

2024 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



Note: A YouTube video of the entire business meeting is located at <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.org/event/2024-annual-business-meeting/>

Meeting called to order on November 2nd, 8:30 am

Welcome/Introductions

The coordinator welcomed the Steering Committee members and guests in the room, starting the meeting at 8:33am.

Meeting Attendance:

- Andy Clark
- Mike Homer
- Brad Tribby, BLM
- Don Wiley, Utah
- Craig Walker, Utah
- Tanya Ramey, Arizona
- Brian Todd, Missouri DOC
- Steve Bardin, MLF
- Gary Klein, MLF
- Earl Conway, Sun Country Outdoors
- Spencer Phillips, Kentucky FWR
- Lynn Quattro, SCDNR Steering committee
- Jeff Conley, Kansas FWP
- Ben Page, PA FBC, Steering Committee
- Mark Porath, USFWS Steering Committee (and proxy for Kevin Pope Steering Committee)
- Jeff Jackson, Nebraska GFP
- Sandy Clark-Kolaks, Indiana DNR
- Julie Carter, Arizona GFD, NFHAP Board WAFWA
- Matt Schein, Arizona GFD
- Rich Zwiefel, Ohio DNR (proxy for Scott Hale AFWA Steering Committee)

- Jon Stein, Arkansas Game and Fish (proxy in for Reed Green Steering Committee)
- Clint Brunson,
- Michael Holly, Oklahoma DOW
- David Bogner, Oklahoma DOW
- John Hammonds, Tennessee
- Jake Miller, New Mexico
- Trevor Luna, FWS SW Region
- Steve Grier, Midweek Bass
- Lawrence Dorsey, NC WRC
- Mark Fowlkes, NC Wildlife Resource Commission
- Payson Ham, Arizona GFD
- Nathan Bailey, Arizona GFD
- Amberle Jones, Arizona GFD
- Gene Gilliland, BASS Steering Committee
- Doug Nygren, Coordinator
- Rebecca Krogman, Iowa DNR, Outreach Coordinator

Doug Nygren announced proxies for the business meeting with Kevin Pope, USGS assigning Mark Porath, Scott Hale, MAFWA assigning Rich Zweifel, and Reed Green, NALMS assigning Jon Stein. A quorum was met to conduct business.

Approval of Minutes/Financial Statement

There was an opportunity to comment on the minutes with no one opting to speak. There was a motion to approve by Mark Porath, second by Brad Tribby. Discussion was sought and none offered. A unanimous vote to approve the 2023 Minutes passed.

We are required to report to the IRS on a calendar year, rather than a federal fiscal year, so we are shifting this year to a calendar year financial report. An annual report showing data through September was provided in the briefing book. A review of the current calendar year's income and expenses was completed and the Coordinator will provide an update with the final numbers after December closes to the Steering Committee. We discussed line items related to an IRS penalty that was paid and then refunded once the issue was clarified. Our accounting firm missed a deadline to file an extension and that triggered the fine. We cleared this up with the IRS and were reimbursed for the penalty and are now in good standing as a nonprofit organization.

Based on our expected spending, we should end 2024 with a bank balance of about \$49,000.

There was a discussion of the website related costs as to what is baseline versus extra. The question was asked if it is similar each year? Rebecca said that it varies depending on special upgrades that require extra development time. The baseline cost of hosting and technical support is about \$2,000.

There was a motion to approve the financial report by Brad Tribby and seconded by Ben Page. Motion passed unanimously.

2024 Coordinator Work Plan Accomplishments

- We successfully closed out the 2022 Operation Grant and implemented the 2023 Operations Grant.

