

Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership  
Interim Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
June 21, 2012

SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee Members present:

- USFWS - Neil Stichert, Meeting Chair and Interim Steering Committee Co-chair
- Trout Unlimited - Mark Kaelke, Interim Steering Committee Co-chair
- The Nature Conservancy – Norman Cohen
- Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition – Jessica Kayser
- ADF&G – Roger Harding and Jeff Nichols
- USFS –Sheila Jacobson
- NOAA – K Koski and Cindy Hartmann Moore

SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee Members absent:

- ADEC – Brock Tabor

Advisors and guests present:

- SEAKFHP Coordinator: Debbie Hart
- USFWS NFHP Coordinator: Cecil Rich
- USFWS Ecological Services Field Supervisor: Bill Hanson
- Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA): Leilani Knight-McQueen, Native Land and Resources Environmental Coordinator

Welcome and Introductions – Neil Stichert provided welcoming comments for the first formal meeting of the SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee (ISC) and facilitated round robin introductions of ISC members, advisors and meeting guests. Cindy Hartman Moore will be participating jointly with K Koski from NOAA as there is some uncertainty of K's position receiving funding past August 2012. Leilani Knight-McQueen joined the meeting representing CCTHITA and will follow-up with the group after the meeting regarding future participation of CCTHITA with the SEAKFHP.

Agenda and Meeting Objectives – Debbie provided a brief review of the agenda and outlined the objectives for the meeting which included the following:

- *Establish a decision process for the Interim Steering Committee*
- *Share and work to accept common SEAKFHP purpose and values (review individual partner expectations and concerns regarding the SEAKFHP with focused discussion on areas of unknown agreement (attachment A of meeting materials))*
- *Define the scope of a SEAKFHP Founding Partnership Document (what should this look like) and develop steps to complete (attachment B of meeting materials)*
- *Review updated version of SEAKFHP Founding Bylaws Document, address specific needed decisions for roles and responsibilities of the SEAKFHP Steering Committee and if needed identify steps to complete (attachment C of meeting materials)*

Interim Steering Committee Role and Decision Process – The group discussed the role of the ISC and agreed their task is to formalize the organizational structure of the SEAKFHP and to create needed documents and processes by which the partnership will operate. To help address how the ISC will make decisions Debbie proposed a straw dog decision making process for the ISC to consider (as borrowed from efforts made by the Pacific Marine Estuarine

Fish Habitat Partnership, PMEP, and is included in their bylaws and found in their draft strategic plan under Appendix B).

The group reviewed the straw dog decision making process and discussed their commitment to making decisions guided by the desire for group consensus. There was substantial discussion on how best to proceed when consensus may not occur. There was discussion on the definition of consensus, how best to provide a mechanism to reach consensus without a vote or prior to polling a vote and questions expressed on how to make decisions through email correspondence. Cecil offered that other fish habitat partnerships (FHPs) that he has worked with have had similar dialogs and challenging discussions regarding consensus and how to move effectively to a decision when all partners may have differing degrees of comfort on a topic. Leilani suggested the group consider how to handle a committee member opting out of a decision and Jessica shared the “Zone of Agreement” concept used by the SE AK Watershed Coalition. Changes to wording in the straw dog process were suggested and the group agreed to move on with a general agreement to an ISC decision making process that would include the following and with an understanding that future discussion would incur on the definition of consensus and specific details on how voting would be handled.

#### SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee DECISION MAKING PROCESS [ACTION ITEM]

- The SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee members seek to make decisions by consensus with agreement by all members and without objections to block decisions.
- If agreement does not occur, the SEAKFHP Interim Steering Committee will take conscientious steps to provide for options of agreement.
- To determine if there is consensus any member can call for a vote, and that call must be seconded. Discussion will occur, dissenting positions will be documented, options for consensus will be assessed, and a vote will be taken.
- The interim steering committee must have a quorum (simple majority, i.e., more than half of the total members present) to call for a vote (this includes decisions made by email, teleconference or meeting). A simple majority is required for a vote to pass.
- An interim steering committee member cannot give another member, unless that member is a designated alternate, his/her vote.
- Between meetings, the steering committee can make decisions via email but it is understood that if consensus is not attained then a teleconference or meeting will be called to more formally review the decision under consideration.
- To maintain integrity of decisions made during teleconferences and formal meetings interim steering committee members must be present at the meeting/or on the call to vote (no written votes can be submitted).

