



Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 10, 2026 1:30 – 4 pm
Susitna River Coalition Office
KTNA Radio, 13764 E 2nd St Dr, Talkeetna
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MEETING NOTES

Facilitator: Melis Coady

Notetaker: Trent Liebich

Welcome and introductions (15 min)

Attendance:

Jessica Speed – Trout Unlimited - Mat-Su Partnership Coordinator
Melis Coady – Susitna River Coalition
Margarette Stern – Susitna River Coalition
Grace Fahrney – Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Erika Ammann – NOAA Fisheries
MaryKate Swenarton – Trout Unlimited
Paul Clark – Matanuska Susitna Borough (filling-in for Mike Campfield)
Natalie Velez – Native Village of Eklutna (replaced Marc Lamoreaux)
Laurie Stuart – Tyonek Tribal Conservation District
Cody Beus – Knik Tribe

*Marc Lamoreaux retired and this is Laurie Stuart's last meeting. Thanks for your service, Marc and Laurie. Thanks to NVE and MSB for your service as well. Hoping they will reapply for another term on the Steering Committee.

Partnership Business

- Approve January 2026 Steering Committee meeting notes (5 min) *[Draft January notes](#)

Edits to the January Steering Committee meeting notes – None.

Action: Jessica will post the [notes online](#).

- Partnership Strategic Plan Update (80 min)

Starting this past fall, the Partnership embarked on an update to its strategic action plan. As a refresher, we hired a contractor, and with information gleaned from a Symposium session, survey and accomplishments review, created a draft plan for us that they shared at the January SC meeting.

Priorities of this meeting were to firm up below sections of language in the draft plan.

- The Partnership's Role and Niche *[Partnership's Role](#)
 - Decision: Confirm language defining the Partnership's role (30 min)
 - Could be valuable to more thoroughly describe the partners role. See sharepoint documents for suggested edits
 - https://troutunlimited11.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Alaska403/IQCcn4y3N0SeQ67BFhuu_1UqATq_tdGdPFAE5PedxuKCTwQ?e=ymSYHX
 - Action: Jessica will incorporate edits and share confirmed Partnership role language
- Approval of 2026–2031 Conservation Priorities *[Conservation Priorities](#)
 - See sharepoint documents for suggested edits
 - https://troutunlimited11.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Alaska403/IQDcqluq4qQzR4T-1OINDyb4AaKpS_J0R_MuQINMdKtBR1g?e=HJjsAN
 - Action: Jessica will incorporate edits and share language updates
- Decision: Confirm core conservation priorities for the five-year plan (50 min)

Committee discussed creation of subcommittees by conservation priority to draft proposed updates for the draft plan. (**Note: need to clarify if for just conservation priorities or all of the 12 conservation priorities in Addendum*).

Action: Jessica, facilitate creation of working groups and invite Steering Committee and subject matter experts to participate.

- FY27 Request for Proposals for Mat-Su National Fish Habitat Partnership funded projects (40 min)

We have funded well over 100 projects since 2006 in areas of science, conservation, restoration, and outreach/operations of Partnership.

FY26 projects are currently in review and expected to be announced soon by Jason Olive at USFWS

Our next call for proposals for funding (RFP) (FY27) opens June 1 to September 14th, 2026. This next agenda item is a beginning conversation about updates to this year's RFP.

- Updated: ACE Act and NFHP relevancies for this year's RFP (10 min) *[Relevancies](#)

ACE Act Reauthorization

- 1:1 non-federal match change: at aggregate FHP level vs individual project level
- Tribal projects
 - exempt from non-federal match requirement

- Direct NFHP funding toward Tribal project is considered non-federal match and counts toward total FHP aggregate non-federal match.
- 5% of NFHP project funding is dedicated to Tribal projects
- Slower review and greater scrutiny of projects over 50k
- Timeline change. From 18 months to 12 months from application to receiving funding. (though with review may take longer). Recommended projects for funding deadline to NFHP staff November 15th. Mat-Su timing June 1 – September 14th, submit report to NFHP end of October.

Coordination/ops funding

- No longer considered a “project” under Ace Act
- No longer required 1:1 non-federal match
- Funding cap increased from 125k to 200k
- Standalone outreach projects may need to be included as Partnership operations funding proposals (or included as part of conservation/science projects).
- Science projects may also need to be included in operations.
- Given increased funding limit for Partnership operations and limited metrics, there is a new scoring methodology being developed by the NFHP Board to evaluate and score Partnerships and operations funding in FY27.

- Priorities for FY27 RFP (30 min) [*Priorities discussion](#)

The group discussed priorities for FY27, largely focused on those from the current SAP update. Send any suggested edits to the FY27 RFP to Jessica Speed. Otherwise, she will draft priorities and edits for committee consideration in April, in advance of the May 12th Steering committee meeting. This could include any new priorities or removal of existing priorities.

