

Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership  
Science and Data Committee Working Group  
Meeting Summary - November 28, 2012

SEAKFHP Steering Committee Members present:

- USFS –Sheila Jacobson
- ADF&G – Jeff Nichols
- USF&WS – Cecil Rich
- SEAKFHP Coordinator: Debbie Hart, meeting recorder

Introductions – Debbie convened the meeting and provided a brief summary of the tasks outlined at the last working group meeting and provided background to help provide Cecil with information that the working group was looking for through his participation in today's meeting. She also outlined the primary task of the meeting was to finalize a list of roles and responsibilities that would guide the formation of the SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee.

NFHP Guidance

- Cecil provided an overview of how other FHPs have utilized and convened Science and Data Committees, noting that some have pursued a formal committee with detailed tasks and others have convened them on an ad hoc basis. He provided context to how the Alaska FHPs utilize and task their respective committees and also shared insights to the NFHP Science and Data Committee. Each FHP has taken a slightly different path in creating these committees, and while some tasks are different, all use their committees to help strengthen the science based foundation to FHPs strategic plans and partnership actions.

Cecil sits on the National S&D Committee and highlighted the group's role in producing the National Fish Habitat Assessment Strategy:

[http://www.fishhabitat.org/sites/default/files/www/Assessment%20Strategy%20-%2020120622\\_National%20Fish%20Habitat%20Partnership%20-%20National%20Habitat.pdf](http://www.fishhabitat.org/sites/default/files/www/Assessment%20Strategy%20-%2020120622_National%20Fish%20Habitat%20Partnership%20-%20National%20Habitat.pdf) . He also noted their role in helping to develop important

data sharing protocols, metadata guidelines, monitoring guidelines used in the Waters to Watch initiative and application to the Multi-State Conservation Grant. Cecil will send Debbie a document that outlines the roles for the National Committee for distribution to the larger group.

- Sheila asked if Cecil was aware if other FHPs pursued social science areas. Cecil noted that the national group has focused on anthropogenic stressors to fish habitat conservation efforts but to his knowledge has not taken any further direct investigation of socio/economic factors that impact fish habitat conservation. The group discussed how best those types of issues may be addressed by the SEAKFHP Steering Committee, if the S&D Committee would be the best place or perhaps instead referring any social/economic issues that may arise to another committee or ad hoc work group that would be created based upon a specific need.

SEAKFHP S&D Committee Roles and Responsibilities

- The group reviewed the draft set of roles and responsibilities that were created for the SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee. This draft was shared with the Steering Committee and committee members provided feedback. The group discussed these points and also asked Cecil for his recommendations. The blue highlights the edits discussed during the meeting.
  - Summary of identified SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee Roles

- Serve as a liaison from SEAKFHP to the NFHP Science and Data Committee (For this role Cecil offered to help provide assistance through his connection on the national committee)
- Facilitate any directed assessment or research needs for the SEAKFHP (Social or economic assessments may be facilitated through a separate committee or ad hoc working group; also this role may ebb and flow as various issues arise such as climate change or invasive species)
- Provide the science based review and input to regional scientific assessments (Identification of Critical Threats/ SEAKFHP Strategic Action Plan) and provide guidance to the SEAKFHP Steering Committee regarding general science oriented information requests.
- Review project proposals from entities requesting SEAKFHP endorsement, and ideally provide summary and 'opinion' to the greater SEAKFHP SC, so that the larger group makes final decision based on info gathering and review by the smaller S&D committee. (For this role, the group agreed outreach or social science proposals may not best be fitted to this group and instead may be fielded by the Steering Committee or through convening an ad hoc working group on a case by case basis).
- Will identify, review, recommend, and ensure availability to partners a diversity of relevant spatial datasets and non-spatial information (including protocols) that will assist planning efforts associated with fish habitat identification, delineation, characterization, prioritization, and assessment in Southeast Alaska (SEAK). (Group discussed various protocols that would help to integrate and encourage best practices regarding fish habitat conservation efforts, such as fact sheets that inform common terminology and course habitat descriptions for different user groups/ restoration best practices/ AWC entries/ fish passage design. The group discussed this would be a key area that the committee would look for integration with the NFHP and when possible elevate and work to integrate the work of other partners such as FS Condition Assessment Framework, TNC Ecoregional Assessment work, Kenai FHP Wetlands Mapping, etc...).
- Serve as liaison to data resource entities (stream ARC data/SEAK hydro, Southeast Alaska GIS Library, Transboundary Data Working Group, others...) and assist in coordinating science and data needs among Alaska and adjacent fish habitat partnerships.

