

## Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Formalized Through MOU

This March, the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) formally took effect with the signature of the final party to its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). ACFHP aims to accelerate the conservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fish species through the coast wide collaborative efforts of its state, federal, tribal, and nongovernmental partners. Ultimately, ACFHP will focus its efforts on supporting on-the-ground projects, implemented cooperatively by its partners, through endorsement, funding, coordination, and other opportunities. Through collaborative effort the Partnership will generate conservation outcomes exceeding those that partners could accomplish independently.

Over the past two years, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, as one of ACFHP's 30 partners, has facilitated the formation of the partnership by providing staff and logistical support. Other partners are the 16 state natural resource agencies managing Atlantic coastal river drainage systems (ME - FL, including PA and VT), federal natural resource agencies (NOAA, USFWS, USGS), the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and several non-governmental organizations (American Littoral Society, American Rivers, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, Oyster Recovery Partnership, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, The Nature Conservancy).

ACFHP is a candidate partnership under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). The Action Plan is an unprecedented national effort to build and support strategic partnerships for fish habitat conservation. It establishes a process that brings together partners, challenges them to identify and collaborate to advance strategic conservation priorities, and to measure and report progress. It is this commitment to strategic work, conducted by partners working together, and a commitment to progress measurement that distinguishes the Action Plan and its Partnerships from other fish habitat conservation efforts.

Presently, ACFHP is working to meet the needs of its partners as well as the requirements for recognition as a fish habitat partnership under the Action Plan. Specific projects include a web-based assessment of existing coastal fish habitat information, development of an innovative coast wide analysis of species-habitat relationships for coastal fish species, and creation of a variety of communications products to disseminate information and provide overall coordination to ACFHP partners. In the coming year, these projects will support the development of coast wide priorities for future ACFHP efforts. For more information, please contact Emily Greene, ACFHP Coordinator, at [egreene@asmfc.org](mailto:egreene@asmfc.org).

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444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 725,  
Washington, DC 20001, Phone - 301.713.4300 x 171 [FishHabitat.org](http://FishHabitat.org)  
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