Desert Fish Habitat Partnership

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DFHP Request for Proposals for 2013 are now available

The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) is requesting submission of project proposals for the 2013 National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) funding cycle and other potential funding sources. Projects should directly address the habitat needs of desert fish, specifically those identified in the DFHP Framework for Strategic Conservation of Desert Fish. The link to the Framework is http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/Fisheries_Partnership/Documents/dfhp_final_LOWRES.pdf. Projects which provide on-the-ground habitat conservation or restoration for desert fish in cooperation with multiple, diverse partners and matching resources will be given the highest priority. Emphasis will be given to projects that address natural habitats rather than artificial refugia (unless the refugia prevents a detrimental loss to the species).

To apply for funding, proposals must be submitted electronically to DFHP coordinator, Kayla Barrett, by 1 September 2012. If you would like DFHP's RFP emailed to you, please contact Kayla Barrett (contact info on last page). Also, please contact your respective regional coordinator to discuss potential proposals. Their contact is on page 7.

Mature humpback chub
Photo credit: Jeff Sorensen

Bringing together people and organizations with a common interest in voluntary conservation of desert fishes and their habitats

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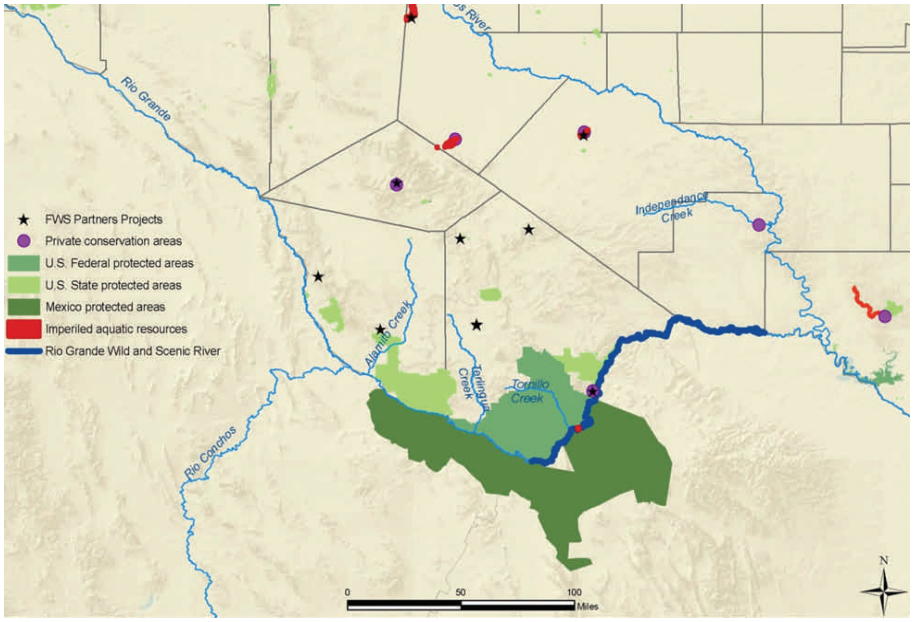
Rio Grande tributaries: national recognition for locally driven conservation collaborations and restoration of critical desert fish habitat

Megan G. Bean, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department



The National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP; www.fishhabitat.org) is a coalition of regionally based partnerships focused on conserving and restoring fish habitats. Each year, NFHP recognizes ten rivers, watersheds, or other aquatic features as a Waters to Watch in recognition of ongoing collaborative coalitions, conservation and restoration projects, and preservation of aquatic habitats. The Rio Grande tributaries in Texas have been selected as one of NFHP's 2012 Waters to Watch.