- Identify and support cross cutting science based training needs to facilitate strengthening regional professional development and available resources for fish habitat conservation efforts.
- The group discussed the importance of linking the S&D Committee to the National efforts and recent assessment strategy work published by the NFHP Science and Data Committee. Jeff noted that it is hard for folks to keep up on this and that this recognition also needs to occur more regularly during general Steering Committee meetings. Debbie offered to help focus discussion and review NFHP priorities during both Steering Committee meetings and strategic planning meetings by having the group review NFH action plan priorities at the beginning of each meeting.
- The group discussed timing and process for the committee formation and agreed that once the set of roles becomes final they can begin to build capacity on the committee. Depending upon the final geographic scope of the partnership the SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee may want to have a stratified approach with some science and data committee members focused on freshwater/estuarine issues and others on nearshore/marine issues. This could help address workload and capacity concerns. The group discussed a phased approach where initially the committee would focus on freshwater/estuarine issues and then, as capacity developed, evolve to taking on nearshore and marine issues.

Interim Project Endorsement –The group discussed the pros and cons for developing interim project endorsement criteria and whether or not this would be an initial task asked of the S&D Committee. Jeff shared his recent research on other FHPs, specifically the Atlantic Coastal FHP, who provide a detailed set of endorsement criteria and application that may provide a good template for SEAKFHP. Cecil noted the similar work of the Desert FHP and Debbie provided the templates shared by the PMEP. Discussion focused around what “interim” might mean and the pros and cons for moving forward with project endorsement before the strategic action plan was completed. The group agreed to table this discussion to a later time and in the mean while Debbie will compile a variety of project endorsement templates for later discussion.

#### General Discussion Items

- Jeff asked Cecil if he had some insights to how large data warehouses are being implemented in Alaska and specifically asked how the UAS GIS Library fits in on a larger state level. Cecil noted some other large statewide data resource sharing occurring around the state but noted that more needs to be done to coordinate in this area and noted the SEAK Hydro data set.
- Cecil provided a brief update on a statewide Alaska FHP web page. Katrina Mueller is continuing to assist the Mat-Su and may be soon working to help Southwest FHP and Kenai FHP in revamping their web sites. This master site will provide links to all Alaska FHPs as well as provide links to shared data sites and other outreach tools like USFWS’s Facebook site.
- Cecil noted the recent efforts at USFWS to review the Coastal and Partners Programs. They recently met to review gaps in their decision making and strategic planning effort for those programs and are hoping this review will help them to make improvements and identify any gaps in implementation.

#### Wrap Up/Action Items:

- Jeff will provide an update on this meeting at the SEAKFHP Steering Committee meeting on Dec 6<sup>th</sup>; specifically asking the Steering Committee to approve the amended set of Science and Data Committee roles (see summary below)

- Cecil will share the roles and responsibilities document for the National Science and Data Committee
- Debbie will compile and make available a variety of project endorsement templates from other fish habitat partnerships.
- Debbie will facilitate review of NFHP Action Plan priorities during upcoming Steering Committee and strategic planning meetings.
- A hold over from last meeting's actions: Debbie will check the status of the other candidate fish habitat partnerships (Salmon in the City/Salmon Stronghold) and make an updated outreach to those as well as other AK FHPs.
  - Jeff Nichols had email and voicemail (never spoke live unfortunately) contact with Mark Trenholm (Program Manager for Salmon Stronghold) in late October in response to an email by inquiring about their 'candidate' status for FHP. Our most significant concerns are with duplication of efforts due to overlap in geographical scope. Mark conveyed that b/c of their current funding structure; the elevation to full partnership status within the NFHP was not a high priority, at least with respect to receiving funding from this entity. So...this implied that the Salmon Stronghold was not aggressively working to become a national FHP, although many of the groups' overriding goals, objectives, and priorities parallel that of NFHP. It should be noted however, that they have not retracted their candidate status, so the idea of recognized partnership may just be something they have tabled for the time being.

