

Increasing Recreational Fisheries Engagement through the Fish Habitat Partnerships (FY24) Call for Proposals

The NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation and Recreational Fisheries Initiative are seeking to identify and support projects within coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) that protect or restore habitat **AND** engage recreational fishing partners.

Background: The goals of this funding opportunity are to enhance collaboration with recreational, subsistence, cultural, and non-commercial fishing communities, and to protect and restore habitat. Healthy habitat leads to more fishing opportunities and increased climate resilience, and there are numerous opportunities to advance habitat conservation by working together. [The National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) (NFHP) and individual FHPs provide strategic opportunities to advance priority habitat conservation projects while also engaging recreational, subsistence, cultural, and non-commercial anglers. NFHP aims to protect, restore and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. An existing network of [20 Fish Habitat Partnerships](#) all across the nation develops and implements on-the-ground projects at local and regional scales. There are 10 Fish Habitat Partnerships in coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats:

Fish Habitat Partnership	Coordinator Name	Coordinator Email
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership	Simen Kaalstad	skaalstad@asmfc.org
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership	Todd Ewing	todd@southeastaquatics.net
California Fish Passage Forum	Holly Steindorf	hsteindorf@nrccorp.com
Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative	Max Calloway	mcalloway@pacifclamprey.org
Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership	Joan Drinkwin	jdrinkwin@nrccorp.com
Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership	Gordon Smith	gordon_smith@fws.gov
Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership	Debbie Hart	coordinator@sealaskafishhabitat.org
Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership	Tim Troll	nmtlandtrust@hotmail.com
Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership	Melissa Smith	fishhabitat@kenaiwatershed.org
Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership	Jessica Speed	jessica.speed@tu.org

Western Native Trout Initiative	Therese Thompson	tthompson@westernnativetrout.org
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture	Lori Maloney	lori.maloney@canaanvi.org

Funding Available: Approximately **\$150,000** is available, and will be used to support several FHP projects (up to ~\$75,000 per project).

Time Frame: Projects may take place over the course of more than one year, but funds must be obligated by 09/30/24. Funds do not need to be spent by 9/30/24.

Who Can Apply: Any coastal FHP or their partner(s) is eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Organizations that are not already partners in a coastal FHP are also welcome to apply, provided that they coordinate with the relevant FHP coordinator on their application.

Program Priorities:

Projects must have all of the following:

1. Be located in **and** coordinated with a Fish Habitat Partnership.
2. Actively engage recreational fishing partners in habitat protection or restoration. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Direct participation of recreational anglers in FHP habitat projects, including research, monitoring, and on-the-ground restoration
 - b. Education and outreach with, by, or for anglers on habitat conservation topics
 - c. Hosting of an event focused on habitat and recreational fishing opportunity that engages the recreational fishing community and partners
3. Focus on habitat restoration or protection (*see FAQ for more details*) for recreationally important saltwater or diadromous species.
4. Be achievable within the provided timeline and budget and provide project updates to NOAA when requested.

Priority will be given to projects that

1. Demonstrate coordination between an FHP and recreational fishing partners
2. Have the potential to develop longer-term relationships with recreational fishing community/partners
3. Actively engage groups underserved or underrepresented (including Tribes or Tribal entities) in the recreational fishing community (*applicants must demonstrate in their application how groups are underserved or underrepresented in the recreational fishing community*)
4. Result in improved fish habitat availability, quality, or understanding, particularly for species with high recreational or socioeconomic significance

Call for Proposals: Please send any project proposals (up to 6 pages, not including budget) to alex.mcowen@noaa.gov and tim.sartwell@noaa.gov and copy your coastal FHP coordinator (*listed above*) by Monday, **April 15, 2024**.

Include the following sections in your proposal:

- Project title
- Project location and FHP
- Brief project description
- Explanation of how the project engages recreational anglers or partners;
- Project timeline
- Project budget (broken down into cost categories)

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 based on the following evaluation criteria. We encourage applicants to make explicit connections to the evaluation criterion in their applications.

