



For Immediate Release

April 20, 2018

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Celebrations for World Fish Migration Day Focus Global Attention on Conservation Actions that Benefit Migratory Fish Species

Hundreds of events involving over 2,000 participating organizations highlight the importance of open rivers and migratory fish conservation

As part of a global initiative to highlight the importance of conserving migratory fish species and aquatic ecosystems, World Fish Migration Day 2018 will be celebrated by over 2,000 organizations on April 21, 2018. The celebration will feature more than 520 events worldwide in 62 countries, including nearly 100 events in the United States ranging from global inaugurations of “fishways” that help migratory fish bypass water infrastructure, dam removals, family educational events, kayak tours and river cleanup activities.

Migratory fish such as striped bass, shad, sturgeon, eel and salmon support the diets and livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. However, these fish face a number of threats, including man-made physical barriers that occur in our rivers and streams. Many old dams, weirs and other structures are obsolete and serve little to no benefit to our economy or communities, yet continue to block migratory fish paths, disrupt the natural flow of rivers, and cause further water quality problems that negatively affect communities downstream and upstream. Other barriers that still serve a valuable function lack the necessary adaptive infrastructure to help fish navigate around or over the obstruction.

On World Fish Migration Day (WFMD), partners are highlighting how, together, we can overcome these challenges to benefit fish populations, local economies, our health and the health of our communities. The public also has the opportunity to participate in a wide array of river and beach cleanup activities, forest restoration projects and wetland protection efforts. Local participants are offering kayak and river tours, educational programs and other [events](#).

Over the past 19 years the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (Service) National Fish Passage Program has worked with partners across the country to reconnect more than 52,000 river miles and 192,000 wetland acres improving potential for fish migration success in the United States.

These connected waterways are critical to healthy fisheries that must migrate for successful breeding and foraging.

“The health of our rivers and watersheds is inextricably linked to the well-being of our communities and citizens,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Principal Deputy Director Greg Sheehan. “By working with our partners to protect, restore and maintain free-flowing connected waterways, the Service helps improve water quality, provide efficient water delivery to agricultural users, reduce flooding, and increase safe recreational opportunities, all while maintaining healthy habitat for migratory fish populations.”

Many fish species must travel from rivers and streams to the sea and back to complete their life cycle. Other species migrate within their home rivers to reach critical habitats. Migration routes free of obstacles are crucial for many aquatic species’ survival. If they cannot reach their breeding and feeding grounds, the species will decline and eventually become extinct. This fate has already fallen on many fish species all over the world.

Around the globe, millions of people are working together to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems. In the United States, river restoration projects, such as the [Penobscot River Restoration Project](#), in New England have restored thousands of acres of pristine habitat for migratory fish populations. Despite efforts to protect native waterways, an alarming number of migratory fish species continue to decline.

WFMD partners such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy, are working together to conserve migratory fish and their habitats for future generations. Over the last 19 years the Service’s [National Fish Passage Program](#) has worked with partners such as states, local governments, and private landowners across the United States to improve fish migration success.

There are dozens of WFMD events in the United States highlighting fish passage, including the Service’s WFMD on the James River in Richmond VA. The Service is partnering with the Nature Conservancy in a daylong event with a canoe trip and tour of the fish way. Additional activities, such as the [Flat Fish migration project](#), will provide youth an opportunity to learn about benefits of fish passage projects for fish and other aquatic species.

For more information about World Fish Migration Day, including a complete list of events occurring in the United States, visit: www.worldfishmigrationday.com.

You can share your own World Fish Migration Day activities on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) using the hashtag #WFMD2018.