What to Expect from a Fish Habitat Partnership – Cecil shared his experience working with other Alaska fish habitat partnerships and provided an overview of what partners may expect to get out of the SEAKFHP. He shared some broad concepts focused on by the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) Board and provided specifics in the context of the group’s recent work on common expectations and how these fit in with other Alaska FHP efforts. His comments were outlined in a PowerPoint presentation and a copy of that is included below as the details of his presentation were very well received by ISC members. Some additional highlights of his presentation included the following comments and discussion points by Cecil or ISC members:

- Recognize the SEAKFHP will be unique (different from Mat-Su/Kenai/WNTI/PMEP) based upon partner composition and efforts needed in SE Alaska.

- Recommend working with regional priorities that exist today and are part of current agency/partner efforts.
- Recommend SEAKFHP focus on large development processes. Jessica asked if other FHPs have seen success with this, Cecil responded yes, the Mat-Su FHP has facilitated technical presentations and discussion around proposed hydro project at annual partnership symposium and has provided helpful relevant training opportunities (FERC baseline studies for Su Hydro example). Jeff asked if training was something the NFHP Board evaluated, Cecil responded yes, they would look at training as an on-the ground project of the FHP. Mark asked about prioritizing projects and assessing variables effecting fish habitat, Cecil suggested looking to a strategic planning process that assesses threats within the system and strategically looking at how to impact those threats.
- A strong benefit of the FHP concept is its input to national entities like the NFHP Board and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) and to larger data sharing efforts. Suggest that the SEAKFHP form a Science and Data subcommittee and commit to elevate local data interests (AWC/NHD, etc...). Neil commented that he saw a need for this in the recent NFHP data assessment effort and that SE Alaska information was lacking. He asked Cecil to consider creating an All Alaska FHP Science and Data Committee to help elevate Alaska issues at the National level. Cecil agreed this would be a valuable committee and would look to propose this at the next all Alaska FHP teleconference. **[ACTION REQUEST]**

### **Cecil's PowerPoint Presentation**

*Lessons learned from past efforts to protect and restore fish habitat (NFHAP 2006)*

- *Be strategic rather than merely opportunistic.*
- *Address the causes of and processes behind fish habitat decline, rather than the symptoms.*
- *Provide increased and sustained investment to allow for long-term success.*
- *Monitor and be accountable for scientifically sound and measurable results.*
- *Share information and knowledge at all levels from local communities to Congress.*

*NFHP Board FHP Performance Evaluation (Cecil noted that currently FHPs are experiencing good progress with 1-5 below and that 6-10 are where more effort is needed)*

1. *Are projects focused on strategic priorities and NFHAP strategies?*
2. *Measures being applied to track progress toward achieving desired conservation outcomes?*
3. *Projects address the causes and processes behind fish habitat status?*
4. *Is partnership leveraging available resources to maximize on the ground conservation?*
5. *Partnership has an objective method for prioritizing projects?*
6. *Partnership engages with neighboring or overlapping NFHP partnerships, other regional entities?*
7. *Science-based resource condition assessments used to identify priority conservation actions?*
8. *Effective outreach to raise awareness and understanding of strategic priorities, activities, and status of habitat condition?*
9. *Aquatic resource data and condition assessments coordinated with NFHP Science and Data Committee?*
10. *Partnership tracks its progress toward achieving strategic priorities annually?*

*"Align and elevate regional habitat conservation strategies, goals and priorities"*

- *Strategic planning with broad participation and integration of partner organization's priorities into plans.*
- *Address information needs to inform management plan development—wetlands, fish passage, AWC, NHD, LiDAR*
- *Identified protection and restoration priorities for mitigating large development project-Port of Anchorage*
- *Identifying and coordinating training needs of partner organizations*
  - *Fish passage*
  - *Susitna Hydro FERC process*
  - *HACCP*

*“Foster interagency communication and facilitate fish habitat conservation discussions at broader level”*

- *Strategic planning*
- *Symposium*
- *Fish Passage Working Group*
- *Steering Committee meetings*

*Increase the availability of science-based assessments for decision-making*

- *Science and data committee*
  - *Coordinate acquiring information to inform strategic conservation efforts: fish passage, AWC, NHD(+), LiDAR*
  - *Regional assessments linked to the National assessment of habitat-incorporate fish information*

*“Facilitate funding opportunities for local fish habitat conservation efforts”*

- *NFHP funds*
- *Large development project mitigation funds*
- *Multistate grants*
- *All Alaska FHP website-grant opportunities*
- *Align agency funding programs with FHP priorities*
- *Communicate science/data needs to LCCs*

