



National Fish Habitat Partnership
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March 1, 2012

Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership
c/o Lisa DeBruyckere, Coordinator
6159 Rosemeadow Lane NE
Salem, OR 97317

Dear Ms. DeBruyckere:

Congratulations! The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) approved the application of the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) to become a fully recognized Fish Habitat Partnership under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, at the Board meeting of January 12, 2012.

PMEP has brought together a diverse group of partners to coordinate with agency programs and the private sector to protect, restore, and enhance key habitat types within the Pacific estuaries and nearshore marine environments. The PMEP has completed an analysis of region-wide needs, gaps, and partner interests, and has identified juvenile fish habitat, tidal wetland-intertidal-subtidal-nearshore connectivity, and water quality and quantity as priority areas for conservation efforts. This focus will aid in multi-species habitat protection and restoration in Pacific estuarine and nearshore areas. The geographic scale of the PMEP is appropriate to address regional fish habitat issues, but, in view of the complexity of Pacific coast habitats, the Board commends the PMEP for its statement in its draft strategic plan that the geographic extent of the PMEP could be revisited in the future if circumstances warrant.

The Board's recognition of PMEP as a Fish Habitat Partnership marks the beginning of a new long-term relationship. Our work together has just begun. In that spirit, the Board provides the following observations and recommendations regarding your role as a Fish Habitat Partnership.

- The Board strongly encourages PMEP to continue to coordinate with the Science & Data Committee to ensure that your habitat assessments are compatible with the National Fish Habitat Assessment and your data systems are compatible with the National Data System.
- The Board strongly encourages PMEP to engage sport fishing representatives in the partnership, and to avoid taking positions or undertaking activities that would impede recreational fishing access.
- The PMEP should initiate communication with neighboring governments in Canada and Mexico to alert them to the formation of the PMEP, laying the groundwork for potential future collaboration.

- The PMEP should continue to coordinate with other FHPs that have similar, overlapping, or complementary interests. These include the Western Native Trout Initiative, North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership, several FHPs in Alaska, and especially the California Fish Passage Forum. Coordination is a two-way process, and these FHPs are expected to reciprocate the relationship.

The Board endorsed the following specific comments on PMEP's draft strategic plan.

- The PMEP strategic plan should more fully explain the “suite of ecological services that benefit people” mentioned in the draft strategic plan, and more fully identify the social, cultural, and economic benefits that estuarine and marine habitats provide. A partial explanation appears in the plan's introduction, but a more complete description would help to promote the PMEP and its vision to a wider audience, and to gain more public support and engagement in fish habitat conservation. A brief mention of “maintaining working waterfronts and landscapes” could be expanded upon to capture the role of humans in PMEP's vision for these habitats.
- The PMEP strategic plan should expand on the statement that the “Pacific coast estuary and nearshore marine environments are nationally significant”, with reference to the large human population in the PMEP area, and the importance of these habitats to people, e.g. for sport and commercial fishing.
- The PMEP strategic plan should more fully develop the linkages between PMEP's strategic priorities and conservation action, and conservation metrics that PMEP will use to measure progress. The PMEP should ensure that its final plan addresses these gaps.
- The PMEP strategic plan should acknowledge that the National Fish Habitat Partnership (and hence PMEP) promotes *voluntary, non-regulatory* approaches to conservation. Non-traditional conservation partners (e.g. landowners, businesses, and local communities) should be targeted for involvement in PMEP's efforts, not necessarily at the Steering Committee level, but certainly at the project level.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities and improve the quality of life for the American people. For its part, the Board will be your advocate to bring new financial and technical resources to achieve the goals of the Action Plan. Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,



Kelly Hepler, Chairman
National Fish Habitat Board