Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

Annual Meeting Minutes (October 2, 2013)

**Erie, PA**

# Minutes are intended to complement reports in the 2013 Briefing Book

# Meeting Attendees

* Carl Lutz, PA Boat Commission
* Terry Foreman, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
* Gene Gilliland, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
* Mike McGhee, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
* Hannibal Bolton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
* Jeff Boxrucker, RFHP Coordinator
* Mark Porath, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
* Mark Oliver, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
* Rick Ott, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
* Leroy Young, PA Fish and Boat Commission (Chief of Fisheries)
* John Arway, PA Fish and Boat Commission (Director)
* Doug Nygren, Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism
* Mike Armstrong, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
* Pat Sollberger, Nevada Department of Wildlife
* Don Gabelhouse, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
* Mike Swartz, PA Fish and Boat Commission
* Keith Beamer, PA Fish and Boat Commission
* Joe Conroy, Ohio Department of Natural Resources
* Rebecca Krogman, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
* Ben Page, PA Fish and Boat Commission
* Craig Walker, Utah Division of Wildlife and new WAFWA Coordinator (via phone)
* Shane Titus, Seneca Nation
* Cecilia Lewis (via phone)

Meeting called to order by Executive Committee Chair, Terry Foreman at 8:15am EDT.

* Proxies
  + Rick Ott for Dave Terre
  + Doug Nygren for Gary Martel
  + Gene Gilliland for Noreen Clough
  + Terry Foreman for Joe Margraf and Jeff Lucero
  + Jeff Boxrucker for Tim Toplisek

Nine Board members present (including proxies); quorum established

Board changes: Terry Foreman (WAFWA rep) retiring to be replaced by Craig Walker (approved by WAFWA Fish Chiefs at WAFWA meeting in July 2013); Tom Mendenhall (BLM) retired-replaced by John Moore; Noreen Clough (BASS) retired-replaced by Gene Gilliland (effective 1 Jan 2014)

# Old Business

* Motion to accept the 2012 Annual Meeting minutes without changes by Mark Oliver and seconded by Mike McGhee. Motion passed.
* Motion to accept the current financial report made by Gene Gilliland and seconded by Craig Walker. Motion passed.

# FOR Update – Jeff Boxrucker

* About FOR
* 100% of the membership fees go back to project funds.
* In addition to FOR, RFHP was planning on coordinating watershed-level organizations (Partnership for Fish-Friendly Waters). However, coordination with existing watershed groups may be more efficient and effective.
* 35 states signed on through MOU or letters of support, including 27 with points of contact
* FOR partners established:
* 13 chapters
* 11 organizations
* 35 individuals
* 3 corporate sponsors
* FOR is targeting known habitat impairments based on the results of the assessment (Krogman and Miranda). 5/5 Projects proposed/funded
* Note: Invitation to attend and display FOR materials at the Bassmaster Elite Series Tournament August 7-10, 2014 extended by Director John Arway

# Outreach Committee Update – Jeff Boxrucker for Dave Terre

* Outreach tools (Outreach Committee Chair: Dave Terre)
* FOR website: [www.waterhabitatlife.org](http://www.waterhabitatlife.org)
* Brochures
* Sport fishing industry brochure
* Friends brochure
* Snips tools with logo ($8 profit/ea)
* FOR license holders
* Standing banners for shows
* Video produced by TPWD with Alton Jones
* Facebook page
* If you want to talk about FOR with an angler group, request a copy of Jeff’s FOR presentation.
* RFHP sponsored symposium at Annual AFS Meeting (21 presentations)
* Very well-attended, often with standing room only
* Will be featured in Fisheries to 1) summarize the symposium and 2) feature fish habitat
* Two of three objectives in next multi-state grant is to collect best management practices
* Action Item: Send photos of BMPs for your projects to Steve Miranda at [smiranda@usgs.gov](mailto:smiranda@usgs.gov)

## Investment in FOR: What does it take?

* Nebraska has moved to substantial investments (e.g., complete lake renovations) and seen substantial returns (2-6-fold increase in anglers and other recreational users). Partnerships with angler groups and other groups have grown over time, as both trust and program administration have developed. Nebraska has a habitat stamp to support the program and has conducted extensive outreach to constituents.
* Moving from small grant projects to more comprehensive approaches in Iowa involved redefining management biologist positions, reassessing lakes and reservoirs, and teamwork with other groups (e.g., TMDL folks). Iowa has earmarked money to support the program and has observed a $4:$1 return on investment.
* If you’re gonna teach a bear to dance, you’re gonna have to dance with a bear. – Jeff
* Constituent backing is essential to garner political support. Demonstrating success with initial projects will snowball, yielding more political support for additional projects.
* Realistic expectations when/if you do go to the legislature are essential. What is the time frame and the amount for investment payoff? Focus on projects where the payoff is worth the time and money.

