

# USDA Forest Service Update

## September 2007



### **SUBJECT: Involvement in implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP)**

**SUMMARY:** *“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” (NFHAP 2006).*

**BACKGROUND:** Development of the NFHAP began in 2001 with concepts similar to the successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The plan was signed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), and by the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce in May 2006. It is a voluntary program designed to encourage a variety of diverse partners and stakeholders to more effectively utilize existing and target new resources to successfully execute conservation efforts to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitats across North America. Through this cooperative approach the plan strives to restore aquatic ecosystems by providing national leadership, supporting fish habitat partnerships, and developing increased and sustained investments. In addition, the NFHAP Board plans to submit legislation in July authorizing congressional funding with a companion Executive Order to insure federal support.

The Forest Service participates in the NFHAP through a Federal Caucus and several Fish Habitat Partnerships.

- **NFHAP Board:** The Board is empowered to implement the plan and is composed of 20 representatives from State agencies, Federal agencies, conservation groups, academia, tribal organizations, and at-large groups including industry and elected officials. Recently, the Chief of the Forest Service has been invited to occupy a seat on the NFHAP Board.
- **NFHAP Federal Caucus:** Washington Office staff participate on the Federal Caucus, which was established to coordinate federal participation on the Board, help implement the plan, and develop a National Science and Data Strategy.
- **Fish Habitat Partnerships:** Partnerships are the primary work unit of the plan and are formed around distinct geographic areas or ‘keystone’ fish species. They provide leadership for developing, coordinating and prioritizing fish habitat conservation projects. Field unit personnel are an integral component of the Fish Habitat Partnerships and assist in developing conservation strategies, prioritizing restoration needs and developing on-the-ground projects.

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