U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Fish Passage Program

Reconnecting Aquatic Species to Historical Habitats

How to Get Involved

What is the National Fish Passage Program?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish Passage Program is a voluntary, non-regulatory program that provides funding and technical assistance toward removing or bypassing barriers to fish movement.

Why get involved?

Millions of culverts, dikes, water diversions, dams, and other artificial barriers were constructed to impound and redirect water — all changing natural features of rivers and streams. Many dams are obsolete and no longer serve their original purpose. Culverts that funnel water beneath roads and train tracks often pose insurmountable barriers to fish.

Barriers prevent natural fish migrations, keeping them from important habitats for spawning and growth. As a result, some populations of native fish are gone and others are in serious decline.

The National Fish Passage Program is looking for partners. We depend on good will and solid working relationships with community-minded organizations, agencies and individuals to conduct fish passage projects.

What is a fish passage project?

A fish passage project can be any activity that directly improves the ability of fish or other aquatic species to move by reconnecting habitat that has been fragmented by barriers. Fish passage project proposals may be initiated by any individual, organization, or agency, in cooperation with the Service's Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices.

Ribbon-cutting dedication for a bridge replacement project in Michigan. USFWS photo.

What information is needed in the project proposal?

The following information is requested with all project proposals: title; associated planning documents (e.g. recovery plan, watershed management plan); partners; requested funds and matching contributions; and a project description that briefly identifies the need, problem, objective and methods, and includes the waterbody, location, river miles or acres opened up, and the species affected and how they are benefitted.

Before (left) and after (right) a road crossing restoration project on the Blue River, AZ. USFWS photos.

Example of a Proposal Project Description

The WATERBODY in STATE has historically produced abundant quantities of SPECIES. However since 1996, species returns have been below the established management goal. One contributing factor to these declines is the construction of a causeway in the 1960s. The causeway eliminated the natural access point for SPECIES returning from marine waters to spawn, forcing returning fish to enter the drainage via a more restrictive route. This project will breach the causeway with a bridge or culvert(s), restoring fish passage to 8 miles of spawning and rearing habitat. Prospective partners include NAMES.

How are fish passage projects funded?

By August of each year, project proposals must be provided to the local Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Office for submission into an internal database. Projects will be reviewed and prioritized on a Regional basis. Funding is administered through the Fish and Wildlife Service office that is coordinating the project with partners. The Program has flexibility from project to project but strives to achieve a 50% match, including in-kind contributions.

Projects that receive the highest consideration will be those that show the greatest ecological benefits; exhibit permanence of fish passage benefits; make use of the most current scientific knowledge and proven technology; evidence the greatest public support; and generate the maximum in matching contributions.

Fish passage projects are not eligible for funding if they are for any Federal or State compensatory mitigation, or if fish passage is a condition provided by existing Federal or State regulatory programs.

What are the reporting requirements for fish passage projects?

Photographs of pre- and post- project conditions must be provided to document habitat improvements and project success. Annual and final project reports must be completed, which identify species benefitted; miles of river or acres opened to fish movement; benefits such as improved access to spawning, rearing, or feeding habitats and improved water quality; and population response.

Who to contact?

Contact the appropriate Regional Coordinator if you are unsure of your nearest Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Office.

Regional Program Coordinators

Region 1 — Pacific
Douglas DeHart
503/231-2386 (FAX: 503/231-2062)
Douglas_DeHart@fws.gov

Region 2 — Southwest
Bob Pitman
505/248-6471 (FAX: 505/248-6845)
Bob_Pitman@fws.gov

Region 3 — Great Lakes, Big Rivers
Michael Hoff
612/713-5114 (FAX: 612/713-5289)
Michael_Hoff@fws.gov

Region 4 — Southeast
Tom Sinclair
404/679-7324 (FAX: 404/679-4141)
Thomas_Sinclair@fws.gov

Region 5 — Northeast
David Perkins
413/253-8405 (FAX: 413/253-8488)
David_Perkins@fws.gov

Region 6 — Mountain Prairie
Morgan Elmer
303/236-7862, x286 (FAX: 303/236-8163)
Morgan_Elmer@fws.gov

Region 7 — Alaska
Mike Roy
907/786-3925 (FAX: 907/786-3350)
Michael_Roy@fws.gov

For more information, contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration,
Branch of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 840
Arlington, Virginia 22203
703/358-1718

http://fisheries.fws.gov/FWSMA/fishpassage/

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1 800-344-WILD
http://www.fws.gov/

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