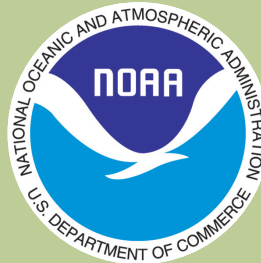




Business Plan

*Conserving coastal, estuarine, and
diadromous fish habitat*

Our Funders



Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

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Arlington, Virginia 22201-2196

703.842.0740

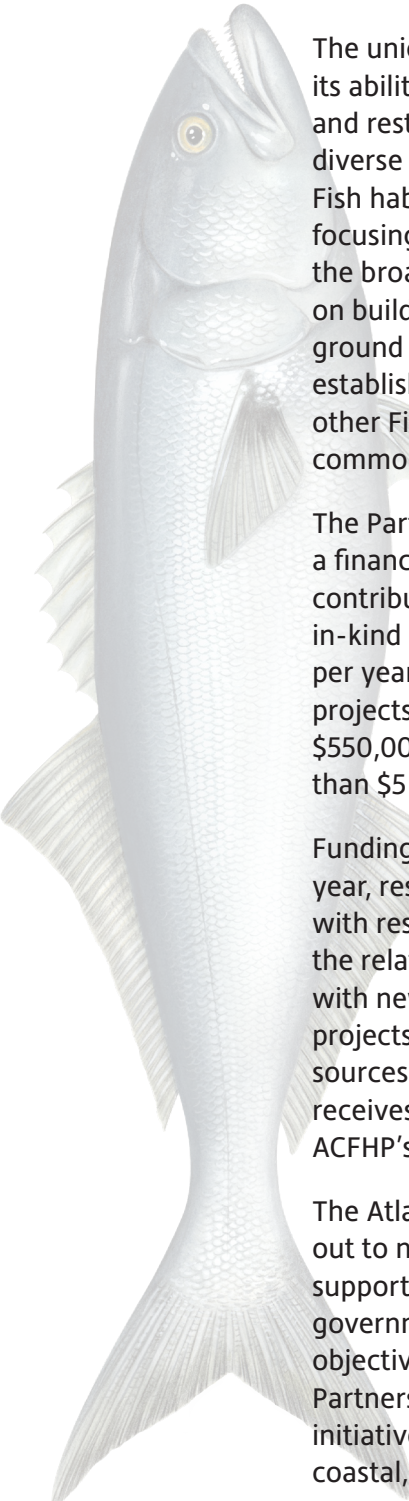
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www.atlanticfishhabitat.org

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COVER PHOTO: istockphoto.com/jocrebbin

Executive Summary



The unique value of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP or Partnership) is its ability to create a collective impact from many different aquatic habitat conservation and restoration programs along the Atlantic coast. The Partnership's strength lies in its diverse membership, notably the expertise of senior fish habitat scientists and managers. Fish habitat experts comprise the Partnership's Steering Committee and other committees focusing on Habitat Science, Project Selection, Communications, and Finance. Because of the broad reach of ACFHP's work, we can aspire to big goals. To date, ACFHP has focused on building habitat assessment and decision support tools to prioritize and select on-the-ground restoration projects that we directly fund or endorse. The Partnership has also established a strong track record of collaborating on regional and national scales with other Fish Habitat Partnerships and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives who share common goals in conserving fish habitat.

The Partnership has utilized its geographically broad and diverse membership to establish a financial strategy combining federal grants, matching funds, and significant in-kind contributions. Our annual operational budget ranges from \$75,000-\$110,000. In addition, in-kind contributions of committee members and administrative staff exceed \$100,000 per year. From these resources, we develop scientific tools, support habitat restoration projects, and fund our daily operations. From 2011-2017, the Partnership contributed over \$550,000 of federal government funds directly to restoration projects, matched by more than \$5 million of funding from local project partners.

Funding from ACFHP to support habitat restoration projects has averaged ~\$75,000 per year, resulting in two to four projects funded annually. However, there is room for growth with respect to the magnitude of on-the-ground restoration we can support compared to the relatively small operational support required to run the Partnership. In collaboration with new and existing partners, our financial goal is to distribute \$1 million to restoration projects over the next five years, from both non-government and federal government sources. The goal can be met by leveraging the operational support ACFHP consistently receives, and by building upon the 17 restoration projects funded to date that demonstrate ACFHP's overall impact on habitat conservation.

