

Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming RFHP General Membership Meeting

The first general meeting of the RFHP since its formal designation as a Fish Habitat Partnership last November will be held at Lake Conroe, just outside of Houston, TX, on September 30 – October 2, 2010, in conjunction with the 2010 Toyota Texas Bass Classic (TTBC). The TTBC is a professional bass fishing tournament that promotes fishing and conservation efforts by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The tournament will take place on September 30th and conclude October 3rd (Thursday-Sunday). Please make plans to attend the RFHP general body meeting at the TTBC – and, if possible, to stick around for the whole tournament and its many activities.

Our plans include committee meetings and a general meeting of the RFHP starting Thursday afternoon, September 30, 2010 and concluding Saturday morning, October 2, 2010. There will be an organized field visit, as well as great recreational opportunities associated with the TTBC during the course of the weekend. So, bring the family, too. In addition, the RFHP will support an information booth at the event. Plans are also underway for various press and other outreach events.

Lodging for this action-packed weekend will be at the Holiday Inn Express Suites in Conroe, TX. Please make your reservations now – even if you are uncertain whether you will be able to attend. Reservations cost nothing and can be cancelled up to the last day. Additionally, the RFHP has been given discount rates on rooms that can be held only through mid-May. When making reservations please request a room in the “Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership” block to obtain the group rate. Conroe, TX, is only a short drive (<25 miles) from the Bush Intercontinental Airport (just North of Houston). See the official meeting announcement on the web for more information about the TTBC. Additional details, including an agenda, will be forthcoming in the May newsletter.

Please attend if you can. This will be the official launch of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership and many of its key activities. Stay tuned for more details.

Chair’s Forum

My neighbor, Dick Tracy (No joke - that is his name!) loves to fish Greers Ferry Lake, a 35,000 acre Corps of Engineers’ flood control/hydropower reservoir in north central Arkansas. He has a bass boat that cost more than my first house. He occasionally fishes the local bass tournaments. Each summer he rents a cabin for his family and spends a week catching rainbow trout below the dam. He canoes and swims the Little Red River above the lake with his church group. Every spring he pours through the new Bass Pro Shop catalogue seeking the newest lure or gadget to make him a better catcher of fish. I

kid him that he spends more on fishing than the GNP of some small countries. He sheepishly grins and reminds not to let that on to his wife Andrea.

The Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership was formed with Dick Tracy, and the millions like him, in mind. They enjoy fishing; and they don't draw clear distinctions between the reservoir, its headwaters or its tailwaters. To the layman all these areas are valuable parts of the landscape and deserve clean water and good habitat for healthy fish. The millions of outdoors people like Dick are willing to spend considerable money on licenses, rods, reels, boats and tackle to enjoy their sport. They are also willing to spend money on good habitat.

Clearly, reservoirs are not natural parts of the landscape - they are man-made constructs providing societal goods such as flood control, electricity, irrigation and drinking water. But these distinctions are insignificant when reservoirs are placed in the larger context of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan goals. The challenge before the RFHP is to integrate reservoirs and their management into watershed habitat restoration using a holistic, system-level approach. Our technical challenge is to assess and classify reservoir impairments on a national scale to inform and drive science-based funding allocation decisions. Our social challenges are multiple; not the least are galvanizing and enabling local coalitions of anglers, boaters, NGOs and government agencies to conduct quality reservoir habitat projects. We must collaboratively leverage our strengths with that of our sister Fish Habitat Partnerships to address situations where a reservoir's societal functions clearly overlap other ecosystem values.

This brings me back to my neighbor, Mr. Tracy. He uses Greers Ferry Lake, the tailwaters and the streams above the lake. In his mind, the three blend into one to add quality to his life. He is a part of the RFHP equation; like most people, he values what he uses. We need to involve and think much like my neighbor to make the most of the opportunity before us to do good work for the nation's reservoir systems.

Michael Armstrong
RFHP Executive Committee Chair

RFHP Website Updated

The website committee for the RFHP is pleased to announce a fresh and updated look to the partnerships' website (www.reservoirpartnership.org). The site has been expanded and further populated with key information and documents. More improvement is yet to come over the next month. If you have questions concerning the website, or ideas for its improvement, please contact John Taylor (www.John.Taylor@tpwd.state.tx.us) or Cecilia Lewis (www.Cecilia.Lewis@fws.gov).

