



# CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN 2020-2021





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# 2020-2021 ACTION PLAN

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The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) 2020 – 2021 Action Plan is a subset of the 2017 – 2021 ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan. It contains a subset of objectives, strategies, and related actions that can be accomplished over the course of a two-year period. These actions will be carried out by the ACFHP Coordinator or Action Lead, with the help of subgroups as necessary.

*Steve Hillebrand, USFWS*



# A. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

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**Conservation Objective 1: Work with partners to protect, restore, or maintain resilient Subregional Priority Habitats (using strategies outside of fish passage) to optimize ecosystem functions and services to benefit fish and wildlife.**

**Strategy A.1.1:** Support on-the-ground conservation projects that protect, restore, or maintain Subregional Priority Habitats (outside of fish passage).

**Action 1:** Allocate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funding to annually support a minimum of one project that promotes/supports restoration, protection, and resiliency of Subregional Priority Habitats and supports our coastal communities.

**Action 2:** Develop a subcommittee to work with the Coordinator to submit a minimum of one funding proposal annually outside of USFWS-National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) funding to support projects that increase the resiliency of Subregional Priority Habitats.

**Action 3:** Support four on-the-ground conservation projects annually through endorsement by ACFHP.

**Action 4:** Assist partners in developing sub-regional habitat focus areas to support coordinated/scalable action (e.g. contribute our mapping products and expertise to assist in designating National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Habitat Focus Areas).

**Strategy A.1.3:** Promote the use of best management practices (BMPs) for protection and restoration of Subregional Priority Habitats.

**Action 1:** Compile, review, synthesize, and publicly share guides for implementing BMPs that support restoration, protection, and resiliency for priority habitats.

**Strategy A.1.4:** Work with partners to identify and conserve intact coastal habitats and buffers in need of protection.

**Action 1:** Promote the use of the Species-Habitat Matrix (Matrix) and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects through at least one webinar or presentation at a professional conference.

**Action 2:** Evaluate the effectiveness and usage of the Matrix and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects by partners/funding applicants and consider refining the products/outreach for the products as needed based on feedback.

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**Conservation Objective 3: Coordinate with partners to restore, enhance, and maintain adequate and effective fish passage to ensure connectivity within and among required Subregional Priority Habitats.**

**Strategy A.3.3:** Work with partners to increase habitat connectivity within and among Subregional Priority Habitats by directly addressing physical barriers.

***Action 1:*** Allocate USFWS funding to annually support a minimum of one on-the-ground project designed to remove fish passage barriers.

## B. SCIENCE & DATA OBJECTIVES

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**Science and Data Objective 1: Work to achieve ACFHP Science and Data needs and fulfill science and data responsibilities established by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP).**

**Strategy B.1.1:** Review species composition of Species-Habitat Matrix to ensure it incorporates all pertinent species.

***Action 1:*** Consider new species for inclusion in the Matrix.

**Strategy B.1.2:** Produce a fine scale ACFHP region-wide GIS map, using existing data, that shows areas for priority habitat protection and restoration which can be used to better target our actions.

***Action 1:*** Complete the Northeast Fish Habitat Mapping Project.

***Action 2:*** Determine a methodology for applicants to use the Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects.

***Action 3:*** Compile the Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects into a seamless online data and mapping portal.

***Action 4:*** Participate on the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) teams.

**Strategy B.1.3:** Develop project tracking capabilities for the purpose of capturing and reporting conservation results to stakeholders.

***Action 1:*** Keep ACFHP projects in the NFHP project tracking database up to date.

**Strategy B.1.4:** Analyze monitoring data to assess success of fish habitat restoration projects.

***Action 1:*** Develop a process to monitor and track project success.

***Action 2:*** Partner with The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) on scoping the feasibility of developing submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) monitoring protocols for the Atlantic coast.

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**Science and Data Objective 2: Support ongoing research related to identifying or assessing fish habitat conservation activities and the threats to fish habitats.**

**Strategy B.2.1:** Identify and communicate pertinent challenges affecting fish habitat management and create a prioritized list of data gaps that would help ACFHP achieve its goals (i.e. spatial data for various life stages of priority fish species and/or habitat maps of subregional priority habitats).

