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2015 “Waters to Watch” Provide Community, Economic Benefit

9th year of partnership campaign highlights an array of conservation practices across the U.S.

(Washington, DC) - The National Fish Habitat Partnership (www.fishhabitat.org) has unveiled its list of 10 “Waters to Watch” for 2015, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, lakes and watershed systems that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition. These voluntary, locally-driven projects represent conservation actions in progress implemented under the National Fish Habitat Partnership by 19 regional Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout the country. The conservation actions implemented through these projects are designed to conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats essential to the many fish and wildlife species that call these areas home. These examples of conservation have been fundamental to the overall success of the National Fish Habitat Partnership since 2006.

Throughout the year, these projects will demonstrate how conservation efforts are reversing persistent declines in our nation’s aquatic habitats. Having featured 90 partnership projects since 2007, these “Waters to Watch” are proving that science-based on-the-ground conservation efforts are truly making a difference in improving fish habitat across the United States.

“Success in conservation often doesn’t happen overnight,” said Kelly Hepler, Chair of the National Fish Habitat Board. “We are highlighting these projects today with both long and short-term goals in mind. We are working through our regional partnerships in an effort to conserve these great waterways, and reverse declines in suitable fish habitat. In our 9th year of this annual campaign, we are beginning to see many of our previous projects named to this list making a real difference. For our 10th Anniversary of the “Waters to Watch” in 2016, we will highlight some of these dynamic past projects that are making a positive impact both regionally and nationally.”

People interested in learning more about the National Fish Habitat Partnership and partner projects happening across the U.S. can find out more information on how to get involved on our Partnerships Page; <http://fishhabitat.org/partnerships>.

The 2015 “Waters to Watch” list and associated Fish Habitat Partnerships:

1) **Alexander Creek Watershed, AK**

Partnership: Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
<http://bit.ly/1dZhlod>

Objective: Project goals are to restore Alexander Creek drainage Chinook salmon numbers in what was previously very productive habitat and a vibrant fishery. Partners are working to do this through large scale invasive pike removal and monitoring, as well as detection, education and eradication of Alaska's first invasive aquatic plant Elodea.

2) **Kasilof and Anchor River Watersheds, AK**

Partnership: Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
<http://bit.ly/1F4OzLE>

Objective: The Kenai Peninsula Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project will help restore physical and biological processes within the Kasilof and Anchor River Watersheds in order to

contribute to a healthy, productive and biologically diverse ecosystem for the benefit of injured species and services. The project will eliminate four barriers to aquatic species passage on the Anchor and Kasilof Rivers.

3) **Kilchis Estuary, OR**

Partnership: Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

<http://bit.ly/1EAjg8a>

Objective: Restore freshwater and tidal connections, provide off-channel rearing habitat for salmonids, and restore historic spruce swamp habitat. The site provides habitat for coho, Chinook and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout as well as a myriad of other wetland species, including colonial nesting waterbirds, migrating waterfowl, juvenile marine fishes and resident mammals.

4) **Lake Livingston, TX**

Partnership: Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

<http://bit.ly/1KFfEWW>

Objective: The overall goal of the project is to reestablish Lake Livingston as a destination for anglers and other outdoor recreationists. As such, the project has support from a host of community leaders. A dedicated core group of volunteer leaders are in place to ensure that the project continues to move forward garnering additional local support along the way.

5) **Lower Heeia Stream Habitat Improvement Project, Oahu (HI)**

Partnership: Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership

<http://bit.ly/1KFi0Fh>

Objective: This project will restore native vegetation in the tidally influenced portion of Heeia Stream and its adjacent estuary. Project implementation will involve removal of a large stand of invasive riparian trees, followed by soil preparation, erosion control and riparian forest restoration using native plant species.

6) **Mill Creek Restoration, WV**

Partnership: Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture

<http://bit.ly/1Fik341>

Objective: The WV Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) is mitigating the negative impacts of Super Storms that occurred in 2012 on Mill Creek, WV, one of the state's four intact brook trout populations, by implementing a strategic Large Woody Material "chop and drop" program within Kumbrabow State Forest, which encompasses approximately 6 stream miles. This project is being completed utilizing the principles of natural stream restoration to place, and in some instances modify and anchor, currently hanging trees in the stream as habitat for fish.

7) **Pinole Creek, CA**

Partnership: California Fish Passage Forum|

<http://bit.ly/1JF2l37>

Objective: The purpose of this project is to restore access to the upper reaches of Pinole Creek for the current population of Central California Coast Steelhead by modifying the existing box culverts where Pinole Creek passes under Interstate Highway 80 (I-80). Habitat assessments conducted on Pinole Creek in 2009 indicate sufficient habitat to support anadromous steelhead spawning and rearing if passage issues at the I-80 culvert are remedied. This project will improve access to nearly 7 miles of documented quality steelhead spawning and rearing habitat on the main stem of Pinole Creek.

8) **Shoshone Springs Pupfish Habitat Project, CA**

Partnership: Desert Fish Habitat Partnership

<http://bit.ly/1E3P4S5>

Objective: The project secured the existence of Shoshone pupfish in their native range far into the future, and will educate the public about their importance. The project quadrupled the habitat area occupied by endemic Shoshone pupfish, benefiting the entire known population in the one spring, springbrook, and spring supported riparian system where they naturally occur.

9) **Sun Creek, OR**

Partnership: Western Native Trout Initiative

<http://bit.ly/1zXTKhD>

Objective: To reestablish redband trout and migratory populations of bull trout to Sun Creek through improved connectivity, habitat quality and stream and riparian function. Due to poor connectivity between Sun Creek and the Wood River, overall habitat degradation, and interactions with non-native salmonids, redband trout were extirpated from Sun Creek and bull trout populations were restricted to a short headwater reach. Similar to other Cascade tributaries in the Upper Klamath Basin, Sun Creek likely supported widespread and abundant populations of both species. Reconnecting Sun Creek to the Wood River will allow redband trout to recolonize Sun Creek and access high quality spawning and rearing habitat. It will also provide a migratory corridor for the isolated bull trout population to expand its range, occupy new habitat within Wood River watershed, and improve overall population resilience.

10) **Ulele Springs on the Hillsborough River, FL**

Partnership: Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

<http://bit.ly/1zXTXBp>

Objective: The restored Ulele Springs is providing native wetland vegetation and provide habitat for fish and mammals. To date, numerous native fish and wildlife has been observed within the basin, which is starting to mimic the anticipated species richness and diversity of a natural spring run entering an estuarine ecotone.

For more information on project maps and descriptions of the 10 Waters to Watch list for 2015, Visit: <http://bitly.com/1PCk3eI>

Visit the Waters to Watch Homepage for all of our projects from 2007-2015:<http://bit.ly/1HeYzWj>

Visit <http://bit.ly/1dXvu5I>, to use our interactive habitat data mapper, supported by USGS.

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About the National Fish Habitat Partnership:

Since 2006, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has been a partner in 514 projects in 47 states benefiting fish habitat. The National Fish Habitat Partnership works to conserve fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal, state, tribal, and private funding resources to achieve the greatest impact on fish populations through priority conservation projects. The national partnership implements the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and supports 19 regional grassroots partner organizations. For more information visit:

<http://fishhabitat.org/>

<http://www.facebook.com/NFHP>

<https://twitter.com/FishHabitat>
<http://www.scoop.it/t/fish-habitat>

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We are moving! On June 1
our new address will be:

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825 - Washington, DC 20002

Want to find out more about
the National Fish Habitat
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Partnership - "Building a
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