



CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN 2023-2024





For more information please contact:

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

1050 North Highland Street

Suite 200 A-N

Arlington, Virginia 22201-2196

703.842.0740

703.842.0741 (fax)

www.atlanticfishhabitat.org



This plan is a product of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with funding from the National Fish Habitat Partnership (Award Number F23AP01705-00) and the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2023-2024 ACTION PLAN

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) 2023 – 2024 Action Plan is a subset of the 2022 – 2026 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. ON-THE-GROUND IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES

On-the-Ground Implementation Objective 1: Conserve¹ and connect priority aquatic habitats to improve ecosystem function and increase climate resilience for fish, people, and nature.

Strategy A.1.1: Fund on-the-ground projects that conserve and/or connect Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Annually fund at least two habitat conservation projects: one of which is a barrier removal/passage project.

Action 2: Annually seek funding for at least one project that conserves or reconnects subregional priority habitats or improves water quality and hydrology.

Action 3: Track project outcomes for the purpose of reporting conservation results to stakeholders and NFHP.

Strategy A.1.2: Improve access to fish habitat conservation funding for organizations working in/with under-resourced communities.

Action 1: Revise proposal criteria to promote selection of projects in under-resourced communities². Work to fund at least one project per year.

Action 2: Create a compendium of relevant funding opportunities to support established habitat conservation partners working in or with under-resourced communities.

¹Conserve is to protect, restore, and enhance.

²Historically under-resourced counties are those identified as economically distressed with the highest percentages of underserved populations. Underserved populations are those that meet certain racial and poverty criteria, as determined by the DEQ Environmental Justice Program.

On-the-Ground Implementation Objective 2: Collectively advance and elevate the work of ACFHP partners to support transformational³ conservation projects on priority habitats

Strategy A.2.1: Leverage relationships to support transformational projects at the landscape scale that conserve and/or connect Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Use integrated habitat assessment tools to plan and support grant application projects.

Strategy A.2.2: Support projects that conserve and/or connect Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Endorse habitat conservation projects, at least 1 of which advances aquatic habitat conservation in and/or for an under-resourced community.

³"Transformational" can also be defined as catalyzing landscape-scale conservation projects.



B. SCIENCE & DATA OBJECTIVES

Science and Data Objective 1: Develop and synthesize information and products that help identify or assess fish habitat conservation activities that support ACFHP goals.

Strategy B.1.1: Evaluate, update, and maintain ACFHP's existing science and data products.

Action 1: Maintain an interactive online map of projects funded/supported by ACFHP that provides a brief narrative highlighting projects.

Action 2: Provide access to ACFHP project monitoring data via the NFHP project database when developed.

Strategy B.1.2: Evaluate the status of ACFHP's fish habitat restoration projects.

Action 1: Implement monitoring survey created by Science and Data Committee.

Action 2: Use information from monitoring survey to update ACFHP's interactive online map with brief narratives, photos, links to project and partner websites, etc.

Action 3: Compile and report on the status and outcomes of past-funded projects.

Strategy B.1.3: Develop fish habitat conservation tools and resources that support managers and practitioners.

Action 1: Collaborate with the East Coast SAV Collaborative on Atlantic Coast SAV mapping and monitoring standardization initiatives.

Action 2: Work with SARP, NAACC, and other partners to help identify gaps in culvert assessments.

Strategy B.1.4: Develop the fish habitat conservation tools and resources that support under-resourced communities in whichever ways are most relevant to said communities.

Action 1: Spatially identify intersections of under-resourced communities with stake holders like subsistence fishermen to understand their needs as it relates to fish habitat.

Action 2: Incorporate under-resourced mapping into the project funding prioritization process.

Strategy B.1.5: Strategically utilize science and data tools to focus project solicitation and selection on high priority areas identified in ACFHP's mapping efforts on habitats, DEIJ, and climate change.

Action 1: Develop an approach to use fish habitat climate vulnerability work in project selection and other ACFHP work.

Action 2: Develop a strategy to address the ACE Act economic requirements.

Action 3: Incorporate S&D tools into NFHP funding proposal development requirements.

C. OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Outreach and Communication Objective 1: Promote ACFHP's mission and vision to target audiences to grow our influence and impact.

Strategy C.1.1: Develop new and evaluate/update current printed and digital content.

Action 1: Develop a plan for developing and disseminating selected outreach materials in languages other than English to target audiences.

Action 2: Review and update communication materials (website, printed materials, etc.) with the intent of making them more user-friendly and ACFHP brand-specific (every 5 years, next time: 2023).

Outreach and Communication Objective 2: Share and disseminate information about the products, projects, and services of ACFHP and its partners to further the conservation of fish habitat.

Strategy C.2.1: Disseminate communication materials via digital platforms and via participation at professional conferences/tradeshows to extend our coverage.

Action 1: Develop an outreach plan for reaching target audiences (including under-resourced communities).