#### Summary of identified SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee Roles

- Serve as a liaison from SEAKFHP to the NFHP Science and Data Committee
- Facilitate any directed assessment or research needs for the SEAKFHP
- Provide the science based review and input to regional scientific assessments (Identification of Critical Threats/ SEAKFHP Strategic Action Plan) and provide guidance to the SEAKFHP Steering Committee regarding general science oriented information requests.
- Review project proposals from entities requesting SEAKFHP endorsement, and ideally provide summary and 'opinion' to the greater SEAKFHP SC, so that the larger group makes final decision based on info gathering and review by the smaller S&D committee.
- Will identify, review, recommend, and ensure availability to partners a diversity of relevant spatial datasets and non-spatial information (including protocols) that will assist planning efforts associated with fish habitat identification, delineation, characterization, prioritization, and assessment in Southeast Alaska (SEAK); see Appendix 1 below which outlines more depth to this role.
- Serve as liaison to data resource entities (stream ARC data/SEAK hydro, Southeast Alaska GIS Library, Transboundary Data Working Group, others...) and assist in coordinating science and data needs among Alaska and adjacent fish habitat partnerships.
- Identify and support cross cutting science based training needs to facilitate strengthening regional professional development and available resources for fish habitat conservation efforts.

## **Appendix 1. SEAKFHP Science and Data Committee role related to relevant protocols and guidelines**

Will identify, review, recommend, and ensure availability to partners a diversity of relevant spatial datasets and non-spatial information (including protocols) that will assist planning efforts associated with fish habitat identification, delineation, characterization, prioritization, and assessment in Southeast Alaska (SEAK). Identifying key datasets complete with metadata, relevant protocols and strategies, and other informational documents and identifying sources of information which provides partner-access will provide consistency and a level of standardization necessary to address strategic planning goals of the Partnership. The S&D committee, upon request from partners or the SEAKFHP Steering Committee, may assist in evaluating and identifying key datasets or protocols to accomplish goals and objectives of projects that align with priorities of the SEAKFHP. The abundance and diversity of fish and fish habitat related protocols presents a potential obstacle to many partners challenged with identifying appropriate measures and means to satisfy project objectives with limited specific capacity.

A short list of protocols that may be used to advance SEAKFHP priorities includes:

- **Fish distribution inventory/survey** (AWC, AFFI, repeated 'index' counts, etc.)
- **Stream habitat inventory/survey** (USFS Tier I-IV, ADF&G-SF modified Tier II, etc.)
- **Watershed Condition Assessment** (USFS Watershed Condition Framework, USFS Proper Functioning Condition Assessment)
- **Culvert and fish passage inventory/assessment** (ADF&G Fish Passage Program, MOU: ADF&G-SF and AKDOT, USFWS Southeast Alaska Fish Passage Program, USFS Upstream Assessment of Fish Habitat)
- **Invasive species inventory and detection** (ADF&G Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan, HACCP, USFWS invasive plant inventory (??), etc.)
- **Road Condition Survey** (ADF&G-SF RCS, USFS (??), etc.)
- **Aquatic, riparian, wetland, upland (?) restoration guidelines** (USFWS-??, ADF&G-SF Streambank revegetation and protection Guide, USFS-Watershed Restoration Plan, etc.)
- **Estuary and nearshore marine habitat surveys** (ShoreZone, NMFS EFH, ??)
- **Stream gauging/in-stream flow requirements and methods** (DRN State of Alaska Instream Flow Handbook, ADF&G-SF methods including the Tennant Method, USGS Water Resources Data for Alaska, etc.)

A separate short list of ecosystems or habitats that require specific protocols for inventory and assessment that need further review by the S&D committee includes:

- Wetlands: identification, delineation, characterization
- Riparian zone assessment, characterization
- Estuarine and nearshore marine environment
- Neritic or offshore marine waters
- Freshwater lakes and ponds
- Ecoregion or broadscale SEAK Assessments