



CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN 2020-2021





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2020-2021 ACTION PLAN

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) 2020 – 2021 Action Plan is a subset of the 2017 – 2021 ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan. It contains a subset of objectives, strategies, and related actions that can be accomplished over the course of a two-year period. These actions will be carried out by the ACFHP Coordinator or Action Lead, with the help of subgroups as necessary.

Steve Hillebrand, USFWS



A. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Conservation Objective 1: Work with partners to protect, restore, or maintain resilient Subregional Priority Habitats (using strategies outside of fish passage) to optimize ecosystem functions and services to benefit fish and wildlife.

Strategy A.1.1: Support on-the-ground conservation projects that protect, restore, or maintain Subregional Priority Habitats (outside of fish passage).

Action 1: Allocate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funding to annually support a minimum of one project that promotes/supports restoration, protection, and resiliency of Subregional Priority Habitats and supports our coastal communities.

Action 2: Develop a subcommittee to work with the Coordinator to submit a minimum of one funding proposal annually outside of USFWS-National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) funding to support projects that increase the resiliency of Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 3: Support four on-the-ground conservation projects annually through endorsement by ACFHP.

Action 4: Assist partners in developing sub-regional habitat focus areas to support coordinated/scalable action (e.g. contribute our mapping products and expertise to assist in designating National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Habitat Focus Areas).

Strategy A.1.3: Promote the use of best management practices (BMPs) for protection and restoration of Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Compile, review, synthesize, and publicly share guides for implementing BMPs that support restoration, protection, and resiliency for priority habitats.

Strategy A.1.4: Work with partners to identify and conserve intact coastal habitats and buffers in need of protection.

Action 1: Promote the use of the Species-Habitat Matrix (Matrix) and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects through at least one webinar or presentation at a professional conference.

Action 2: Evaluate the effectiveness and usage of the Matrix and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects by partners/funding applicants and consider refining the products/outreach for the products as needed based on feedback.

Conservation Objective 3: Coordinate with partners to restore, enhance, and maintain adequate and effective fish passage to ensure connectivity within and among required Subregional Priority Habitats.

Strategy A.3.3: Work with partners to increase habitat connectivity within and among Subregional Priority Habitats by directly addressing physical barriers.

Action 1: Allocate USFWS funding to annually support a minimum of one on-the-ground project designed to remove fish passage barriers.

B. SCIENCE & DATA OBJECTIVES

Science and Data Objective 1: Work to achieve ACFHP Science and Data needs and fulfill science and data responsibilities established by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP).

Strategy B.1.1: Review species composition of Species-Habitat Matrix to ensure it incorporates all pertinent species.

Action 1: Consider new species for inclusion in the Matrix.

Strategy B.1.2: Produce a fine scale ACFHP region-wide GIS map, using existing data, that shows areas for priority habitat protection and restoration which can be used to better target our actions.

Action 1: Complete the Northeast Fish Habitat Mapping Project.

Action 2: Determine a methodology for applicants to use the Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects.

Action 3: Compile the Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects into a seamless online data and mapping portal.

Action 4: Participate on the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) teams.

Strategy B.1.3: Develop project tracking capabilities for the purpose of capturing and reporting conservation results to stakeholders.

Action 1: Keep ACFHP projects in the NFHP project tracking database up to date.

Strategy B.1.4: Analyze monitoring data to assess success of fish habitat restoration projects.

Action 1: Develop a process to monitor and track project success.

Action 2: Partner with The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) on scoping the feasibility of developing submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) monitoring protocols for the Atlantic coast.

Science and Data Objective 2: Support ongoing research related to identifying or assessing fish habitat conservation activities and the threats to fish habitats.

Strategy B.2.1: Identify and communicate pertinent challenges affecting fish habitat management and create a prioritized list of data gaps that would help ACFHP achieve its goals (i.e. spatial data for various life stages of priority fish species and/or habitat maps of subregional priority habitats).

Action 1: Compile various culvert assessments within the ACFHP region to prioritize culverts or regions as part of the project review process.

Action 2: Engage the ASMFC Management and Science Committee and NOAA Fisheries Species Climate Vulnerability Assessments to determine how to incorporate threats to species and habitats in the Matrix.

C. OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Outreach and Communication Objective 1: Develop new and update current printed and digital content for communicating information that supports ACFHP's goals to our target audiences: scientists, resource managers, state and federal legislatures, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, media, and others as identified.

Strategy C.1.2: Upgrade and seek improvements to content/organization of the ACFHP website to make better use of available technology and enhance accessibility/usability by target audiences.

Action 1: Update the ACFHP website, as needed.

Action 2: Assess the current use of the ACFHP website and attempt to increase traffic to website and time spent on the site by a total of 20%.

Strategy C.1.3: Redesign outreach materials for consistency to optimize our messaging.

Action 1: Develop a new display to complement new fact sheets, website, and other outreach materials.

Action 2: Develop a block 'ad' that partners can use to promote ACFHP in their own newsletters.

Strategy C.1.4: Disseminate communication materials via social media platforms, the website, and participation at professional conferences/tradeshows to extend our coverage.

Action 1: Keep the contact information for ACFHP partners and followers outside of the Steering Committee updated, as needed.

Action 2: Identify the communications contact for each ACFHP partner and follow each other on Facebook and via newsletters to increase ACFHP exposure.

Action 3: Attend and present a poster or talk at least once per year at a national conference.

Action 4: Explore the feasibility of having 75% of ACFHP partners provide a link on their websites to ACFHP's website.

Action 5: Develop a list of opportunities to exhibit the ACFHP PowerPoint and fact sheets at trade shows, workshops, and conferences, including incorporation of ACFHP slides into other presentations, as appropriate; promote ACFHP at a minimum of three opportunities per year.

