Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin

**Summer Highlights:**

- Co-Chair Steve Sodeman “From the Farm”
- Garvin Brook Field Day
- Seven Mile Creek Watershed Update
- Science Team Updates
- Newly Funded NFHP/Fishers & Farmers Projects
- Fishers & Farmers Request for Proposals Due October 2, 2015 (RFP Attached)

**Fishers & Farmers Steering Committee Meeting**
October 29-30, 2015
National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
Dubuque, IA

Fish Habitat Partnerships are the working units of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Fish Habitat Partnerships consist of state, federal, and tribal agencies, non-governmental organizations, corporations and private individuals. They are self-identified, self-organized, and self-directed communities of interest formed around geographic areas, keystone species, or system types. There are five that focus their efforts all or in part in the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These include the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, and the Fishers and Farmers Partnership of the Upper Mississippi River. Fish Habitat Partnerships are the working units of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

The mission of the National Fish Habitat Partnership is 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.
On a positive note, we have enjoyed, so far, the best weather you could wish for that might provide the best corn and soybean crop ever in southern Minnesota. Locally, I know of 65-80 bu/ac wheat and 150 bu/ac oats. Corn should be from 180-220 bu/ac in most fields. Soybeans, although weedy and fraught with many issues like SCN and aphids, could be incredible with yields ranging from 40 to 70 bushel/acre.

Of course, there is a downside, namely, price and costs. Costs of seed, fertilizer, and land should average about 12%, 16%, and 28% of the gross income of corn, instead, these costs are 21%, 27%, and 41%, respectively. Today, corn is about $3.35 per bushel, while soybeans are $8.60 per bushel. Since costs have remained fixed at price levels reflecting $6.00+ per bushel corn, most farmers will lose about $200 per acre. Average farm size today is about 1,000 acres per operator with a range of 200 to 30,000 acres. Much of the land is rented by off-farm folks, who show no mercy, which is similar to the seed and fertilizer retailers who also show no mercy. We are price-takers, not price-setters.

As a private crop consultant in southern Minnesota, I work with about 130 farmer-clients who farm an average of 1086 acres of mostly corn and soybeans with some alfalfa, wheat, and oats. My own farm is 560 acres with 220 acres of corn and 220 acres of soybeans. The rest is pasture, roads, trees, and water.

My involvement with FFP began through the Minnesota Corn Growers Association and because of Jack Lauer. I am proud to be associated with FFP where we all can learn from each other about the need to Focus on the Fish. Most farmers love fish and fishing, but too often forget or do not see the critters or impact their business has on them. Just as Urban-Folks have forgotten about what it is like to farm these days, Farm-Folks have forgotten about the Environment that surrounds them. It has become a Business. No harm is intended. This (Fishers & Farmers participation) has been a great opportunity to learn, share, and promote better practices. We are all in this together.
Fishers & Farmers Partnership recently purchased a Emriver3 stream table from Little River Research & Design www.emriver.com in Carbondale, IL. This stream table will be used in the field to educate farmers, landowners, students, and many others about why best management practices are so important to fish habitat and water quality. The table was used in May at the Garvin Brook Field Day near Lewiston, MN to show the importance of buffers. Approximately 80 people attended.

In 2011, partners in the Garvin Brook Watershed received funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to repair flood damage that took place in 2007. For more information visit: www.wincretstu.org/garvin-brook-project/
Seven Mile Watershed – Nicollet County

SWCD

Goal: Use buffers & Water And Sediment Control Basins to slow down sediment & nutrients going into Seven Mile Creek/Minnesota River

Newly seeded buffer in Seven Mile Watershed

2015

Kevin Ostermann-Nicollet County SWCD shows Fishers & Farmers a WASCOB

Ravine

Before

2011

After

Same tree

Established buffer 2015

Blake Honetschlager from Nicollet County SWCD checks a water control structure during a site visit on July 22, 2015. The farmer is able to control the amount of water leaving his property/tile system.

