

February 2015

Accomplishments in Support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan FY 2013 - FY 2014



Accomplishments in Support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan FY 2013 - FY 2014

In March 2012, the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Interior signed a memorandum of understanding to promote collaborative, science-based conservation of the nation's waterways and fisheries through the National Fish Habitat Partnership and the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.



The National Fish Habitat Action Plan 2nd Edition (Action Plan) provides a national strategy to address aquatic habitat from the interior to the oceans. The Action Plan is a science-based, voluntary, and non-regulatory effort providing a nationwide strategy to harness the energies, expertise, and existing programs of federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, foundations, and individuals. It supports cooperative, proactive, aquatic habitat protection and restoration goals at multiple geographic scales.

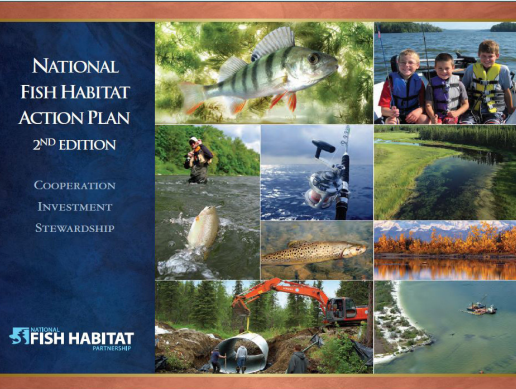
The mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is to protect, restore and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

The goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are:

1. Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems
2. Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected
3. Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms
4. Increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species

Since 2006, NOAA has supported the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) by using existing funding to support national and partnership activities that match NOAA's mission.

The second edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, 2012.



NOAA representatives provide leadership to NFHP at the national level by:

- Serving on the National Fish Habitat Board (the Board)
- Providing primary staff support to the Board
- Providing management and policy support to the Board executive team
- Providing science and technical leadership for the development and execution of the coastal assessments for the 2015 Status of Fish Habitats Report
- Engaging other federal agencies through the NFHP Federal Caucus
- Supporting NFHP communications initiatives
- Providing committee support to fish habitat partnerships
- Providing technical support and funding for on-the-ground project planning and implementation

This report highlights NOAA's accomplishments and progress over the past 2 years in implementing the Action Plan through four key strategies:

- Supporting fish habitat partnerships and ensuring their effectiveness
- Mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals
- Measuring and communicating the status and needs of aquatic habitats
- Providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats



Support for existing fish habitat partnerships to ensure their effectiveness

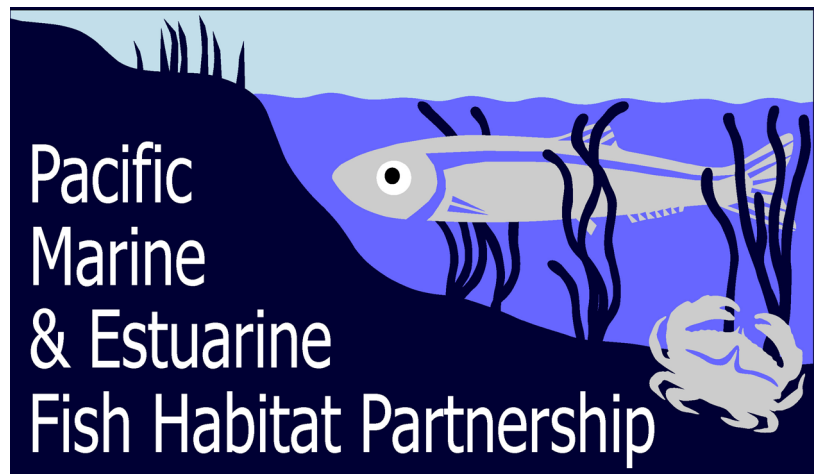
NOAA was actively engaged in the implementation of Fish Habitat Partnerships that address coastal and marine issues. The Agency provided extensive leadership and technical expertise to these Partnerships through in-kind support provided by regional representatives. For example, the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership received approximately a ¼ Full Time Employee support from NOAA, and the California Fish Passage Forum received an estimated \$13,000/year for Per Diem, travel, and hours worked on Forum-related activities by a NOAA representative.



