



## **The National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan was originally advanced by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council in 2001, soon joined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Their idea was to develop partnership effort for fish on the scale of what was done for waterfowl in the 1980s through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. That waterfowl plan has, over the past two decades, been very successful at accelerating work to protect key habitats and boosting waterfowl populations. This work has been accomplished with the formation of Joint Ventures, partnerships which have been able to strategically focus efforts in key waterfowl habitats and leverage public and private dollars.

Read about the National Fish Habitat Action Plan:

[http://fishhabitat.org/documents/plan/National\\_Fish\\_Habitat\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://fishhabitat.org/documents/plan/National_Fish_Habitat_Action_Plan.pdf)

Forming and supporting similar voluntary partnership focused on fish would help advance work and strategically target efforts to those areas and habitats determined to be of most importance, based on scientific assessments. The National Fish Habitat Board, which has now grown from its founding entities to encompass many different interests, and its scientific advisors have come up with an interim strategic plan to be updated and refined once the work they have commissioned on an assessment of the status of fisheries across the country are completed in 2010.

Read the Interim Strategic Plan:

[http://fishhabitat.org/images/documents/science/Final\\_Interim\\_Strategies\\_Targets.pdf](http://fishhabitat.org/images/documents/science/Final_Interim_Strategies_Targets.pdf)

In addition to the scientific assessment work, the National Board has encouraged the formation of Partnerships to accomplish these objectives across the country. Partnerships enhance communication across state boundaries and among agencies, tribes, universities, and other non government organizations, develop shared purpose, increase resources available to projects, increase public awareness and support, and increase recognition for participant efforts.

Partnerships apply for recognition to the National Board and must meet certain standards for organization and strategic planning to be recognized. Once recognized they become eligible for financial support. As of January 2010 there were 15 recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships and 6 candidate partnerships. The Pacific Marine Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership was recognized as a candidate partnership in September 2009. A first organizational meeting is being planned for spring of 2010.

The National Board and its Partnerships and supporters across the country are working with Congress towards getting passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act. This Act would officially authorize the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and the National Fish Habitat Board, and establish Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships as mechanisms to implement the plan. It would also establish the National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership Office within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the National Board and administer grants. It would also establish a \$75 million grant program for fish habitat projects through the Department of Interior.

For more information on the National Fish Habitat Action Plan see their website:

<http://fishhabitat.org/>