



Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Action Items

These action items were discussed at the spring 2017 Steering Committee meeting in Arlington, VA. Those in blue are included in the 2017 – 2019 Action plan; the rest should be revisited for the 2020 – 2021 Action Plan. Scores for actions not selected for the 2017 – 2019 Action Plan are in parentheses.

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 USFWS funding to annually support a minimum of one project that promotes/supports restoration, protection, and resiliency of Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 2: Submit a minimum of one funding proposals annually outside of USFWS-NFHAP funding (e.g. NOAA) 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.

Strategy A.1.2: Minimize or reduce adverse impacts to Subregional Priority Habitats associated with coastal development and water-dependent uses.

Action 1: Education two municipal authorities and marine operators on the use and benefit of Conservation Moorings, and encourage retrofits through outreach and financial support where cooperative partners allow. (1)

Action 2: Support one community effort annually through funding or outreach support on coastal development effects on priority habitats, such as assessments on non-point pollution sources (seagrass habitat), resiliency planning (living shorelines), evaluation of community impervious surfaces, etc. (4)

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

Action 1: Package existing living shorelines documents into a usable guide and distribute this guide to appropriate stakeholders along the Atlantic coast in order to increase the use of BMPs for living shorelines. (0)

Action 2: Submit a minimum of one funding proposal, or fund one demonstration project involving the development and/or promotion of conservation BMPs. (2)

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 and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects to protect high quality fish habitats through at least one webinar or presentation at a professional conference.

Conservation Objective 2: Work with partners to support the maintenance of water quality and hydrology standards for functional priority habitats and improvement of water quality in degraded priority habitat areas.

Strategy A.2.1: Coordinate with partners to assess and identify critical watersheds for water quality improvement that are having a major impact on Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Disseminate information on the importance of water quality needed to maintain healthy fish habitats. (0)

Action 2: Work with Urban Waters Federal Partnerships or help set up urban partnerships in areas that don't have them. (0)

Action 3: Work with USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service to reduce nutrient loads on agricultural land. (3)

Action 4: A communications/outreach action about how important water quality is for fish, forage fish, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, good for the economy, and how regulatory actions included in TMDLs are reducing sediment and nutrients therefore improving habitat for their favorite fish (can put under outreach and communication). (3)

Strategy A.2.2: Support on-the-ground projects that improve water quality within Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Support on-the-ground projects that aim to restore riparian buffers within Subregional Priority Habitats through funding, endorsing, and/or publicizing projects. (2)

Action 2: Develop outreach materials for BMPs in restoration practices for riparian buffers that would be available during RFP processes so there are parameters that would aid with project competitiveness. (0)

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.3.1: Coordinate with partners to identify and prioritize watersheds for conservation where fragmentation of, or barriers to, fish passage are a potentially critical threat to be addressed.

Action 1: Develop a priority list of each ACFHP's state's fish passage projects to facilitate information exchange on existing models and strategies pertaining to aquatic organism passage potential. (0)

Action 2: In year one, encourage partners to use prioritization tools for fish passage connectivity projects by incorporation of criteria in ACFHP project funding efforts and reference to these tools on the ACFHP website. (3)

Strategy A.3.2: Coordinate with partners to disseminate a "standardized toolbox" of fish passage technologies and guidance to assist the public in the development and implementation of effective fish passage protocols.

Action 1: By year two, create an information Fish Passage Toolbox page on the ACFHP website and populate it with materials that promote BMPs for fish passage. Disseminate this link to 20 practitioners of barrier removal. (4)

Action 2: Ensure fish passage-related funding proposals utilize 'approved' strategies from ACFHP's Fish Passage Toolbox. (0)

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 that aims to remove barriers in areas identified as a priority for fish passage restoration by an ACFHP partner.

B. Science and Data Objectives

Science and Data Objective 1: Work to achieve ACFHP Science and Data needs and fulfill science and data responsibilities established by NFHAP.

Strategy B.1.1: Develop an online searchable database of the Species-Habitat Matrix.

Action 1: Identify a partner who can develop a searchable database of the Matrix and work with them to get it online.

Strategy B.1.2: Produce an ACFHP region-wide map by combining existing GIS layers that can be used to inform the goals and objectives laid out in this plan, and prioritize areas for habitat protection and restoration.

Action 1: Establish a timeline and calculate metrics for the Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Project initiated by Merrimack River Watershed Council using the data layers provided, and the metrics defined.

Action 2: Determine data gaps in the Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Project.

Action 3: Initiate the Northeast Fish Habitat Mapping Project by compiling all of the necessary data layers.

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

Action 1: Develop coordination with the USFWS Fish and Aquatic Conservation and Wildlife and Sport Fisheries Restoration divisions (which administers TRACS) to get all of the NFHAP-funded reports (progress and final) into an online database and/or provide them to ACFHP.

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

Action 1: Add statements in the RFP to note the expectation for project pre- and post-monitoring, and add ranking criteria for monitoring in the project scoring (i.e. is the monitoring plan sufficient). (1)

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 to effect 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: Science and Data Committee to design and implement a survey on the pertinent challenges to effect fish habitat management, develop list of persons to send the survey out to. (4)

Action 2: Send the results back to participants after the survey to rank/prioritize the list of challenges. (0)

Strategy B.2.2: Seek funding or endorse applied science/research projects aimed at (1) monitoring the impacts of Priority Threats on ACFHP habitats, (2) evaluating the effectiveness of fish habitat conservation techniques or methodologies, (3) identifying causes of habitat loss and the resulting effects on ACFHP species, and (4) collecting

data to fill gaps identified in Science and Data Objective B.2.1.

