

**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# NOAA's Habitat Conservation Initiatives:

## Supporting Robust Fisheries

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# Council habitat accomplishments



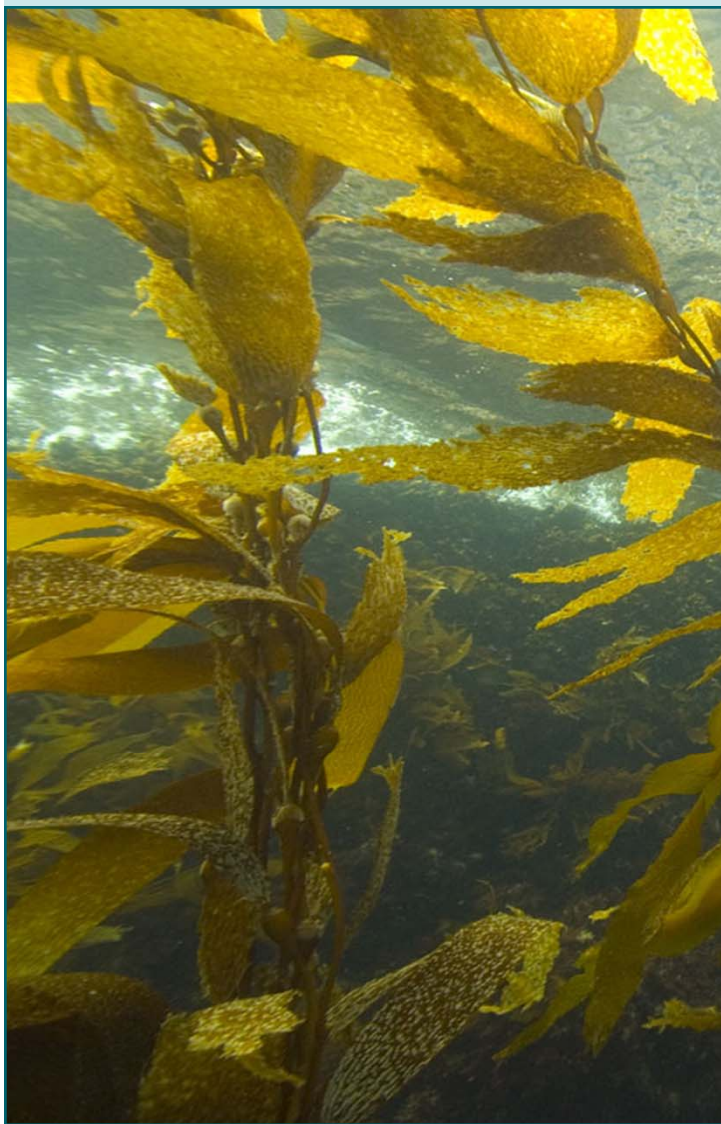
- EFH described in 45 FMPs
- ~100 HAPCs identified
- Protected nearly 1 billion acres of vulnerable bottom habitats from fishing gear impacts
- Proactive deep-sea coral protection

# Challenges Remain...

- U.S. losing 80,000 acres of wetlands in coastal watersheds per year
- Similar downward trends for:
  - SAV
  - Mangroves
  - Coral reefs



# Recognition of the need for action



- Saltwater anglers prefer management strategies that protect and restore degraded fish habitat
- NMFS should invest in habitat research that connects habitat quality and quantity to stock productivity
- Councils are interested in increasing their engagement on non-fishing impacts to habitat
- NMFS and Councils should set clear objectives and establish metrics
- NMFS should provide guidance to implement EBFM



# Current Council habitat initiatives



- Mid-Atlantic Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management Workgroup