Action 2: Minimum of 10 social media posts/mo., 4 blog/website posts/yr., and 2 conferences/tradeshows/workshops/yr.

Action 3: Invite partners who are not on the steering committee to do a short presentation on their current projects, what role ACFHP played, or could play in advancing their habitat missions.

Action 4: Create one-pagers from select projects to highlight project outcomes for outreach.

Strategy C.2.2: Seek opportunities to expand media engagement with ACFHP products, projects, and services.

Action 1: The ACFHP Director chooses a few good story “hooks” and works with partners to pitch stories that feature ACFHP projects.

Strategy C.2.3: Publicize partners' actions, projects, and products via various communication platforms.

Action 1: Establish a requirement for NFHP funded project partners to link their project websites to the ACFHP website.

Action 2: Targeted outreach on 2 partner projects through social media posts, website, or related outlets.

Outreach and Communication Objective 3: Engage with those directing funding streams to promote our conservation priorities.

Strategy C.3.1: Educate/inform funding sources such that they consider ACFHP's priorities when identifying conservation projects to support.

Action 1: Set up 2 or more meetings with federal funders to discuss ACFHP's mission, projects, capacity, etc.

Action 2: Share ACFHP Strategic Plan and outreach materials with NOAA, USFWS, and EPA (CWSRF). Link to appropriate sections of the websites.



D. OPERATIONS OBJECTIVES

Operations Objective 1: Utilize funding and expertise to achieve the greatest benefits for fish habitat conservation.

Strategy D.1.1: Provide and direct funds to high quality conservation projects through annual requests for proposals (NFHP, ACFHP general, NMFS Habitat and Recreational Fisheries, etc.).

Action 1: Pursue new project funding and collaborations to support on-the-ground restoration, science, and outreach projects.

Action 2: Implement the Business Plan, and periodically update.

Action 3: Apply for NFHP Congressional Designation by December 31, 2023.

Operations Objective 2: Enhance administrative capacity for receiving, distributing, and maintaining ACFHP funding in order to increase Partnership productivity.

Strategy D.2.1: Explore alternative means to administer grant awards and donations for conservation, science, and outreach projects.

Action 1: Work with Beyond the Pond to expand their functional role supporting ACFHP.

Strategy D.2.2: Expand organizational capacity of ACFHP.

Action 1: Establish an ACFHP fundraising committee led by a steering committee member, but incorporating volunteers with the ability to regionally fundraise.

Action 2: Engage a part-time Communications Specialist to support the outreach plan.

Action 3: Pursue additional internships to increase staff capacity.

Action 4: Incorporate a line item in grants and large donations to support operations.

Action 5: ACFHP steering committee members along with ACFHP fundraising representatives will approach 2 potential funders with information regarding ACFHP projects.

Strategy D.2.3: Ensure alignment between ACFHP and NFHP's priorities.

Action 1: ACFHP Director liaises with NFHP as needed and provides updates to steering committee; steering committee provides high-level thoughts to convey to NFHP as needed.

Action 2: ACFHP Director attends all NFHP and FHP coordinator meetings.

Operations Objective 3: Achieve a fully inclusive Partnership in order to engage and empower existing and new members.

Strategy D.3.1: Evaluate the composition of the ACFHP members and committees toward increasing capacity, expertise, engagement, and diversity.

Action 1: Update new member application for strengths (DEIJ, projects, etc.).

Action 2: Engage with members via a virtual or in-person workshop to provide status updates, strengths, and feedback on needs from ACFHP.

Action 3: Look into updating MOU with participation requirements for partners.

Action 4: Identify at least 2 groups that could/should be represented on committees and/or steering committee.

Action 5: Identify steering committee and partner organizations missing representation (e.g., tribal, under-resourced communities, etc.) and engage them to consider becoming ACFHP partners, steering committee members.

Strategy D.3.2: Recruit new ACFHP partners representing diverse communities that benefit from healthy fish habitat.

Action 1: Engage with Tribal groups (e.g., the Native American FW Association) and under-resourced communities (e.g., the Brown Folks Fishing organization - www.brownfolksfishing.com) to diversify the Partnership.

Strategy D.3.3: Through habitat restoration RFPs, consider proposal criteria and habitat prioritization scoring to promote selection of projects in under-resourced communities.

Action 1: Distribute RFPs to organizations and/or academic partners representing under-resourced communities.

Action 2: Partner with organizations that work with black or brown landowners/farmers.

Action 3: Explore pursuing urban watershed restoration initiatives (e.g., USGS' Urban Waters Initiative and USFWS Urban Refuges Initiative).

Action 4: Utilize USFWS First Nations liaisons to engage federally recognized tribes to both partner on projects and learn from their conservation ethic.

Action 5: Examine techniques being employed to support projects for under-resourced communities by groups like NOAA, USDA, and NFWF, and add relevant scoring criteria to project evaluation rubric.

ACFHP PARTNERS



