

# The National Fish Habitat Initiative



*Aquatic resources in the United States are in decline, and loss and alteration of habitat is the principal culprit.*

*Habitat alteration is the cause of 75 percent of all fish extinctions over the past 75 years,*

*and the cause of 91 percent of fish*

*listings under the*

*Endangered Species Act.*

**The National Fish Habitat Initiative will seek to make the Service and the Fisheries Program catalysts among States, tribes and other stakeholders to lead development of a fisheries habitat restoration plan similar to the highly successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan.**

The concept for the National Fish Habitat Initiative was the brainchild of Gary Myers, Director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and was set forward in recommendations from the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, an organization chartered to advise the Secretary of Interior in consultation with the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **National Fish Habitat Initiative Goals**

- Foster geographically-focused cooperative efforts to protect, restore, and enhance aquatic habitats and reverse declines in fish and aquatic species.
- Utilize and develop information systems to track progress in protecting, restoring, and enhancing aquatic habitats.

The Initiative will involve close collaboration between partners to increase the quantity and improve the quality of aquatic and riparian habitat as well as to evaluate fish habitat use and preferences. In Fiscal Year 2003, the Service performed 337 such assessments covering 38,000 miles of instream and riparian habitat.

The Initiative will focus on existing and needed efforts already identified. For example, cooperative initiatives, such as the Eastern Brook Trout Initiative and Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Initiative.

This Initiative is closely aligned with the Interior Secretary Gale Norton's 4 C's philosophy — Communication, Consultation and Cooperation, all in the service of Conservation, a philosophy strongly in support of working with regional and local coalitions to develop conservation plans with strong public support.



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