# Multi-State Grant

* 2011 final report was completed and forwarded to FWS (Briefing Book)
* Funding currently runs to 2014; we have been excluded from the first two years of the “all-inclusive” NFHP grant. We need a new source of funding, but cannot succeed with a multi-state grant without NFHP’s support.
* There is a misconception that RFHP is funded by sponsors.
* There was also a misunderstanding that RFHP had its own multi-state grant; however our grant expires before the next round of NFHP’s multi-state grant begins.
* Regional agency associations may be a source of support, although some past attempts have not been successful.
* Hannibal suggested that more fisheries chiefs become involved in the NFHP board to lend their voice.
* Fisheries administrators and NFHAP board may be meeting in Denver in the spring – Contact: Mike Stone
* New grant focuses on compiling the BMPs to address regional impairments and make them accessible to fisheries managers
* Action Item: Jeff will send a copy of the new grant to Joe Conroy and Rebecca Krogman.

# How to Incorporate the Assessment into Management

* Rebecca Krogman presented an update on the habitat assessment.
* Feasibility assessment should accompany the habitat-based prioritization to incorporate socioeconomic value of the reservoir, angler use, and local support and resources.
* Gene Gilliland inquired whether the habitat data would be combined with angler data to analyze satisfaction, fishery quality, and fishery type.

# Bylaws Revisions (Briefing Book)

* Motion to accept the bylaws revisions with amendment by Mark Oliver and seconded by Hannibal Bolton. Motion passed.

# RFHP Conservation Priorities (Briefing Book)

* A statement regarding the importance of reservoirs will be added to the beginning of the document, including their role in angler recruitment and participation, water supplies, water quality, and quality of life.
* Priority II(a) will be revised to give priority to projects that address regionally-pertinent impairments.

Break for lunch 12:15-12:55pm.

# Strategic Plan-5 year update scheduled for 2014

* Committee for update
* Karl Hess
* Jeff Boxrucker

# 2012-2013 Work Plan (Briefing Book)

* Work plan was presented with accomplishments.

# 2013-2014 Work Plan (Briefing Book)

* Newsletter editor: Rebecca Krogman
* Director of Strategic Partnerships
* Sub-contract around $36,000 from Jeff’s salary
* If we do not get more stable, long-term funding, RFHP will not exist.
* Purpose: Meet with industry to develop partnerships and funding sources. Approximately $10,000 has been earmarked for travel.
* Gene Gilliland, who will be the new BASS Conservation Director, is a candidate. There may be conflicts of interest in his dual roles.
* Return has been disappointing for another group (WNTI), but Gene already has numerous contacts and the communication skills to hit the ground rolling.
* Current budget
* We currently have $10,000 in the FOR account
* $2,000 is earmarked for FOR small projects
* Coordinator’s salary is funded through May 2014
* Upcoming meetings to attend
* Feb. 21-23, 2014 BASS Conservation Summit
* SDAFS Charleston

# 2012-2013 Project Grant

* Package with FOR as applicant was submitted to FWS and was rejected; they are concerned with environmental compliance and would like to see a component discussing how projects are addressing environmental regulations. Notably, this was not an issue for every project in the package, but the entire package has been returned.
* McKinley Lake, Iowa – State was not involved
* Recommended that state biologist cooperating with applicants fill out federal compliance documents.
* The group must have documented environmental compliance or pending environmental compliance, with a caveat that the compliance paperwork must be complete prior to project final approval. We will emphasize this far more next year to avoid a repeat.
* Approval letters will need to allow piecemeal allocation in order to allow prepared projects to move forward.

**Project Selection (Briefing Book)**

## Criteria

* This year’s criteria were more usable and clear, good progress. There was some discussion regarding whether criteria should be further revised, but overall the group was happy with the current revision.
* The map used this year was based on an earlier reservoir classification step and will be revised prior to the next year’s round of project selection.

## Final Selection

* 21 projects submitted
  + Break in scoring occurred between projects ranked 10 (205) and 11 (177)
  + Funding from FWS allowed funding of first 7 projects
    - See Briefing Book for project narratives, ranks and scores
* Motion to approve the top seven RFHP projects was made by Mark Oliver and seconded by Don Gabelhouse. Motion passed.
* Motion to approve all three Small Project Grants was made by Mark Porath and seconded by Don Gabelhouse. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.