

RESERVOIR FISHERIES HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

RFHP News and Updates

June 3, 2009

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Big Cedar Lodge - Table Rock Lake Workshop

The Big Cedar Lodge-Table Rock Lake Workshop on May 5-8 was well attended and highly productive. Thirty-five members of the partnership met over three days to complete and report on the work of the governance, outreach, and science & data subcommittees, and to commence work on the RFHP Strategic Plan. Summary reports of the subcommittees are described separately in the newsletter. A full report of the workshop is available online at www.reservoirpartnership.org.

The key decision reached by workshop attendees was to complete the RFHP Strategic Plan this summer and to submit an application to the NFHAP Board on August 21st, 2009, for Fish Habitat Partnership designation. This is a momentous decision for the partnership. It elevates our work from concept to reality. It also requires of the partnership an enormous commitment over the next two months.

In recognition of the work that lies ahead, the attendees established three working groups to address the critical pieces of the overall FHP application process. A Strategic Planning Team was named to coordinate completion of the RFHP Strategic Plan. An Assessment Team was named to complete the assessment surveys now underway in the states of Arkansas, California, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas. Finally, an Application Team was designated to assemble the partnership's application for FHP designation.

To make all of this happen, attendees compiled a schedule and timeline for completing key products: Reservoir Assessments – completion July 1; RFHP Strategic Plan – completion July 24 of first draft for review; and FHP Application – completion July 24 of first draft for review. All documents will be finalized by August 14, and then submitted to the NFHAP Board no later than August 21.

This is an extremely tight and ambitious schedule. But it can be done, and it will be done with the help of the RFHP membership. If you want to join the effort, simply contact the lead for the Team(s) you wish to join. Contacts are:

Strategic Planning Team – Mike Armstrong (mlarmstrong@agfc.state.ar.us)

Assessment Team – Jeff Boxrucker (jboxrucker@odwc.state.ok.us)

Application Team – Karl Hess (karl_hess@fws.gov)

All three teams meet weekly – every Thursday at 11am EDT – on a simultaneous telephone and web conference call. To join the weekly work session, please call or email Karl Hess ([703-358-2293](tel:703-358-2293)/karl_hess@fws.gov) for access information.

Thanks to Big Cedar Lodge, Missouri Department of Conservation, and Bass Pro Shops

The success of the May 5-8 workshop at Table Rock Lake was due in large part to the wonderful facilities and services made available to our partnership. The conference lodge was ample and comfortable, the food was fine and abundant, and the scenery was both inspiring and constantly tempting. The staff at Big Cedar Lodge gave us royal treatment, making our work possible and fun.

The Missouri Department of Conservation provided an overview of its fish habitat conservation work at Table Rock Lake and led a tour for attendees that included visits to its Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery, the Henning Ozark glade habitat Conservation Area, and the Department's habitat barge in action at Table Rock Lake. The overview and tour enriched the workshop and enhanced our awareness of important reservoir fisheries habitat work now underway.

Bass Pro Shops extended numerous courtesies to the workshop and its attendees over the three-day meeting, including a hosted opening dinner, three striking RFHP banners that will serve the partnership over the years, and two afternoons of boating and fishing recreation. The partnership was particularly honored by the presence of Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops. His Tuesday evening chat with our group was riveting and his continued support for our effort striking.

To all of those mentioned above, the RFHP extends its thanks and gratitude.

Outreach and Partnership Subcommittee

The Outreach and Partnership Subcommittee is starting a major effort in June to contact and engage all State Fish and Wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and major NGOs and outdoor recreation businesses not already participating in the RFHP. Subsequent outreach will be made to the broader array of reservoir stakeholders, including communities, conservation organizations, marinas, landowners, property associations, and other entities with an interest in the conservation of fisheries in reservoirs and associated watersheds.

Additionally, the subcommittee is taking actions to document, expand, and formalize the partnership as part of the FHP application. Those actions include:

- Letters of invitation to key prospective partners with follow-up telephone calls
- Memorandums of Understanding signed between all existing and new partners and the RFHP

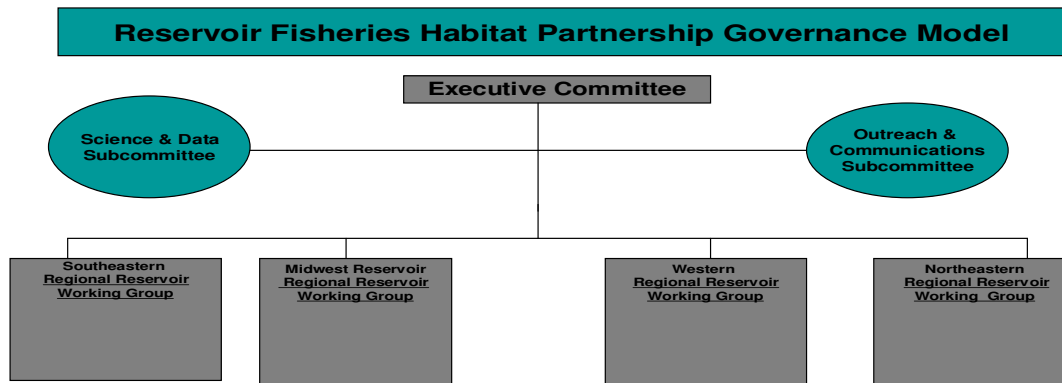
- Meetings with NFHAP candidate and designated Fish Habitat Partnerships at the upcoming National Fish Habitat Action Plan Workshop on June 23-25, 2009, at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA.
- Support letters from the four regional associations of fish & wildlife agencies
- Outreach to tribes
- Meeting with the EPA National Lakes Assessment Program on June 11