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership will achieve its financial goals by reaching out to new contributors to show the benefits of restoration projects we have already supported. ACFHP will also continue to build partnerships among citizen groups, government agencies, and scientists in order to address habitat threats and achieve objectives laid out in the [ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan](#). Our intent is to expand the Partnership's footprint both on-the-ground and among the local, state, and regional initiatives who share our vision of achieving healthy, thriving habitats to support Atlantic coastal, estuarine, and diadromous fishes.

Making the Connection

Habitat is the physical space an organism uses to fulfill its basic requirements for life, including food, water, oxygen, and shelter. Put simply, habitat is where something lives. Habitats like seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, and wetlands of sufficient quantity and quality to support all life stages are critical for healthy fish communities. In turn, sustainable recreational and commercial fisheries are dependent upon healthy habitats. The ACFHP region, from Maine to Florida, has a range of fish habitats that are important to coastal fisheries. These are areas where coastal fish species find food, grow, reproduce, or hide from predators. Protection and restoration of such areas are necessary to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources and the ways of life they support.

Thriving, healthy habitats and fish populations are also vital to the well-being of our society. Habitats provide clean water and shoreline protection from storms. They also provide us with food and reduce the impacts of climate change. Habitats are also essential for less tangible reasons, as anyone who has fished wild waters or canoed a tranquil stream can attest. Unfortunately, in many waters along the Atlantic coast, fish and the habitats on which they depend are in decline. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken to protect and restore aquatic habitats. Although significant gains have been made, they have not kept pace with impacts resulting from population growth and land-use changes. Given the diverse array of federal, state, tribal, local, and private jurisdictions, the need has never been greater for improved coordination and increased action for habitat conservation across boundaries and jurisdictions. That's where ACFHP comes in – we make the connection among different players in the region, working to connect people with fish and fish habitat along the Atlantic coast.

Are you interested in restoring and conserving coastal habitats and ecosystems for wildlife and people to enjoy for generations to come?

Join us by dedicating funding to a project you would like to see brought to fruition, or let us choose where to direct funds.

There's no donation too big or small.

Tax-deductible donations to ACFHP from private foundations and other groups can be made directly to the Beyond the Pond 501c3 by visiting the website (www.beyondthepondusa.com) and selecting 'Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership' from the drop down menu under 'Please Select a Cause,' or by contacting the ACFHP Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Havel, lhavel@asmfc.org.

Our Mission

To accelerate the conservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine, and diadromous fishes through partnerships between federal, tribal, state, local, and other entities.

Conservation Achievements

From the headwaters of coastal rivers to the offshore waters of the Gulf Stream, ACFHP brings diverse groups together to identify the causes of habitat loss, implement strategic restoration, and measure and communicate progress made through Partnership efforts. The end results of ACFHP's actions benefit not only a great number of fish species, from migratory to marine, but a large number of people as well. As a densely populated region in close proximity to some of the country's most beneficial and unique fish habitats, ACFHP's role in making the connection to maintain healthy fish habitat is vital. ACFHP affects positive change for over 130 fish species through on-the-ground habitat conservation.

ACFHP has supported restoration projects in 17 watersheds across 10 states from Maine to Florida. The projects have collectively opened 75 river miles (Figure 1) and restored 0.5 acres of riverine spawning habitat, 3 acres of oyster reefs, 2.4 acres of salt marsh and mangroves, and 19 acres of seagrass beds. In the past ten years, ACFHP brought together over 60 different entities representing federal, state, county, local, non-governmental, academic, and private interests to complete habitat conservation and restoration projects.

ACFHP remains focused on return per investment. From 2011-2017, the Partnership contributed over \$550,000 to 17 restoration initiatives in our region. Project costs totaled more than \$5 million, leveraging an average of \$9 for each ACFHP dollar (Figures 2 and 3). In return, the restoration work had a combined estimated economic value of more than \$41 million annually¹.

¹ 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>



Figure 1. The ACFHP restoration project on Shorey's Brook, Maine, before and after dam removal. Photos courtesy of the Great Works Regional Land Trust.

