the Board at its January meeting. * Staff should work with BassPro to update its website with the NFHP logo and a revised summary. * Staff will participate on the proposed international habitat information sharing list-serve and will provide information on the National Fish Habitat Assessment. * Staff will determine whether presentations from the World Recreational Fishing Conference habitat symposium are available and will explore participation in World Fish Migration Day. * State representatives should let the nomination committee know if you are interested and willing to stay on in your roles. * Staff and the Communications Committee will consider Board member suggestions for the Waters to Watch program and send a list of projects to the Board for endorsement via email. |
| **Future Board meetings (2018):**   * January 16 or 17 WebEx * March 7-8 (Arlington) * Summer Introductory Call for new members (Date TBD) * June 27 WebEx * October 17-18 (Texas) |
| **Board approved documents:**   * June Board Webinar summary |
| **Additional attendees:**  Alex Atkinson (NOAA contract)  John Carreiro (SD Game, Fish and Parks)  Jake Davis (SD Game, Fish and Parks)  Emily Greene (Board Staff – NOAA contract)  John Lott (SD Game, Fish and Parks)  Steve Perry (EBTJV)  Ryan Roberts (Board Staff - AFWA)  Gary Whelan (SDC Co-Chair MI DNR)  By Phone: Tom Bigford (AFS), Jessica Graham (SARP), Joe Nohner (MGLP), Kate Sherman (PSMFC), Therese Thompson (WNTI) and Daniel Wieferich (USGS). |