



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (4/26/10):

NFHAP AWARD WINNERS HONORED AT JIM RANGE NATIONAL CASTING CALL

(Washington, DC) - The winners of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) Awards were honored for their extraordinary achievements at the Jim Range National Casting Call on Thursday, April 22nd on the grounds of the C&O Canal National Historic Park, along the banks of the Potomac River in Washington, DC.

Scott Robinson (Southeast Aquatics Resources Partnership), Kenda Flores (Missouri Department of Conservation) and Bob and Nicky Baker (Lower Bourbeuse COA Landowner Committee), David Moe Nelson (NOAA) and Catherine Inman (Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District), were all recipients of the 2010 NFHAP Awards. This was the third year the NFHAP Awards have been handed out, recognizing outstanding achievements in Fish Habitat Conservation.



Award Winners From Left: Kenda Flores (Missouri Department of Conservation), Catherine Inman (Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District), David Moe Nelson (NOAA), Scott Robinson (Coordinator, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership)

The NFHAP Award winners for 2010:

Scott Robinson, coordinator of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) won the Jim Range Conservation Vision Award in support of Fish Habitat.

Award Presented by: Rowan Gould, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Background:

Directly, Scott's leadership has resulted in local fish habitat improvement in each of the 14 SARP states through 30 on-the-ground projects between 2006 and 2009. These have impacted stream, river, reservoir, and coastal habitats as well as recreational, sensitive and imperiled species. Indirectly, Scott's leadership trickles down to in-state research and conservation projects that utilize The Plan. Regionally, Scott is coordinating a systematic regional habitat assessment with the NFHAP Science and Data Committee's habitat assessment, and participates in relevant regional and national aquatic conservation issues such as the Black Bass Initiative and the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership. Scott's work and coordination with other Fish Habitat Partnerships, has been exceptional in regards to the fostering of newly formed partnerships.

Kenda Flores of the Missouri Department of Conservation, accepted the award for Extraordinary Action in support of Fish Habitat Conservation Award, along with **Bob and Nicky Baker** of the Lower Bourbeuse COA Landowner Committee.

Award Presented by: Doug Austen, PA. Fish & Boat Commission/National Fish Habitat Board Vice Chairman

Background:

Efforts to improve aquatic habitat in the Meramec – Lower Bourbeuse watershed, make for a unique partnership that is rarely found on the landscape. The uniqueness of the partnership comes from the sheer fact that landowners, mostly farmers, drive the aquatic restoration process. A well documented history of established landowner participation in the Meramec Basin-Lower Bourbeuse watershed has proven successful in ensuring healthy streams and healthy farms within the watershed.

A six member landowner committee governs and guides restoration efforts in the Lower Bourbeuse Conservation Opportunity Area. The committee leads by example, contributing their time and expertise and choosing funding sources for proposal competitions. They host farm tours to encourage neighbor participation. There has been continuous demand for best management practices for agriculture, fisheries, forestry and wildlife to protect, enhance and restore natural resources. Installation of fencing, alternative water systems, and secured cattle crossings keep cattle out of streams, addressing root causes of habitat deterioration. Landowners appreciate what these projects mean for their watersheds and cattle.

David Moe Nelson - Marine Biologist, Biogeography Branch (NOAA), accepted the award for Scientific Achievement in support of Fish Habitat Conservation.

Award Presented by: Brian Pawlak, Deputy Director of the Office of Habitat Conservation for NOAA Fisheries

Background:

David Moe Nelson led the development of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership's (ACFHP) scientifically based 'Assessment of Existing Habitat Information', a database of documents, data sets, and information portals on Atlantic coastal fish habitats. As the lead analyst and Partnership collaborator, Moe and his team collected over 500 fish habitat sources, and assessed those sources for indicator, threat, and action information.

