

RESERVOIR FISHERIES HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

RFHP News and Updates

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National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board Designates RFHP a Fish Habitat Partnership

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board met October 7-8, 2009, at the Arlington, Virginia, headquarters of The Nature Conservancy to consider, among other items, seven applications for Fish Habitat Partnership, including the application submitted by the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership. Two weeks earlier the NFHAP staff had notified the RFHP of its recommendation to approve our application without conditions. Following a brief presentation by Phil Durocher, chair of the interim RFHP Steering Committee, the Board unanimously accepted the staff's recommendation to approve our application, asking only that we develop a plan for outreach to and inclusion of Native American tribes.

2010 Funding for the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

NFHAP Staff reported to the Board at the October 7-8 meeting the intent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to award to all Fish Habitat Partnerships funds from its anticipated \$7.1M 2010 NFHAP congressional appropriation. Both the Senate and House appropriation bills include this amount – which, for that reason, should survive the conference reconciliation process. The Service has not made a final decision on the exact allocation of these funds, but it does appear the RFHP will receive at least \$90K for 2010.

In addition to this award, Bass Pro Shops will contribute \$25K to the RFHP in 2010, on top of the generous contributions it has already made.

There is one piece of negative news: the RFHP did not succeed in its application for a 2010 Multistate Conservation Grant. Unlike last year, AFWA did request the partnership to submit a full application. Unfortunately, the pool of available MSCGP funds was down 50% percent for the 2010 funding cycle because of the National Survey. Had there been full funding our application would have been granted. We are determined to resubmit an application next year if we are invited.

The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Action Plan

The centerpiece of the RFHP's application for Fish Habitat Partnership was its draft Strategic Plan. Many members of our partnership spent long hours in the weeks following the May, 2009, Big Cedar Lodge meeting at Table Rock Lake to make the plan a reality. Everyone is encouraged to read it. It can be found at and downloaded from our website (www.reservoirpartnership.org) and the website of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (www.fishhabitat.org).

The plan will be finalized over the coming year, giving everyone an opportunity to help polish it. In particular, we must complete our reservoir assessment and project prioritization procedures by the end of 2010.

RFHP Governance Structure to be Fully Implemented

The Strategic Plan sets forth, among other things, the permanent governance structure of the partnership. All RFHP participants should examine this section of the plan in detail. The current interim Steering Committee is now implementing the first phase of the new governance structure: formation of the Executive Committee, which is comprised of 4 State members from the four AFWA regions, four federal members from four agencies, four NGO members, and three industry members. Once the Executive Committee is in place, the remaining governing elements of the partnership will be addressed: the four Regional Workgroups and the designated subcommittees. We anticipate the Executive Committee to be in place and operational by late January, 2010.

Outreach Subcommittee

Phil Durocher will be calling a meeting of the interim Outreach Subcommittee in late October. Our initial outreach to the States was immensely successful: 33 States have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the RFHP. It is now time to reach out to the remaining 17 States. In addition, we must also reach out to a wide community of other business, NGO, and community interests – as well as Native American Tribes. All members of the partnership are asked to consider joining this outreach effort. A notice of the upcoming teleconference meeting will be sent to everyone within the next week. Please consider helping out. Questions concerning the Outreach Subcommittee, or a request to be part of it, should be submitted to Phil Durocher (Phil.Durocher@tpwd.state.tx.us). All MOUs and letters of support for the RFHP are available as part of the partnership's Fish Habitat Partnership application. Contact Karl Hess (Karl_Hess@fws.gov) or the NFHAP website (www.fishhabitat.org) to get a pdf of that document.

Science and Data Subcommittee

The Science and Data Subcommittee assembled the framework for the Strategic Plan and took the first steps in defining and implementing a national reservoir assessment and reservoir classification framework. Much work still remains to be done on both fronts. The Science and Data Subcommittee will schedule a teleconference at the end of October to lay out the next steps for completing the reservoir assessment and classification. Please consider being part of this critical next step. A notice will be sent to all RFHP members once the teleconference is scheduled. Individuals seeking additional information on the Science and Data Subcommittee should contact Jeff Boxrucker (jboxrucker@odwc.state.ok.us).

Inquiries on Next Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership National Meeting

A number of RFHP members have asked when and where the partnership will hold its next national meeting. That decision must await the selection and seating of the new Executive Committee. However, the outgoing Steering Committee will recommend to the Executive Committee that it schedule a national meeting for late Spring or early Summer, 2010, and report to the membership once the dates for that meeting are set. As many of you have noted, much has happened in the intervening months since Big Cedar Lodge. We have new issues and an action agenda that must be addressed as soon as possible. Once a decision is reached on the next meeting – hopefully by early February – a notice will be sent out to everyone.

Eddies Magazine Article on Reservoir Partnership

The summer edition of **Eddies Magazine**, a quarterly publication of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, includes *Dancing with Reservoirs* (page 12), an article that highlights and describes the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership. The link to it is: <http://www.fws.gov/eddies/pdfs/EddiesSummer2009.pdf>.

Last Word

The promise of the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership is great. Our draft strategic plan sets forth a compelling vision and an ambitious plan of action for the next five years. We are in the critical formative stage of our effort. It is exciting, it is challenging, and it is a substantial responsibility driven by high expectations for our future. Our partnership builds on almost three years of hard work identifying who we are and what we propose to do. What comes next depends on all of us working together to meet the goals and objectives we have set forth in our strategic plan. The engagement of all of us in some aspect of the partnership is essential if it is to succeed as we hope. Please consider actively participating in the partnership through its subcommittees. Two of those subcommittees will meet within the next few weeks. Other subcommittees will undoubtedly be formed. Participate, engage, and make this partnership work for fish habitat conservation nationwide!

Contact Information:

For additional information regarding RFHP and its activities, please contact: Phil Durocher (Phil.Durocher@tpwd.state.tx.us) or Karl Hess (Karl_Hess@fws.gov). Please share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested in the partnership.