Executive Committee Approves RFHP Charter and Other Business

At its March 31st teleconference meeting, the RFHP Executive Committee approved the Charter for the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership. The section of the Charter addressing Friends of Reservoirs, however, was earmarked for further revision by RFHP staff. Those revisions have been made and will be submitted to the executive committee for approval in early April. Once approved, the completed Charter will be posted on the partnership website.

Other highlights of the meeting of the Executive Committee include:

- The Bass Pro Shops design staff has generously prepared multiple RFHP logos for consideration by the executive committee
- Creation of a 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation is now underway with the assistance of Bass Pro Shops legal department
- Formation of Regional Workgroups is underway
- The target for launching the Friends of Reservoirs (FOR) foundation is set for the Lake Conroe meeting, September 30 – October 2, 2010. The Executive Committee approved moving forward on Friends of Reservoirs. The proposed name of the foundation will be Friends of Reservoirs – *Partnerships for Fish Friendly Waters*; The FOR foundation will raise funds for the RFHP and serve as a vital outreach arm to the partnership.

Highlights from the Science and Data Committee meeting, Asheville, NC

The Science and Data Committee met on Friday, February 26, 2010, in conjunction with the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society spring meeting in Asheville, NC. Jeff Boxrucker, Steve Miranda, Gary Whelan, and Reed Green gave presentations on the Science and Data Committee's activities with an emphasis on the RFHP national reservoir assessment and, more specifically, work underway by Reed and Steve to extend and complete that reservoir assessment and classification. The highlights of the meeting are as follows:

- Jeff Boxrucker gave an overview of the results from the preliminary test survey assessment sent out to eight pilot states. The test survey was used to identify reservoir characteristics that can be used as indicators for overall reservoir condition.
- Steve Miranda's initial research on reservoir impairments identified five major reservoir impairment factors. Miranda will broaden the project by expanding the 14 question survey to include questions on the 1) tailrace, 2) fish assemblage and fisheries, and 3) reservoirs > 250 acres. (Miranda's Asheville presentation is available on the RFHP website at www.reservoirpartnership.org.)

- Reed Green presented a list of the databases that the RFHP is currently using for its assessment. He also presented a list of potentially useful datasets and the last known updates to those databases. Reed encouraged group discussion around the types of data we have, current data needs, and data analysis.
- Gary Whalen gave his perspective on which database sources would provide the type of information that should be included in the RFHP assessment. He also gave a synopsis of the types of variables that would be best suited for a timely reservoir condition assessment.
- Pete Esselman, from the NFHAP Science and Data Committee, gave a presentation on the progress of the NFHAP national habitat assessment. During his presentation he shared examples of the databases that the committee uses as well as information on how the committee has analyzed that data. Peter made a few suggestions about how the RFHP should go about collecting and analyzing data to ensure data standardization and compatibility with the NFHAP's national assessment.

Please visit the RFHP website for complete meeting notes and presentations from the Science and Data Committee meeting in Ashville, NC.

Report of the Science and Data Committee

The Science and Data Committee (SDC) of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership is charged with developing an assessment and classification system to provide status on the health of reservoirs within functionally similar reservoir categories. The SDC chose to address this charge by merging two separate assessment efforts into a final product. Dr. Steve Miranda (Mississippi State University) is modifying a study on reservoir habitat impairments. He recently reported his findings in the *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* journal. The index used in the impairment assessment is based on a survey questionnaire that scores the impairment level of 14 physical and chemical variables. The survey questionnaires were sent to reservoir managers across the United States. Dr. Miranda will expand the current survey format to include additional questions regarding tailwater issues and fishery measures, and to encompass all reservoirs > 250 acres nationwide. Dr. Reed Green (U.S. Geological Survey) is developing the second component of the assessment system: His efforts focus on compiling physical, chemical, and biological data on select metrics on reservoirs > 250 acres nationwide. Preliminary SDC efforts found that some data were simply unavailable and, if available, were inconsistent between states due to differences in data collection methodologies. To overcome these obstacles, SDC plans to use data sources published on-line that give the broadest coverage of reservoir types.

