

## National Fish Habitat Action Plan News

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### Leveraging Our Investments: Fish Habitat Partnerships Receive \$2 Million

More than \$2 million in public and private funding is now being channeled to 15 states for five regional fisheries conservation pilot projects, building on the April 2006 rollout of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. To date, nearly 500 partner organizations have lent their input in the effort.

Congress provided \$1 million in funding to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during last year's budget cycle to support the plan's development and provide seed money for fledgling fish habitat partnerships. Those dollars are now being leveraged with \$1.2 million from public and private partners to invest in the following pilot partnerships:

- > Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
- > Matanuka-Susitna Salmon Conservation Partnership
- > Midwest Driftless Area Restoration Effort
- > Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership; and
- > Western Native Trout Initiative

States receiving funding include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

These investments build on \$2.9 million in multi-state grants issued by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies over the last two years to support fish habitat partnerships while the nationwide framework was still being formalized.

In the future, these and other fish habitat partnerships stand to benefit from additional investments. Earlier this year, President George Bush included another \$3 million for fish habitat partnerships in his budget request to Congress for next fiscal year. In addition, a new "More Fish" fundraising and grant program developed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation aims to raise and leverage millions of dollars over the next five years for fish habitat partnerships under the plan.

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan, a new approach to restoring fisheries to healthy and sustainable levels, taps the shared interests of state and federal agencies, Native American tribes, non-profit organizations and foundations, and corporations. Led by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the plan includes an unprecedented number of partners in the strongest showing of unity ever reached on behalf of fisheries. Modeled after the highly successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the fisheries plan provides a strategic focus on key fish habitats to better leverage partners' resources and effort.

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## **Partner Profile:** **Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)**

Established in 1967 and now headquartered in Celebration, Florida, the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (BASS) is one of the largest fishing organizations in the world, with more than 535,000 members. The organization comprises 51 Federation Nation organizations with more than 2,000 chapters in the United States, Africa, Japan, Canada, Italy, Spain, and Mexico. Each state and international Federation Nation is staffed by volunteers who support all BASS programs, including Federation Nation Youth and Conservation Directors.

BASS has had a longstanding and prominent influence on aquatic resource conservation and angler education. In addition to taking a lead role in national conservation and sportfishing policy, BASS is credited with raising the profile of the sport over the last 35 years, as well as initiating the catch-and-release ethic that so many anglers practice today. BASS also has made great strides in angler education through "Keeping Bass Alive," which provides tournament fish care advice, and a new Women's Bassmaster Tour to help grow participation in the sport. The organization's impact on youth has been significant, especially through its Junior Bassmaster Clubs and Junior Bassmaster magazine, as well as the CastingKids program, which has reached more than 2 million children since 1991.

Sportfishing's popularity has grown dramatically because of BASS's renowned tournament trail including the Bassmaster Classic, the Olympics of bass fishing and the organization's broad media reach. BASS produces BASS Times; Bassmaster, Junior Bassmaster, and Fishing Tackle Retailer magazines; the Bassmaster.com Web site; and a Bassmaster Saturday television block on ESPN2 (BASS was purchased by ESPN in 2001).

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## **Project Profile:** **Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership**

The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) was initiated five years ago to better address widespread threats to aquatic resources in the Southeast. SARP is one of a handful of regional partnerships implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

SARP is comprised of representatives from 13 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Other public partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. SARP also includes several private partners, including non-profit organizations, grassroots groups, and businesses.

The southeastern United States is a globally important area of aquatic biodiversity, and the region's aquatic resources are a national treasure. SARP's challenges are significant, since 90 percent of the native mussel species designated as endangered, threatened, or of special concern and 34 percent of North American fish species are found in this region.

SARP leverages resources and operates in a broader landscape context on issues ranging from habitat conservation to fisheries mitigation to combating aquatic nuisance species. Instead of focusing solely on the traditional boundaries of each organization's responsibilities and interests, SARP partners focus on their common vision: healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystems that support sustainable public use throughout the Southeast.

SARP partners are currently developing a Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan that will serve as a regional guide for implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The ultimate goal of SARP is to, "with partners, protect, conserve, and restore aquatic resources, including habitats, throughout the Southeast for the continuing use, benefit, and enjoyment of the American people."

For more information, contact SARP Coordinator Scott Robinson, [scott\\_robinson@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:scott_robinson@dnr.state.ga.us), or (770) 918-6418.

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For more information on the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, visit <http://www.fishhabitat.org> or contact:  
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