*Outreach/education*

- *Annual partnership meeting*
- *Symposium*
- *Partnership website*
- *10 Waters to Watch*
- *Collaborate with and support partner organizations with an outreach emphasis*
- *Educate policy makers on fish habitat issues*

SEAKFHP - Expectations, Guiding Purpose(s) and Partner Concerns – The group reviewed attachment A of the meeting materials (a summary of partner expectations and concerns regarding the SEAKFHP that resulted from independent partner interviews) and discussed each section focusing on 1) areas of strong agreement, 2) areas of unknown agreement, and 3) areas of concern. The goal of this discussion was to create a sense of common purpose for the partnership and capture it in the formal organizational development documents needed to formalize the partnership (partner's agreement form/bylaws) and provide a platform by which partners can understand the purpose of the SEAKFHP and commit themselves. The focus for this effort was not on articulating key priorities and strategies of the partnership (although these did percolate throughout the discussion) but rather to frame the larger picture for the group in terms of outlining (and narrowing, if possible) its core purpose(s).

Due to limited time for detailed discussion the group focused on areas of agreement and put items requiring additional discussion into a parking lot category that would be tabled for future discussion. The group spent a good deal of time on this effort and in the end agreed with the core statements made under the strong alignment heading and some of the items in the unknown heading, a summary of consensus areas and areas where more discussion is needed is included below. In addition, Attachment A will be updated based upon these discussions and edits to these meeting notes and will be used as the partnership continues to frame its purpose through a formal strategic planning effort that will begin most likely in August of 2012.

**Strong alignment in Partner expectations of SEAKFHP:** (areas highlighted in green appeared to have consensus agreement within the ISC; areas in red were either not discussed or may reflect areas where future discussion is needed; underlined sections are new additions, black writing indicates discussion points or comments)

- **Align, develop and elevate common regional habitat conservation strategies, goals and priorities among agencies and partner groups** (The group agreed that in addition to reviewing exiting strategies, goals and priorities for habitat conservation efforts the SEAKFHP would also guide development of them as well.)
  - **Elevate planning, policy and practice of habitat management in SE Alaska using best available science, traditional and local ecological knowledge and best project management practices (share what is in place and available now and facilitate best practices for fish habitat assessment and restoration efforts)** (Leilani asked if TKE could be added or considered here; in general there was group agreement that TKE would be considered similar to an existing strategy that the group would look to elevate as part of its efforts)
  - **Focus on key areas of fish habitat assessment, protection, restoration, enhancement and evaluation**
  - **Consider process to involve and inform community based management plans**
  - **Consider unique opportunities for SE Alaska pristine watersheds and a strategy focused on Fish Habitat Protection** (Roger provided more information for the group on this topic regarding the importance of having a protection strategy for the SEAKFHP recognizing the inclusion of this in the NFH Action Plan and also in regards to competition for funding, while SE Alaska may not be able to qualify/compete for many habitat restoration grants due to our habitat quality in comparison to other states we can compete for continued protections of pristine habitat areas.)
  - **Provide emphasis on evaluation and accountability of implementation efforts**
- **Foster interagency communication and facilitate fish habitat conservation discussions at a broader level in the region**
  - **Build awareness of what is happening currently and what has been accomplished**
  - **Provide a focus among agencies with differing degrees of concern regarding Southeast watersheds fostering greater interagency communication**
  - **Facilitate habitat restoration discussions to help provide a neutral atmosphere on complicated, controversial projects** (There was confusion on this and much discussion by the group. The group discussed the concept of and concerns around advocacy and the possible benefits that may come from the partnership)

facilitating broad discussions on difficult habitat related issues. There was strong support for this type of effort and similarly strong concern that the group not get stuck in a role of conflict resolution but rather maintain a focus on providing information and assisting in creating an atmosphere where points of view could be expressed and possible solutions developed. The concept of advocacy was placed in the parking lot and will be addressed at a future teleconference.

Jessica asked if the SEAKFHP may at some point pursue non-profit status, Cecil and Bill advised caution here as agency entities participating in the partnership must adhere to internal rules regarding advocacy and fundraising.)