In addition to in-kind expertise, NOAA also provided financial support for activities that include habitat assessment work and on-the-ground habitat protection and restoration projects. NOAA's financial support to Fish Habitat Partnership projects (excluding in-kind support) since October 2012 has totaled nearly half a million dollars.

There are nine NOAA-supported Fish Habitat Partnerships addressing coastal and marine issues:

- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
- California Fish Passage Forum
- Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership
- Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
- Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
- Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership
- Southeast Aquatic Fish Habitat Partnership
- Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership
- Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership



Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

NOAA representatives play an active role in the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP), a partnership that supports priority habitat conservation work for fish along the Pacific Coast. As participants on the steering committee, NOAA staff assisted with soliciting restoration projects. During this 2-year period, this Partnership was approved for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Fish Habitat Partnership funding in support of projects ranging from the removal of derelict fishing gear to estuarine restoration. NOAA representatives and other partners are also actively involved in a West Coast assessment. The study considers nursery functions, key threats to estuarine habitats, and habitat-related changes in distribution and abundance of forage fish using estuary and nearshore habitats.

Leadership in PMEP:

Multiple NOAA representatives chair and participate on the Partnership's Steering and Science and Data Committees.

Technical expertise:

NOAA representatives provide oversight, analysis, and technical review, and oversee contracted work in the development of fish habitat assessments for the Pacific Coast effort.

Financial support:

NOAA provided \$230,000 to support the Pacific Coast fish habitat assessments.





California's Eel River



California Fish Passage Forum

A NOAA representative has provided support to the California Fish Passage Forum (CFPF) on numerous fronts, including governance, science, and outreach. The California Fish Passage Forum excelled in the FY 2014 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Fish Habitat Partnership Project Funding Allocation Method, which allocates funds based on an evaluation of Partnership performance over 3 years and a 1-year planning horizon. Since 2013, the NOAA representative has played a lead role in the development of project application and scoring criteria, and provided support in reviewing and selecting projects. During this reporting period, eight projects were funded that benefit NOAA trust resources. On the science front, the Forum is working on an optimization-based methodology for prioritizing potential fish passage barrier projects.

Leadership in CFPF:

NOAA's representative participated in multiple Fish Passage Forum committees over the 2-year period. Participation included the Steering Committee, the Governance Committee, the Science and Data Committee, the Barrier Prioritization and Optimization Working Group, the Education and Outreach Committee, and serving as chair of the Governance Committee.

Technical expertise:

We provided assistance in the development of a tool that prioritizes potential fish passage barrier projects for the Forum's Prioritization and Optimization Working Group.



Eel River Delta, California



A sample of the goby returning to restored Salt River tributaries.

NOAA Plays Instrumental Role in Eel River Delta

In 2013, NOAA contributed \$200,000 toward instream and tidal marsh restoration in the Salt River through the Community-based Restoration Program's partnership with Ducks Unlimited.

In 2014, the California Fish Passage Forum and Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership were approved for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Fish Habitat Partnership funds for the Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project in the Eel River Delta, CA. This project will restore tidal marsh, restore 7 miles of Salt River Channel and floodplain corridor, reduce sediment, and monitor the physical and biological changes associated with this restoration.

Celebrating the Delta

In celebration of the restoration of the Eel River Delta landscape and ecosystem, the two Fish Habitat Partnerships joined CalTrout and Humboldt County Resource Conservation District to host the "Restoring the Delta" event.

Festivities included a celebration of the cultures and working traditions of the delta, presentations on restoration work, and a field tour of two restoration sites. Representatives from federal, state, and local governments, tribal sovereign nations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and landowners attended.

NOAA staff served on the event's steering committee, created the agenda, coordinated speakers and field trips, prepared outreach materials, coordinated media, and spoke at the event.



SOUTHEAST AQUATIC RESOURCES PARTNERSHIP



Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

In addition to providing guidance and science support, NOAA provided technical support to previously funded on-the-ground coastal fish habitat restoration projects. Our staff also visited previously funded Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership/NOAA Community-based Restoration Program projects to meet partners and understand more about the work being conducted.

Leadership in SARP:

NOAA staff participated on the SARP Steering Committee and the Science and Data Subcommittee. We participated in a variety of SARP interagency meetings aimed to help conserve coastal habitats.

