



The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) is an exciting new partnership under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. This coastwide collaborative effort will involve state and federal agencies, local governments, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and other entities to protect and restore fish habitat along the Atlantic seaboard.

The ACFHP is a geographically-focused and scientifically-based effort to conserve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast.

For more information, please contact:

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# The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

*Working towards healthy, thriving habitats of sufficient quality to support all life stages of Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes.*



## How Did ACFHP Get Started?

In May 2006, the Commission charged its Habitat Committee with developing a coastal fish habitat partnership (FHP) under the auspices of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). The Commission recognized that the existing NFHAP partnerships were primarily focused on freshwater species and that an important area was missing -- coastal habitats. The existing infrastructure and collaboration of the Atlantic coastal states make the Commission an ideal candidate to catalyze such a partnership. Through a series of letters, information sessions, meetings, and a workshop, the ACFHP was formed.

## What is the ACFHP?

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) is a collaborative effort catalyzed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) to involve agencies from the 16 states that contain Atlantic coastal river drainages, in addition to federal agencies (such as NOAA, USFWS, USGS, USACE, and USEPA), tribes (such as the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians), local governments, non-governmental organizations (such as American Littoral Society, American Rivers, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Environmental Defense, and The Nature Conservancy), and other entities to conserve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast.

## ACFHP Mission

The mission of the ACFHP is to accelerate the conservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes through partnerships between federal, state, tribal, local, and other entities.





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## Species and Habitats

On a watershed, ecosystem, or regional scale, the ACFHP will focus on three primary issue areas:



- 1) Ecological connectivity
- 2) Water quality and quantity
- 3) Habitat alterations and modifications

Examples of specific concerns that pertain to these issues include, but are not limited to: the effects of land use, improvements to fish passage, advances in sediment management, and aquatic/riparian

habitat restoration and protection. These issue areas do not cover everything the partners do, however the ACFHP will focus on those projects that should be joint work efforts.

## Management Structure

The ACFHP currently has a Steering Committee, a Science and Data Working Group, a Communications Working Group, and a full-time Coordinator. These groups are working to accomplish activities that are needed to satisfy commitments made for a 2008-2009 Multi-State Conservation Grant. Currently, the partnership has a charter, bylaws, and draft memorandum of understanding.



## Assessment of Existing Information

A comprehensive bibliography/compendium of selected documents, data sets, and analyses on Atlantic coastal fish species and habitats compiled in a database framework. The database will be queryable, enabling ACFHP partners to identify and summarize priorities and threats, gaps in knowledge and information, and habitat conservation, restoration, and policy strategies. It will also incorporate a spatial component mapping priority habitat areas. Products from this work will support a coast-wide conservation plan that sets priorities for management, conservation, and outreach.

## Species-Habitat Matrix

A tool for evaluating the relative importance of a specific habitat type to a given life history stage for an individual species. It ultimately aids in identifying those habitat types and categories that provide the greatest amount of benefit for multiple species. The Matrix will be completed in four parts by dividing the ACFHP geographic range into bioregions: New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic and South Florida.



## Next Steps

- Identify priority Atlantic coast fish habitats
- Develop a conservation strategic plan
- Develop project proposal guidelines and ranking criteria
- Solicit project funding proposals
- Develop and implement an ACFHP website
- Identify and recruit additional key partners
- Seek additional funding sources