**Action 1:** Compile various culvert assessments within the ACFHP region to prioritize culverts or regions as part of the project review process.

**Action 2:** Engage the ASMFC Management and Science Committee and NOAA Fisheries Species Climate Vulnerability Assessments to determine how to incorporate threats to species and habitats in the Matrix.

## C. OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

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**Outreach and Communication Objective 1:** Develop new and update current printed and digital content for communicating information that supports ACFHP's goals to our target audiences: scientists, resource managers, state and federal legislatures, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, media, and others as identified.

**Strategy C.1.2:** Upgrade and seek improvements to content/organization of the ACFHP website to make better use of available technology and enhance accessibility/usability by target audiences.

***Action 1:*** Update the ACFHP website, as needed.

***Action 2:*** Assess the current use of the ACFHP website and attempt to increase traffic to website and time spent on the site by a total of 20%.

**Strategy C.1.3:** Redesign outreach materials for consistency to optimize our messaging.

***Action 1:*** Develop a new display to complement new fact sheets, website, and other outreach materials.

***Action 2:*** Develop a block 'ad' that partners can use to promote ACFHP in their own newsletters.

**Strategy C.1.4:** Disseminate communication materials via social media platforms, the website, and participation at professional conferences/tradeshows to extend our coverage.

***Action 1:*** Keep the contact information for ACFHP partners and followers outside of the Steering Committee updated, as needed.

***Action 2:*** Identify the communications contact for each ACFHP partner and follow each other on Facebook and via newsletters to increase ACFHP exposure.

***Action 3:*** Attend and present a poster or talk at least once per year at a national conference.

***Action 4:*** Explore the feasibility of having 75% of ACFHP partners provide a link on their websites to ACFHP's website.

***Action 5:*** Develop a list of opportunities to exhibit the ACFHP PowerPoint and fact sheets at trade shows, workshops, and conferences, including incorporation of ACFHP slides into other presentations, as appropriate; promote ACFHP at a minimum of three opportunities per year.

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**Outreach and Communication Objective 2: Promote and broadly disseminate information about the products, projects, and services of ACFHP.**

**Strategy C.2.1:**      **Share the successes of the on-the-ground conservation projects that ACFHP supports with our target audiences.**

***Action 1:*** Develop a PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet on conservation moorings for use at aquatic-related venues.

***Action 2:*** Develop success data, healthy habitats, and success story infographics for sharing on social media.

**Strategy C.2.2:**      **Seek opportunities to expand media coverage of ACFHP products, projects, and services.**

***Action 1:*** Record, distribute, and post on the ACFHP website a webinar on how to use the Matrix and Northeast-Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping Projects for developing proposals.

***Action 2:*** Develop outreach material on the importance of water quality needed to maintain both healthy fish habitats and human health.

***Action 3:*** Identify two products/projects per year to pair with media venues to broaden media coverage and public exposure.

***Action 4:*** Develop a subcommittee to explore the possibility of hosting a coastwide fishing challenge.

***Action 5:*** Promote World Fish Migration Day via our website and Facebook page.

**Strategy C.2.3:**      **Facilitate the dissemination of BMPs and other fish habitat conservation information from partners to our targeted audiences.**

***Action 1:*** Evaluate the potential to conduct a symposium at an existing national conference on a timely topic of interest to fish habitat enthusiasts.

***Action 2:*** Provide links on ACFHP's website on topics of interest to target audiences (e.g. water quality parameters needed to maintain a healthy ecosystem, fish passage tools, riparian buffer BMPs, etc.).

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**Outreach and Communication Objective 3: Maintain relations with the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board (Board), fellow Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs), and Beyond the Pond.**

**Strategy C.3.1:** Promote the mission and accomplishments of ACFHP and exchange lessons learned with the Board.

**Action 1:** Participate in at least three Board meetings per year and present as opportunities allow.

**Action 2:** Participate on the NFHP Partnership Committee and in NFHP workshops as needed, and report highlights to the ACFHP Steering Committee biannually.