The Big Bend region of the Rio Grande is the centerpiece of an emerging bi-national system of lands dedicated to conservation. In May 2009, United States Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Mexican Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Juan Elvira Quesada announced their commitment to strengthen cross-border conservation efforts in the Big Bend region. This presents a unique opportunity to unify Department of Interior agencies and other Federal, State, and local partners to lead strategic conservation planning, design, and implementation at broad, bi-national scales. Over 40 bi-national conservation partners have been working to conserve three million acres of lands on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border within the greater Big Bend ecosystem. The Rio Grande watershed was also recently recognized as one of two important conservation areas in Texas by the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO; www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov). The AGO Initiative seeks to promote the protection of our natural and cultural heritage through community involvement and awareness. Emphasis is placed on empowering local partners and communities to develop conservation and restoration initiatives to promote the protection and recreational enjoyment of our natural resources.

Because large portions of Rio Grande tributary watersheds are privately owned, building partnerships between private landowners and conservation organizations is a critical component to restoring and conserving aquatic habitat in the region. Two of many aquatic habitat projects in the Big Bend region are in the Terlingua and Alamito Creek watersheds. These tributary watersheds are important spawning and refuge areas for imperiled fishes, including the federally listed Rio Grande silvery minnow. The silvery minnow was once one of the most abundant and widespread native fishes in the Rio Grande and Pecos rivers. More recently, until reintroductions began in Big Bend, the fish had been confined to about seven

Story continued...

percent of its historic range. Decline of the silvery minnow has been attributed to flow modifications, stream channelization, decreasing water quality, and interactions with non-native species. Projects that improve instream habitat, water quantity, and water quality in the Terlingua and Alamito Creek watersheds will contribute to persistence of Rio Grande silvery minnow and other imperiled fish species in the Big Bend region.

The Alamito Creek restoration project is one of DFHP's 2012 priorities. Alamito Creek Preserve (The Preserve) contains a 3.5 mile section of scenic Alamito Creek that historically flowed much of the year. Perennial pools in this reach support populations of endemic fishes, amphibians and aquatic invertebrates, and a healthy riparian habitat. The Preserve would like to restore natural, perennial creek flow by removing large areas of invasive mesquite, which dominate upland vegetation in the watershed and are partially responsible for lowering the water table in an already arid habitat. Native grasses will be replanted to slow the rate of reinvasion and provide increased water quality via runoff catchment and erosion control. Feral hogs are abundant in The Preserve; their wallowing and rooting impacts water quality in perennial pools critical to the endemic aquatic species of Alamito Creek. The Trans Pecos Water and Land Trust will begin a feral hog removal program that will partner with a hunter safety program sponsored by TPWD.

In addition, another important aquatic habitat restoration project is occurring in the Terlingua Creek watershed. A large portion of a 276,000 acre ranch was deferred from grazing to restore native grasslands and riparian areas. Removal of mesquite, creosote bush, etc. and re-establishment of native grasslands has increased spring recharge, improved instream and riparian habitat, and benefited endemic fish species.

Erosion from loss of riparian vegetation in Alamito Creek floodplain will be addressed with DFHP habitat restoration project.

Conservation efforts and projects in the Big Bend region offer opportunities to restore and preserve critical habitats for aquatic species. Fishes within this region exhibit remarkable adaption to a harsh environment and climate, yet rely on a delicate balance of limited natural resources and are thus extremely vulnerable to drought and human stressors. As Texas suffers through a period of exceptional drought, the persistence of aquatic habitats is severely threatened. Threats to habitats in this region are exacerbated by decreasing water availability from surface and groundwater withdrawals, encroachment of non-native species, and land use practices. Conservation projects in the region will restore habitats to a more functional form and increase their resilience to natural and anthropogenic changes reducing stress on our native fish populations.

Weber River Project selected as a NFHP 10 “Waters to Watch”

The Weber River in Utah has also been selected as a National Fish Habitat Partnership 10 “Waters to Watch”.

The Weber River fish passage project is intended to protect native fishes and improve water use efficiency for water companies in the Weber River drainage. It will re-connect 17.5 total river miles and allow native sucker and trout species to pass one mainstem diversion and two culvert barriers in two tributaries, Strawberry and Gordan Creeks.