- Increase regional efficiency through professional networking
  - Help breakdown perceptions of agencies/partner groups – highlight the things they do, can do and cannot do.
  - Provide broad tools to communities to be more efficient and effective in networking/responsive to conservation project opportunities
  - Facilitate professional development of the region's habitat community
- Facilitate funding opportunities for local fish habitat conservation efforts
    - Facilitate successful grant proposals
    - Help to locate non-federal match funding opportunities
    - Develop clearing house for habitat related funding opportunities
    - Coordinate existing and future resources (funding/expertise) among agencies/partner groups
    - Help communities obtain the resources they need to meet local management plans/permit regulations/requirements, etc...
  - Convene a SEAKFHP Science and Data Subcommittee
    - Facilitate formal mechanism for coordinating collaborative restoration expertise, consider role of SEAKFHP subcommittee as Technical Review Panel to provide feedback and review of larger agency planning efforts (The group did discuss this and agrees a Science and Data subcommittee is needed although the details of this committee need more attention at some point including whether or not this subcommittee will serve as a technical review panel for regional efforts.)
  - Support education focus by partnership to help build regional awareness and understanding of fish habitat conservation efforts (There was support by the group for an education focus by the SEAKFHP although many did express concerns including capacity of the partnership to invest in education projects and that careful consideration be made of the issues and timing before the partnership would be asked to tackle a hot button education related issue. Norman asked Cecil how much other Alaska FHPs were investing in education projects. Cecil said other FHPs also struggled with this and that their current focus is first to help educate partners, to assist in building/sharing internal knowledge and then, secondly, providing education (and outreach) more broadly when opportunities arise.
    - Consider a limited focus mainly in collaboration with other entities (ACRC/AFS/WQA etc...) already working towards similar goals
    - Could address hot button issues/back lash occurring with local restoration efforts
    - Could increase understanding within the timber industry

- Consider outreach role for partnership through routine or opportune publicity of current efforts shared regionally
- Provide technical services and support to organizations working on local watershed efforts (This bullet originally contained specific language regarding watershed councils, the group recognized this crossed over too closely with the mission of the SE AK Watershed Coalition. To not duplicate missions the group suggested broadening the language so the intent was clear that the SEAKFHP is supportive and will assist as able any organization working on watershed issues, but also recognizing that the Coalition or another group may serve to support them and the SEAKFHP would work to not duplicate efforts and at a minimum share contact information and encourage groups to network accordingly.)

### **Unknown alignment in Partner expectations of SEAKFHP:**

- **Is there a forest component to the SEAKFHP?** Norman shared more information on this topic, specifically addressing the efforts currently happening regionally on forest related issues (Tongass Futures Round Table, JEDC forest clusters (also an Ocean cluster), etc...). These groups do work on watershed issues and he is wondering what sort of role the SEAKFHP may want to play with these other entities, should there be some formal outreach from the SEAKFHP to these groups?, should a member of the ISC attend these meetings?, are there any other considerations regarding forest interactions with watershed and fish habitat efforts?. This item was added to the parking lot and will be discussed by the group at a later date.
- **What are the overlaps between upland restoration and riparian/in-stream projects? Should SEAKFHP integrate or segregate its focus?** (There was limited discussion on this topic and the group agreed more time was needed to address the geographic focus of the partnership's efforts, this item was added to the parking lot.)
- **Transboundary Issues** – Jessica mentioned transboundary issues are of concern to the SE AK Watershed Coalition and asked the group how the partnership might address transboundary issues with Canada since many of the headwaters of SE watersheds originate in Canada and concerns surrounding recent large project efforts like the Tulsequah Chief Mine in British Columbia at the head of the Taku River. The group agreed this was a topic for deeper discussion so the issue was added to the parking lot. Mark recommended to Jessica that the SE AK Watershed Coalition consider communicating with the Taku River Task Force and Rivers without Borders.

**Partner concerns/limitations of SEAKFHP:** (In general the group recognized and supported the concerns expressed below. Areas that required more discussion were added to the parking lot for future meetings.)

- No collaboration for the sake of collaboration
- SEAKFHP is not a voting group on agency priorities
- No advocacy – keep partnership efforts science based and non-politicized – there was some confusion and need for more discussion on this topic, it was added to the parking lot for later discussion
- Redundancy of partnership effort/mission

