



# USDA Forest Service Update

August 2011

## Subject: Forest Service Contributions to the Implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

---

**Issue:** The Forest Service is actively involved with the majority of the 17 established Regional National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) partnerships.

### **Key Points:**

- Partnerships with which FS is involved include: Western Native Trout Initiative, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP), Great Lakes FHP, Midwest Glacial Lakes FHP, Driftless Area Restoration Effort, Atlantic Coastal FHP, Southwest Alaska Salmon HP, Kenai Peninsula FHP, Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon HP, Ohio River Basin FHP, Southeast Aquatic Restoration Partnership, Reservoir FHP, California Fish Passage Forum, Great Plains FHP, Fishers & Farmers Partnership and Hawaii FHP.
- The Chief of the Forest Service, represented by the Director, holds one of the five seats on the board reserved for the federal agencies.
- Many of the priority actions emerging from these Regional Partnerships benefit aquatic habitats, water quality, and water resources on National Forests.
- In FY11, the Forest Service contributed significantly to NFHAP by providing:
  - Over \$37 million in direct program funds to were allocated to improve stream and lake habitat in FY 11. These funds are matched with other FS programs and external partnership contributions to complete hundreds of collaborative projects.
  - \$10 million of Federal Highway Funds are provided for the Forest Service to enhance fish passage on all Forest Service roads in each region.
  - Legacy Roads and Trails funding, decreased from \$90 million to \$50 million in FY11, has objectives to improve watershed condition and aquatic habitat, and create jobs, and achieves a significant amount of aquatic organism passage.
- In April 2011, NFHAP released their report *Status of Fish Habitats in the United States*, which used GIS analysis to assign watersheds and estuaries a risk of current habitat degradation ranging from very low to very high. These results allow comparisons of aquatic habitats across the nation and within 14 sub-regions. The results also identify some of the major sources of habitat degradation that plague waterways across the nation.
- The FS lands are generally presented as at low risk of habitat degradation in the NFHAP report due to the relative scarcity of the sources of degradation on NFS lands (e.g. urban/human settlement, agriculture, and point source pollution).

**Background:**

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) is a national investment strategy to maximize the impact of conservation dollars on the ground. Under the Action Plan, Federal, state, and private funds will be the foundation for building regional partnerships that address the Nation's biggest fish habitat challenges. This is the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of fish habitat decline, not just the symptoms.

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Act which would provide for up to \$75 million each year to fund science-based conservation projects and implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan was introduced in June 2011 in the Senate.

The Forest Service manages 220,000 miles of stream habitat and over 2 million acres of lake and reservoir habitat. National Forest System land includes many of the nation's headwater streams, a large number of reservoirs, and many critical habitats that serve as refugia and strongholds, particularly for native fish, recreationally valuable sport fish, and other important aquatic organisms. The Forest Service is focused on implementing the strategic priorities of the NFHAP – directing its resources towards accomplishing priority work in the priority places.

**Contact:**

Anne Zimmermann, Director Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air & Rare Plants, 202-205-1671  
Amy Unthank, Fish Program Leader, 202-205-0951, aunthank@fs.fed.us