

Appendix V – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership Strategic Plan

The Partnership would focus on six key issue areas that encompass those activities that the Service and the States can work in partnership and will provide the greatest benefit to the resources. These issues are not separate or distinct. They should be woven together at every opportunity. Partnership is woven through each issue.

1. Increase recreational fishing and other sustainable uses of aquatic resources by the public. Successful fishery conservation in the United States has always depended upon the significant contributions of recreational anglers and commercial fisherman. Aquatic conservation efforts would not have succeeded without the support of the fishing public. Anglers are the primary catalysts of aquatic resource conservation. Without the recreational anglers and commercial fisherman, State resource agencies, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the coastal Councils and Commission would be very limited in their scope in addressing fishery resource problems. Successful fishery conservation is a three-way partnership between Federal and States agencies and the public.

Objective 1.1: Increase and improve physical access to aquatic resources for fishing and other recreational related activities.

Objective 1.1.1: Provide appropriate access as identified in assessment/inventory.

Action: Conduct assessment of needs for public access (infrastructure, etc.) as part of coordinated assessment for meeting the goal of increasing recreational fishing and other sustainable uses of aquatic resources by the public.

Objective 1.2: Develop and implement a marketing program to increase participation in recreational fishing and other aquatic related recreation activities.

Objective 1.2.1: Evaluate effectiveness of messages.

Objective 1.2.2: Build messages for identified target groups.

Action: Survey people to market to as an element of coordinated assessment for meeting the goal of increasing recreational fishing and other sustainable uses of aquatic resources by the public..

Objective 1.3: Provide public programs to cultivate fishing and outdoor recreation skills, and promote ethical use of natural resources.

Objective 1.3.1: Incorporate best practices guidelines.

Objective 1.3.2: Evaluate the effectiveness of education programs.

Action: Coordinated assessment for meeting the goal of increasing recreational fishing and other sustainable uses of aquatic resources by the public.

Objective 1.4: Develop and implement management programs for recreational and commercial fisheries.

Objective 1.4.1: Identify management authorities for non-consumptive activities

(partners).

Objective 1.4.2: Assure integrated management efforts among regulatory authorities.

Action: Coordinated assessment for meeting the goal of increasing recreational fishing and other sustainable uses of aquatic resources by the public.

2. Provide high quality angling opportunities at water development projects. Fishery mitigation in the Southeast is a joint Federal/State partnership involving the Fish and Wildlife Service and State resource agencies. Although clearly a Federal responsibility, the combined efforts of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the States have been successful in addressing fishery mitigation responsibilities resulting from the construction of numerous Federal water development projects throughout the Southeast. Although the goal is intended to target mitigation at all tailwaters, reservoirs, estuary, and marine environments, the actions address coldwater tailwater (trout) fisheries.

Models: Service's Mitigation Workgroup (ongoing active workgroup);

Objective 2.1: Improve and maintain water quality and quantity to meet state standards, also improve and maintain instream and riparian habitat.

Action: Inventory (cold) tailwaters existing conditions and proposed improvements to maximize angling opportunities in cold tailwaters. Future inventories will include both coldwater and warmwater tailwaters.

Objective 2.2: Provide and maintain access to fisheries.

Action: Inventory (cold) tailwaters existing conditions and proposed improvements to maximize angling opportunities in cold tailwaters. Future inventories will include both coldwater and warmwater tailwaters.

Objective 2.3: Continue to stock fish necessary to provide high quality fisheries to meet the needs of a diverse angling constituency.

Action: Inventory (cold) tailwaters existing conditions and proposed improvements to maximize angling opportunities in cold tailwaters. Future inventories will include both coldwater and warmwater tailwaters.

Objective 2.4: Continuously monitor, evaluate and manage waters impacted by water development projects.

Action: Inventory (cold) tailwaters existing conditions and proposed improvements to maximize angling opportunities in cold tailwaters. Future inventories will include both coldwater and warmwater tailwaters.

3. Reduce the numbers of imperiled species in the Southeast. Rapidly expanding human population growth is placing tremendous pressure on this country's aquatic ecosystems. The subsequent decline in the health of these ecosystems has resulted in the escalating imperilment of many of the aquatic species dependant on these ecosystems. It will take a coalition of State/Federal/Tribal/Private partners in order to reverse this trend and accomplish the specific

goal of imperiled aquatic species recovery, which is part of the overall charge of ensuring fishable, swimmable waters in sufficient quantity to meet the reasonable needs of Americans.

Models: Strategy for the Conservation and Recovery of Southeastern Imperiled Fishes (Southeastern Imperiled Fishes Working Group, 1999);

Objective 3.1: Delisting of currently listed species (State and Federal) through recovery actions.

Objective 3.1.1: Encourage universities to train scientists to address habitat/species issues.

Objective 3.1.2: Outreach and Inreach/Education

Objective 3.1.3: Build and expand partnerships.

Objective 3.1.4: Implement ecosystem-based conservation plans.

Objective 3.1.4.1: Develop ecosystem-based conservation plans.

Objective 3.1.5: Monitoring and assessment of existing projects.

Objective 3.1.6: Protect, conserve and restore aquatic habitat needed by imperiled species.

Objective 3.2: Prevent fish and other aquatic species from being listed.

Objective 3.2.1: Encourage universities to train scientists to address habitat/species issues.

Objective 3.2.2: Outreach and Inreach/Education

Objective 3.2.3: Build and expand partnerships.

Objective 3.2.4: Implement ecosystem-based conservation plans.

Objective 3.2.4.1: Develop ecosystem-based conservation plans.