- Reef Ball Foundation small grant opportunity was realized.
- Gary Klein boat sale raffle.
- Acme Brick to facilitate donation of bricks and other materials.
- Coordinated with Beyond the Pond to utilize a \$500,000 donation from Bass Pro Shops
- The RFHP RFP went out for this year (FY25) and our package has been submitted to NFHP. All eleven projects were submitted, and we await funding decisions that will happen in spring of 2025.
- The 2021 \$1.6 Million donation from Bass Pro Shops was handled by NFHP's Ryan Roberts. Those projects have now been declared as ours, given they were all reservoir projects. We've updated the NFHP project dashboard as much as we can, but we could use more detail on these projects if you have them available. The projects will be listed as under the RFHP from now on.
- The RFHP submitted our application to Congress for Congressional Designation as an official NFHP Partnership. Work was completed by the Coordinator, Rebecca Krogman, and Jeff Boxrucker. Jeff was very helpful as he guided us through a similar process in 2009.
- Brad Tribby motioned to approve the report, seconded by Mike Homer. Motion carried unanimously.

2025 Work Plan and Budget

Doug reviewed the written plan from the briefing book and went into more detail on the following items:

- We will continue to pursue corporate sponsorships. We will submit projects for additional funding from Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Fund with a formal request for them to consider in their May 2025 meeting.
- 2026 RFP should go out this month, based on discussion at this meeting with a planned February 15, 2025, deadline.
- There will be site visits to ensure proper completion of stated project objectives and the expected outcomes. We want to show that our projects have spent the grant funds appropriately, especially the BPS funds.
- Doug will continue to support the effort to send the Congressional Designation Package to Congress.
- The motion to accept the work plan was made by Richard Zweifel and seconded by Mike Homer. Motion carried unanimously.

Doug then reviewed the budget guidelines and budget document.

- NFHP board approved an increase in the Operations Grant to \$125,000, which we can opt to do or not. Doug suggested we increase from our current \$85,000 to \$95,000, particularly to plan forward for the day we need to put a salary package together. To be competitive and to recognize the potential increase in workload should the Bass Pro Shops grants continue, we would be wise to allocate a greater portion to the Coordinator role. Doug has asked Beyond the Pond for additional funds of \$7,000 to cover overhead costs associated with the Bass Pro Shop funding. That request is under consideration. Doug emphasized that he is not asking for a raise at this time, but that we may want to be prepared for that change in spending.
- Julie Carter suggested we ensure the travel expenses can cover enough to attend meetings like WAFWA. Doug reported on our previous travel budget being able to cover that, and that he does intend to have representation at such meetings in the future. The budget proposed should cover it.
- Doug projected a year-end balance of \$49,000 depending on the amount of small grants awarded and pending anticipated donations.

- Mike Homer moved to approve the budget, seconded by Mark Porath. Motion carried unanimously.

Current Executive Committee Members and Working Group Members

- Doug thanked Scott Hale for representing RFHP at the William H Harsha Grand Opening, representing us well.
- Doug thanked Ben Page for representing RFHP at the NEAFWA meeting, where he presented on RFHP/FOR. Ben reported that the Northeast has been a challenge, although there is great potential in states like New York and New Jersey. He will continue to push for more visibility. Doug responded that Virginia has recently expressed some interest.
- Mike Homer represented RFHP at the AFS Annual Meeting, presenting on the Partnership's history, goals, and accomplishments.
- Julie Carter spoke regarding WAFWA FHPs. Julie created a FHP working group under the WAFWA Fisheries Committee. There are 12 Partnerships operating within the WAFWA states. WAFWA houses two of the 12. They are the Western Native Trout Initiative and the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership. Their summer meetings will now occur at the WAFWA summer meeting because of this organizational approach, giving much higher visibility to fisheries chiefs and keeping them engaged and aware of FHP operations. Julie intends to invite one or two of the other 10 partnerships to the annual working group meeting each year as guests. The 2025 meeting will be held in Provo Utah in June. Julie has asked the RFHP to be the first "guest" partnership. Doug and Mike Homer, our chairman, plan to attend along with any other steering committee attending the WAFWA meeting. Julie encouraged RFHP to submit a presentation for next year as well focusing on how our operations process works, what we could work on, and addressing some of the concerns Craig brought to us from the WAFWA members.
- Mark Porath mentioned that one of the challenges of reservoir projects is that many of us involved in fish habitat management are not the dam managers. Progress in the West depends on coordination with Federal agencies such as BLM (Brad Tribby), BOR, and others. Doug identified a major gap to having Federal liaisons and suggested he should focus on that in the coming year.
- Early Conway mentioned that many projects are also on Tribal lands, and we should coordinate with the association of tribal agencies Native American Fish and Wildlife Society to get work done as well. We should reach out to the Bureau of Indian Affairs as well. Doug responded that we intermittently had tribal representation but would welcome it again. Earl encouraged us to reach out to NAFWS.
- Doug thanked Trevor Luna USFWS for his assistance with the operations grant and management of our funds. Jeremy Crossland has been essential for transferring money between USFWS and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, getting money on the ground for projects.
- John O'Keefe is now on the NFHAP Board representing private industry. He is still on our Steering Committee, but we should check with him regarding his steering committee role going forward.
- Reed Green may step down from his representation of NALMS now that he is retired, so we should consider a potential replacement for the future.
- Craig Walker (WAFWA chair) spent time this year encouraging more Western involvement with RFHP. He attended WAFWA with the intent of building more get-togethers similar to WNTI, but support for