Well-connected and spatially distributed spawning habitats are critical to ensure resiliency, genetic diversity, and long-term persistence of fish populations. This project is a significant step towards reconnecting and expanding bluehead sucker and Bonneville cutthroat trout habitat.

The project objective in 2012 is to facilitate upstream passage for as many species as possible in the Lower Weber River drainage with target species being bluehead sucker and Bonneville cutthroat trout. Project partners include Trout Unlimited, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Utah Department of Transportation. The project is a unique partnership of Federal funding between the National Fish Passage Program and the NFHP Partnerships, Desert Fish Habitat Partnership and the Western Native Trout Initiative.

Partnership Activities

Dan Dauwalter, DFHP science and data chair, and Kayla Barrett, DFHP coordinator, developed a presentation for a DFHP/Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) webinar. LCCs are public-private partnerships that recognize conservation challenges that transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and require a more networked approach to conservation—holistic, collaborative, adaptive, and grounded in science to ensure the sustainability of America's land, water, wildlife and cultural resources. Four of the five geographically overlapping LCCs (Great Basin LCC, Southern Rockies LCC, Desert LCC, Great Northern LCC) were represented on the webinar. Kayla Barrett presented background information on the National Fish Habitat Partnership, DFHP, and examples of DFHP's past funded projects. Dan Dauwalter presented DFHP's science and data needs and how the LCCs could help.

Cynthia Tait, Kayla Barrett, Jeff Sorensen, Megan Bean, and Greg Gustina updated DFHP's Request for Proposals for 2013 projects.

NFHP NEWS

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

The Secretaries of the Interior (Ken Salazar), Agriculture (Tom Vilsack) and Commerce (John Bryson) signed an agreement to promote collaborative, science-based conservation of the nation's waterways and fisheries through the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The agreement ensures that Federal resources are effectively focused on locally supported conservation strategies developed by Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs). The announcement was made at the White House Conference on Conservation, Growing America's Outdoor Heritage and Economy.

The revised National Fish Habitat Action Plan will be released in July 2012. The revised Plan will be built on the objectives below and will also feature case studies and a vision for the future of our nation's aquatic habitats;
1) Achieve measurable habitat conservation results through strategic actions of FHPs that improve ecological condition, restore natural processes, or prevent the decline of intact and healthy systems leading to better fish habitat conditions and increased fishing opportunities. 2) Establish a consensus set of national conservation strategies as a framework to guide future actions and investment by the FHPs by 2013.
3) Broaden the community of support for fish habitat conservation by increasing fishing opportunities, fostering the participation of local communities in conservation activities, and raising public awareness of the role healthy fish habitats play in the quality of life and economic well-being of local communities. 4) Fill gaps in the National Fish Habitat Assessment and its associated database to empower strategic conservation action supported by broadly available scientific information, and integrate socio-economic data in the analysis to improve people's lives in a manner consistent with fish habitat conservation goals. 5) Communicate the conservation outcomes produced collectively by FHPs as well as new opportunities and voluntary approaches for conserving fish habitat to the public and conservation partners.

FUN NEWS

The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership has a Facebook page! If you are not one of the 500 million users on Facebook, you should be. The DFHP Facebook page has public friendly information posted, pictures, DFHP Newsletters, RFPs, reports, and much more. So check us out because it is something that everyone will "like." http://www.facebook.com/pages/Desert-Fish-Habitat Partnership/193053497376208

Kathryn Boyer, Natural Resources Conservation Service representative on the DFHP steering committee, has retired from NRCS and DFHP. Kathryn is replaced by Casey Burns. Thank you for all your hard work towards conserving desert fish habitat Kathryn and good luck on your next adventure! Welcome aboard Casey!

DFHP has a new picture representing it on the National Fish Habitat Partnership website (fishhabitat.org). The picture that was selected had the most "likes" during a photo contest on DFHP's Facebook page. The spawning bluehead suckers picture is credited to Brian Healy, National Park Service.

