

# **Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership Charter**

## **I. BACKGROUND**

The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) is a national collaborative partnership established to promote the protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for fish and other aquatic species and their communities in reservoir systems through cooperative and voluntary actions. The RFHP provides strategic coordination and direction in the conservation of fish and aquatic habitat in reservoir systems.

## **II. MISSION and GOALS**

The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership is a national partnership established to promote and facilitate the conservation of habitat for fish and other aquatic species in reservoir systems through collaborative actions that contribute to:

- The ecological health and function of reservoirs and their associated waters and watersheds
- The restoration, protection and enhancement of fish and other aquatic species and communities, therein
- The sustainability and enhancement of reservoir fisheries
- Public awareness of the conservation issues and challenges facing reservoir and associated waters and watershed management in the 21st Century
- The quality of life of the American people

The RFHP's goals are to:

- Protect, restore and enhance fish habitat in reservoir systems to support productive fisheries and healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Manage reservoir systems to provide, protect and enrich quality of life for the American people
- Develop and foster partnerships that implement landscape-scale approaches to the conservation of fish habitat in reservoir systems
- Develop and sustain institutional arrangements and sources of funding to support the long-term conservation of fish habitat in reservoir systems
- Support education and outreach initiatives that advance public awareness and understanding of the value of healthy reservoir systems

In furtherance of the mission of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat partnership, an Executive Committee is established to:

1. Coordinate reservoir stakeholder involvement at the national level
2. Establish policy and operational guidance for the partnership
3. Develop mechanisms to acquire funding for conservation of reservoir systems and their fisheries, and processes to prioritize the distribution of those funds
4. Support Fish Habitat Partnerships, and other partnerships, in the implementation of projects to achieve healthy reservoir systems and sustainable fisheries

5. Establish national measures of success and evaluation criteria for the conservation of reservoir systems and their fisheries
6. Establish technical guidelines and appropriate technologies for the conservation management of reservoir systems and their fisheries
7. Communicate with policy makers and the public to advance the health of reservoir systems and resident fisheries

### **III. RFHP BYLAWS**

The Executive Committee constitutes the governing structure of the RFHP. Its responsibilities are to:

- Implement the RFHP Strategic Plan
- Set partnership policy
- Review and approve national conservation priorities
- Request, acquire and allocate funds to projects
- Provide oversight of and direction to Regional Workgroups
- Conduct national assessments
- Maintain a reservoir database coordinated with the NFHAP database
- Oversee monitoring and performance measurement and reporting

#### **A. Appointment**

The membership of the RFHP Executive Committee includes by category of organization:

- Four State agency members
- Four Federal agency members
- Four Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Three to four Industry representatives
- One to two Tribal representative

Individual members of the Executive Committee will be selected, respectively, by the organizations that are assigned seats to the committee.

1. State and Federal agencies hold permanent seats and constitute eight (8) permanent positions on the Executive Committee.
2. The permanent Executive Committee members will initially designate the specific organizations within stated categories for all other Executive Committee seats; subsequent designations of new or replacement seats for non-permanent members will be done by the full Executive Committee by majority vote.
3. Non-permanent Committee seats are designated by category for:
  - a. Outdoor recreation and fishing industry
  - b. Non-Governmental Organizations
  - c. Tribal representatives (includes Native American tribes, tribal governments, and native Alaskan tribes)
4. Organizations and individuals from each of the categories mentioned above must be invited to join the Executive Committee.

**B. Membership**

The Executive Committee will consist of up to 17 members. Composition of membership by category will consist of the following:

1. Four State agency members representing each of the four Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The Chair of the Executive Committee shall be selected from among these four members.
2. Four Federal agency members including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Land Management
3. Four Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to be designated initially by the permanent members of the Executive Committee and, subsequently, by the full Executive Committee.
4. Three industry representatives to be designated initially by the permanent members of the Executive Committee and, thereafter, by the full Executive Committee
5. Indian tribal representation to be designated by the Full Executive Committee and to include at least one representative from an Indian tribal or native Alaskan government.