- Potential to overlap missions with the SE AK Watershed Coalition, need to be careful of creating redundancy with watershed council efforts
- Tongass Futures Round Table/JEDC Cluster Initiatives, Others?
- Is contact communication/coordination a collateral role for the SEAKFHP? Should we plan for this so it does not become a primary responsibility of the partnership? How does this overlap with other partner roles? (Jeff suggested we create a “practitioner directory” to help with this effort, Jessica also noted that once we have a web site up and going that will also aide in directing folks to the correct entity, the group also highlighted that a strong need of the partnership would be a mechanism and associated funding to keep a coordinator in place for the SEAKFHP.)
- Concerned about efficiency/long range stability of the SEAKFHP
  - Avoid getting buried in bureaucracy mechanisms
  - Lack of support funding/limitations to partner investment
  - Not making enough progress for current funders to continue investment
  - Steering Committee workload/burnout
  - Concern lack of an executive director may impact success of partnership
  - Concerned the partnership may get bogged down in specific implementation efforts
- Lack of regional coordination for fish habitat restoration efforts in SE Alaska
- Limited amount of match funding for fish habitat restoration efforts/trends of diminishing federal funding opportunities in near future
- Lack of accountability and evaluation for current restoration projects (cleaned up this language and deleted reference to funding)
- Lack of public education/understanding of habitat restoration efforts
  - Current hot button issues / backlash on local restoration efforts
  - Lack of recognized benefits
- Benefits of the SEAKFHP are not contingent upon recognized NFHP status, although it is important to highlight why SE AK should be recognized as a partnership and work towards this recognition
- Should we consider providing an update on SEAKFHP efforts with WAFWA (Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), is this a step required as part of the NFHP recognized status process? (Roger provided more back ground on this topic and Cecil suggested that this would be a good idea, that networking through WAFWA could only be beneficial to the SEAKFHP.)
- Sees some concern for partnership efforts as a result of misconceptions and lack of understanding by some within businesses, industries and communities.

SEAKFHP Founding Partnership Document/Process – The group discussed creating a formal way for partners to better understand what the SEAKFHP is and how to formally commit themselves. They discussed options for formalizing this effort through a formal signatory document and options for something less formal. Partners were asked to consider what may be a requirement for their agency/ partner group. Options to consider included a general agreement form – as is drafted in attachment B of the meeting materials, something more formal like an MOU or including charter language as part of the bylaws, similar to the PMEP bylaws. Cecil and Bill provided some general guidance regarding the utility of a formal agreement and provided reference examples like the Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center MOU and the Western Native Troup Initiative (WNTI) Partnership Agreement. The group discussed the differences among each other regarding the need and desire for this formality. The group



agreed they would like to avoid a full blown MOU effort but many offered support for a formal signatory agreement form that could be useful for promoting internal communication and facilitating understanding for an individual representing an agency or partner group. Debbie will draft a SEAKFHP Agreement form based upon the WNTI example and using some of the information as outlined in attachment B, she will send this document out to the ISC for their review by email and track edits for a final draft. If consensus can be reached on a final draft this document will be finalized by email and if discussion is required a teleconference will be called to complete it. **[PENDING ACTION ITEM]**

SEAKFHP Bylaws/Process – With little remaining meeting time the group briefly touched on how to address creating formal bylaws for the partnership. Cecil and Bill offered some guidance on what items should be included in the bylaws (define membership at large, define steering committee, etc...). While the group did agree to an ISC decision process the concept of consensus and details of voting need to be further defined and will occur during review of the next draft of bylaws. Mark offered to help support a next revision to the draft bylaws currently under review looking to streamline some of the existing language and incorporate some of the discussion points made at this meeting (consensus/voting, etc...). There are a number of specific decisions the ISC will need to make on the bylaws and Debbie will forward out the next draft with specific decision questions for the ISC to make via email. She will make changes based upon consensus actions of the ISC and will track decisions items that may require formal discussion and the group will finalize the bylaws at the next scheduled teleconference. **[PENDING ACTION ITEM]**

#### Outlook to future SEAKFHP meetings and tasks:

- Debbie recommended, in addition to follow-up items from this meeting, during our next teleconference we review our draft timeline and assess how best to proceed with a formal process for developing the SEAKFHP Strategic Plan, review timeframes and tasks associated with acceptance from the NFHP, and discuss/schedule an outreach event (realistically scaled “symposium”). Debbie will follow-up shortly via Doodle Poll with a meeting request for our next teleconference (late July/early Aug).
- Mark relayed an invitation from Ron Wolfe of Sealaska, anyone interested in joining them as they assess streams on Prince of Whales the week of June 25<sup>th</sup> are welcome.
- Parking Lot Items
  - Future discussion needed on advocacy
  - Future discussion needed on SEAKFHP forest component role
  - Future discussion needed on the overlaps between upland restoration and riparian/in-stream projects. Should SEAKFHP integrate or segregate it’s focus?
  - Future discussion needed on how SEAKFHP will approach transboundary issues
- Pending Action Items
  - SEAKFHP Partner Agreement Form – draft to ISC for review via email
  - SEAKFHP Bylaws draft/decision tree to ISC for review via email
  - Request to All AK FHP Committee to form an Alaska wide Science and Data Committee