Outreach and Communication Objective 2: Promote and broadly disseminate information about the products, projects, and services of ACFHP.

Strategy C.2.1: **Share the successes of the on-the-ground conservation projects that ACFHP supports with our target audiences.**

Action 1: Develop a PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet on conservation moorings for use at aquatic-related venues.

Action 2: Develop success data, healthy habitats, and success story infographics for sharing on social media.

Strategy C.2.2: **Seek opportunities to expand media coverage of ACFHP products, projects, and services.**

Action 1: Record, distribute, and post on the ACFHP website a webinar on how to use the Matrix and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects for developing proposals.

Action 2: Develop outreach material on the importance of water quality needed to maintain both healthy fish habitats and human health.

Action 3: Identify two products/projects per year to pair with media venues to broaden media coverage and public exposure.

Action 4: Develop a subcommittee to explore the possibility of hosting a coastwide fishing challenge.

Action 5: Promote World Fish Migration Day via our website and Facebook page.

Strategy C.2.3: **Facilitate the dissemination of BMPs and other fish habitat conservation information from partners to our targeted audiences.**

Action 1: Evaluate the potential to conduct a symposium at an existing national conference on a timely topic of interest to fish habitat enthusiasts.

Action 2: Provide links on ACFHP's website on topics of interest to target audiences (e.g. water quality parameters needed to maintain a healthy ecosystem, fish passage tools, riparian buffer BMPs, etc.).

Outreach and Communication Objective 3: Maintain relations with the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board (Board), fellow Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs), and Beyond the Pond.

Strategy C.3.1: Promote the mission and accomplishments of ACFHP and exchange lessons learned with the Board.

Action 1: Participate in at least three Board meetings per year and present as opportunities allow.

Action 2: Participate on the NFHP Partnership Committee and in NFHP workshops as needed, and report highlights to the ACFHP Steering Committee biannually.

Strategy C.3.2: Enhance fish habitat improvement through cooperation with fellow FHPs.

Action 1: Work closely with Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture and the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership on Whitewater to Bluewater efforts, and report to the ACFHP Steering Committee on progress biannually.

Outreach and Communication Objective 4: Seek avenues to promote the activities and products of partners.

Strategy C.4.1: Publicize partners' actions and products via our communication platforms.

Action 1: Post an average of 5-10 times/month on Facebook about issues relevant to target audiences.

Action 2: Reshare at least 10 relevant posts coming from partner groups per year to target audiences on Facebook and/or the ACFHP website.

Action 3: Develop a short paragraph on our project endorsement process, the benefits of an ACFHP endorsement, and how to find more information to easily share with partners and like-minded organizations.

D. FINANCE OBJECTIVES

Finance Objective 1: Maintain infrastructure and mechanisms for managing ACFHP finances.

Strategy D.1.1: Coordinate with ASMFC to maintain ACFHP operations.

Action 1: Work with the USFWS and NOAA to establish grant/cooperative agreements with ASMFC for annual ACFHP operational funding.

Action 2: Work with ASMFC and NFHP to apply for annual supplemental operational funding, including Multistate Conservation Grants.

Action 3: Work with ASMFC to apply for annual Wallop Breaux operational funding.

Strategy D.1.2: Coordinate with Beyond the Pond staff and partners to establish financial capacities for managing grant proposals and awards.

Action 1: Provide assistance and input to the development of Beyond the Pond infrastructure by attending at least 75% of FHP calls and quarterly Board meetings.

Finance Objective 2: Utilize NFHAP funding to achieve the greatest overall benefits for on the ground conservation and Partnership productivity.

Strategy D.2.1: Solicit and select high quality conservation projects through an annual request for proposals (RFP) process.

Action 1: Convene the USFWS-NFHAP project review subcommittee annually to evaluate proposals.

Action 2: Evaluate the success of the previous RFP cycle and provide the Steering Committee with recommended changes.

Strategy D.2.2: Enhance ACFHP's performance score in the annual NFHAP funding determinations.

Action 1: Complete the annual report to the USFWS and develop recommendations to maintain ACFHP's performance score for the Steering Committee.

Strategy D.2.3: Support federal legislation for NFHAP.

Action 1: Track legislation and regulations that may impact ACFHP operations and restoration activities; provide input on the effects of legislation, as needed.

Finance Objective 3: Leverage new funding for restoration projects and ACFHP operations.

Strategy D.3.1: Adopt a working Business Plan.

Action 1: Update the Business Plan periodically to accurately represent ACFHP's achievements.

Strategy D.3.2: Implement the Business Plan and pursue private donors for funding.

Action 1: Establish a fundraising and Business Plan implementation subcommittee.

Action 2: Conduct a fundraising and development training.

Action 3: Create a fundraising package and pitch script for approaching potential donors.

Action 4: Research donors, foundations, and companies across our geography to target for donations, including organization contacts to approach.

Action 5: Approach two potential donors.

Strategy D.3.4: Identify and pursue new sources of operational funding.

Action 1: Explore options for operational funding stability consistent with ACFHP Business Plan objectives.

Action 2: Apply to new sources of operational funding support.

Action 3: Develop an overhead percentage and strategy to enable ACFHP to expand its mission.

Finance Objective 4: Fund projects for Science and Data and Communications and Outreach.

Strategy D.4.1: Secure funding or in-kind support to develop Science and Data and Outreach and Communication priority materials and products.

Action 1: Seek funding for developing SAV monitoring protocols along the Atlantic coast.

Action 2: Seek funding for fundraising and development training.

Action 3: Seek funding for future habitat assessment projects or any other priorities S&D has identified.

ACFHP PARTNERS