**Strategy C.3.2:** Enhance fish habitat improvement through cooperation with fellow FHPs.

**Action 1:** Work closely with Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture and the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership on Whitewater to Bluewater efforts, and report to the ACFHP Steering Committee on progress biannually.

**Outreach and Communication Objective 4: Seek avenues to promote the activities and products of partners.**

**Strategy C.4.1:** Publicize partners' actions and products via our communication platforms.

**Action 1:** Post an average of 5-10 times/month on Facebook about issues relevant to target audiences.

**Action 2:** Reshare at least 10 relevant posts coming from partner groups per year to target audiences on Facebook and/or the ACFHP website.

**Action 3:** Develop a short paragraph on our project endorsement process, the benefits of an ACFHP endorsement, and how to find more information to easily share with partners and like-minded organizations.

## D. FINANCE OBJECTIVES

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### Finance Objective 1: Maintain infrastructure and mechanisms for managing ACFHP finances.

#### Strategy D.1.1: Coordinate with ASMFC to maintain ACFHP operations.

**Action 1:** Work with the USFWS and NOAA to establish grant/cooperative agreements with ASMFC for annual ACFHP operational funding.

**Action 2:** Work with ASMFC and NFHP to apply for annual supplemental operational funding, including Multistate Conservation Grants.

**Action 3:** Work with ASMFC to apply for annual Wallop Breaux operational funding.

#### Strategy D.1.2: Coordinate with Beyond the Pond staff and partners to establish financial capacities for managing grant proposals and awards.

**Action 1:** Provide assistance and input to the development of Beyond the Pond infrastructure by attending at least 75% of FHP calls and quarterly Board meetings.

### Finance Objective 2: Utilize NFHAP funding to achieve the greatest overall benefits for on the ground conservation and Partnership productivity.

#### Strategy D.2.1: Solicit and select high quality conservation projects through an annual request for proposals (RFP) process.

**Action 1:** Convene the USFWS-NFHAP project review subcommittee annually to evaluate proposals.

**Action 2:** Evaluate the success of the previous RFP cycle and provide the Steering Committee with recommended changes.

#### Strategy D.2.2: Enhance ACFHP's performance score in the annual NFHAP funding determinations.

**Action 1:** Complete the annual report to the USFWS and develop recommendations to maintain ACFHP's performance score for the Steering Committee.

#### Strategy D.2.3: Support federal legislation for NFHAP.

**Action 1:** Track legislation and regulations that may impact ACFHP operations and restoration activities; provide input on the effects of legislation, as needed.

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### Finance Objective 3: Leverage new funding for restoration projects and ACFHP operations.

**Strategy D.3.1: Adopt a working Business Plan.**

**Action 1:** Update the Business Plan periodically to accurately represent ACFHP's achievements.

**Strategy D.3.2: Implement the Business Plan and pursue private donors for funding.**

**Action 1:** Establish a fundraising and Business Plan implementation subcommittee.

**Action 2:** Conduct a fundraising and development training.

**Action 3:** Create a fundraising package and pitch script for approaching potential donors.

**Action 4:** Research donors, foundations, and companies across our geography to target for donations, including organization contacts to approach.

**Action 5:** Approach two potential donors.

**Strategy D.3.4: Identify and pursue new sources of operational funding.**

**Action 1:** Explore options for operational funding stability consistent with ACFHP Business Plan objectives.

**Action 2:** Apply to new sources of operational funding support.

**Action 3:** Develop an overhead percentage and strategy to enable ACFHP to expand its mission.

### Finance Objective 4: Fund projects for Science and Data and Communications and Outreach.

**Strategy D.4.1: Secure funding or in-kind support to develop Science and Data and Outreach and Communication priority materials and products.**

**Action 1:** Seek funding for developing SAV monitoring protocols along the Atlantic coast.

**Action 2:** Seek funding for fundraising and development training.

**Action 3:** Seek funding for future habitat assessment projects or any other priorities S&D has identified.

# ACFHP PARTNERS



