

April 16, 2009



News from the

## NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN

*For and about employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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### ***Fish Passage Decision Support System a factor in the national assessment of fish habitat***

The Fish and Wildlife Service established the [Fish Passage Decision Support System](#) (FPDSS) in 1999 to address the urgent need for an integrated national database and analytical tools to support fish passage conservation efforts across the Nation. The FPDSS is an online application that makes information about fish passage barriers available to policymakers and the public. It is one of a family of online conservation tools within the Service's [Environmental Conservation Online System](#) (ECOS).

The FPDSS provides a tool for fish habitat biologists and agency decision-makers to plan strategically across boundaries and jurisdictions. The application contains an inventory of stream barriers (dams, culverts, dikes, irrigation diversions, etc.) collected from multiple sources across the Nation, coupled with analytical tools with advanced GIS functionalities. Its intent is to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources by helping to identify and prioritize the removals of fish barriers; establish priorities for particular species; and focus conservation efforts on aquatic habitats that are in need of immediate restoration actions. For more information on the FPDSS, contact [Leslie Hartsell](#) or [José Barrios](#).

The FPDSS is an integral tool for implementing [Strategic Habitat Conservation](#) in aquatic systems. The system helps to identify and prioritize barrier removal projects that contribute to population goals for Federal trust fish and aquatic species. It helps to predict the outcome of on-the-ground conservation actions, and facilitates monitoring and evaluation of those outcomes.

### **The National Fish Habitat Assessment**

The [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) sets an objective to "Conduct a condition analysis of all fish habitats within the United States by 2010". The FPDSS is one of 20 national databases currently being analyzed and compiled as part of the [condition analysis](#) called for by the Action Plan.

The Action Plan's [Framework for Assessing the Nation's Fish Habitat](#) identifies a set of seven "habitat variables" that influence fish abundance, diversity and distribution. The first of these variables – connectivity – is directly addressed by the FPDSS. No other nationwide system exists to measure and communicate the status of aquatic habitat connectivity.

Unfragmented reaches of habitat allow fish and other aquatic organisms to fully exploit all potential habitats to complete their life histories and to maximize their production. Many marine and migratory species, such as salmon, striped bass, and American eel, require connected riverine and estuary habitat to complete their life cycles. Fragmented habitat also imperils the genetic integrity of populations by reducing effective population size and restricting gene flow. A recent [conference](#) sponsored by the [National Council for Science and the Environment](#) identified increased connectivity as one of the most important actions to promote adaptation of freshwater ecosystems to the effects of climate change.

In addition to contributing data to the national fish habitat assessment, the Service is supporting the work financially through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University. The National Fish Habitat Board's Science and Data Committee oversees the work under the leadership of [Gary Whelan](#) (Michigan Department of Natural Resources) and [Doug Beard](#) (U.S. Geological Survey).

## Upcoming Events

**Jim Range National Casting Call**, April 26-27, Washington, DC. Ryan Roberts, [Rroberts@fishwildlife.org](mailto:Rroberts@fishwildlife.org), 301-713-4300 x171. [www.nationalcastingcall.com](http://www.nationalcastingcall.com)

**Evolution of the Western Landscape: Balancing Habitat, Land, and Water Management for Fish**, Annual Meeting of the Western Division – American Fisheries Society, May 3-7, 2009, Albuquerque, NM. Amy Unthank, [aunthank@fs.fed.us](mailto:aunthank@fs.fed.us), 505-842-3263.

**Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership**, Steering Committee meeting, May 19-20, 2009, Athens, TX. Scott Robinson, [scott.robinson@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:scott.robinson@dnr.state.ga.us), 770-918-6418.

**NFHAP One-Year-Out Workshop**, June 23-25, 2009, National Conference Center, Leesburg, VA. Tom Busiahn, [Tom\\_Busiahn@fws.gov](mailto:Tom_Busiahn@fws.gov), 703-358-2056.

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**, July 9-15, Newport Beach, California. <http://www.wafwa.org/html/summer09.shtml>

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### **For more information**

[www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)

The place to go on the web for general information on the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

<http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/fwco/nfhap/>

A web site about the Action Plan with information tailored for FWS employees

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