Technical expertise:

NOAA provided support to ongoing SARP-administered Community-based Restoration Program projects in the form of technical assistance in the field and project management.



Jockey's Ridge, North Carolina



Community-Based Restoration Program

A total of 12 Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership projects, which received more than \$500,000 in NOAA funding from FY 2009 to 2012, reported accomplishments in this reporting period. These include restoration of more than 19 acres of fish habitat and opening 1.7 miles of stream habitat to migrating fish. These projects also leveraged significant additional federal, state, and local funding to catalyze community participation.



Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Florida

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

NOAA provided staff support to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) on multiple levels over the past 2 years. NOAA staff helped hone project selection criteria and the review of project proposals. During the reporting period, this Partnership was approved for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Fish Habitat Partnership funding that was used in four projects: Restoring Coastal Fish Habitat Using Oysters, Mussels, and Marsh Grass in Guana Peninsula, Florida; Expanding Marine Meadow Habitat in Peconic Estuary, New York; Oyster Reef and Salt Marsh Habitat Restoration in Stump Sound, North Carolina; and Oyster Reef Restoration in Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire.

Leadership in ACFHP:

NOAA staff participated on the ACFHP Steering Committee, the Partnership's Science and Data Working Group, Project Endorsement Subcommittee, and the Project Review Teams.

Technical expertise:

In 2014, NOAA staff provided expertise in the development of a modeling framework and in soliciting data for a pilot habitat assessment in Narragansett Bay, which is being led by the Partnership with North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative funding.

Financial support:

NOAA provided \$16,667 in funds to the Partnership. This money was used to bolster the total amount of funding the Partnership provided to the Oyster Reef and Salt Marsh Habitat Restoration project in Stump Sound, North Carolina.



SOUTHEAST ALASKA FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Fish Habitat Partnerships in Alaska

Kenai Fish Habitat Partnership, Mat-Su Fish Habitat Partnership, Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, and Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership

NOAA staff partners with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Alaska to support the administrative and data needs of all the Alaska Fish Habitat Partnerships. Additionally, NOAA staff actively participated in activities such as planning and execution of symposia and project proposal reviews.

Leadership in Alaska partnerships:

NOAA staff assisted in the development of the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership, which was formally recognized by the National Fish Habitat Board in March 2014. Later that year, NOAA staff worked with the Southeast Alaska Habitat Partnership to increase the number of marine-focused partner organizations. NOAA staff participate on steering committees on all four of the recognized Alaska Partnerships.

Technical expertise:

During the project period, NOAA staff participated in the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Science Symposium and cohosted the Southwest Alaska Fish Habitat symposium. Staff also helped plan the Mat-Su Salmon Science and Conservation Symposium, an event that shared information about salmon and their habitat in the Mat-Su Basin.

NOAA staff also participated in the review and ranking of projects submitted to the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership for U.S. Fish and Wildlife/National Fish Habitat Partnership funding. We assisted the Southwest Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership and Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership in project proposal ranking and selection.

Hawai'i Fish Habitat Partnership

To ensure that the focus of the Hawai'i Fish Habitat Partnership includes estuarine and marine fish habitats, NOAA contributes to the implementation of the Partnership's "Ahupua'a Approach"—a ridge-to-reef view of aquatic ecosystems in Hawai'i.

Leadership in Hawai'i FHP:

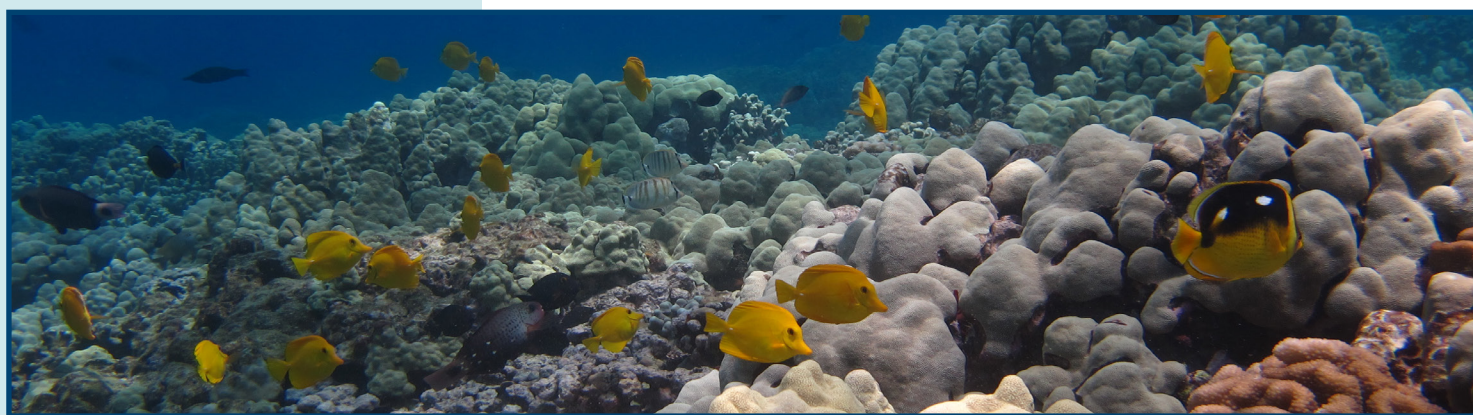
NOAA continued to play a leadership role in the Hawai'i Fish Habitat Partnership as a member of the Partnership's Steering Committee.

Technical expertise:

We began initial discussions and collaboration with the Hawai'i Fish Habitat Partnership on the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area under NOAA's Habitat Blueprint and Community-based Restoration activities.



O'opu nopili (Hawai'ian Goby)



Fish Habitat Protection with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

In 2011, NOAA provided \$150,000 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a one-time-only grant opportunity. Five projects that promote the protection of coastal and marine fish habitats were awarded funding in fall 2012.

In 2013, NOAA again contributed \$212,000 to the Foundation. Through the *Bring Back the Natives Campaign*, four projects were awarded NOAA funds in fall 2013, all of which received letters of support from Habitat Partnerships and had protection components.

Among the projects:

- Collection of baseline data and monitoring of headwater streams in Alaska
- Conserving fish habitat in the Thirtymile Creek in Oregon
- Restoring off-estuary habitat in Hoppaw Creek, Klamath River in California
- Conversion of North River Farms agricultural land back to wetland habitat in North Carolina



Mobilize and Focus Support for Fish Habitat Conservation Goals

NOAA has implemented many national and regional initiatives to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat, including strengthening and building new partnerships with local organizations.



Flyover view of the mouth of the Cape Fear River, North Carolina

Cape Fear River Partnership

In 2011, NOAA initiated the formation of the Cape Fear River Partnership. Comprised of key federal, state, local, academic, industry, and non-governmental organizations, the Partnership focuses on fish passage, habitat conservation, and water quality solutions.

Recognizing the economic, ecological, social, and cultural importance of migratory fish in the Cape Fear River, the Partnership developed the Cape Fear River Basin Action Plan for Migratory Fish.

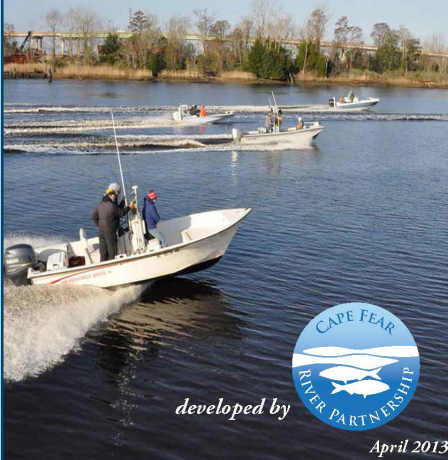
In 2013, NOAA provided \$99,670 to The Nature Conservancy and North Carolina's Division of Marine Fisheries to complete a socioeconomic assessment called, "Linking Improvement in Water Quality and Migratory Fish Passage to Economic Benefits of Fisheries."

Last year, the Partnership hired a coordinator to take over the implementation of the Action Plan. NOAA funding supported these efforts and headquarters and regional staff from the Southeast remain active as partners and helped smooth the transition of leadership.



For more information on the Cape Fear River Partnership, visit <http://www.capefearriverwatch.org/about-us/the-cape-fear-river-partnership>.