attendance to WAFWA is already difficult as it tends to be an expensive meeting and gaining more staff attendance is unlikely. Craig felt WAFWA states could conduct more RFHP things virtually. So, he gathered many RFHP representatives virtually for a “situation assessment,” 20 individuals who were involved somehow in reservoir fish habitat projects or management across WAFWA states. 13 attended the call, representing 8 states. Craig wanted to assess how many large-scale projects were being done, whether fish habitat was considered an objective in those states, how many RFHP meetings they had been able to attend in the last 5 years and what they perceive to be the benefits of being involved in RFHP. Most importantly, what limits the successful outcomes you had been expecting? What do you view as the most important change in the administration of RFHP that would change that?

Situation Assessment:

- Most if not all appear to be actively engaged in multiple reservoir habitat enhancement projects annually
- Most states have identified reservoir habitat restoration as an objective in their strategic plans
- All but one state has had at least one representative participate in an RFHP meeting over the past 5 years
- The most commonly cited benefit of state involvement in RFHP was the possibility of project funding. Additional important benefits include collaboration, sharing of BMPs among states, and partner and vendor interactions.
- Outcomes
 - Funding challenges include. The match to get access to those funds is large at 1:1. Project scale needs to be large enough to get a project worth the effort. Other challenges include: Getting grassroots support and funding streams through FOR; compliance issues when dealing with waterbodies not designed for recreation but rather solely for irrigation or drinking water; project scoring equity.
 - Meeting attendance challenges: timing conflict as field seasons tend to extend later because the high summer is actually too hot for viable and safe sampling, and the season gets pushed back later.
 - Host RFHP annual meeting in August, December or January to accommodate states now avoiding hot and cold periods and conducting field work in the fall
 - Field tours are an important component of these meetings. When meetings are held in areas of the country that have warmer winters, host a winter meeting. When meetings are hosted in states that have cooler summers, host an August meeting.
 - Get a broader array of large angler (tournament) groups involved to raise funds (thousands annually), Texas has been able to partner with tournament angling groups to bring in thousands of dollars and have those be additive to other funds.
 - Develop habitat and angler access funding programs focusing on habitat enhancement
 - For more FOR chapters – Craig Walker suggested the one-time payment is bad and reduces income.
 - Engage with local communities by showing the nexus between reservoir habitat improvement, maintenance of quality angling opportunities, and local economic benefit.
 - Pursuit of outdoor recreation grants or other large-scale grants (i.e., replicate the WNTI model)
 - Examine the use of a “YY consortium” model whereby states contribute to a region wide reservoir habitat funding pot for use on WAFWA state projects – Can we engage them to

contribute the hard cash which we then redirect toward the needed match to scale up our projects?