Partners: Nicollet County SWCD, MN DNR, MN Dept. of Ag, Trout Unlimited, MPCA, Great River Greening, MN River Board, US Army Corps of Engineers, Fishers & Farmers Partnership

NFHP/Fishers & Farmers funded Nicollet County 2 years

MN DNR

2011

2015
Fishers & Farmers Partnership Summer Highlights

May 20-21, 2015
Fishers & Farmers
Science Team Meeting
USGS La Crosse, WI
Partner focused-engage NRCS
Determined direction for focal area selection – with break out groups

Attendees: NRCS-WI, MN, & IA, MDC, MN DNR, WI DNR, Trout Unlimited, Driftless Area Restoration Effort FHP, Midwest Glacial Lakes FHP, USGS, USFS, USFWS, Eastern Tallgrass Prairie & Big Rivers LC C

September 1, 2015
Fishers & Farmers
Science Team Meeting
Saints Avenue Cafe
Bowling Green, MO
Organizational Outreach meeting- engaging more partners

Working on:

*Data Development
  GIS Data – Fish Habitat Assessment – HUC12/Ranking Tool
  State Map books - focal areas - coming soon to fishersandfarmers.org
  Survey Monkey - Science Team/Communications
*Fishers & Farmers Focal Watersheds categorized by Ecoregion, ranking output
*Implement both biological and social monitoring plans in projects
*Fishers & Farmers Science Team Outreach - online interactive map, storyline
*Report of different models and how they can work together - LIDAR,
  Downstream Strategies Assessment, GESHIA, MN DNR, etc.
*Draft Science Team Plan 2015-2016

Contact: Alex Prentice,
Fishers & Farmers Science Team Lead
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October 28-29, 2015
Science Team Meeting
Dubuque, IA

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Newly Funded NFHP/Fishers & Farmers Projects

Treatment Trains for High Sediment Yielding Ravines in Seven Mile Watershed, MN

Boone River Watershed Oxbow Restoration Project, IA

Achieving Goals & Fish Habitat Improvement with a GIS/Science Team Lead for Fishers & Farmers Partnership

Boone River Watershed Stream Fish and Habitat Monitoring, IA

Thanks to Fishers & Farmers Partners for these journal articles:


Fishers & Farmers Partnership Seeks Aquatic Habitat Project Proposals for 2016 funding cycle

Deadline October 2, 2015

Fishers & Farmers Partnership (FFP) for the Upper Mississippi River Basin, a fish habitat partnership, is seeking project proposals to benefit aquatic habitat in Mississippi River basin streams. Federal funding may be available under the National Fish Habitat Partnership through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to fund the top ranked proposals.

About the Program:
Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is a self-directed group of non-governmental agricultural and conservation organizations, tribal organizations and state and federal agencies united to add value to farms while protecting, restoring, and enhancing the 30,700 miles of streams and rivers of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. It is a partnership of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

We Support the National Fish Habitat Partnership’s Goals:
- Protect & maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems
- Prevent further degradation of fish habitats
- Reverse declines in quality & quantity of aquatic habitats to improve overall health of fish/aquatic species
- Increase quality & quantity of fish habitat that support a broad natural diversity of fish/aquatic species

Fishers & Farmers Partnership’s Goals:
- Engage Farmers & Ranchers
- Support Fish Habitat Conservation Projects
- Continue Development of Long-Term Basin Scale Strategies
- Strengthen the Organization for Long-Term Action

Fishers and Farmers Partnership’s Vision:
The Partnership’s vision of the future is one in which landowners work together with conservationists and scientists to address the needs of their own farms, local streams, and the fishes of the basin. Lessons learned are shared with neighbors, participating organizations, and others outside of the basin. Fish populations and habitats are monitored at project sites and downstream. The Partnership helps landowners showcase successful practices to neighbors and others. With a focus on mutual respect, dialog is cultivated between agricultural and environmental organizations throughout the Upper Mississippi River Basin. This leads to better use of resources, less duplication of effort, and measurable progress toward common goals.

Our Mission:
The mission of the Fishers & Farmers Partnership is to support locally-led conservation projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations.