Cape Fear River Basin Action Plan for Migratory Fish



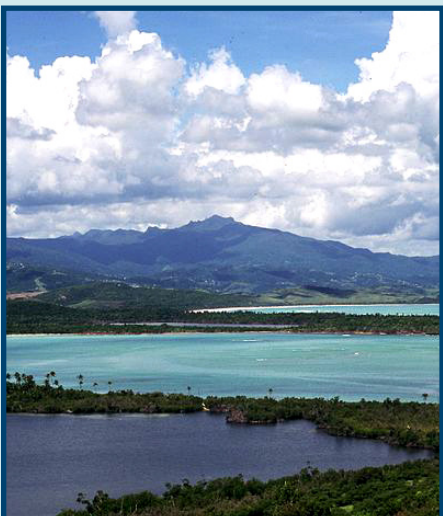
*Cover of the 2013 Cape Fear River Basin
Action Plan for Migratory Fish*



*NOAA Habitat Focus Area:
Kachemak Bay, Alaska*



*NOAA Habitat Focus Area:
Biscayne Bay, Florida*



*NOAA Habitat Focus Area:
Northeast Reserves and Culebra
Island, Puerto Rico*

NOAA Habitat Focus Areas

During the reporting period, NOAA designated seven Habitat Focus Areas. Each area has multiple habitat conservation objectives that NOAA expects to meet within a 3- to 5-year period. A number of these Habitat Focus Areas overlap with Fish Habitat Partnerships in which NOAA is active. For example, the Choptank River and Penobscot River Habitat Focus Areas overlap with the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership; the Russian River Habitat Focus Area overlaps with the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership and the California Fish Passage Forum; and the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area overlaps with the Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership. Habitat Focus Areas provide a venue for increased collaboration between the National Fish Habitat Partnership and NOAA at a local level.

Measure and Communicate the Status and Needs of Aquatic Habitats

NOAA has applied strong leadership, technical expertise, and funding for the Partnership's scientific and communication activities. Over the 2-year reporting period, NOAA provided more than \$350,000 of in-kind staff time and direct contracts in support of the NFHP Science and Data Committee.

2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment

In 2010, the Partnership completed a national assessment of the condition of aquatic habitats. For the coastal component of that assessment, NOAA refined existing coastal boundary data and analyzed disturbance variables occurring within the coastal watershed. Since completion of the 2010 Marine Assessment products, the NOAA assessment team has focused on improving the analytical basis of the marine assessment by incorporating available data on fish and shellfish and on stressor relationships. This work has required refinement of the original geospatial framework and development of a new assessment methodology to incorporate fish abundance and distribution and new sources of stressor data.

To fully take advantage of available data resources and improve spatial resolution of results for the next iteration of the marine assessment, the new methodology is being implemented on a regional basis. This new regional approach enables the assessment team to better relate habitat condition to effects on fish populations and communities. It also provides the NOAA assessment team and National Fish Habitat Partnership Science and Data Committee collaboration opportunities with Fish Habitat Partnerships and regional stakeholders.

During this reporting period, the process for producing a revised geospatial framework was initiated for the northern Gulf of Mexico, and further refinements to Pacific Coast spatial units began. In addition, a pilot assessment to develop and test the new marine assessment methods for estuaries in the Gulf of Mexico was completed. This effort included extensive collection of datasets on fish abundance and distribution, natural habitat variation, and stressor variables. The NOAA assessment team developed the modeling framework with a group of academic experts from around the country. Throughout the process, regional experts (including members of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership) were invited to review and provide feedback. The pilot assessment provides a strong foundation for follow-up work, including a full assessment of estuaries in the northern Gulf of Mexico.



Interagency Coastal Wetlands Workgroup

NOAA co-leads the Interagency Coastal Wetlands Workgroup with the Environmental Protection Agency. It was formed in response to the 2008 report “Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Coastal Watersheds of the Eastern United States, 1998 to 2004” published by NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This report showed that wetlands in coastal watersheds were being lost at an alarming rate of roughly 60,000 acres per year (now estimated at 80,000 acres per year). The Workgroup includes representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Through seven workshops over 3 years, the Workgroup developed a plan to determine the underlying causes of wetland loss. This plan—endorsed through the Implementation Plan for the National Ocean Policy—applies an analytical framework to four pilot coastal watersheds. Pilot studies were initiated on the Cape Fear River, Tampa Bay, and Galveston Bay. Results from these studies will help inform the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership’s conservation work.

