



NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT

*A Framework to Improve Habitat for
Marine Resources and Communities*

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting
October 25, 2011

NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT OVERVIEW

- *NOAA's Objective*—
Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities
- We protect and restore habitat for:
 - Sustainable and productive fisheries
 - Threatened and endangered species
 - At-risk habitats, including corals, shellfish, and wetlands



NOAA FISHERIES PRIORITIES

- Ending Overfishing and Rebuilding Stocks
- Recovered Threatened and Endangered Species
- Aquaculture
- Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment



WHAT IS THE NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT?



- Improve the way we do business
- Focus on improving habitat conditions for priority species and habitats at risk



WHAT IS THE NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT?



- Make decisions in broader ecosystem context and consider competing priorities
- Leverage partnerships to better execute our authorities, tools, and capabilities

CONNECTIONS WITH NOAA'S NGSP

NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan

Healthy Oceans Goal

Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained with healthy and productive ecosystems

Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies Goal

- Improved coastal water quality
- Comprehensive ocean and coastal planning and management
- Resilient communities that can adapt to climate impacts

Improved understanding of ecosystems

Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities

Sustainable fisheries and safe seafood for healthy populations and vibrant communities

Recovered and healthy marine and coastal species



FOUR KEY APPROACHES



- 1) Implement Regional Habitat Initiatives
- 2) Establish Geographic Priorities
- 3) Implement a Systematic and Strategic Approach to Habitat Science
- 4) Strengthen Policy and Legislation





HABITAT BLUEPRINT REGIONAL INITIATIVES

To preserve or improve habitat conditions to address specific challenges to living marine resources within a geographic area

1: REGIONAL HABITAT INITIATIVES



- Alaska: Cook Inlet Habitat Conservation Strategy
- Northwest: Puget Sound Habitat Initiative
- Pacific Islands: Guam Habitat Initiative
- Southwest: Southern California Bight Habitat Assessment Initiative



1: REGIONAL HABITAT INITIATIVES



- Southeast: Charleston Harbor Initiative
- Northeast: Deep Sea Coral Conservation in the Northwest Atlantic
- Chesapeake Bay: Tributary-based Oyster Restoration in Harris Creek



1: REGIONAL HABITAT INITIATIVES



- Share “lessons learned” from regional initiatives as well as other projects and initiatives to promote Blueprint principles





ESTABLISH GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES TO FOCUS HABITAT CONSERVATION

*Focus expertise, resources and actions
in targeted areas to maximize benefits
to marine resources*

2: ESTABLISH GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

- Identify priority areas based on convergence of important habitats for priority species
- Define habitat conditions considering species needs and other goals
- Implement habitat-based solutions using all available programs, authorities, partnerships, and tools



2: IDENTIFY PRIORITY HABITAT AREAS



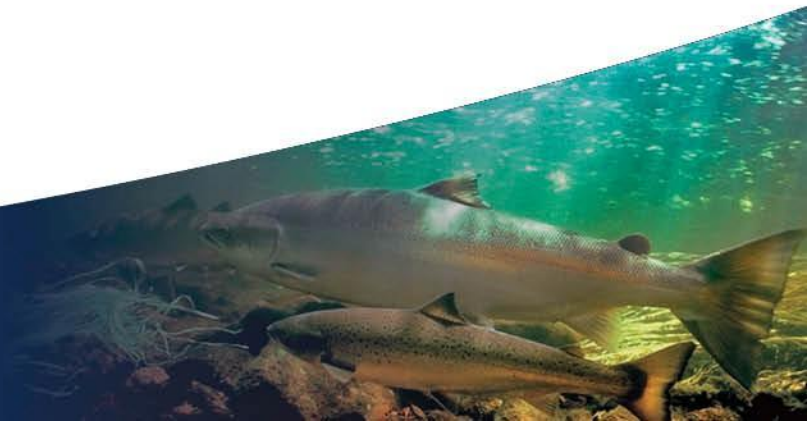
- Identify criteria and process for selecting geographic areas
 - Federally managed fish
 - Protected species
 - Habitats at risk
- Engage internal NOAA and external stakeholders
- Convene workshop in one Region to select geographic areas



2: IMPLEMENT HABITAT-BASED SOLUTIONS



- Explore opportunities to leverage resources across NOAA and with partners
- Establish policy to prioritize consultations
- Share lessons learned from Regional Initiatives and other efforts





IMPLEMENT A SYSTEMATIC & STRATEGIC APPROACH TO HABITAT SCIENCE

*Prioritize our science & use a more
integrative approach for planning &
conducting quality habitat science*