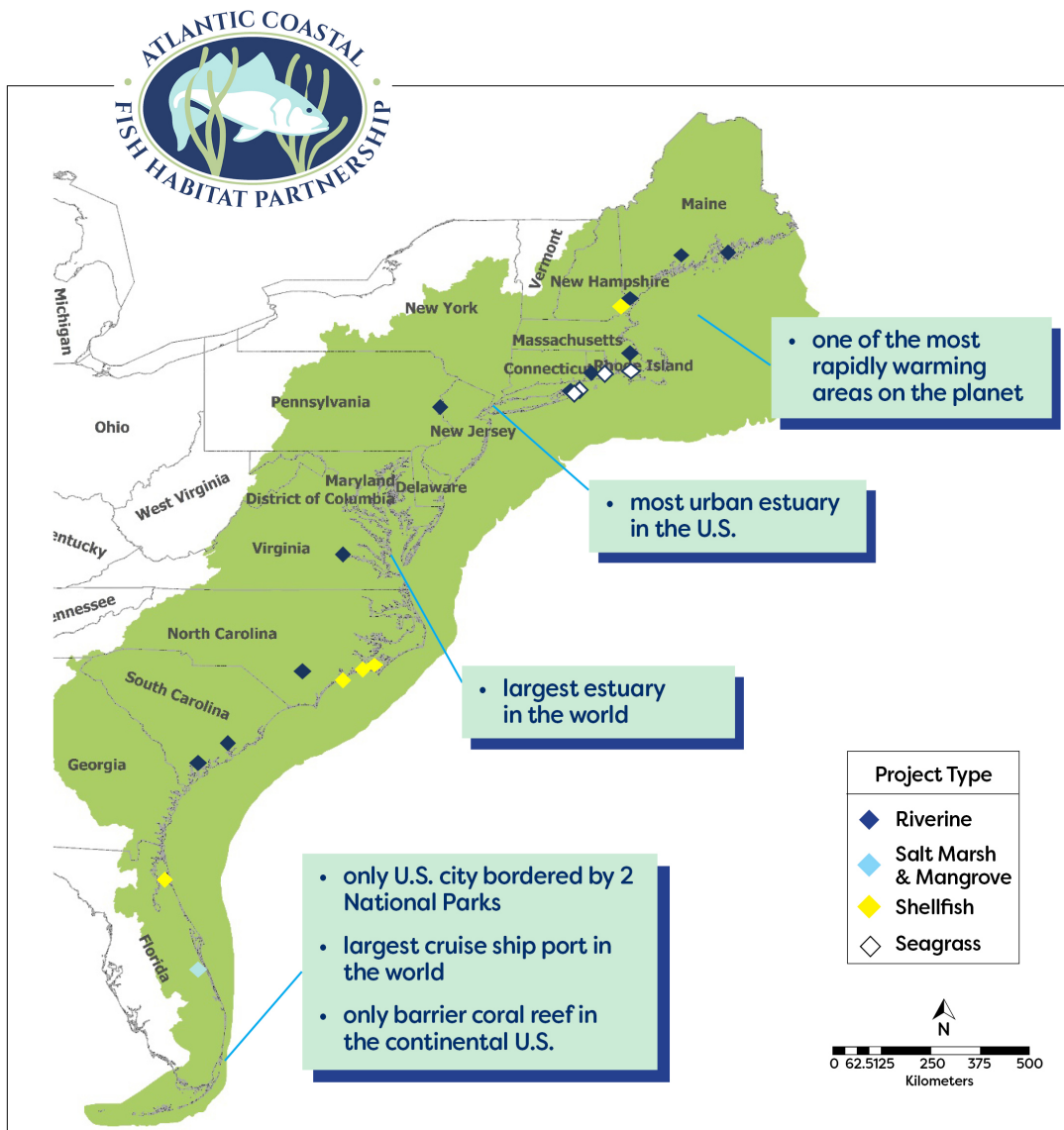


Figure 2. The ACFHP Region.

Making A Difference Together

If you or your organization are considering making a donation to a worthy cause, and are interested in improving fish habitat, look no further than ACFHP. Our proven track record of enhancing and restoring important fish habitat comes with the benefit of matching every dollar available to nine dollars from project partners to achieve our goals. The Partnership has access to a vast network of technical experts that can convert limited financial resources into result-oriented projects, from concept, to construction, and beyond. Our network extends from Maine to the Florida Keys, and from Appalachian mountain streams

to offshore reefs. Wherever you want to leave your mark, ACFHP can link partners together to compliment your goals.