Action: all. Got feedback on priorities or how to update FY27 RFP? Send to Jessica by end of March

Action: Jessica share NFHP proposed changes to evaluation criteria

Action: based on the conversation Jessica will propose priorities and draft updates to the RFP for review.

Updates **Find written updates at bottom of agenda*

- Committee updates
- National updates
- Partner updates **Partner updates will be shared via email for meeting notes*

Upcoming Events and Relevant Dates:

- MSB FWC meeting, March 12th, 4-6pm, 2026, Palmer
- MSB Assembly Meeting, Riparian Setbacks, March 17th, 2026
- Mat-Su Elodea Task Force meeting, March 20th, 11am-12:30pm, 2026, virtual
- American Fisheries Society Alaska Chapter, March 23-27, 2026, Fairbanks
- Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management, March 24-27, 2026, Anchorage
- NFHP Board meeting, April 28, 2026, 1 – 4pm ET, virtual
- SRC - Hosting speaker series, includes presentation on Elodea.
- SRC - Working with MSB on watershed planning process.

- SRC - Hosting Wild Salmon Day in Talkeetna –Aug 14-16
- ADFG - Eklutna & USFWS planning streambank restoration workshop for end of May – Eklutna land on the Eklutna river
- Tyonek – has hired 2 new biologist – now 5 full time biologists on staff

Next meeting: Tuesday, May 12th, 2026.

Facilitator: Cody Beus **Notetaker:** Marykate Swenarton

General SC meeting calendar: [*2026 meeting calendar](#)

Committee Updates (*find list of committee members [here](#)*)

- Science and Data
 - Did not meet.
 - Dan Rinella (USFWS) is applying to serve on the committee. Steering Committee must review and approve to serve. Look for separate email.
- Symposium Planning
 - Formed the seven-member 2026 planning committee and hosted first planning meeting on February 26th.
 - Significant interest in increasing and broadening attendance by anyone interested in salmon conservation (fishers, decision makers, industry, community members)
 - Interest in prioritizing decision maker attendance and adjusting presentations and presentation styles to meet that audience.
 - We could use a few more folks on the planning committee – please consider and/or share with anyone you think may be a good fit. ([find current members at bottom of page](#)).
- Outreach
 - Did not meet
 - Sent a February email bulletin ([click here](#)). Included a new “Partner Spotlight” section. Thanks to Margaret Stern for catalyzing and Michael Mazzacavallo for being the first in the ongoing series.
 - Interest from Kenai FHP in utilizing Mat-Su’s riparian science summary as a base to develop their own Kenai materials. Would credit Mat-Su.
 - Plants for Salmon riparian planting day. Planning team from Montana Creek project meets March 9th to discuss ideas for a single or multi-year project to begin as a 2026 Plants for Salmon event. Please share ideas and feel welcome to join us. Team currently includes: MSB, SRC, Knik Tribe, TU, USFWS, ADF&G
- Adhoc working groups and/or initiatives
 - Science to conservation outcomes pilot. Assembly member Bill Gamble confirmed he will sponsor legislation that classifies MSB land shorelines on the Deshka River with cold water refugia as “watershed Lands” highlighting them as important for fish and as community assets.

National Updates

**From January 28/29 NFHP Board meeting. Below are a few meeting notes from NFHP Staff member Jason Olive/USFWS. Find [full meeting notes here](#).*

1.NFHP Board member elections.

- a. Gene Gilliland, with BASS, was reelected to the seat representing Freshwater Recreational Anglers;
- b. Kellie Ralston, with Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, was elected to the seat representing Habitat Conservation Organizations (formerly held by Bryan Moore/Trout Unlimited);
- c. Connor Bevan, with American Sportfishing Association, was elected to the seat representing the Recreational Fishing Industry (formerly held by Mike Leonard).

2. The Board voted to approve a motion by the Partnerships Committee to raise the limit on how much of their annual funding allotment that FHPs can spend on operations from \$125k to \$200k, effective in the FY2027 process.

- a. Note that this is optional and will require some changes to the Board's FHP scoring metrics to more heavily weight activities conducted under the banner of operations; and
- b. Given increased scrutiny on the NFHP project list this year, to the extent possible, we will need to fund most outreach products using operations funds, which will consume some of this increase for some FHPs.

3. The Board approved two new chapters for the NFHP Procedures Manual- 1) Process for designation of new FHPs; and 2) Annual funding allocation process. Drafts of both were in the Board Book you received 2 weeks ago and will be posted on website soon.

4. Beyond the Pond has changed their name back to the National Fish Habitat Fund, "The Fund" for short. This is NFHP's fundraising arm.

5. The new NFHP Action Plan was not approved due to the submission of some 11th hour proposed edits. We hope to have it approved by March.

6. The Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force is now known as the Federal Interagency Fish Passage and Aquatic Connectivity Work Group.

Also, NFHP is celebrating its 20 year anniversary and there is an opportunity to tell FHP stories nationally through AFS.