

## -National Conservation Need 1-

### Strengthening the National Fish Habitat Partnership

**Submitted By:** Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee

**Statement of Need:** The *National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP)* seeks to arrest and reverse declines to the quality and quantity of our nation's fish habitat in freshwater, estuarine, and marine waters. The National Partnership includes 18 regional Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) that develop and implement landscape scale approaches to protect, restore, and enhance priority fish habitats (natural and manmade) across the nation. All 50 states are engaged in one or more of the FHPs. The Partnership is guided by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and coordinated by the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) which includes AFWA and regional association representatives. FHPs implement the habitat-based conservation strategies and actions established by the Board and themselves and seek to complement other local, regional, and national priorities, particularly those contained in many State Wildlife Action Plans. The Multi-state Conservation Grant Program helps leverage other federal, state, and private resources to implement the priorities of the Board and the FHPs. Grant resources aid state, federal, tribal, private, academic, and other local partners that coordinate with or are members of FHPs to

- compile scientific information on fish habitats,
- establish strategic goals and objectives for fish species and habitats, and
- develop methods for and implement habitat conservation activities across jurisdictional boundaries and species ranges.

**Desired Proposals:** Grant recipients would compete for Multi-state Conservation Grants to:

- 1) coordinate and compile scientific assessment information on fish habitats consistent with the Board's *Science and Data Framework*, including addressing gaps identified by FHPs in the *2010 National Fish Habitat Assessment*,
- 2) implement data standards and mechanisms established by the Board,
- 3) develop measurable outcomes from conservation action for fish species and habitats and compile those outcomes for reporting to the Board and stakeholders,
- 4) develop or improve methods to identify priority places, issues, and projects to focus conservation action, and
- 5) monitor the performance and needs of FHPs nationwide in a manner that enables direct and consistent comparisons between FHPs.

Projects that create methods or systems that could be used by multiple FHPs, and/or those that could be adopted by the Board's Science and Data Committee for broad implementation, are preferred. Some examples of desired proposals would be those that include collaboration between Partnerships, and with Joint Ventures and/or Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** Desired outcomes of successful proposals would include:

- 1) production of scientific information that fills gaps identified through the national fish habitat assessment reported in *Through a Fish's Eye: Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010*,

- 2) coordinated implementation of *NFHP Conservation Strategies and Targets* adopted by the Board or FHPs for rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other aquatic habitats,
- 3) development of new analytical approaches to examine landscape conservation information to improve the Board's and FHP's understanding of fish habitat quality or condition,
- 4) coordinated implementation of conservation actions by FHPs with other aquatic habitat strategies and actions identified in State Wildlife Action Plans and other complementary plans,
- 5) engagement of additional organizations and individuals with interest in the conservation of target aquatic habitats with FHPs and the Board, and
- 6) support for and development of FHP capacity to achieve goals and objectives for 2015 that will be outlined in the revised Action Plan that is expected to be completed in early 2012.

### **-National Conservation Need 2-**

#### **Outdoor Heritage – participation, recruitment, and retention in hunting, fishing, boating, and conservation-related recreational activities; enhanced relations among state fish and wildlife agencies and the related industries**

**Submitted By:** Hunting & Shooting Sports Participation Committee, Angling & Boating Participation Committee, Fish & Wildlife Trust Funds Committee, and Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

**Statement of Need:** Participation in outdoor and conservation-related recreational activities is vital to strengthening the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to protect the nation's natural resources and preserve opportunities for future generations. Generally, participation rates in traditional outdoor recreational activities are on the decline, and this trend is expected to continue into the immediate future. The reasons for declining participation are varied and complex; however, all states recognize a need for action to stabilize or reverse this trend. Ramifications of declining participation include 1) a citizenry further disassociated from our conservation heritage, nature, and all related benefits, 2) a direct loss of funding to fish and wildlife conservation programs, and 3) detrimental effects on critical industries that support and are supported by hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and the shooting sports. Successful recruitment and retention efforts rely on maximizing crossover opportunities in outdoor recreation; developing partnerships to implement state, regional, and national programs; and sharing best practices and the financial and intellectual resources necessary to create needed innovations.

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals submitted under this NCN should address needs related to participation, recruitment, and retention of people in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and the shooting sports. This NCN also takes into consideration outdoor activities with valuable crossover applications. For example, approximately 73 million Americans participated in boating activities in 2006, and more than half of all anglers in 2006 fished from a boat.