Objective 3.2.5: Monitoring and assessment of existing projects.

Objective 3.2.6: Protect, conserve and restore aquatic habitat needed by imperiled species.

4. Protect, conserve and restore interjurisdictional fisheries in the Southeast.

Interjurisdictional fisheries are defined as those aquatic resource populations that are managed by two or more States, nations, or Native American Tribal governments because of geographic distribution and migratory patterns. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to impose political or jurisdictional boundaries upon living resources that freely migrate or move across these boundaries during the course of their lives, successful management of interjurisdictional fisheries resources requires a collaborative and coordinated approach between the governmental entities that share them.

Models: Chesapeake Bay Program,

Objective 4.1: Implement fishery management plans for southeast interjurisdictional fisheries.

Objective 4.1.1: Develop fishery management plans for southeast interjurisdictional fisheries.

Objective 4.1.2: Support interjurisdictional fisheries forums such as coastal fishery commission, councils, etc.

Action: Recommend scope (check list) to guide interjurisdictional fisheries management plans.

Action: Identify by management unit and decide on which interjurisdictional fisheries to work on next.

Objective 4.1.3: Increase role and participation by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in interjurisdictional forums.

Objective 4.1.4: Interjurisdictional fish priorities determined and recommendations made to the relevant forums.

Action: Population and habitat status review.

Action: Engage critical partners.

Action: Identify by management unit and decide on which interjurisdictional fisheries to work on next.

Objective 4.1.5: Establish interjurisdictional fisheries forums by river system/watershed where needed.

Action: Population and habitat status review.

Action: Engage critical partners.

Action: Identify by management unit and decide on which interjurisdictional fisheries to work on next.

Objective 4.2: Adaptive management plan for monitoring, evaluating and modifying fishery management plans.

Objective 4.2.1: Develop fishery management plans for southeast interjurisdictional fisheries.

Objective 4.2.2: Support interjurisdictional fisheries forums such as coastal fishery commission, councils, etc.

Action: Recommend scope (check list) to guide interjurisdictional fisheries

management plans.

Action: Identify by management unit and decide on which interjurisdictional fisheries to work on next.

Objective 4.2.3: Increase role and participation by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in interjurisdictional forums.

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5. Aquatic habitats have appropriate biological, chemical and physical integrity to support healthy functional communities: The quality and quantity of aquatic habitats in North America and the Southeast, both inland and coastal, has essentially been in decline since European colonization. The bottom line is that past efforts of Federal and State agencies charged with the management of aquatic resources, with minimal notable exceptions involving the restoration of a few individual aquatic species (American alligator, American shad on the Susquehanna River, beaver, river otter, migratory Atlantic Coast striped bass), have been largely ineffective in halting a decline in aquatic habitats and species. Restoration and preservation of aquatic habitats, both in quality and quantity, is the keystone issue underlying the restoration, recovery, and sustainable use of aquatic resources.

One of the key initiatives identified in the “*A Partnership Agenda for Fisheries Conservation: Report of the Fisheries Program Strategic Plan Steering Committee to the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council*” was the development of a National Aquatic Habitat Plan (NAHP). The initiative asks the Fish and Wildlife Service to assume a leadership role in convening a wide array of interests to begin the process to develop a NAHP. The NAHP as envisioned by the Steering Committee of the SFBPC would be an aquatic analog of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, science-based, landscape-scale, partnership-driven model for habitat conservation. The Report stated “The Steering Committee believes a partnership effort on the scale of the highly successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan is needed to establish and achieve the national conservation goals necessary to rescue imperiled fisheries. As with many natural resource issues, responsibilities for management of aquatic habitats are under

the jurisdiction of a wide array of Federal, State and Tribal entities. Thus, management of aquatic habitats is the responsibility of all of them – or none of them.

Models: Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (Lower Mississippi River Aquatic Resource Management Plan),

Objective 5.1: Geographical focus

Objective 5.1.1: Conduct geographical assessment

Action: Identify priority areas for restoration.

1. Prioritize areas for restoration
2. Determine restorative actions.
3. Implement actions
4. Monitor and evaluate progress

Action: Identify priority areas for protection

1. Prioritize areas for protection
2. Determine protection actions
3. Implement actions
4. Monitor and evaluate progress

Objective 5.2: Issue focus

Objective 5.2.1: Conduct geographical assessment

Action: Identify issues

1. Prioritize issues
2. Determine actions
3. Implement actions
4. Monitor and evaluate progress

6. Prevent and control the impact of invasive species on the ecological, economic and societal values of the Southeast. Aquatic nuisance species threaten the ecological stability of lakes, rivers and streams and the commercial and recreational activities dependent on these waters. Over 200 aquatic plant and animal species have been introduced into the United States. Approximately half of these are found in the Southeast. Many of these invasive species, such as the Asian carps and the Asian rice eel, can impact both commercial and recreational fishing opportunities.

Models: Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel

Objective 6.1: Prevent new aquatic nuisance species introductions in the Southeast.

Action: Enforce existing laws.

Action: Implement interdiction plan (Interdiction plan – state/regional).

Objective 6.2: Eradicate new aquatic invasive species, when possible.

Action: Rapid response (Rapid response plan – state/regional)

Objective 6.3: Limit the spread of existing aquatic invasive species in the Southeast.

Action: Strategy implementation (Control and management strategy – state/regional)

Objective 6.4: On-going actions crucial to the goal.

Action: Monitor and detect aquatic invasive species.

Action: Data and information management.

Action: Education and outreach

Action: Research and Development.