The Cape Fear River Partnership
A Model for Holistic Restoration of Migratory Fish

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Why the Cape Fear River Basin?

• Diverse habitat problems and needs
• Momentum of fish passage at Army Corps Lock and Dam #1
• Presence and status of protected and managed species
• Active partners interested in migratory fish
• Opportunity to improve migratory fish habitat and protect from future threats
Mission: Restore and demonstrate the value of robust, productive, and self-sustaining stocks of migratory fish in the Cape Fear River

>31 partners, including federal, state, local, academia, and NGOs
• Migratory fish populations have declined over the past two centuries
  • Current commercial landings 87% lower than historic estimates.
  • Harvest moratoriums and reductions are not enough to sustain and increase stocks.

• Migratory Fish Populations are threatened
  • Barriers to spawning habitat (1,100 dams)
  • Decreased water quality / quantity
  • Reduced/Impacted riverine habitat
    • Reduced buffers = excess pollutants
    • Coastal Wetland loss (saltmarsh, forested)
  • Impacted spawning grounds
The Cape Fear River Basin Action Plan for Migratory Fish

• Provides long term habitat-based solutions to challenges for migratory fish
• Uses a wide range of non-regulatory tools to protect and restore habitats
• Includes socioeconomic analysis and actions
• Will benefit communities that depend on the river for water supply and recreational opportunities
Goal 1: Restore access to historic migratory fish habitat

Goal 2: Improve habitat conditions for migratory fish within the Cape Fear River basin

Goal 3: Engage new stakeholders and increase interest in improving fish passage and habitat conditions through communication of socioeconomic values associated with such improvements
Significant measurable long-term impacts will be achieved with the implementation of the Cape Fear River Basin Action Plan.

Examples of measurable targets include:

- Increased fish populations
- Increased recreational fishing success for shad, striped bass, and river herring
- A re-opened striped bass and river herring harvest in the Cape Fear River.
- Water quality enhancements
Planned Activities

Fish Passage/Habitat Projects:

- The Cape Fear River Partnership’s Action Plan contains 95 actions that will be implemented to restore migratory fish to the basin.
- Examples:
  - Mapping of inland fresh/flooded hardwood habitats (8.1)
  - Mapping of ag/forestry/sod farms impacting habitats (14.2)
  - Impacts of climate change/sea level rise on migratory fish habitats
  - Analysis/characterization of benefits to recreation and water users from improved migratory fish habitat (18)
  - Joint interagency rec’s for dredge and fill permits (11.2)

Funding Opportunities (Challenges):

- $26M in funds from Tronox Settlement
- In-kind match from Partners
- Duke Energy grant
- Coastal Recreation Fishing License Fund
The Cape Fear Partnership currently consists of 31 partner organizations representing federal, state, local, NGO, industry, and academic entities. There is an existing commitment and foundation of support from the 31 member organizations in the Partnership and buy-in from partners to complete actions in the Action Plan.

Potential partners:
- National Fish Habitat Partnerships (ACFHP)
- South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC)
- N.C Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) (OCRM)
- North Carolina Coastal Federation and North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
There are critical gaps in our understanding of the factors that affect efforts to restore migratory fish to the Cape Fear River basin. These gaps include knowledge about:

- Historic and current spawning and rearing habitats
- Algal blooms and their effects
- Floodplain connectivity
- Coastal wetland loss
- Climate change and sea level rise
- Timing of river flows
- Economic benefits
NOAA (NMFS/HC) made a significant investment from 2011-2013 in leading the development of the Cape Fear River Partnership and its Action Plan. Several NMFS programs are and will be involved in implementing the Plan’s actions (NMFS/HC, NMFS/RC, NMFS/SER HCD, NMFS/SER PRD).

NOAA (NMFS/RC; NOS/ORR) has been active in developing funding for compensatory damages related to several waste sites in the Cape Fear watershed.

NOAA (NMFS/OHC) has invested funding through the community-based restoration program into multiple habitat restoration projects and socioeconomic studies in the Cape Fear River Basin.

NOAA/NOS/CSC is currently engaged through the Coastal Change Analysis Program (CCAP). Analysis of Cape Fear data underway to steer conservation efforts.
1) Clear, Focused, Attainable Objectives:

- Provide access to, and enhance spawning and rearing habitat for migratory fisheries within the Cape Fear River Basin, leading to increased populations of the endangered Atlantic Sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon; federally-managed American shad, American eel; and the re-opening of striped bass and river herring harvest.

2) Habitat actions and proposed projects have been vetted, documented and commitment by Partners.

3) Existing Momentum
   - Strong partnerships
   - Significant NOAA investments
   - MOMENTUM- with opportunity to expand
Why a Large-scale/Watershed-based Approach?
Questions?

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