

Fish Habitat Factsheet #2

Collaborating for Successful Fish Habitat Improvement

Over the past 10 years, environmental agencies and private citizens have worked closely together to successfully improve fish habitats in many areas of North America. Because of shared interests between agencies and the public, they have effectively combined resources to solve fish habitat problems. These collaborations are often the vital ingredient for project success.

Many citizens desire to learn more about natural resources, making education an important first step toward successful fish habitat management. Educated volunteers, who recognize the important of habitats, often become conservation “stewards” or guardians of fish habitats.

Because habitat areas are often located on private property, landowners play an important role in getting projects off the ground by granting permission to locate fish habitats on or adjacent to their property.

Opportunities exist for the public, including landowners, to obtain financial support for habitat improvement projects.

Collaborative partnerships do not happen overnight. Discussions involving interested citizens bring different opinions and purposes - from protecting native species to improving sport fishing - to the project development process. It is important to plan projects that are practical, cost-effective, and that best represent the interests of all stakeholders.

Face-to-face meetings held early in the planning process can help resolve any disagreements and facilitate common goals. Once this is done, all stakeholders can have a feeling of project ownership that increases support from individuals and local communities with a shared sense of conservation for local watersheds.

The partnership continues even after the habitat project is put in place. The project needs to be monitored over time to make sure it is working properly to accomplish its goals. Trained citizen volunteers are an important part of this process to determine whether habitat management targets are met. If the plan falls short, the causes need to be determined, so adjustments can be made.

Collaborations between agencies and the public can really make a difference in improving local fish habitats and fish populations for everyone to enjoy.

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