Proposals submitted under this NCN should address one or more of the following: a) innovative tools, research, training and actions that foster introduction, initiation, recruitment, and retention,

including efforts to increase opportunities for target markets, under-represented groups, and non-traditional audiences; b) partnerships and cooperation between or among successful recruitment/retention or outdoor and conservation related recreational outreach programs and related industries, communities or organizations; c) new approaches to marketing that document and promote the social and economic benefits of hunting, fishing, boating, and related recreational activities; d) tools to assist hunting, fishing, and boating education instructors in communicating the history and role of hunters, anglers, and boaters in the conservation of North America's fish and wildlife; e) methods to assist state fish and wildlife agencies in assessing and meeting the demands for public shooting facilities, access to public waters for recreational fishing and boating, and public access to land for hunting; f) actions that help related recreational industries understand and enhance the important role they play in fish and wildlife conservation and promoting these benefits to the public at large; and g) efforts to evaluate the efficacy of recruitment and retention programs and strategies.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** Desired results and expected benefits of proposals would be: 1) successfully implemented strategies that increase participation and retention rates in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and shooting sports; 2) a steady and reliable source of revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies from license sales, registration fees, taxes, and associated federal aid; 3) national policies and programs to help recruit and retain participants; 4) continued long-term social and economic benefits through participation and increased recruitment of new hunters, anglers, boaters, and recreational shooters; 5) strategic guidance to state wildlife agencies to assist them in meeting demands in their state for public shooting facilities, boating and fishing access to public waters, and public access to land and public waters for hunting; 6) enhanced networking and understanding among agencies, related industries, and other committed partners; and 7) an improved conservation ethic among outdoor recreational participants, and a more understanding and supportive public – all of which will help ensure a bright and sustainable future for our North American hunting, fishing, and boating heritage.

### **-National Conservation Need 3-**

#### **State Fish and Wildlife Agency Coordination and Administration**

**Submitted by:** Executive Committee

**Statement of Need:** State fish and wildlife agencies are facing a host of issues that are impacting their ability to manage trust resources, most notably the continued large-scale budget reductions in most states due to the drops in state revenues and continued belt-tightening by governors and legislatures. State agencies need to collectively address these and other emerging issues to ensure they can continue to meet their management responsibilities and sustain the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals will be considered that assist state agencies with the coordination and administration of programs that address important issues facing fish and wildlife conservation. Applicants must demonstrate they have a history of collaboration and the ability to coordinate work with all fifty state fish and wildlife agencies.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** A proposal funded under this NCN would provide states with valuable technical, administrative and professional expertise and services. Detailed coordination and administrative objectives should be included along with an explanation of how these efforts will assist state agencies.

#### **-National Conservation Need 4-**

**Improve benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats as provisions of the 2008 and future Farm Bills are implemented** (Submitted by: Agricultural Conservation Committee)

**Statement of Need:** The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) is the most important legislation for providing fish and wildlife habitat on millions of acres of privately owned and managed lands. Importantly, deliberations on the next Farm Bill are underway and effects of the economic downturn place unprecedented pressures on agriculture, our natural resources, and the programs that work to achieve conservation for the well-being of all citizens. The following concepts are needs of state fish and wildlife agencies to help bridge information gaps between state decision-makers, planners and field personnel to enable more efficient agency adaptation to changing circumstances and challenges as well as document conservation progress.

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals submitted under this NCN should address one or more of the following:

- At the national level, work with State fish and wildlife agencies, NGOs, producers, USDA, FWS, initiatives, forestry and others to optimize fish and wildlife benefits from Farm Bill implementation.
- Provide recommendations on how fish, wildlife, and their habitat needs can best be integrated into Farm Bill programs, rules, policies, practices, and guidelines used to implement the laws.
- Increase the capacity to deliver fish and wildlife expertise/technical assistance; provide outreach to educate current and potential farm bill program participants.
- Develop recommendations for increasing the use/availability and improving establishment techniques of native plant materials used across the country to improve habitat quality.
- Assess the economic and social benefits as well as the fish and wildlife benefits associated with implementation of conservation provisions and communicate societal benefits such benefits.
- Assess Mid Contract Management (MCM) activities and determine whether /how practice and program intent is being met; conduct a multistate assessment of MCM across the country.
- Develop and coordinate scientifically sound methods for research, monitoring, assessment, and outcome reporting of fish and wildlife initiatives. Facilitate information sharing, and identify information needs and success stories that support strategic delivery of Farm Bill programs.
- Examine the affects, benefits, threats, and successful approaches to wildlife, soil, and water conservation with wind/ bioenergy provisions. Develop/implement outreach mechanisms to advance understanding of fish and wildlife needs as these technologies/initiatives evolve.
- Identify/evaluate approaches to maintaining conservation benefits on expiring CRP acres

and improve efforts to apply the best CRP mid-contract management practices.

