



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (4/19/2011):

DUCHESNE RIVER, UTAH NAMED “WATER TO WATCH” FOR 2011

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (www.fishhabitat.org) has unveiled the **2011 10 “Waters to Watch”** list, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, watershed systems and shores that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition.

These waters represent a snapshot of this year’s larger voluntary habitat conservation efforts in progress. These and other locally driven conservation projects are prioritized and implemented by regional Fish Habitat Partnerships that have formed throughout the country to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The objective of the Action Plan is to conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats essential to the many fish and wildlife species that call these areas home. In Utah, the **Duchesne River** has been selected as one of the 10 “Waters to Watch” for 2011.

The 10 “Waters to Watch” are representative of freshwater to marine habitats across the country including rivers, lakes, reservoirs and estuaries that benefit through the conservation efforts of these Fish Habitat Partnerships formed under the Action Plan—a bold initiative implemented in 2006 to avoid and reverse persistent declines in our nation’s aquatic habitats.

The initial Action Plan’s 10 “Waters to Watch” list was unveiled in 2007 and in 2011 will feature its 50th project. Since 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided \$12 million to support 257 on-the-ground Action Plan projects in 43 states, leveraging \$30 million in partner match, to address the priorities of Action Plan Fish Habitat Partnerships. Additional funds have been provided by several other State and Federal agencies and Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and industry partners.

“Our approach—teaming local, state, tribal, and federal agencies with private partners and stakeholders—is helping to bring these waters back to life in most cases...in a faster more strategic way,” said Kelly Hepler, Chairman of the National Fish Habitat Board. “By watching these 10 models of our nation’s aquatic conservation efforts underway, we can see real progress, in both avoidance and treatment of causes of fish habitat decline. Too often we have focused on treatment of symptoms with limited success. Through sound science and on-the-ground locally driven partnerships, these select Action Plan projects can be held high as a vision of what quality habitat should and can be, and how it benefits all people throughout the United States.”

DUCHESNE RIVER- (Desert Fish Habitat Partnership)

Project Partners:

USFWS Fisheries (Region 6), Northern Ute Indian Tribe, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Ecological Service Field Office

The Duchesne River is a major tributary of the Green River in northeastern Utah. It once provided seasonal habitat for Colorado pikeminnow and year-round habitat for flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker, and roundtail chub.

However, because of the construction of water diversion structures and dams, and increased numbers of nonnative fish, habitat value and availability for native fishes have diminished. Recent studies have indicated that native fish, including species of concern such as flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker, and roundtail chub, have become increasingly rare below the diversion.

The Myton Diversion, located approximately 43 river miles above the confluence with the Green River, does not currently allow fish to move from the lower reaches of the Duchesne River into the upper reaches of the Duchesne River. A fish passage structure will restore connectivity between fish populations above and below the diversion, which will restore gene flow and migratory capabilities of the species and increase the amount of habitat and the ability to select better habitat of each individual.

The Myton Diversion Fish Passage project is expected to restore connectivity to populations of flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker, and roundtail chub existing above and below the diversion and to allow movement upstream of Colorado pikeminnow. The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) is providing financial assistance because the project supports the DFHP's purpose which is, "to conserve aquatic habitat in the arid West for desert fishes...by protecting, restoring, and enhancing these unique habitats..." The Myton Diversion Fish Passage project is anticipated to be completed by 2012.

The rest of the 10 "Waters to Watch" for 2011 include:

- **Alewife Brook/Scoy Pond, New York -**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership)
- **Au Sable River, Michigan -**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership)

- **Barrataria Bay, Louisiana –**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership)
- **Batten Kill River, New York -**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture)
- **Cottonwood Creek, Alaska –**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership)
- **Llano River, Texas -**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership)
- **Manistee River, Michigan–**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership)
- **St. Charles Creek, Idaho -**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Western Native Trout Initiative)
- **Waipa Stream, Hawaii –**
(National Fish Habitat Partnership – Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership)

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is built on a framework of National Fish Habitat Partnerships. These regional-scale efforts include, **the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Western Native Trout Initiative, the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, the Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership, the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, the Fishers and Farmers Partnership, the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the California Fish Passage Forum, the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.** There are also four “Candidate” Fish Habitat Partnerships that have stated their intent to apply for full NFHAP Board recognition.

The Action Plan has met its objective of establishing at least 12 Fish Habitat Partnerships by 2010 to help identify the causes of habitat declines and implement corrective initiatives for aquatic conservation and restoration, with 17 Fish Habitat Partnership currently working on the ground in aquatic conservation.

Since its launch five years ago, the Action Plan has received wide public support. To date nearly 1,700 partners have pledged their support including a range of organizations and individuals interested in the health of the nation’s fisheries such as fishing clubs, international conservation organizations, federal agencies, angling industries and academia.

These ten habitat conservation efforts highlighted in 2011 are a small sample of the many habitat conservation projects implemented under the Action Plan. The 2011, as well as past 10 “Waters to Watch” lists can be viewed at www.fishhabitat.org along with complete information on the scope of the Action Plan.

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About the National Fish Habitat Action Plan

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to voluntarily conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine waterways and habitat across the country. The Action Plan is a science-based investment strategy to conserve waterways and make conservation dollars stretch farther by combining federal and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships. For more information, visit www.fishhabitat.org.

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