In addition to the membership guidelines stated above, the Executive Committee will consist of a term-appointed Chair and two term-appointed Vice-Chairs. The Chair will be automatically filled by rotation in alphabetical order of the four Regional Associations. The first Chair will be selected by the Executive Committee and will determine the alphabetical starting point for subsequent Chair selections. In the event a Chair is not available in the following rotation, the next available Regional Association member will be selected. A quorum of Committee members will nominate and elect the two Vice-Chairs from among the non-State Executive Committee membership.

**C. Terms of Service**

1. Executive Committee members will remain seated on the committee until they are replaced by their respective agency. Members that have term appointments on the committee (i.e. the Chair and Vice-chairs) will serve no more one term. One term is equal to two consecutive years. Members whose term appointments have expired and they have not been replaced by their respective agency will remain seated on the committee until replaced by the agency they represent.
2. Initial Term Appointment - The initial term appointments of the Executive Committee will serve for two years.
3. Vacancies - Any vacancy among the Executive Committee membership shall be filled through appointment by the respective organization or agency to which the respective seat is assigned. Any vacancy in a term appointment on the Executive

Committee shall be filled by the prescribed rotation, in the case of the Chair, or by the Executive Committee, in the case of the Vice Chairs, for a full two-year term.

4. Members assigned to the Executive Committee should represent a high administrative or executive level within their respective organizations or agencies to ensure the committee's authority to commit partners and partnership resources to the implementation of the RFHP strategic plan as consistent with the missions of each partnering entity and governing State and Federal laws.
5. Individual Executive Committee members may represent multiple organizations within their respective category but they can fill only one position and exercise only one vote on the Executive Committee, except in the case that an Executive Committee member is acting as a proxy for another Executive Committee member.

#### **D. Procedures**

1. Selection of Executive Committee Chair - At the first meeting of the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee shall elect a Chair by majority vote from the four State Regional Association members. Thereafter, the Chair shall rotate alphabetically every two years among the State Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
2. Term of Chair - The term of the Chair shall be two years. In the event that a chair must serve consecutive terms, he or she may not serve more than 2 consecutive terms.
3. Meetings - The Executive Committee will meet a minimum of two times a year, one time of which will be in person at a time and place to be determined by the Chair in consultation with its members and staff. Executive Committee members are expected to attend at their own expense. Financial support can be provided at the discretion of the Chair in cases of hardship.
  - a. The Chair shall establish a proposed meeting schedule identifying potential meeting dates within the twelve-month period following each meeting of the Executive Committee.
  - b. The Chair must give Executive Committee members at least two months' notice of an Executive Committee meeting and shall provide a draft agenda at that time. Notice must be provided in writing, email or facsimile to each Executive Committee member.
  - c. The Chair with due cause may call the Executive Committee for emergency meetings, provided, however, that business of the meeting must be restricted to the reasons for which the meeting is called.
  - d. Executive Committee meetings shall be open to the public, provided, however, that the Executive Committee may meet in executive sessions closed to the public to discuss personnel, legal matters, or any other matter of a private or confidential nature. These closed sessions shall be clearly identified in the meeting announcement. Notification of Executive Committee meetings shall be made to members of the RFHP and other interested parties.