Expanding fish habitat conservation success across our region is also a key function of the Partnership. For example, with seed money from NOAA, we tested new boat anchoring technology in Buzzards Bay (MA) to reduce impacts to eelgrass habitat. The innovative technology and expertise were then transferred to Narragansett Bay (RI) and Long Island (NY). Each project is highlighted in our outreach efforts, and starting a project is as simple as providing seed funding

Restoration Funding Recipients

- Atlantic Salmon Federation
- Town of Surry, Maine
- Great Works Regional Land Trust
- Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
- The Nature Conservancy
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- James River Association
- North Carolina Coastal Federation
- Cape Fear River Watch
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- University of North Florida
- Marine Resources Council of East Florida

and a stated goal that aligns with ACFHP’s strategic goals. For more information on previously funded on-the-ground restoration projects, see <http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/on-the-ground-projects/>.

Economic Importance

(from *Fisheries of the United States*, NOAA 2016 and NOAA 2014)

The ACFHP region is home to numerous high value recreational and commercial fisheries: American lobster (\$667 million) (M), sea scallops (\$486M), blue crab (\$143M), Atlantic menhaden (\$36M), and summer flounder (\$30M). Atlantic coast striped bass is the largest recreational fishery in the United States by weight of fish harvested at approximately 20 million pounds. The Atlantic coast also leads the nation in value of seafood (39%), aquaculture (41% of marine aquaculture), and recreational saltwater fishing (58% of trips

and 57% of catch). The port of New Bedford, MA has been landing the most seafood by value (\$327 million annually) every year for the past 17 years. See the tables on page 6 for more fishing details.

Sponsoring Institutions

ACFHP was formed along with 19 other regional Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) around the country through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) initiative and funding support to establish the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). Our activities are led by a Coordinator and directed by a Steering Committee comprised of professionals representing multiple agencies and organizations, including the states’ marine fisheries agencies, several NGOs, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), USFWS, and NOAA Fisheries.

Representatives from each institution provide expert guidance and either in-kind or direct funding support towards achieving ACFHP’s objectives. Total in-kind contributions exceed \$100,000 per year. The collective input allows for careful selection of valuable and cost-effective fish habitat restoration projects along the Atlantic coast, ensuring great ‘bang for the buck’ in

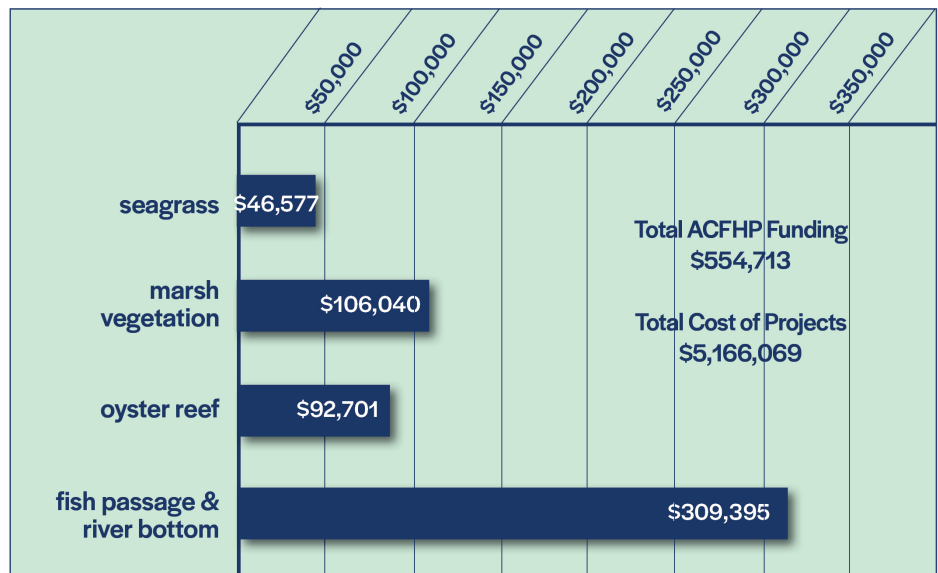


Figure 3. ACFHP restoration project funding distributions by habitat type (2011-2017).

using funds provided to the Partnership. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of signatory institutions to the ACFHP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Financial Management