- Integrate multiple NFHP partnerships (e.g., DFHP, WNTI, SARP, etc.) to do something larger with other partnerships at a watershed scale
- Look into use of volunteer funds as match
- Increase license revenue
- Involved tribal partners
- Work with NGO partners or other granting entities to create multi-year partnership whereby matching or project funds are available
- Angler and stakeholder involvement
 - Increase angler involvement during annual meetings to allow for more round table interactions to assess what anglers want out of the partnership
 - Provide funding for FOR chapter member travel and accommodation to boost member attendance
 - Scheduling meetings to meet the scheduling needs of anglers who are volunteers and need to schedule around their day jobs
 - Involve FOR reps in the funding process to gain buy-in
 - Assess level of interest from anglers regarding meeting participation, project scoring, etc.
 - Encourage regional representatives for federal partners and water users to attend in the state where the meeting is being hosted
 - Encourage national representatives for federal partners (e.g., NPS, USFS, BLM, USACE, BOR, etc.) to attend all annual meetings
- BMP
 - Provide BMP to all states
 - Provide BMP to partners and anglers
 - Review BMP at X-year mark and create a new “edition” of L.E. Miranda chapter
 - Use the national RFHP meetings as a symposium to publish and archive proceedings of presented BMP and novel approaches. These new approaches can then become the materials and citations for modification of the BMP chapter.
- Scoring of proposals
 - Support periodic review of the scoring criteria to ensure equity among regional interests and support for project proposals.
- Discussion
 - Jeff Jackson pointed out that we do have obvious gaps on the map, wherein an entire State is missing. Craig suggested that engaging at WAFWA meetings can make a big difference here.
 - Doug suggested that we circulate the document out and assign thinking processes perhaps at a regional level (e.g., scoring challenges). Rebecca suggested that we revamp the Science & Data Committee’s leadership in some of these areas too.
 - Earl Conway suggested that the value proposition for FOR has also changed. They used to get more assistance and support with managing finances, for Sun Country Outdoors that went away unexpectedly.
 - Gene Gilliland suggested it may be time to step back and re-think our strategic plan. In-person steering committee meeting might be appropriate to hash these big challenges out, as the other

regions will likely have similar responses to these challenges. Many things have evolved, and we simply need to update.

Gary Klein spoke about his desire to support RFHP. He grew up fishing Havasu, and his experience after being away for a while and returning to a degraded reservoir was eye-opening. He attended the 2023 Annual Meeting and identified ways to generate more funds for RFHP. The conservation raffle in Tennessee is a highly successful model, raising \$2.8 Million for conservation. They work off an email list to do such a large-scale fundraiser, but RFHP does not have a list of that scale.

- We identified a possible way to grow the list and do some fundraising, with a prize of a free fishing trip with Gary Klein in 2025.
- If we could work through some of the states license lists, like TN did, we could expand our reach significantly.

Regional Working Group review and 2026 RFP Process for NFHP federal funds and possible Bass Pro Shop Outdoor Fund donation

- Doug thanked the working group members for their work scoring this spring for grants to be allocated in FY2025 (approved now, funding likely delivered next spring). Doug mentioned that the new Bass Pro Shop funding may see a big increase in the number of submitted 2026 projects and therefore a larger task for the Working Groups. Doug asked for more volunteers and Brian Todd, Jeff Conley, and Jacob Miller volunteered to join their area's working groups. Northeast is still lacking members with Ben Page the lone member.

The 2026 RFP has the same Conservation Priorities as last year. So, projects should address as many as possible to craft a quality application. The large grant RFP will ask a new question asking if you are seeking federal funds, Bass Pro Shop funds, or either source.

The online large grant application will be online as in the past.

NFHP Board Report Card

- For the second year in a row, we received a "report card" to help strengthen our annual funding package. The report this year gave us a score of 88 out of 100. Suggested areas for improvement include; do a better job of explaining our scoring system, do a better job of justifying the expertise of our project managers in the applications (Add to the application budget page "experience/expertise/qualifications" section).
- We scored 88 this year and 93 last year including our accomplishments and work plan. So, there is room to improve although not bad. It was noted that we have a limited understanding of how we compare to other FHPs as we only see our report and not the other 19. Julie suggested we ask Ryan Roberts to divulge who did well in our weak areas, then reach out to those coordinators to discuss how they do business.