4. Quorum - A quorum of the Executive Committee is comprised of a simple majority of members in good standing. A quorum can be established using one or more approved proxy votes.
5. Participation and Attendance - A committee member's failure to attend three consecutive committee meetings, or teleconferences, can result in the member's suspension by majority vote and a request to the members' organization or agency to select a replacement.
6. Proxy - Committee members may appoint a proxy to act on his/her behalf in the event that the Committee member is unable to attend a meeting in person or via teleconference line.
  - a. Notification of a proxy must be submitted to the Chair of the Executive Committee, in writing, prior to the meeting.
  - b. The Chair must receive notification of an acting proxy at least two days before the scheduled meeting.
  - c. Notification of a proxy can be sent via email, fax, or phone to the Chair
7. Voting - The committee will seek consensus on all business before it. In the absence of a consensus, a simple majority vote of the members present will carry the motion.
  - a. Each Executive Committee member shall have one vote and all Executive Committee members have the right to vote on motions.
  - b. Any Executive Committee member acting as a proxy can cast a vote for him/herself and one vote for the individual he/she is acting for.
  - c. All voting shall proceed under Robert's Rules of Order. A motion set forth by the Committee can be carried by majority vote of the members present and participating in the meeting. This includes proxies and individuals participating via teleconferencing.
  - d. The Executive Committee may extend the discussion period for items on the agenda, or consider items not on the proposed agenda for a meeting, provided that such changes to the agenda are approved by a vote at the time they are proposed.
  - e. Executive Committee business, including motions and resolutions, may be conducted via e-mail, fax, or teleconference.
8. Other Procedures - The Executive Committee shall establish other procedures as needed to schedule meetings, develop agendas, and otherwise facilitate and conduct business, including those procedures or matters required to comply with any requirements resulting in accordance with the governance of Fish Habitat Partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.
9. Chair's Responsibilities - In addition to such duties established elsewhere in these bylaws, the Chair shall:
  - a. Prepare a written agenda of all matters to be considered by the Executive Committee at any meeting;
  - b. Prepare and issue all notices, including notices of meetings, required to be given to the Executive Committee and public;

- c. Preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee and, unless otherwise directed by the Executive Committee, present items of business for consideration by the Executive Committee in the order listed on the agenda for the meeting;
- d. Conduct all meetings in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order and these bylaws;
- e. Appoint committees as required; and
- f. Perform other duties as requested by the Executive Committee.

#### **E. Executive Committee Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the RFHP Executive Committee to:

1. Coordinate with the NFHAP Board and its Fish Habitat Partnerships in the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
2. Support the development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation protocols for reservoir systems, as well as fish habitat conservation actions at national, regional and local levels
3. Promote planning efforts for fish habitat conservation among partners and stakeholders by providing direction to Regional Workgroups on funding availability, categories of potential projects, and criteria for their prioritization
4. Support and recommend partnership projects to the National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board for funding
5. Provide direction and input to partnership committees and Regional Workgroups, and creating RFHP ad-hoc task groups as needed
6. Support the Regional Workgroups and the projects of the partnership with financial and/or staff resources as available
7. Participate in marketing efforts and information campaigns to garner additional resources to meet the RFHP objectives
8. Report to partners and stakeholders on the status and accomplishments of the RFHP
9. Establish and direct a Science and Data Committee to provide direction and support to the Executive Committee and the Regional Workgroups in the implementation of the strategic plan, the national reservoir assessment and database, monitoring, reporting, and performance assessment, and in the coordination of science and data related issues with the NFHAP Board, the Board's Science and Data Committee, and other Fish Habitat Partnerships
10. Establish and directing an Outreach and Communication Committee to further develop and expand the partnership, provide educational services, communicate the purpose, organization, activities and successes of the partnership to the public and policy makers, review and contribute to the development of policies impacting reservoir systems, and coordinate with and support Friends of Reservoirs
11. Establish other Committees as deemed necessary
12. Recruit and hire a full-time Coordinator to provide staff support to the Executive Committee, including dissemination of information, coordination and facilitation of actions and projects within the partnership, coordination of outreach activities, and pursuit of funding and grant opportunities
13. Establish and implement a national Friends of Reservoirs foundation and network

of affiliated Friends chapters to support the RFHP and to sustain its operations through volunteer recruitment and fund-raising

#### **F. Financial Management of the RFHP**

1. The Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership will be self-supporting through the contributions of the partnership members, grants, private donations and other gifts.
2. Virginia Tech will be the banking institution for the RFHP. It will hold and distribute at the direction of the Chair and the Executive Committee all funds granted or donated to the partnership.
3. Funds raised through Friends of Reservoirs Foundation shall be managed and distributed by that entity by the procedures and for the purposes set forth in its charter.
4. The Chair and the RFHP coordinator will have joint discretionary spending authority for expenses not to exceed \$1,000. For expenses in excess of \$1,000, the approval of one Vice Chair will be required in addition.