The primary purposes for which ACFHP receives and distributes funds are on-the-ground restoration projects, and the day-to-day operations of the Partnership. Restoration funds are managed by the USFWS for projects sponsored by NFHAP dollars. Contracts are issued by USFWS directly to the local project recipient. There are also restoration projects supported by NOAA funds, for which ASMFC issues contracts to project recipients. Other unique projects, including habitat assessments, have been supported either by USFWS via ASMFC or Beyond the Pond contracts, or through external organizations such as the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. ASMFC is the administrative home for the Partnership, providing various forms of human resources, grants

management, scientific, and strategic support. Operational finances are managed by ASMFC with primary roles and responsibilities fulfilled in combination by the Finance Director (issuing contracts), Science Director (budget tracking), and the Partnership Coordinator (project management, grant reporting). To date, funding for operations has largely been obtained from Multistate Conservation Grants and other federal grants from USFWS (Figure 4). The ASMFC as part of its standard grant management practices produces monthly budget reports, including detailed tracking of all ACFHP grants and contracts. The Coordinator and Directors also complete and submit grant reports to all entities providing operational support. The Science Director provides biannual updates to the Partnership Steering Committee on the status of ACFHP finances. The Partnership also maintains a Finance Committee to guide fundraising activities.

ACFHP has the ability to connect with the private sector through its chapter membership in the

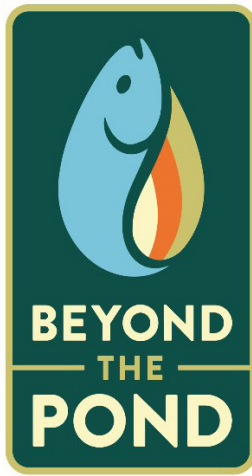
Recreational fishing along the Atlantic coast (NOAA 2014)

Location	Number of anglers	Number of fishing trips	Value added impact	Number of jobs created	Durable goods expenditures
New England	1.2 million	6.7 million	>1.6 billion	23,310	>\$2.2 billion
Mid-Atlantic	2.2 million	14.3 million	>\$3.1 billion	44,024	>\$4 billion
South Atlantic	2.7 million	17.6 million	>\$4.5 billion	69,165	>\$6.2 billion
Total	6.1 million	38.6 million	>\$9.2 billion	136,499	>12.4 billion

Commercial fishing along the Atlantic coast (NOAA 2014)

Location	Pounds landed	Landing revenue	Value added impact	Number of jobs created
New England	643 million	\$1.2 billion	>\$5.3 billion	163,229
Mid-Atlantic	591 million	\$471 million	>\$6 billion	133,513
South Atlantic	105 million	\$184 million	>\$7.3 billion	120,342
Total	1.339 billion	\$1.855 billion	>\$18.6 billion	417,084

National Fish Habitat Fund, Beyond the Pond, a 501c3 organization which received IRS approval in 2015. Beyond the Pond provides opportunities for additional funding sources via a non-profit framework. ACFHP was the first FHP in the country to bring in funds via the 501c3, through a grant, to support fish habitat research in the Mid-Atlantic. The Partnership can solicit donations from corporate entities and other contributors interested in supporting conservation work along the Atlantic coast, while realizing tax benefits in return. Donated funds can be leveraged with federal grant funds to support on-the-ground restoration projects, habitat research, outreach efforts, or day-to-day operations for the Partnership. Donations from private entities generally leverage between 1-3 times the donated amount. **Tax-deductible donations to ACFHP from private foundations and other groups can be made directly to the Beyond the Pond 501c3 via the website (www.beyondthepondusa.com) and selecting 'Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership' from the drop down menu under 'Please select a cause,' or by contacting the ACFHP Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Havel, lhavel@asmfc.org.** The ACFHP Steering Committee determines



how donated funds will be used among restoration projects, Partnership operations, or habitat assessment activities. Donors can specify how and where they would like their funds to be used, including fish habitat restoration projects in specific locations.

Structure and Governance

ACFHP operates under the National Fish Habitat Partnership umbrella. The National Fish Habitat Partnership consists of four distinct components: the National Fish Habitat Board, the 20 individual FHPs, the National Fish Habitat Fund (Beyond the Pond), and the Fish Habitat partners which include federal, state, local, public, and private entities and individuals who implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Like all FHPs, ACFHP is an independently organized and directed community formed around a particular geography, species, or system of interest - in this case, Atlantic diadromous, estuarine, and coastal fish species. Each Fish Habitat Partnership has a governance structure in place that reflects the range of all partners, and promotes joint strategic planning and decision making by the Partnership.

