

Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership (SEAKFHP)  
Strategic Planning Meeting Summary – March 28, 2013

Meeting Participants

- USF&WS – Neil Stichert, John Hudson and David Wigglesworth
- ADF&G – Roger Harding and Jeff Nichols
- TNC: Dave Albert and Christine Woll
- TU: Mark Kaelke
- Southeast Alaska Watershed Council: Jessica Kayser and Angie Eldred
- Takshanuk Watershed Council: Brad Ryan
- Sitka Conservation Society: Scott Harris
- City and Borough of Yakutat: Bill Lucey
- SEAKFHP Coordinator: Debbie Hart

Introductions –Neil Stichert, USFWS/SEAKFHP Steering Committee chair provided a brief overview of the SEAKFHP strategic planning efforts to date including background on guidance for development of the plan from the National Fish Habitat Board.

Debbie followed with a brief review of outcomes from the partnership's first strategic planning session held in October of 2012 specifically:

- development of vision and mission statements,
- adoption of a broad geographic scope, and
- identification of four core functions for the partnership to work towards over the next few years including: growth and outreach of the partnership; strengthening perseverance of the partnership, providing partner services, and developing regional fish habitat conservation strategies.

She noted that since the partnership is still relatively new, that the core functions and geographic and species scope are all relative to the capacity of folks involved in the partnership and will also impact the focal points for crafting the partnership's short-term and long-term priorities. She noted that the main thrust of today's meeting is to consider the approach the partnership wants to use to develop regional conservation strategies. She shared that there is currently a draft outline for developing the SEAKFHP Strategic Action Plan (handout provided as meeting material, attached for reference) and highlighted three pieces of work that have been identified:

- one is general organizational development and background information on the partnership that she will work to compile in the plan
- a second is providing a snap shot of the condition (current assessment) of fish habitat in southeast Alaska and noted the SEAKFHP Science and Data committee has been tasked with this effort
- and lastly the need to develop a process for developing regional conservation strategies with specific priorities the partnership will commit to working on in the short and long term. For this last one she noted that this is why Dave Albert was asked to present at today's meeting as he has some case studies to share that help provide insight in how the Conservation Action Planning Process (CAP) and associated tools may help inform this effort. She also noted that a set of National Fish Habitat Conservation Strategies were adopted at the recent National Fish Habitat Board meeting in February and that these would be helpful in this effort for the SEAKFHP (provided to the group as meeting material, attached for reference).

David Wigglesworth, the partnership's USFWS/NFHP adviser, offered his insights to strategic planning and shared some of his experiences with other fish habitat partnerships who have used the CAP in their efforts. He noted that there are many ways to proceed and it is good to

consider how best to modify approaches to meet our specific needs. He encourages the partnership to focus on its strengths and consider how best to engage other entities to participate more broadly in the process. He suggested reviewing the recent performance measures recently adopted by the National Fish Habitat Board (attached as reference). He also suggested having conversations about how we envision the future state of fish habitat in Southeast Alaska and let this help drive our priorities. He discussed the need for proceeding with a defensible method for developing our priorities and considering how best to document this within the plan.

CAP Framework and Possible Tools for Developing Regional Conservation Strategies – Dave Albert began by referencing Dr. Lackey's work on salmon and how salmon and people need many of the same things. He noted that if salmon are valued then we may consider that it is society's role to conserve them. He offered this view and then posed the question – "if that is the case then what roles can fish habitat partnerships play in conservation?" He went on to suggest they (we) may play an important role in evaluating the regional needs that make conservation possible or successful and track progress on those assumptions.

From here Dave began a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the Conservation Action Planning process – in essence a methodology or framework for developing priorities, which includes steps to design strategies and associated actions that can be measured to determine if these strategies and actions do what is intended. Dave introduced the situation analysis concept as a tool for planning and used two examples – the coastal forest generic example looking at a broad scale approach and the salmon life-stage example a more defined approach. He then shared these examples with specific data and reference to situations facing salmon in Southeast Alaska and highlighted the work TNC did to develop a restoration prioritization list of the top 20 watersheds within the Tongass National Forest. (note this PowerPoint presentation is archived at the SEAKFHP web site at: [http://www.seakfhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Salmon\\_CAP\\_framework.pdf](http://www.seakfhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Salmon_CAP_framework.pdf))

Dave described the key points for using a situation analysis and discussed some of the process involved including using critical questions and box and arrow diagrams. He shared the examples of the conceptual framework developed for conservation success on Prince of Wales Island and development of ecological attributes essential for successful conservation of salmon at each live cycle stage (work done looking at possible impacts of the Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay). Dave noted how they found it helpful to frame threats in a way that expressed the positive state desired and noted it is important to consider leveraging current/future economics in the process as well.

Open Discussion – Discussion occurred throughout the presentation among the group including sharing feedback and asking follow-up questions on Dave's presentation, expressing thoughts' regarding the value the situation analysis and CAP process brings to the SEAKFHP strategic planning process, and considering of how the group may proceed forward with next steps. Highlights of this discussion include:

- general favor for using the situation analysis for developing regional conservation strategies focused on salmon in Southeast Alaska and there were questions asked on how to use this process looking more broadly at other fish targets in the region, how to provide defensibility to the process, and how and when to involve additional stakeholders. Bill Lucey spoke favorably of the CAP process in general and his experience using it in Yakutat, noting the community participation value and how this now is often referenced in defending priorities and actions. Jeff shared his thoughts on how this seems a very logical approach and reasonable approach.

- general discussion on current capacity of the SEAKFHP and initial focus for its first few years – mostly focusing on anadromous fish species concentrating on threats to the freshwater and nearshore habitats.
- questions and discussion on how other FHPs have utilized this effort in their work and how it may apply at a statewide level recognizing the jurisdictional matrix is the same as would be the general components of the situation analysis (including strategies, sources of stress, key ecological attributes and conservation targets), it was noted forest practices would be perhaps more of a driver for conditions in SE Alaska compared to other areas of the state.
- process check and discussion on the strategic plan outline and how this process fits in with the whole plan development including the organizational descriptions. At this point the group encountered some confusion on parts of the plan and the group revisited the outline for the SEAKFHP Strategic plan draft and spent some time discussing the assessment section where the SEAKFHP Science and Data committee has been tasked to develop a summary or snap shot of fish habitat conditions in SE Alaska, in essence highlighting the work that has been done in the region to date and noting potential gap areas. Jess Kayser shared some work the SAWC is doing as part of work for the In Lieu Fee program to aggregate a variety of this information for the Army Corps of Engineers. Neil noted that this work by SAWC and other literature search information will be helpful as the S&D group gathers the background information on assessment information in the region.
- Dave shared a few cautions with the CAP process noting TNC's work on developing a CAP for estuaries in SE Alaska. He noted we may want to consider different emphasis areas for our strategic actions and noted TNCs focus on science, governance and people engagement.

#### Wrap Up/Next Steps:

- Small group work needed to build more detail to the outline for SEAKFHP Strategic Plan and refine work items needed to develop specific conservation strategies within the plan (focal targets, broad themes, specific themes, etc.) – Debbie and Neil will meet to describe this in more detail and initiate the work group
- Consider how to proceed with a situation analysis effort to help inform development of the conservation strategies and/or how this may be considered an action identified in the plan – Debbie will engage in follow-up discussions to offer suggestions on how to proceed
- S&D Committee will begin fish habitat assessment summary effort in working meeting planned for mid-April.