- North Pacific Council MOU on non-fishing impacts



- Atlantic deep-sea coral management MOU





# Opportunities beyond MSA



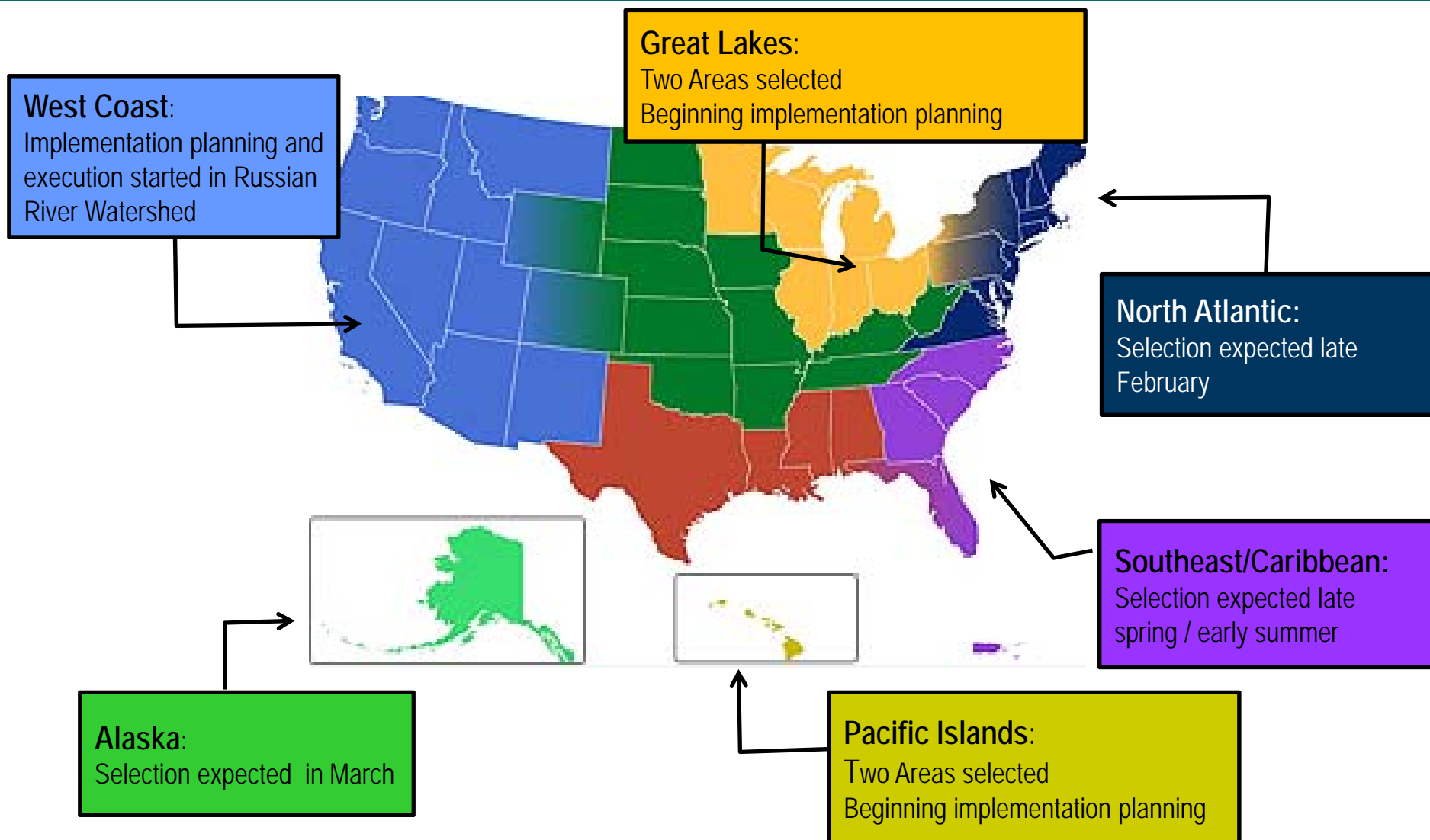
- Habitat Blueprint
  - Place-based focus areas
  - Landscape-scale approaches
- Targeted fisheries habitat restoration
- National Fish Habitat Partnership
- Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

# NOAA Habitat Blueprint



- *A framework* to improve habitat for fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities
  - Improving the way we do business
- Built around Guiding Principles
- Implemented through place-based, science, and policy activities

# Blueprint: Habitat Focus Areas





# Blueprint: Potential benefits & opportunities



- Increased focus on habitat conservation for managed fisheries
- Opportunity to highlight habitat science and conservation needs
- Access to broad network of NOAA assets
- Habitat Focus Areas:
  - Provide input into selection process
  - Participate in development of implementation plans once Focus Areas are selected
- Identify key habitat science gaps/needs or policy issues

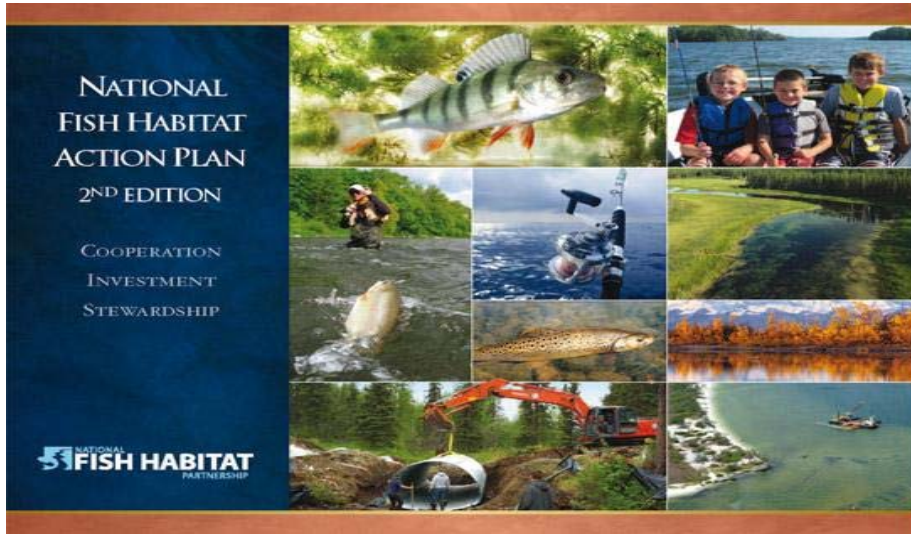
# Targeted Fisheries Habitat Restoration

- Focus on supporting sustainable fisheries
- Leverage federal funding with external funding
- Benefits for EFH, ecosystem level benefits (i.e., forage fish)
- Opportunity for Councils to guide restoration towards highest priorities





# National Fish Habitat Partnership



## Goals

- Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems
- Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected
- Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms
- Increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species



# NFHP: Potential benefits & opportunities



## Benefits

- Directed habitat conservation in support of managed species
- Another voice on fisheries and habitat
- Leverage partner resources
- Fish habitat assessments can increase best available science

## Opportunities

- Council rep on Board can advocate your priorities and concerns
- Articulate objectives and priorities to regional FHPs
- Participate in FHP committees
- Endorse priority projects funded by the FHPs



# DOI Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)

- Network of public-private partnerships
- Provide science to support sustainable natural resource management (including coastal habitats that support fisheries)



# LCCs: Potential benefits & opportunities

- Funding to fill science gaps
- Forum to incorporate fishery goals and threats into large scale management efforts
- Potential new partners to work on ecosystem level challenges
- LCC Steering and Science/Technical Committees
- LCC National Council



[www.lccnetwork.org](http://www.lccnetwork.org)



# Take home messages



- The habitat challenges we face are complex and not easily solved.
- NOAA Fisheries is working on habitat strategies beyond MSA
- Lots of opportunities for Councils to convey habitat needs and priorities



# Thanks!



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