FHP Congressional Approval Process

We submitted our application to Congress, and it was accepted by the NFHP Board. It will be a part of the package to be submitted to Congress next year. Rebecca played a huge role in the effort not only drafting Outreach, Science and Data sections of the report, but utilizing our web site to point to many

required documents that strengthened the application. Jeff Boxrucker also assisted as he went through a similar process when our partnership was new.

We will put the document on our web site now that it has been officially accepted.

Project Updates

The new NFHP database now shows that we have completed 110 federally funded projects worth \$4.4 million, and we have leveraged \$27 million in non-federal match.

- We reviewed the 2021 Bass Pro Shop projects with only one not yet completed.
- The 2022 projects are all completed except one in Nebraska.
- 2023 Projects; Pymatuning in PA that is completely done, Three Mile Lake (both Bass Pro and Federal grants) was delayed by an extended drawdown and serious dam repairs; both projects will be completed soon. We expect the habitat work to occur this winter. All others are still active currently.
- 2024 Projects; We are now working on grant documents and fund transfers from the FWS to select USACE local projects. When BPS funds came available, we had enough to cover some of the approved-but-not-funded 2024 projects (FY Sayers Lake, PA; Paintsville Lake, KY). So, we were able to fund all 2024 applications.
- 2025 Projects Discussion; If RFHP receives its normal apportionment, we should be able to fund every single one of the approved projects, with \$115,000 left over!

We are still in limbo with Federal fund approval and delivery, so we don't want to spend it too soon, but we should be able to allocate the \$115,000 to something else. Doug suggested we go back to the approved list and offer Bass Pro Shops extra funds to them?

- Rebecca asked whether we must spend it on the ground, or this year? Can we delay and hold it to utilize in the next year?
- Gene Gilliland suggested we not go back to the list we have but use it to recruit more FOR chapters or re-activate participation by issuing an RFP just for that money. No Federal strings attached. This could give these groups a first chance to get involved as members on a smaller scale, but larger than the small grants scale. Rebecca suggested not excluding current FOR chapters but rather using it to re-engage them too.
- Mark Porath suggested we market this opportunity through the agencies, which would help us connect with new angler groups.
- Mark Porath suggested \$10,000 cap, Sandy Clark-Kolaks suggested \$10-20,000 to allow flexibility if we have fewer applications.
- Rebecca suggested more formal reporting requirements to ensure we are accountable for the accomplishments of this grant, and to build better habits for the small grants program.
- Jeff Conley pointed out the difficulty for new FOR chapters to have the capacity for applying for funds, as the Federal process is quite onerous. This is a good steppingstone +to help them get on board, practiced, and be more able in the future to get more large grants done.
- Craig suggested more criteria for involving other angler groups/local partners, as part of scoring.

- Doug will document the draft application, scoring, and reporting requirements for this for one more review, then Rebecca will implement with an RFP online.

Science and Data Committee Updates (page 36) and Small Grants

- Assessment re-up
- Re-examining our regions – deeper dive into what the impairments mean and how they translate to habitat strategies – score the fitting of good strategies to the impairments present as a revised part of our scoring
- Plastics – update on the literature
- Need a chair and formal committee re-up

Small Grants

- We did not receive as much donation funding for this program as we typically do. We hope to see a sponsorship come in from Costa Conserve+Compete, but that check has not yet come in, and we have been informed that program may be short-lived.
- We received 11 applications, of which 6 were from the same FOR chapter. Given the lower fund this year, Doug suggested we not fund all 6 from LFSA but they would make an outstanding medium-sized grant applicant. This would help the project be more comprehensive and have clearer reporting requirements as well.
- Mossback – Doug recommended we fund all three.
- Reef Ball – Doug recommended we fund Paintsville Lake
- Mike Homer moved to approve all recommendations; Lynn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FRIENDS OF RESERVOIRS MEETING

