

Meeting of RFHP WAFWA state agency representatives

October 11, 2024

In attendance: Amberle Jones (Arizona), David Bogner (Oklahoma), Don Wiley (Utah), Jeff Conley (Kansas), Jeff Jackson (Nebraska), John Reinke (Kansas), Lacey Schmitt (Arizona), Lucas Kowalewski (Kansas), Michael Hollie (Oklahoma), Mike Homer (Texas), Nathan Bailey (Arizona), Quinn Granfors (California), Craig Walker (Utah)

Topics discussed:

- How many large scale (e.g., multiple acre or multiple structure improvements) reservoir habitat improvement projects have you completed in your state over the past 5 years?
- Is reservoir habitat enhancement identified in strategic plans developed by your state?
- How many RFHP annual meetings has a representative from your state attended in the last 5 years?
- What do you perceive as the possible benefits of RFHP to your state?
- Is your state currently realizing any of these (RFHP related) benefits?
- What, if anything, prevents realization of possible RFHP benefits to your state?
- What do you view as the single most important change to the administration of RFHP (i.e., what change would maximize benefits and relevance of the partnership for your state and increase participation at annual meetings)?

Findings:

- 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 included collaboration, sharing of BMP among states, and partner and vendor interactions.

- Some states appear to be accessing RFHP funding opportunities, all appear to be gaining benefits from the sharing of knowledge
- Constraints and barriers to realizing RFHP benefits included:
 - Availability of matching funds
 - Partnership match requirement is more than traditional 75:25; making it more beneficial to just do projects in house using state dollars or DJ.
 - Building grass roots support from local communities
 - Investing in the pursuit of RFHP funding is “not worth it” when compared to the returns from other grants/funding avenues
 - Compliance issues/difficulties
 - Gaining buy-in from land management agencies and water users
 - Priority projects scoring low based on existing RFHP criteria
 - Historically, participation from regional or national BOR attendee mitigated issues locally. This has not been occurring recently.
 - Habitat work in the west often involves structure installations at varied depths to address water level shifts; possibly limiting the likelihood that a project will rank highly and receive funding
- States felt that the most important change to RFHP that would maximize benefits and relevance of the partnership for their state and increase their participation at annual meetings were:
 - The timing of the meeting is overlapping with the extended (fall) sampling season
 - Adjusting scoring for western states to rank higher in grant requests
 - Timeliness of receiving grant awards

Suggested actions:

Funding

- Get a broader array of larger 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
- Form more FOR chapters
- 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 largescale 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
- 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
- Involve tribal partners

- Work with NGO partners or other granting entities to create a multi-year partnership whereby matching or project funds are available

Angler and stakeholder involvement

- Increase angler involvement during annual meeting to allow for more round table interactions to assess what anglers want out of the partnership
- Provide funding for FOR chapter member travel and accommodations 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 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 meeting as 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

Meeting timing

- Host RFHP annual meeting in August, December or January to accommodate states now avoiding hot and cold periods and conducting field work during fall
- Field tour is 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.

Scoring of proposals

- Support periodic review of the scoring criteria to ensure equity among regional interests and support for project proposals.