- Expand farm bill programs/practices to regions of the nation where they are under-utilized.
- Develop materials on fish, wildlife and habitat conservation benefits and other values derived from Farm Bill provisions to appropriately inform development of the next Farm Bill.
- Assess the extent of native grassland and rangeland conversion to farm production across MAFWA and WAFWA states; evaluate the land cover conversion in general across the same states.
- Evaluate ecological /social implications of not recoupling crop insurance to conservation compliance.
- Assess the impacts of increased pattern tile drainage (IPTD) in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) on wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and flooding: determine relationships between IPTD and impacts on fish and wildlife populations and habitats; evaluate relationships between IPTD and increased flood events in the Dakotas and/or other downstream states; assess relationships of IPTD and/or enhanced tile systems and water quality on downstream states and water bodies; assess current methodology (van Schilfgaarde model) and develop/utilize a model that provides a significant level of comfort for conservation interests to ensure tile setback distances are sufficiently protecting wetland functions and values in the PPR.
- Coordinate, manage, and facilitate information about habitat accomplishments and wildlife population responses for state-based regional conservation plans between state decision-makers, planners and field personnel to optimize utility of the plans to the states and improve State agencies' ability to manage their public trust resources.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** Successful proposals will improve Farm Bill benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats and improve State fish and wildlife agencies' ability to manage their public trust resources.

### **-National Conservation Need 5-**

**The Management Assistance Team (MAT) or similar entity to increase leadership capacity and agency effectiveness within state fish and wildlife agencies**

**Submitted by:** Leadership and Professional Development Committee

**Statement of Need:** Seventy-seven percent of state fish and wildlife agency senior leadership were predicted to retire between 2004 and 2013 according to an Association / National Conservation Training Center sponsored study conducted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Due to the current economy some baby boomers are waiting longer to retire; however, this is only a delay in the inevitable significant losses of senior leadership and will likely exacerbate agency turbulence beyond what was initially thought. In a 2005 survey by the AFWA Leadership and Professional Development Committee 75% of all state fish and wildlife agency directors responded that "leadership development" was *very important*; no directors reported the problem as *somewhat* or *very unimportant*. Leadership development and well-managed fish and wildlife agencies are priorities identified in the Association's current strategic plan as well as critically important *vis-à-vis* today's economic reality. The MAT Team's 25 years of experience can be a

timely resource to help agency leaders meet the challenges of agency downsizing, restructuring, funding, and demographic/constituent changes and opportunities.

**Desired Proposals:** Strategies to increase the leadership capacity of tomorrow's fish and wildlife leadership through programming that provides:

- 1) leadership development programming that can reach a significant portion of the nation's state fish and wildlife agencies;
- 2) leadership program development, delivery expertise, and staff support to maintain an elite-level leadership development program, *the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI)*, on a nationwide basis reaching governments, NGOs, conservation-oriented businesses and tribes;
- 3) knowledge, expertise, and consulting services to expand leadership capacity and developing workforce planning strategies;
- 4) organizational development and business management consulting services to state fish and wildlife agency staff particularly to help them during the current economic crisis;
- 5) programs and opportunities for state fish and wildlife agency staff to increase their capabilities for delivering leadership development to their employees.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** As baby-boomers continue to retire, this NCN's programs will increase leadership capacity of the majority of states through online and classroom training, webinars, consulting services, and other tools including building rich networks among state, federal, tribal, provincial, NGO, and for-profit organizations in the conservation arena. Agency access to organizational development and business management consulting services provides state fish and wildlife agencies expertise and help as Boomers exit and funding teeters. Consulting services specifically tailored to the unique needs of state fish and wildlife agencies will also be a critical tool to help them develop their own leadership development programs. During the three years of this grant the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) will graduate its 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> cohorts of Fellows and the 10<sup>th</sup> cohort will be in mid-program. By the end of this grant cycle the NCLI will have an accumulated cadre of approximately 360 Fellows across the spectrum of conservation – creating a powerful professional network of graduates to effectively lead fish and wildlife conservation work through the turbulent and unpredictable future.

### **-National Conservation Need 6-**

#### **Incorporating Fish and Wildlife Considerations into Energy Development Decisions**

**Submitted by:** Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee

**Statement of Need:** Energy development has been one of the dominant adverse influences on our nation's fish and wildlife resources over the past decade, and will continue to cause major landscape disturbances over the next decade. Our ability to direct the development of energy facilities and sources—whether for fossil, renewable or nuclear fuels and generation, pipelines or transmission lines—while maintaining fish and wildlife populations and habitats is limited by: 1) inadequate fish and wildlife resource information and tools needed to effectively inform decisions concerning energy development; 2) planning, leasing, siting, and mitigation processes

that do not provide a means for wildlife considerations to be addressed before irreversible development decisions are made; and 3) a shortage of personnel and financial resources to administer and influence energy development programs without diverting resources from other fish and wildlife conservation programs. Energy development decisions affect every regional association and virtually every state and province; hence, this NCN is intended to directly address the Critical Issues and Program/Project Coordination Goals in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA's) Strategic Plan.