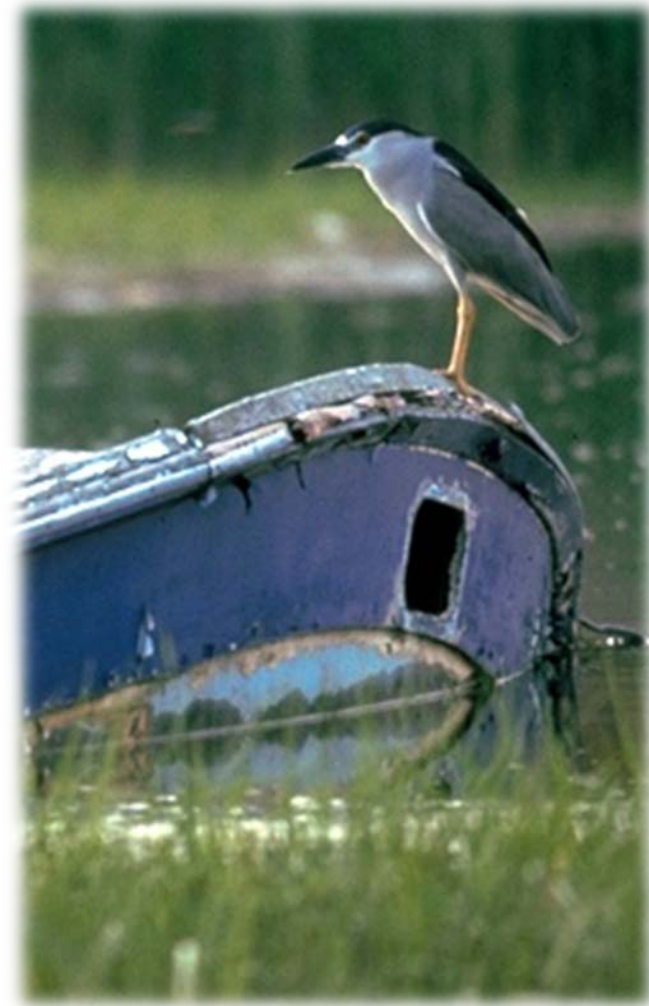
3: STRATEGIC APPROACH TO HABITAT SCIENCE

- Prioritize science activities to fulfill habitat needs
- Integrate science with management actions to foster better decisions
- Improve delivery of habitat science
- Increase implementation of recommendations from the HAIP





3: HABITAT SCIENCE



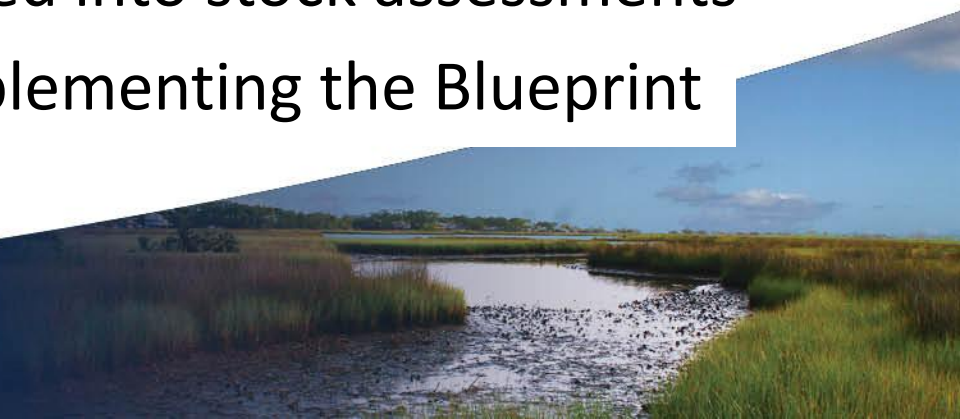
- Existing habitat science focused efforts:
 - Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan (HAIP)
 - National Habitat Assessment Workshop (NHAW)
 - Habitat Assessment Prioritization Working Group (HAPWG)



3: NEXT STEPS



- Prioritize habitat assessments based upon HAPWG criteria
- Evaluate existing surveys to increase habitat data collection and identify surveys where habitat information can improve design or data analysis
- Examine funded habitat assessment pilot projects to determine if results can be operationalized into stock assessments
- NHAW II: Implementing the Blueprint





STRENGTHEN POLICY & LEGISLATION TO ENHANCE HABITAT CONSERVATION

*Remove barriers & seize opportunities at
the national level to increase the durability
of the Habitat Blueprint*

4: POLICY & GUIDANCE—SHORT TERM



- Issue a NOAA Fisheries policy to institutionalize the Blueprint
 - *E.g., Habitat Impacts in Decision Memos/Issue Advisories*
- Establish policy to prioritize and coordinate consultations
- Engage Councils and MAFAC for input
- Engage stakeholders for input



4: IMPROVEMENTS TO AUTHORITIES—LONG TERM



- Explore how we can better use existing authorities (MSA, ESA)
- Evaluate need for a stronger legislative mandate for habitat conservation
- Explore new habitat policy innovations:
 - Blue carbon
 - Sediment/nutrient reduction





NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS



- Conduct NMFS-wide outreach
- Coordinate across NOAA
- Engage stakeholders on Blueprint concept
- Develop strategies in more detail
- Facilitate dialogue through Managing our Fisheries III
- Seek input from MAFAC



INPUT DESIRED FROM MAFAC

- How do you think NOAA Fisheries should approach identifying geographic priority areas? What are the potential implications and pitfalls?
- Who are key external stakeholders we should engage in developing the priority areas, and how should we engage them?
- What are key policy opportunities we can use (within existing MSA provisions) to promote the Blueprint? What are the policy barriers?