Individuals interested in participating in and assisting the Outreach and Partnership subcommittee should contact Phil Durocher at Phil.Durocher@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Governance Subcommittee

The Governance Subcommittee has completed the broad outlines of the organizational structure and operation of the RFHP. The Executive Committee will provide the national framework in which the RFHP will function. Duties of the Executive Committee will include:

- Support reservoir habitat actions at national, regional and local levels
- Promote strategic planning among partners and stakeholders
- Support and recommend RFHP projects for NFHAP funding
- Direct RFHP standing committees and create ad hoc task groups as needed
- Support Regional Work Groups (RWG)
- Represent RFHP in outreach, marketing, and information campaigns to raise financial and public support for the partnership
- Report on status and accomplishments of the RFHP



Executive Board membership is set at 15 members, and would include:

- 4 State Members, one from each of the four regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies (Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, and Western). The Chair of the Executive Board will be selected from these members on a rotating basis among the four regions.
- 3 Federal Members (Proposed: Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and Army Corps of Engineers).
- 3 NGO Members (Proposed: NALMS, AFS, TNC)
- 3 Industry Members (Proposed: BASS, ASA, and Hydro-Power Representative)
- RFHP Staff (Executive Director)

Regional Working Groups (RWG) will be the operational and implementation arms of the partnership, and will function within the geographic areas of their respective fish & wildlife agency regional associations. SARP will act as the host organization for the Southeastern RWG. The other three Regional Working Groups will be formed and operated under the auspices of the regional fish & wildlife associations to which each is affiliated.

Additional information on governance can be found online in the Final Report for the Big Cedar Lodge Workshop at www.reservoirpartnership.org.

Science & Data Subcommittee

The Science & Data Subcommittee is focused exclusively on completing an initial “trial assessment” of reservoir fisheries habitat among reservoirs greater in size than 250 acres in the eight states of Arkansas, California, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas. This “trial” approach was adopted in order to develop and fine-tune an assessment methodology among a small yet geographically representative body of states. The trial assessment will provide the initial assessment background for the draft Strategic Plan that will accompany the FHP application. The trial assessment will be expanded to all States in 2010 and incorporated into the final RFHP Strategic Plan in late 2010.

The Subcommittee’s assessment approach consists of three steps:

- (1) Classification of all reservoirs greater than 250 acres in size based on a hybrid physiographic and physical attribute model derived from *In Fisherman* magazine and modified by RFHP.
- (2) Qualitative survey of physical and biological conditions of all reservoirs greater than 250 acres in size based on a procedure developed by Professor Steve Miranda and expanded and enhanced by RFHP.

(3) Quantitative survey of select physical and biological parameters from all reservoirs greater than 250 acres in size based on metrics developed by RFHP.

In light of initial results from the first application of the assessment methodology, the subcommittee has made substantial changes to the qualitative survey and to the data collection spreadsheets established for the classification and the quantitative metrics survey. New data from the eight “trial states” is now being collected for each of the three reservoir assessment steps and will be submitted to the Science & Data Subcommittee by June 26.

Using statistical analysis, the subcommittee will be able to (1) substantiate or modify, if necessary, the proposed reservoir classification system; (2) identify primary reservoir stressors and categorize reservoirs within impairment groupings; (3) identify quantitative metrics that are predictive of stressors and impairment groupings; (4) combine the quantitative and qualitative assessment methodologies; (5) correlate impairments to reservoir classification types; and (6) generate a preliminary first assessment of reservoir fisheries habitat condition based on the eight trial states.

In addition to the critical task of completing a preliminary assessment, the Science & Data Subcommittee is also addressing other areas of concern for the partnership, including:

- Scoring and ranking of reservoir projects based on scientific criteria
- Collaboration with NFHAP and Michigan State University in the national fish habitat assessment

Additional information on these last two activities, as well as the three assessment steps, can be found in the Final Report of the Big Cedar Lodge workshop online at www.reservoirpartnership.org.

Last Word

Over the past two years, RFHP members have debated the complex issue of what exactly constitutes a reservoir for the purposes of the reservoir partnership. After the NCTC meeting last November, the partnership agreed to a relatively restricted definition:

A Reservoir is a manmade body of water 500 acres or larger at normal operating pool formed by the impoundment of waters that are both accessible to the public and that support, or have the potential to support, a sport fishery.

More recently, northeastern States that lack reservoirs exceeding 500 acres in size expressed concern that the RFHP would not be able to serve their needs given the prevailing definition. An interim decision was made by the Steering Committee to lower the acreage threshold to 250 acres. At the Big Cedar workshop the partnership further modified the definition, eliminating altogether an acreage size constraint. Today, the definition for a qualifying reservoir is any *manmade body of water formed by the impoundment of waters that are both accessible to the public and that support, or have the potential to support, a sport fishery.*

In making this change, the partnership also chose to stand-by its original position that impounded natural lakes would not be included among impounded waters addressed by the RFHP Strategic Plan. In reaffirming this position, however, the partnership left the door open to future reconsideration, agreeing to revisit the issue of impounded natural lakes at a later date. More specifically, the partnership left the door open to consideration of all lentic waters should no other partnership options emerge to properly address them.

Contact Information:

For additional information regarding RFHP and its activities, please contact: Phil Durocher (Phil.Durocher@tpwd.state.tx.us) or Karl Hess (Karl_Hess@fws.gov). Please share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested in the partnership.