The primary objective of the assessment is to inform and enable conservation planning for ACFHP. This project was a cooperative effort of NOAA/NOS Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the ACFHP Steering Committee and partners. The Assessment included three components –

1. A representative bibliographic and assessment database
2. A GIS spatial framework, and
3. A summary document with description of methods, analyses of habitat assessment information, and recommendations for further work.

Catherine Inman, Program Manager for the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District accepted the Outreach and Educational Achievement Award in support of Fish Habitat Conservation.

Award Presented by: Kelly Hepler, National Fish Habitat Board Chairman

Background:

The Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District (WSWCD) is a leader in education and outreach programs and activities, working in the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership to spread the word on increasing impacts to salmon from human use and development. WSWCD projects emphasize community-based restoration and stewardship with a diverse group of stakeholders on issues of water quality, water quantity, and fish habitat. By partnering with local schools, community groups, citizen volunteers, and local businesses, they are able to achieve restoration and educational goals. They have coordinated restoration projects to improve the natural conditions and ecological integrity of degraded systems by inviting youth and community volunteers to conduct on-the-ground restoration work, thus fostering stewardship and appreciation for natural resources.

Award Winner Quotes:

From Scott Robinson: “I am truly honored to accept such a prestigious award. Jim Range was a pioneer in the world of conservation and his numerous contributions to fish and wildlife will live on for generations. Working with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan has been a rewarding experience both in the difference that conservation projects have made on the landscape and for what it has done for me personally.”

From Kenda Flores: “The success of the Landowners Committee truly lies with the Landowners and their efforts in making aquatic habitat a concern and incorporating it into their land use practices. This Committee excels in better farming practices and are a vital part of our aquatic system improvement in the Lower Bourbeuse Watershed.”

From David Moe Nelson: “This award would not be possible without the hard work of my colleagues involved with the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership. With our work, we are hoping to advance NFHAP and contribute to the Science and Data research from the partnership prospective.”

From Catherine Inman: “Accepting this award is truly an honor that I never expected. Our work in Alaska has grown from a grass roots effort into a success story in educating our next generation of Conservation Leaders. Having our groups of students educated in a hands-on working environment has been very rewarding for both our organization and the future leaders themselves.”

From Kelly Hepler (NFHAP Board Chair): “We as a Board and staff are grateful for these award winners’ contributions to all areas of fish habitat conservation in working to meet the critical needs that exist today. We hope that these awards will be held high to inspire more people to support the progression of fisheries habitat issues.”

Following the Awards ceremony the National Fish Habitat Action Plan’s 10 “Waters to Watch” list was unveiled to the Casting Call attendees and media present. Over the next several months, a major outreach effort will be initiated to bring attention to not only these 10 “waters,” but projects nationwide being conducted under the Action Plan’s Fish Habitat Partnerships.

The Waters to Watch for 2010 are:

Bobs Creek, Pennsylvania
Diamond Lake, Iowa
Fairbanks and Soda Springs, Nevada
Georgetown Creek, Idaho
Green River Basin, Wyoming/Colorado/Utah
Koktuli River, Alaska
Lake Vermilion, Minnesota

Mackeys Creek, Mississippi
Wasilla Creek, Alaska
West Branch, Machias River, Maine

The National Fish Habitat Awards presentation was just a portion of the program for the Jim Range National Casting Call. Other agencies represented for the Monday event included The American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA) and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and numerous other partners that help make the Jim Range National Casting Call a success every year.

Since its launch five years ago, the Action Plan has received wide public support. To date nearly 1,200 partners have pledged their support including a range of organizations interested in the health of the nation's fisheries such as fishing clubs, international conservation organizations, federal agencies, angling industries and academia. Complete information on the scope of the plan is available at www.fishhabitat.org.

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About the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of aquatic habitat decline and fix the nation's most pressing fisheries problems. The Action Plan is a science-based investment strategy to conserve waterways and make conservation dollars stretch farther by combining federal and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships. For more information, visit www.fishhabitat.org.

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