



2017 Executive Summary

ACFHP has continued to help restore and protect fish habitat through on the ground conservation projects along the coast, working on science and data initiatives, and collaborating with partners to address fish habitat concerns in 2017.

The Partnership spent the first half of the year finalizing their five-year Conservation Strategic Plan and complimentary two-year Action Plan, both of which were released in July. These plans contain new conservation, science and data, outreach and communication, and financial objectives and strategies based on subregional priority habitats and threats.

The 2017 - 2021 Conservation Strategic Plan updates and revises ACFHP's first conservation strategic plan, which covered the 2012 - 2016 time frame. Some of the Partnership's accomplishments during this period can be found on page 5 of the new plan. Most notably, ACFHP has contributed over \$400,000 directly to conservation projects, leveraging an average of \$4 for each ACFHP restoration dollar. This has helped to open 75 river miles and restore almost 25 acres of priority fish habitat, adding an estimated \$41 million in economic value to the Atlantic coast annually*.

The 2017 - 2019 Action Plan has identified 32 specific actions to be taken to advance a subset of objectives and strategies listed in the Conservation Strategic Plan. These actions will be carried out by ACFHP and its partners.

*Calculation based on economic valuations from Charbonneau and Caudill, 2010. Conserving America's Fisheries: An Assessment of Economic Contributions from Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Arlington, VA. <https://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2011/pdf/fisherieseconomicreport.pdf>

On the Ground Conservation

ACFHP has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the eighth consecutive year to fund two new on-the-ground restoration projects in 2017. One project is located on the Sheepscot River in Maine, and will remove both the Coopers Mills Dam and a section of the Head Tide Dam. This work is being led by the Atlantic Salmon Federation and will restore access to 71 river miles for federally endangered Atlantic salmon and 11 other migratory fish species. The North Carolina Coastal Federation is leading the second project, which will restore oyster reefs and estuarine shoreline in Bogue Sound, North Carolina. The Federation will work with volunteers to restore 300 linear ft. of fish habitat, providing valuable nursery grounds for species such as black sea bass and red drum, as well as foraging areas for summer flounder and other trust species.

Science & Data

ACFHP has been working with researchers from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to improve our understanding of the relationship between black sea bass abundance and habitat characteristics in the Mid-Atlantic region. The work is funded by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and data will be collected through 2018.

ACFHP continues its progress on our NOAA-funded initiative to characterize fish habitat conservation areas through GIS mapping and analysis for the southeast region of the U.S. from North Carolina to Florida. The resulting maps will help ACFHP identify where best to invest effort and future NFHAP funds. Species of concern, data layers, and metrics have all been selected, and the analysis and mapping is currently underway.