#### **G. Entities supporting the Executive Committee**

1. Staff - A full-time paid coordinator (supported by voluntary staff from partnering agencies and organizations) will manage partnership operations. The Chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, may accept additional staff or other support from other entities.
2. Science and Data Committee - The Executive Committee shall solicit information from the Science and Data Committee and incorporate that information, and other appropriate information, into the strategies and goals developed by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will support the Science and Data Team by providing necessary staff, funding, data and other resources needed to complete the national assessments and reports called for in the RFHP Strategic Plan.
3. Outreach and Communication Committee – The Outreach and Communication Committee shall establish and maintain a partnership website, expand partnership participation to all stakeholders, publicize and report on the partnership to policy makers and the public, maintain and publish newsletters and other publications promoting understanding and knowledge of the partnership, and establish, support and coordinate partnership activities with Friends of Reservoirs.
4. Fund Raising Committee – The Fund Raising Committee shall be responsible for identifying and pursuing sources of financial support for support of partnership programs and projects.
5. Project Selection and Ranking Committee – The Project Selection and Ranking Committee shall be responsible for establishing procedures and criteria for selecting and ranking projects for funding support by the partnership through the Executive Committee.

#### **H. Committees**

The Executive Committee may establish and otherwise manage other committees as needed to carry out the responsibilities of the Executive Committee. Such committees may include individuals who are not members of the Executive Committee.

**I. Board and Committee Expenses**

Executive Committee members and RFHP partners will not be compensated for their time working on the Executive Committee, other Committees or work groups on the behalf of the Executive Committee. This includes any expenses accrued while conducting business or traveling to meetings. Travel expenses generally should be borne by the agency or other entity that employs the Executive Committee, Committee, or work group member, but reimbursement arrangements may be made at the discretion of the Chair if funds for this purpose are available.

**J. Regional Workgroups**

Regional Workgroups will be selected, staffed, and supported by or in coordination with the four Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Southeastern-SARP, Northeastern, Midwest, and Western). Each Regional Association will organize and structure its respective Regional Workgroup to meet internal administrative requirements.

Regional Workgroups will be responsible for assembling stakeholders to guide development of local joint-venture projects that address fish habitat issues in reservoir systems described in the RFHP strategic plan.

Regional Workgroups will prioritize projects for submission to the Executive Committee for either national partnership funding or funding by the NFHAP. Criteria used to prioritize regional projects will be developed from the national assessment and project criteria guidelines developed by the partnership through its Executive Committee in consultation with the Science and Data and project selection and ranking Committees.

Regional Workgroups may, at any time, collaborate with reservoir managers and local stakeholders to develop and fund opportunistic projects through non-partnership funds. Additionally, Regional Workgroups will promote and communicate RFHP strategic plan goals and objectives and meet the data needs established by the Executive Committee and those required by the NFHAP.

**K. Friends of Reservoirs**

The Friends of Reservoirs national foundation and affiliated network of local chapters shall constitute the primary support institution for the RFHP. It shall provide the institutional means to include all stakeholders with interests in healthy reservoirs in the support, implementation, and governance of the RFHP. The role of Friends of Reservoirs shall be four-fold:

- Provide supporters options to participate in the operation of the RFHP and to influence its governance through interaction with the Executive Committee, staff, and Regional Workgroups on the setting of reservoir conservation priorities, selection of fish habitat conservation projects, and long-term partnership goals and objectives
- Provide sustainable funding for RFHP operations and project implementation

- Help develop volunteer corps to support project implementation
- Facilitate delivery of outreach for public education, awareness, and service.

#### L. Procedure to Amend Charter

The Executive Committee may decide to amend this charter by consensus or a two-thirds vote of all members present and voting. Any proposed change to this charter must be noted on the draft agenda that is sent out at the time the meeting is scheduled.

### Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership Governance Structure