**Desired Proposals:** This NCN seeks proposals in the following four areas: 1) research on the relationships between energy development practices and impacts on fish and wildlife populations and habitat (e.g., influences of wind turbine design and placement on birds, bats and big game, effects of gas well drilling and fracking processes-pad spacing and infrastructure build-out on ground nesting birds such as sage grouse and prairie chickens, and neotropical migrants experiencing population declines such as the golden winged warbler, effects of potential erosion and sedimentation impacts and consumptive water use on varied aquatic resources etc.); 2) evaluation and refinement of current BMPs and guidelines for energy development practices; 3) joint efforts to incorporate fish and wildlife data into decision support systems designed to inform landscape conservation planning efforts, and 4) increased coordination with organizations and processes affecting energy facilities development and regulation.

**Desired Results//Expected Benefits:** Over the past two years, AFWA has been involved in several initiatives undertaken to improve interstate and interagency coordination, and processes to integrate fish and wildlife resources conservation into energy development (e.g., Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee recommendations, Western Governors Association's Wildlife Corridors Initiative, Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development symposium, Executive Order 13443, and formation and participation in the American Wind Wildlife Institute). These have produced recommendations to improve the conservation of fish and wildlife resources during energy development. To realize those objectives, states and provinces must continue to support research into the impacts of energy development on fish and wildlife that will result in successful mitigation of lost wildlife resources, and improve Wildlife Agencies participation in the planning, leasing, siting, and mitigation of energy development, with the desired outcome of no net loss to fish and wildlife resources during energy development.

### **-National Conservation Need 7-**

#### **Protect State Wildlife Agencies' Authority to Manage Wildlife Resources in Concert with Federal Actions Required by International Treaties and Conventions**

**Submitted by:** International Relations Committee

**Statement of Need:** Rules established under international treaties often supersede state authority and limit how states manage wildlife. State agency representatives must work with the federal agencies and be engaged in international fora where these actions are taken. Added regulations and burdensome oversight results from restrictions adopted through international treaties such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). State management and harvest decisions for otters and bobcats stem from federal restrictions that

resulted from CITES actions 30+ years ago. The collapse of the Caspian sturgeon fishery and European Union trade restrictions coupled with continued market demand for caviar has increased pressure for commercial harvest of sturgeon and paddlefish making it more difficult for States to sustainably regulate the fisheries. Our active involvement on CITES committees has insured that permits are not required for international movement of personal items such as wallets and garments. Without these provisions it would be virtually impossible to travel with alligator garments leading to catastrophic declines in sales in these sustainable use products. These are just three examples that have significant impact on state's authority.

Understanding issues and developing working relationships over a sustained period by the Technical Work Group are essential for effectively resolving these issues and requires a thorough working knowledge of the treaties and routine engagement with international colleagues. CITES was originally intended to ensure globally sustainable use of natural resources in trade. Over the past decade, there has been a swell in NGO participation (e.g., HSUS and the Animal Welfare Institute) attempting to push a protectionist/no use approach in CITES for well managed game and non-game species. Protectionists outnumber sustainable use advocates 6:1. The present system, using the regional Association representation, was initiated in 1994 and has proven both effective and efficient. Without funding, this coordinated approach to state participation in international fora will effectively end in 2012 and the state agencies will not be represented at any CITES meetings in 2013.

Other international forums that are of importance to state wildlife agencies include but are not limited to the Ramsar Convention, the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, and The Convention Migratory Species (CMS).

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals submitted under this NCN should address the need to fund one representative from each Regional Association and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to participate in international treaties, conventions, and associated meetings.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** Successful proposals will provide 1) an efficient, effective approach for state agencies to have input into federal policy on international treaties, 2) a means whereby state wildlife agencies may be apprised of pending developments and respond appropriately, 3) a streamlined approach to requesting changes in federal and/or international policies, procedures and rules to better accommodate state wildlife agency needs, 4) a mechanism to provide biological and administrative information to assist the federal government in executing its international responsibilities, 5) a method to minimize unnecessary oversight and restrictions to state wildlife agency authority, 6) support for sustainable use principles in international arenas, 7) ensure the federal government understands and reacts positively to the needs and authority of state fish and wildlife agencies on these issues, and 8) ensure the North American Conservation Model is recognized and considered in the international conservation arena.