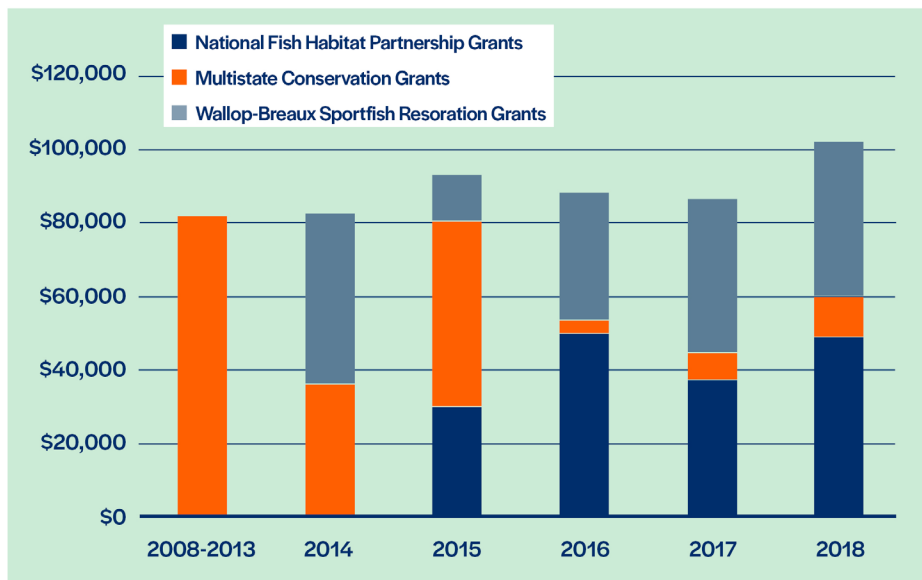


Figure 4. ACFHP operational funding support by grant source from 2008-2018.

Conservation Objectives

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE 1:

Protect, restore, or maintain resilient Priority Habitats to optimize ecosystem functions and services to benefit fish and wildlife.

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE 2:

Support maintenance of water quality and hydrology standards for functional Priority Habitats and improvement of water quality in degraded habitat areas.

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE 3:

Restore, enhance, and maintain adequate and effective fish passage to ensure connectivity within and among Priority Habitats.

The ACFHP Memorandum of Understanding formalized the Partnership in 2009, and was signed by 30 signatories, including 16 states responsible for managing Atlantic riverine and coastal resources. Since then, we have added new partners and updated our MOU.

The Steering Committee is the decision making body of ACFHP and has oversight responsibility for all ACFHP activities. The Partnership is self-directed, voluntary, and has no authority beyond that of its individual members. Each partner organization is allowed one voting member on the Steering Committee, with a cap of 25 voting members.

Working groups are organized by the Steering Committee, and members volunteer from partner organizations, or are appointed by the Steering Committee. Working group chairs are not required to be current Steering Committee members. This is to facilitate as much involvement from the Partnership

as possible and to share leadership opportunities. Established working groups include the Science and Data Working Group, the Communications Working Group, and the Finance Committee. The Steering Committee also creates ad-hoc working groups and subcommittees in order to address issues identified by the Partnership as they arise.

The ACFHP Charter and By-Laws define the overall function, organization, and membership of the Steering Committee and working groups. The Charter includes guidance for meetings management and a decision structure.

Prospect Analysis and Fundraising

The Partnership's programs and initiatives have a successful track record of achieving outcomes in habitat assessment, on-the-ground restoration prioritization and support, and outreach to a broad network of organizations with a common interest in conserving fish habitat. The Partnership's marketing strategy is comprised of a blend of professional networks among partners, professional conferences and trade shows, social media, a new website, and breaking news releases, including funding announcements for habitat restoration projects. In addition, Partnership representatives meet with foundations and conservation groups to solicit donations towards expanding the productivity and impact of ACFHP, in order to achieve our Conservation Objectives.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a donor or partner, please visit our website www.atlanticfishhabitat.org or contact Dr. Lisa Havel at lhavel@asmfc.org.

Appendix I. Signatories to the ACFHP Memorandum of Understanding

