



September 24, 2019

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom McClintock
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Leaders of the House Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of Trout Unlimited's 300,000 members and supporters across the Nation, we are writing to express our strong support for **HR 1747, The National Fish Habitat Conservation through Partnerships Act (NFHCTPA)**. We deeply appreciate the bill's chief sponsors, Representative Wittman and Veasey for their leadership, as well as many others who have offered strong support for the bill. We thank Chairmen Grijalva and Huffman for the hearing on the bill, and especially for the subsequent mark up.

This is a bipartisan bill with broad support among stakeholders. During the President George W. Bush Administration, it was developed by the state fisheries agencies and fisheries and boating stakeholders to improve fish habitat across the country through partnerships. Former Senators Kit Bond and Joe Lieberman, and Representatives Ron Kind and Wayne Gilchrest, introduced this bill in the 110th Congress. It has been vetted and improved many times since then. It is time we finish the task those thoughtful leaders started and get HR 1747 signed into law.

The purpose of this Act is to codify the existing National Fish Habitat Board and National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), and to formally recognize the official existence of both entities. This action will fulfill the vision established in the 2006 National Fish Habitat Action Plan where strategic implementation of local fish habitat projects are carried out by regional Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs). Oversight of these efforts are provided by the Board, which is a non-regulatory entity whose membership consists of representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies; federal fish, wildlife and natural resource management agencies; sportsmen's and conservation organizations; and the business community.

The bill ensures the Board evaluates and recommends projects and partnerships for funding to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. This legislation ensures that most of the funding will go to on the ground projects, and it provides an added layer of transparency and public involvement in project selection, as was originally envisioned by stakeholders involved with the program inception and the 2006 National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

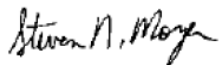
The NFHP and the respective regional Fish Habitat Partnerships have been very successful in implementing important stream and riparian improvements across the country in both freshwater and saltwater environments. The work is carried out on both public lands, and private lands working with cooperative landowners. All of these working relationships are built at the local level to provide many benefits to local residents, and to others visiting the area to enjoy outdoor recreation. These projects not only provide better overall fish habitat, they also serve to improve stream health and provide better resiliency in flood and drought events.

Working with NFHP and the FHPs, Trout Unlimited projects have benefitted communities across the country through the improvement of critical habitat on our coldwater trout and salmon streams. Very good working examples of Trout Unlimited projects directly assisted by NFHP are the Upper Potomac River in West Virginia and Virginia, and the Driftless Area in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.

In the Upper Potomac River basin in West Virginia, for example, our TU managers have been able to combine NFHP funding with other funding sources at an average dollar leverage of 5:1, in other words for every dollar of NFHP money spent, an additional five dollars are brought into that project. Stream and riparian projects have been implemented on public lands and private agricultural lands to the benefit of the native brook trout, which is the state fish of West Virginia. The Driftless area is a large landform in the mid-west that is the only unglaciated area in that region. It literally has hundreds of miles of coldwater streams that have been degraded over the years. Often amplified by Farm Bill conservation funds, here NFHP funds have enabled partners to produce up to fivefold increases in resident trout on many streams.

In closing, we respectfully request your support for this important bill that serves to improve both the health and stability of our invaluable water resources and the fisheries which depend on that stream health.

Sincerely,



Steve Moyer
Vice President for Government Affairs

Cc: Members of House Natural Resources Committee