Habitat Assessment Prioritization Work Group

In the 2010 Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan, which defines NOAA Fisheries' role in habitat science and assessments, recommendations were made toward building capacity. Two of these recommendations focused on:

- prioritization of stocks and geographic locations that would benefit from habitat assessments
- identification and prioritization of data inadequacies for stocks and their respective habitats

Habitat experts convened to develop a nationally consistent process for prioritizing regional habitat science for fish stocks. Prioritization was completed for the Southwest region early in the reporting period, followed by the Northwest in early 2014. The processes were kept separate with an expectation of significant overlap in priority needs. A final report on the process was released in September 2014. This report describes application of the Work Group prioritization criteria for both Northwest and Southwest stocks, comparing and contrasting regional scoring approaches, and presents results across all West Coast stocks. Prioritization efforts are now underway in the Northeast, Southeast, Pacific Islands, and Alaska. The results of these assessments can be useful tools in coastal Fish Habitat Partnership decision making, priority setting, and objective development.



Provide National Leadership and Coordination

Support for the National Fish Habitat Board

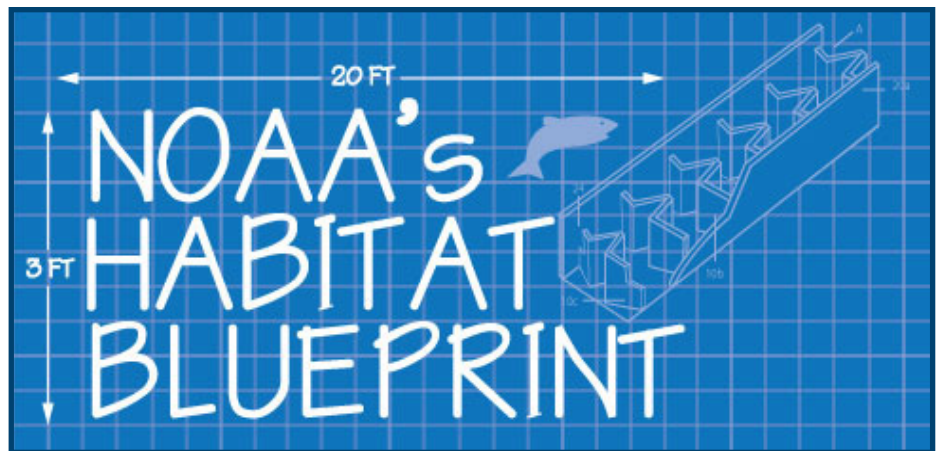
NOAA has provided significant leadership and coordination for the National Fish Habitat Partnership. NOAA representatives supported the Board Chair and Vice-Chair on Board operations through five Board meetings and three conference calls in this 2-year timeframe. NOAA representatives also lead Board staff coordination across committees and projects. This is accomplished by establishing a standing Board meeting schedule; ensuring delivery of quality materials; and establishing annual Board priorities for implementing the Action Plan. Our representatives also provide primary staff support on the regular review of Board membership. NOAA's operational support ensures transparent Board decision-making, which is critical to the success of a partnership-based effort such as the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

NOAA also contributed \$35,000 for the development of an outreach campaign to highlight the work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership and stress the importance of the public's role in conserving fish habitat.

Partnership with Regional Fishery Management Councils

NOAA has significantly improved coordination and communication with the eight regional fishery management councils on habitat conservation activities.

In May 2013, NOAA presented new strategies for connecting habitat conservation to fisheries management through a panel session at the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 conference. NOAA then participated with regional fishery management council members, staff, scientists, and experts at the June 2013 East Coast Forum. There, we considered the steps councils can take to integrate habitat science and considerations into sustainable fishery management policies. Strategic conversations with the councils continued at the 2014 Fishery Management Council Coordination Committee meetings, with overviews of NOAA's habitat conservation initiatives and strategies for integrating habitat considerations into fishery management. As a result, a cross-council habitat work group was formed to continue sharing habitat strategies across the country. While Fish Habitat Partnerships play a non-regulatory role in habitat conservation, they can potentially benefit from products developed by the councils.