Action 1: Create one page summaries for each of the four tasks in B.2.2 to share with the finance committee. (4)

Action 2: Develop or continue use of the existing project endorsement letter format, for actual science projects. (1)

Action 3: All partners should send any RFP which they believe would be of possible interest/use to ACFHP, to Lisa as Coordinator; to implement this, we need to draft a letter to all of the partners, and then monitor the results (i.e. how many RFPs does Lisa receive from partners within a given time period). (0)

C. Outreach and 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.1.1: Determine which communications platforms maximize our ability to deliver our messaging to target audiences.

Action 1: Within one year, complete and analyze a survey to 1) determine what communications platforms are used by our target audiences, and 2) what information related to fish habitat would be useful to them (e.g. information on habitat types, geographic interests, data, etc.). (3)

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: Hire a contractor and complete the ACFHP website redesign within 1 year.

Action 2: Within one year following website redesign, increase traffic to ACFHP website and time spent on the site by 20%. (0)

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

Action 1: Develop a PowerPoint presentation that can be used by partners to explain what ACFHP is, what we do, etc.

Action 2: Develop a one-page ACFHP fact sheet specifically for primary target audience(s).

Action 3: Develop a new display to complement new fact sheets, website, and other outreach materials. (0)

Action 4: Develop a block 'ad' that partners can use to promote ACFHP in their own newsletters. (0)

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: Update contact information for ACFHP partners and followers outside of the Steering Committee and find out how we can increase their involvement in the Partnership.

Action 2: Attend and present a poster or talk at least once per year at a national conference.

Action 3: Increase number of social media followers by 20%. (1)

Action 4: Ensure that at least 80% of ACFHP partners have a link on their website to ACFHP's website. (0)

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 we support with our target audiences, which are implemented to protect, restore, or maintain Subregional Priority Habitats.

Action 1: Develop a PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet on conservation moorings for use at marine-related venues. (0)

Action 2: Identify two key marine industry venues (such as marine trade associations or harbormasters) with whom to conduct a workshop or presentation on conservation moorings. (0)

Action 3: Submit a newsletter article to Rhode Island Marine Trades Association on the benefits of conservation moorings.

Action 4: Identify two venues at which to present information on ACFHP's other on-the-ground projects, and identify what resources would be required to expand outreach to those venues. (0)

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

Action 1: Develop a partnership-approved op-ed to hold until a timely article response is needed to a national outlet story, and identify a high profile co-author for op-ed. (2)

Action 2: Identify two products/projects per year to pair with possible media venues to broaden media coverage and public exposure nationally. (1)

Strategy C.2.3: Facilitate the dissemination of best management practices (BMPs) and other fish habitat conservation information from partners to our targeted audiences.

Action 1: Conduct a symposium at an existing national conference on a timely topic of interest to fish habitat enthusiasts. (1)

Action 2: Provide Science and Data-approved links on ACFHP's website on topics of interest to target audiences, such as 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, fellow Fish Habitat Partnerships, and Beyond the Pond.

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

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

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

Strategy C.3.2: Enhance the successful improvement of fish habitat through cooperation with fellow Fish Habitat Partnerships.

Action 1: Produce three quarterly Coastal FHP articles for the newsletter in coordination with other FHPs.

Action 2: Work closely with EBTJV and SARP on Whitewater to Bluewater efforts, and report to ACFHP Steering Committee on progress biannually.

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

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

Action 1: Post at least twice per week on Facebook about issues relevant to target audiences. (0)

Action 2: Distribute at least 10 RFPs per year to target audiences on Facebook and ACFHP website. (0)

Strategy B.4.2: Distribute and publicize ASMFC's Habitat Committee actions and products, including a link in our website to their website.

D. Finance Objectives

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

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

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

Action 2: Work with ASMFC and NFHP to apply for Multistate Conservation Grant funding annually.

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

Strategy D.1.2: Work with Beyond the Pond operatives to establish financial capacities for managing grant proposals and awards.

Action 1: Provide assistance and input into 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 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 USFWS-NFHAP funding determinations.

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

Strategy D.2.3: Support federal legislation for NFHAP.

Action 1: Encourage partners to support federal legislation through their individual outreach and legislative programs by tracking legislation and providing updates to partners on opportunities to comment. (4)

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

Strategy D.3.1: Adopt a working Business Plan.

Action 1: Present a Business Plan to the Steering Committee for adoption within one year.

Action 2: Prioritize actions in the Business Plan in Year 2.

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

Action 1: Annually review and update as necessary the previously crafted ACFHP one-pager handout. Give to potential donors as a snapshot of what the Partnership is all about, toward identifying common interests and collaborative conservation opportunities. (0)

Action 2: Develop and prioritize a ‘bank of projects’, comprised of lists of shovel-ready projects to provide to donors who are looking for projects to fund. Examples include project proposals that have been submitted for NFHAP funding but went unfunded, or lists that individual partners maintain for their organization. (6)

Action 3: Develop a ‘decision tree’ as to how money received will be utilized. (0)

Action 4: Revisit and refine list of potential donors to identify a more targeted list of private donors, with interests specific to coastal habitat conservation. (4)

Strategy D.3.3: Continue to pursue additional conservation project funding and endorsement opportunities.

Action 1: Network with NGOs (CCA, Surfriders Foundation, etc.) to collaborate on and endorse conservation projects, including potential matching/in-kind funds. (4)

Action 2: Annually monitor and pursue, where appropriate, restoration grant funding available to ACFHP and its partners. (5)

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

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 Communication and Outreach priority materials and products.

Action 1: Secure funding for an online searchable database of the Species-Habitat Matrix if in-kind support is not feasible.

Action 2: Securing funding to extend the Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping project to the rest of the ACFHP region. (0)

Action 3: Seek funding for other applied research projects. (0)

Action 4: Secure funding to maintain and update the content and organization of the ACFHP website.