

American Fisheries Society • American Fly Fishing Trade Association • American Rivers • American Sportfishing Association • Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies • BASS/ESPN Outdoors • Berkley Conservation Institute • Center for Coastal Conservation • Coastal Conservation Association • Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation • Federation of Fly Fishers • Izaak Walton League of America • National Marine Manufacturers Association • National Wildlife Federation • Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association • Shimano Sport Fisheries Initiative • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy • Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership • Trout Unlimited

May 20, 2010

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of America's conservationists and anglers, respectfully request your support for the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA) and ask you to support its passage into law during the 111th Congress. The NFHCA is a national, bipartisan effort to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.

In December 2009, after a successful hearing in the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works' Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife, the bill was reported favorably by unanimous consent by the full Committee and currently awaits floor action. Your support will be vital for passage of this legislation, which is one of the top priorities of the sportfishing community this Congress.

Healthy waterways and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of our society and economy. They provide clean water and sustainable fisheries, providing recreational enjoyment for millions and supporting many local communities. They also are vital for less tangible reasons, as anyone who has fished wild waters or canoed a tranquil stream can attest. Unfortunately, in many waters around the country, aquatic habitats and the fish they support have been degraded. This is of huge concern to the 44 million anglers who pursue fish recreationally and countless others who depend on them for subsistence and commerce. The economic contribution of recreational fisheries alone surpassed \$125 billion in 2006.

Research has determined that many fish populations are in decline and half of our waters are impaired. As fish habitats come under increasing pressure, the current efforts to address habitat and population declines are not reversing these trends. The goal of the NFHCA is to foster landscape-scale, regional fish habitat conservation efforts.

The NFHCA will authorize a grant program to support locally driven fishery and habitat improvement projects, maximizing the return-on-investment by targeting much needed funding to priority on-the-ground projects. Based upon the highly successful North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the NFHCA will leverage state, local and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships aimed at fixing the nation's biggest fisheries problems. Funding will be awarded based on habitat need, strength of local and regional partnerships, and the likelihood of success. The NFHCA will put into statute the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of fish habitat decline, not just the symptoms.

We encourage your support for the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act and request your cosponsorship of this landmark legislation. Given the current and impending threats to many of our nation's fisheries, it is critically important that this legislation is enacted this Congress. To become a cosponsor of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act, please contact Danielle Rosengarten (Sen. Lieberman) at Danielle_Rosengarten@lieberman.senate.gov, John Stoody (Sen. Bond) at John_Stoody@bond.senate.gov or Kasey Gillett (Sen. Casey) at Kasey_Gillette@casey.senate.gov.

Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

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Bass Anglers Sportsman Society
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