SDC met recently in Asheville, NC to review progress made to date on the assessment efforts. Ideas on expanding the impairment survey to refine previous

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assessment parameters and include measures of the fishery were exchanged. Meeting attendees also discussed ideas on how to mesh the reservoir impairment survey with the metrics being gathered from existing databases and then use that information to develop the a reservoir classification system.

Difficulties with inconsistencies in existing databases were identified but a way forward was agreed upon. Dr. Green has explored the NID+ and some of the USGS national database(s) to date and found that we are missing some needed parameters. We propose to review as many national databases as possible to try to obtain as much consistent data on a broad array of reservoirs as possible. No single database is going to have all of the needed information, so we will have to retrieve information from multiple databases and combine them into one data set. We will then look at which parameters yield the most consistent data on the widest array of reservoirs and which parameters are most suitable for developing a reservoir classification system.

Reservoirs < 250 acres and those not providing public access will not be addressed. Physical variables that are consistent among all reservoirs will be identified. Anthropogenic datasets (watershed attributes, LULC, population, WWTP's, nutrient loading, etc.) will be examined separately. Ultimately, our intent is to connect the anthropogenic data and the metrics for the physical classification with the impairment classification to identify common impairments across reservoir-types. Ultimately grouping reservoirs by impairments should help leverage funding across a geographic scale and lead to recommendations for rehabilitation techniques that would be useful on a broad geographical scale.

We need your help to identify databases which may have information useful for this assessment. Databases identified to date are:

- EPA-sponsored National Eutrophication Survey conducted in the 70's
- USACE NID (National Inventory of Dams)
- USGSE2rf1
- SPARROW
- <http://ida.water.usgs.gov/RESSED/>
- <http://www.usbr.gov/projects/>

If you know of any additional databases that would be useful to this effort please forward that link to me. Also, please share this with any colleagues that you feel may have ideas for additional data sources. Thank you.

Jeff Boxrucker
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RFHP Calendar for 2010

April

1st – Executive Committee conference call

13th – Midwest Glacial Lakes Fish Habitat Partnership meeting

- Jeff Boxrucker will give an overview of current RFHP Science and Date Committee activities
- Presentation will be given via WebEx

May

6th – Fisheries Administrators Section of the American Fisheries Society (AFS)

- Jeff Boxrucker will give a presentation on the history of the RFHP and current partnership activities. He will also give a brief summary of the status of the National Reservoir Assessment.

12th – SARP Meeting, RFHP overview presentation

- Jeff Boxrucker will give a presentation on the history of the RFHP and current partnership activities. He will also give a brief summary of the status of the National Reservoir Assessment.

June

22nd – Executive Committee Meeting, Big Cedar Lodge, Ridgedale, MO

September -October

30th to 2nd – General Meeting of RFHP Partnership at Lake Conroe, TX in conjunction with 2010 Toyota Texas Bass Classic

November

4th – RFHP will lead two moderated sessions at the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) 30th International Symposium, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. See the NALMS website for more details.

December

12th – 15th – Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota

- Jeff Boxrucker will give a presentation on the interactions between the RFHP and the Midwest Fish Habitat Partnerships

Please submit upcoming events to Cecilia Lewis (Cecilia_Lewis@fws.gov).

Last Word

The RFHP is continuing to grow and develop as we move through 2010. As the final pieces of the partnership begin to take shape, it is imperative that we maintain the momentum that led up to the creation of the RFHP. Across the United States, regional workgroups are starting to form and their success is inextricably tied to state resource agencies and the work of dedicated individuals on the ground. Over the next several months, the final pieces of the partnership will be put in place and the regional workgroups will begin developing their organizational structures. With that in mind, please be encouraged to contribute your time, talents, and/or resources to helping develop your region's RFHP Workgroup and thank you for your interest and commitment to the RFHP and its mission.

Contact Information:

For additional information regarding RFHP and its activities, please contact: Mike Armstrong (mlarmstrong@agfc.state.ar.us) or Cecilia Lewis (Cecilia.Lewis@fws.gov). Please share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested in the partnership.