FOR Membership Update

- There were some interesting developments in 2024. It was noted that there are 10 new chapters and one more pending in the next few weeks, and one that re-engaged after a long absence, the Lake Fork Sportsman's Association
- Earlier it was asked why would a group join Friends of Reservoirs? Of course, grants are the top reason, but other reasons stated by new groups included a desire to be part of our organization. Our mission and the opportunity to learn and share techniques were also mentioned. The Wyoming WYldlife Fund and Friends of Sheridan State Fishing Lake believed in our mission, but stated they weren't actively seeking funds at this time.
- Rebecca mentioned Craig's earlier comment that asked should members have continued skin in the game. Our membership fees should be reviewed, and we could decide whether a return to annual membership fees is needed. Which way do we go? Craig suggested a survey of all members to see what they want from the organization.
- Rebecca reminded everyone that when we cut the annual renewal fee, we added a \$25.00 grant application fee.
- Craig commented that we ask chapters what they want, need, and what the service package is that makes their membership valuable. Survey them. There are many older FOR groups who may not even realize they are current members, as leadership changes in these groups frequently.

- Mark commented that the expanded network, keeping it very open, was to increase the visibility and accessibility of FOR as an information source.
- Andy Clark commented that the fee wasn't necessarily a barrier, but that they also felt they had little chance of getting funds as a benefit. They may not think they qualify for certain grants. We also need to ensure our agency reaches out to those groups to clarify that they are welcome and eligible.

Outreach Committee Report – Rebecca Krogman

Outreach Committee Report – Rebecca

- This year, Rebecca completed a number of important updates for the website, including adding information for nonprofit financial transparency, building a project dashboard that echoes NFHP's new project dashboard, and resolving several bugs. The FY2025 grant application and scoring processes were handled, and project- and grant-related news were shared. In addition, branding was discussed for a future dedicated grant program supported by Bass Pro Shops. Please inform Rebecca regarding any technical issues you have had or any other needs you would like fulfilled on the website or email communications.
- Several sponsorships were gained, including a Reef Ball grant program, and onboarding through Beam for Simms' website checkout. Gary Klein and Major League Fishing offered a giveaway, and numerous meetings were held to discuss how that giveaway would work to best provide visibility for Friends of Reservoirs. A sweepstake for a fishing trip with Gary in 2024 was chosen and implemented as of this meeting. The partnership with Barefoot Bay (custom shirts and other clothing) was also highlighted at this meeting with meeting-related apparel. FOR members are encouraged to utilize this partnership to make merchandise for their home fishing waters!
- Project Dashboard – send list of grantees out so they can follow up and get reports, plan to follow up with Craig about measuring impact of partner-occurring projects that utilize our knowledge/guidance
 - Gene Gilliland asked for a list of the small grants awarded by year. The database does not have complete data for small grants yet. Go back to the awardees and get data with outcomes.
 - Mike Homer suggested a reporting rubric on project outcomes.
 - Steven Bardin of MLF wanted to know if we wanted to add their projects to our database.
 - Earl Conway asked about capturing other funds from additional sources that were a part of grant we funded.
 - Craig Walker mentioned that knowledge from our group is used by projects not funded by us. This might be captured as well for our knowledge.
 - This will be discussed at a future meeting in detail to determine if any expansion of our database is warranted.

Coordinator recommendations and comments

Doug listed donations to our 501(c)3 to fund small grants, support meetings, and provide funding for expenses not eligible for our Operations Grant.

- AFTCO \$2500 to Small Grants
- Costa \$2500 to Small Grants for last year
- BASS \$1000 to Small Grants
- Bass Fishing HOF donation may happen yet this year
- Bob Jacobs \$500 to raffle

Coordinator recommendations:

- Act on suggestions made at this meeting from WAFWA and others.
- July 2025 – Submit a list of projects for another \$500,000 to the BassPro Shop Outdoor Fund along with a plan for branding. It is possible we can get on their “long-term” list as a regular line item.

Trevor Luna FWS Update - Trevor has heard our concerns about the restrictions on funding delivery and match issues. FWS changed the timeline to be more flexible than a single year time of spending which didn't work for partners. Fish habitat and fish passage have been given exceptions for that timeline limitation, and Trevor will send more information to Doug for sharing.

Trevor described the new “small grant process” that should make it much easier for our partners to acquire their federal funding. The new system uses a fillable pdf form that doesn't require use of multiple forms and documents required in Grant Solutions.

Meeting Adjourned