NOAA's Habitat Blueprint

Implementation of NOAA's Habitat Blueprint continued throughout this period. With the newly established NOAA Habitat Conservation Team, this initiative helped improve coordination across NOAA on habitat conservation policy, science, and landscape-scale activities.

The Habitat Blueprint provides a forward-looking framework for NOAA to act strategically across programs and with partner organizations to address the growing challenge of coastal and marine habitat loss and degradation. This framework builds on existing programs, prioritizes our activities, and guides the agency's future actions.

The guiding principles of the Habitat Blueprint, such as fostering and leveraging partnerships, align with many of the actions called for in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

For more information on NOAA's Habitat Blueprint, please visit <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint>.

USCRTF UNITED STATES CORAL REEF TASK FORCE



U.S. Coral Reef Task Force & Coral Reef Conservation Program

NOAA is a co-chair of the interagency U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, established by Executive Order 13089 in 1998. The Task Force coordinates coral reef habitat conservation activities among 12 federal agencies, seven states and territories, and three Freely Associated States.

Much of NOAA's activities are directed through the Coral Reef Conservation Program. The Program focuses on addressing primary threats to coral reef ecosystems from climate change, fishing impacts, and land-based sources of pollution using a ridge-to-reef approach in priority areas of the seven states and territories. Three of these areas are also Task Force Watershed Partnership Initiative areas: Guanica Bay, Puerto Rico; West Maui, Hawaii; and Faga'alu, American Samoa.

In this reporting period, the Coral Reef Conservation Program continued to work in these Partnership areas to:

- Stabilize erodible sediments that could be transported to reefs
- Conduct baseline and assessment monitoring to determine the effects of restoration activities
- Develop outreach materials for hotels and other businesses on low-impact designs to reduce pollution

Additionally, the Coral Reef Conservation Program conducted assessments to identify relative resiliency of reefs to climate change impacts and explore potential management actions.

The 2 years of activities by the Task Force and Coral Reef Conservation Program in Hawai'i supported the mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to conserve the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships.



Looking Forward: Fiscal Years 2015-2016



NOAA will continue to focus on habitat conservation and expand its coordination with other federal agencies, states, and non-governmental partners through national and regional initiatives. We will consider the National Fish Habitat Partnership's goals in development of our strategic plans, while highlighting the importance of habitat in supporting sustainable fisheries and resilient coastal economies.

NOAA's Habitat Blueprint: Habitat Focus Areas

The identification of all 10 regional Habitat Focus Areas is complete and we continue to engage Fish Habitat Partnerships where there are opportunities to collaborate and produce measureable habitat conservation results.

2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment

NOAA will continue its leadership in the development of the coastal portion of the 2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment by contributing new data and completing the Gulf of Mexico regional assessment. Using new methodology, the Gulf assessment will score biological conditions of estuaries and watersheds across the Gulf Coast.

In 2016, NOAA will begin assessment work for the next iteration of the National Fish Habitat Assessment.

Interagency Coastal Wetlands Workgroup

We will complete work on the Cape Fear River, Tampa Bay, and Galveston Bay watershed pilot studies and complete the San Francisco Bay pilot study.

Results from these studies will be used to develop recommended actions the federal government can take—in cooperation with states, local communities, NGOs, and private entities—to reduce wetland loss in coastal watersheds through the National Ocean Policy. The recommendations developed can help coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships develop their own habitat conservation strategies.

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force & Coral Reef Conservation Program

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program continue to make progress on the Watershed Partnership Initiatives; developing strong relationships and strategic plans with other federal agencies; and beginning to explore intersections with Fish Habitat Partnerships working in Southeast Florida and Hawai'i.

Cape Fear River Partnership

The Cape Fear River Basin Action Plan outlines specific actions that partners, including NOAA, will implement to improve conditions for migratory fish. These will include assessing and improving fish passage and water quality in the basin.

Increased Non-Federal Stakeholder Engagement

NOAA will seek new ways to engage with the recreational fishing community and stakeholders. Together, we can prioritize habitat conservation efforts and leverage resources to achieve strong, vibrant, and sustainable fisheries in support of the National Saltwater Recreational Fishing Policy. We will identify and address outstanding needs, such as funding collaborative scientific studies to clarify the links between habitat, forage fish, and species of recreational and commercial value. NOAA will also increase engagement with the recreational fishing community through and in coordination with the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

