

U.S. House Passes Bipartisan Fish Habitat Legislation

Bill will establish more consistent federal funding for habitat conservation programs

On December 11, 2019 bipartisan legislation to support public-private partnerships focused on conserving and maintaining healthy fisheries passed in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The bipartisan **National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnership Act** (H.R. 1747), introduced by U.S. Reps. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) and Marc Veasey (D-Texas), would place into federal law the National Fish Habitat Partnership, which funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects.

The National Fish Habitat Partnership is a state- and locally-driven initiative administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnership Act will codify this program into law to secure consistent federal funding and establish a strategic framework to provide certainty for restoration and conservation projects.

“Conservation efforts all across the country rely on National Fish Habitat Partnerships to provide the funding and know-how to help maintain and restore fisheries,” said American Sportfishing Association’s (ASA) Inland Fisheries Policy Manager **Chad Tokowicz**. “Through the bipartisan efforts of U.S. Reps. Rob Wittman and Marc Veasey, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnership Act is another step closer to helping increase healthy fish populations. With more abundant and healthy fisheries, anglers will have more opportunities to spend time on the water helping to boost the outdoor recreation economy.”



Chad Tokowicz

“Healthy waterways and fish populations are absolutely critical to providing clean water and sustainable fisheries,” said U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman. “My legislation, HR 1747, included in the package, will increase transparency, put power back in the hands of stakeholders and require accountability to ensure taxpayer dollars go further to conserve fish habitat.

Modeled after successful programs like the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), this program would utilize locally-driven partnerships – which have proven successful in implementing much needed habitat improvement projects. I want to thank my colleagues and the American Sportfishing Association for their support of my legislation and hope for its consideration in the Senate soon.”

“Nearly 50 million recreational fisherman and 800,000 jobs depend on healthy waterways and robust fish populations,” said U.S. Rep. Marc Veasey. “I am proud to join a bipartisan group of my colleagues to continue to achieve measurable habitat conservation results through strategic partnerships that lead to better fish habitat conditions and increased fishing opportunities.”

The [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) was started in 2006 and has since established 20 individual [Fish Habitat Partnerships](#) focused on specific regions or habitat types.

To date, more than 800 successful conservation projects have been carried out



across the country. Types of projects completed through these partnerships include dam removals, streambank stabilizations and invasive aquatic plant removal.

The National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnership Act passed as part of a larger package of natural resources bills which also includes the Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization Act of 2019 (H.R. 1023). This Great Lakes-focused legislation will help support critical fisheries data collection in the Great Lakes and authorize the U.S. Geological Survey program to conduct biological assessments that serve as the foundation for Great Lakes fishery management, supporting the region’s \$7 billion fisheries.

Last March, the National Fish Habitat Through Partnership Act was [introduced](#) in both the U.S. House and Senate with the support of the recreational fishing sector. The following September, U.S. Rep. Wittman testified in favor of this legislation during a hearing in the U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. The following day the Committee [passed](#) this bipartisan legislation.



RISAA is a member of the American Sportfishing Association, the sportfishing industry's trade association committed to representing the interests of the sportfishing and boating industries as well as the entire sportfishing community. ASA gives America's 49 million anglers a voice in policy decisions that affect their ability to sustainably fish on our nation's waterways through Keep America Fishing, our national angler advocacy campaign. America's anglers generate nearly \$50 billion in retail sales with a \$125 billion impact on the nation's economy creating employment for 800,000 people.