Priorities for FFP:
- Improve instream habitat
• Work with farmers/landowners to protect/maintain healthy aquatic systems, or prevent further degradation
• Increase landowner engagement/farmer-led committees that drive conservation
• Reduce sedimentation, phosphorus and nitrogen runoff to stream habitats
• Improve floodplain habitat, enhance flow regimes, improve connectivity
• Promote best management practices across the landscape
• Monitor effectiveness of conservation projects, then share our stories through outreach

Funding Amount:  
Cost sharing by partners.  
Funding floor $15,000  
Funding ceiling $40,000  
USFWS requires at least a 1:1 cost share. Cost share may be in-kind services such as time or cash. Cost share may include monitoring.

Applicant Eligibility:
Applicants can be federal, state, county, and non-government organizations in either natural resources or agriculture with the ultimate goal of adding value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations. Managers and supervisors responsible for implementing fish habitat projects must document compliance with all applicable Federal laws and regulations (e.g. National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Rivers and Harbors Act). Fish habitat projects must also comply with any applicable State, local and tribal laws and regulations that do not conflict with, or are not preempted by, Federal laws and regulations.

Eligible expenditures. Expenditures of NFHP funds are appropriate for the following actions/activities:  
(a) Time spent for project planning, directing project activities (e.g., earthwork, fence installation), site assessments, travel to and from project, and project oversight.  
(b) Equipment (e.g. monitoring equipment, not farming equipment).  
(c) Earthwork (e.g., contracts for earth moving, planting, structure installation, other site preparation), materials (e.g. rock, gravel, plants and planting supplies, materials to construct habitat structures).  
(d) Short-term monitoring/evaluation. Funds may be used for pre-post project monitoring of NFHP projects to evaluate biological and/or physical response to project activities.  
(e) Outreach to advance conservation. Engaging farmers/landowners in farmer-led efforts, workshops/training,

Ineligible expenditures. The following activities are not eligible for NFHP funding:  
(a) Actions required by existing Federal or State regulatory programs. Fish habitat expenditures shall be in addition to, not in lieu of, other expenditures authorized or required from other entities under other agreements or provisions of law.  
(b) Realty costs (e.g. lease or purchase interests in real property, or to make rental or other land use incentive payments to landowners).  
(c) Pre-award costs associated with preliminary design, surveys, and appraisals.  
(d) Operation and maintenance of facilities, structures, or other construction.
General Requirements:
Project Duration: Work is to be completed within 18-24 months
Terms of Funding: Funding must be spent within 24 months
FFP Map: Priority habitat is outside Driftless Area (DA), but DA projects will be considered

Application Method/Submittal:
Project Proposals will be required to be submitted on an electronic form which will be available on the website: http://www.midwestfishhabitats.org/apply

Timeline:
Aug
Develop project proposals for National Fish Habitat Partnership funding consideration
Oct 2
Application/Proposal Deadline
Oct/Nov
Projects will be evaluated/ranked by FFP Steering Committee
Early Nov
FFP will provide priority list of projects to USFWS. Funding for projects will be available after the U.S. Congress approves the FY 2016 budget, likely in spring/summer 2016.
Jun
Announcement of Awards to recipients
Jun/Jul
Agreements due
Jul/Aug
Funding available

Ranking Criteria:
- Addresses FFP & NFHP Goals/Priorities
- Addresses the root cause of the problem within the watershed
- Outlines anticipated benefits to the larger restoration focus area
- Explains pre and post project evaluation/monitoring (required)
- Generates the maximum in matching funds and cost-sharing contributions
- Incorporates climate change strategies
- Improves farms and fish habitat

Please address questions to:
Heidi Keuler
US Fish and Wildlife Service
555 Lester Avenue
Onalaska, WI 54650
608-783-8417

The National Fish Habitat Partnership’s mission is 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.

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan was approved for implementation by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on March 24, 2006, in Columbus, Ohio. In 2012, NFHAP changed its name to the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The Partnership is non-regulatory and voluntary, and relies upon the energies plus expertise of geographically-focused regional Fish Habitat Partnerships dedicated to protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish habitats.