Upcoming Events

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

Southwest Regional Conference

24-26 July 2012, Ignacio, Colorado

142nd Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society

19-23 August 2012, St. Paul, Minnesota

Desert Fish Habitat Partnership Annual Meeting

14 November 2012, Las Vegas, Nevada

Regional Representatives for RFP

Please consult with your DFHP Regional Representative prior to submitting your proposal. Regional Representatives will answer questions and assist with the process. Submit completed proposals in electric format to the DFHP Coordinator.

DFHP's 2013 RFP Regional Representatives Contact Information:
Lower Colorado River including Rio Yaqui, Rio de la Conception, and Rio Sonoyta
Jeremy Voeltz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (928) 338-4288, jeremy_voeltz@fws.gov

Upper Colorado River
Krissy Wilson, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, (801) 538-4756
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Basin and Range
Jon Sjoberg, Nevada Department of Wildlife, (702) 486-5127 x3300 sjoberg@ndow.org

Rio Grande including Pecos River and Tularosa Basin
Megan Bean, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, (512) 754-6844 x221
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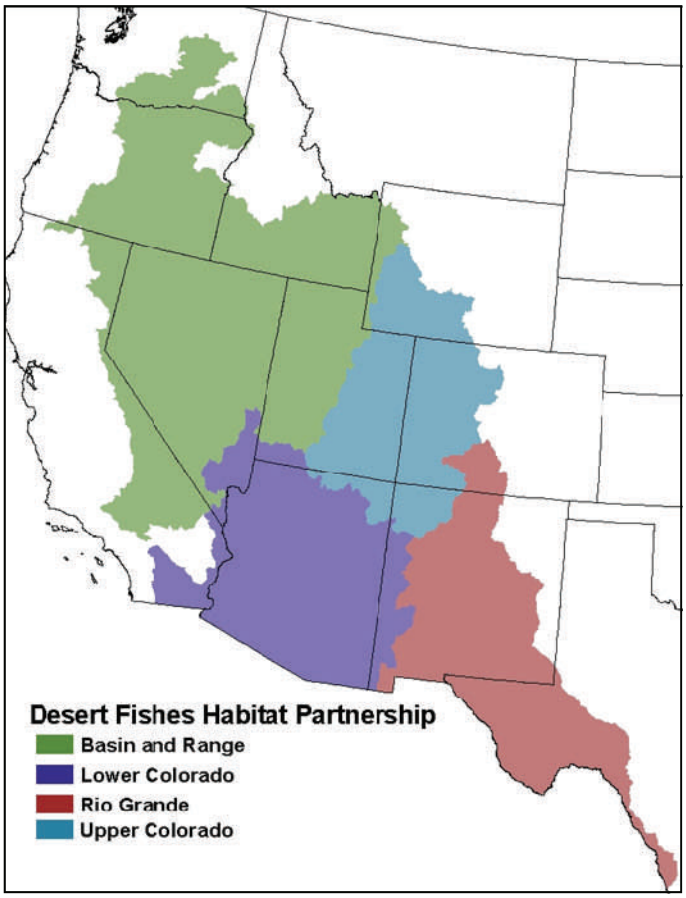

For More Information:

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www.nature.nps.gov/water/DFH_partnership.cfm
To learn more about the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, please visit our website.

www.facebook.com/pages/Desert-Fish-Habitat Partnership/193053497376208
To view DFHP photos, download documents, see latest news, and learn more, visit the DFHP Facebook page.

www.fishhabitat.org
To learn more about Fish Habitat Partnerships, please visit the National Fish Habitat Partnership website.

DFHP Purpose: *To conserve aquatic habitat in the arid West for desert fishes and the American people by protecting, restoring and enhancing these unique habitats in cooperation with and in support of, state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, Native American tribes, conservation organizations, and individuals.*