Relevance to program goals (40 points)

- Is the project located in **and** coordinated with a Fish Habitat Partnership?
- Are recreational, cultural, subsistence, or non-commercial fishing partners actively engaged?
- Does the project focus on habitat conservation, restoration, or protection for recreationally important saltwater or diadromous species?
- Will the project result in improved fish habitat availability, quality, or understanding for future restoration or protection?
- Does the project involve partners from groups underrepresented in the recreational fishing community?

Clear objectives and activities (20 points)

- Are the project activities aligned with the objectives of the proposed project?
- Are the project objectives and activities clearly described?
- Is there information about how project success will be evaluated?

Collaboration (20 points)

- Does the project demonstrate coordination with the relevant FHP and recreational, cultural, subsistence, or non-commercial fishing partners?
- Does the project have the potential to build long-term relationships with recreational, cultural, subsistence, or non-commercial fishing community/partners?

Budget (20 points)

- Is the project budget clear and specific as to how funds will be spent?
- Is a large proportion of funds (relative to salaries, overhead, etc.) directed toward the implementation of on-the-ground habitat restoration, protection, or engagement activities?
- Is the budget reasonable and is the project achievable within the provided budget and timeline?

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What types of projects or activities are considered “habitat restoration or protection”?

Habitat restoration and/or protection takes many forms depending on the geography and the fish species of focus. This funding opportunity will support projects that directly result in habitat restoration or protection (e.g., oyster reef, living shoreline, or woody debris installation, etc.) for recreationally important fish species or indirectly result in protection (e.g., habitat mapping for protection, research, etc.). Projects that are purely research focused (i.e., without a direct connection to restoration or protection) are not best suited for this funding opportunity.

2. Who can submit proposals?

Any coastal FHP or its partner is eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Organizations that are not already partners in a coastal FHP are also welcome to apply, provided that they coordinate with the relevant FHP coordinator on their application. A brief acknowledgement of support from the corresponding FHP coordinator can help to demonstrate this coordination.

3. How will funds be distributed? Does there need to be a funding mechanism already in place for the project?

Typically, the interstate fisheries commissions are simple mechanisms NOAA Fisheries can utilize to disburse money. NOAA Fisheries has existing agreements with every commission. Proposals do not need to budget for any overhead associated with the funding mechanism (e.g., transfer through a commission). FHPs and partners do not need to have a funding mechanism in place to submit a proposal. If there is not a funding mechanism identified in the proposal, we will work to identify whether a mechanism exists.

4. Will funds need to go through NOAA Fisheries regional offices?

The path of the funds depends on the funding mechanism, but funds will not have to pass through the regional offices to go to the recipient, unless deemed appropriate or necessary.

5. Can funds be distributed through the non-profit arm of NFHP (Beyond the Pond) to get to the FHP to implement the project?

We are not able to move money through the non-profit arm of NFHP (Beyond the Pond).

6. When do the funds need to be spent?

Funds must be obligated by the end of FY24 (September 30, 2024) but do not need to be spent by that date.

7. What does it mean for funds to be obligated?

In order for funds to be obligated, they must be processed onto a contract, grant, cooperative agreement, etc. (whatever funding mechanism that is used to move the money from NOAA/OHC to the awardee, or to the entity transferring the funding to the awardee). Processing of funds must happen by September 30, 2024, but the performance period of the project may be longer.

8. Over what time frame can the projects take place?

The funding opportunity is for the FY24 fiscal year. However, projects can take place over the course of more than one year. Please include a project timeline with your application.

9. Can projects focus on diadromous species?

Yes, projects can focus on diadromous species. Priority may be given to projects that focus on federally-managed species (which include several diadromous species).

10. What are the reporting requirements?

There are no formal reporting requirements for this funding opportunity, but the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation will ask for brief project updates and photos, and will write a web story about the funded projects when selected and approximately a year later to describe progress.

Historically, funds have been transferred to FHP partners through the interstate fisheries commissions, which may have their own reporting requirements for funded projects.