

RISE TO THE FUTURE: NATIONAL FISH AND AQUATIC STRATEGY

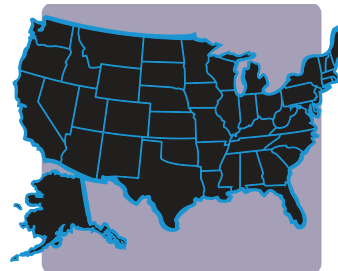
AN OVERVIEW

source: wemayfly.org

photo credit: Dave Herasimtschuk

Why does the Forest Service need an updated national fish and aquatic strategy?

- The Forest Service is responsible for managing some of the best, and in some cases, only habitat for many valuable and culturally important fish and aquatic resources. In fact, national forests and grasslands provide important habitat for more than half of the country’s federally listed fish, mussels, and amphibians.
- Fishing, boating, and other aquatic activities afford economic, social, and cultural benefits to communities across the Nation. The agency’s sustainable, long-term approach to managing healthy watersheds and aquatic habitat supports vital recreational and commercial economies, providing many benefits to local communities, downstream cities, and the public.
- The Forest Service increasingly recognizes the importance of working with its many Federal, State, tribal, private, and nongovernmental partners to restore habitat, improve watersheds, conduct research, and serve the public.



Millions of people fish on national forests and grasslands, resulting in more than \$2.2 billion of economic activity

each year. National forests in Alaska support a world-renowned, billion-dollar commercial and recreational salmon industry, as well as culturally important subsistence fisheries.



More than 220,000 miles of rivers and streams and more than 10 million acres of lakes, reservoirs, and ponds on national forests and grasslands provide a wide range

of fishing opportunities for the American people.



- In the 30 years since the inception of Rise to the Future, the Forest Service's and the conservation community's understanding of the threats and stressors that need to be addressed to achieve successful fish conservation outcomes have changed. This updated strategy provides a vision of how the Forest Service will contribute to fish and aquatic stewardship in close collaboration with its cooperators and partners.

Who built the updated strategy?

A team of nearly 60 participants across the agency with representatives from the American Fisheries Society, American Sportfishing Association, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National Fish Habitat Partnership, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, and Trout Unlimited updated the strategy.

What is the strategy?

The strategy contains six priority goals:

1. Conserve fish and aquatic resources.
2. Connect people to the outdoors through fishing, boating, and other aquatic activities.
3. Strengthen partnerships and work across boundaries.
4. Deliver and apply scientific research.
5. Build capacity through mentoring and training.
6. Communicate the value and benefits of fish and aquatic resources.



Public fishing access provides cherished family time and a multi-billion dollar economy.

Credit: S. Dingman



Youth snorkeling on the Cherokee National Forest.

Credit: Dave Herasimtschuk



Working with partners to restore habitat for aquatic species, recreation, water quality is an economic driver in rural communities.

Credit: Trout Unlimited

Each goal contains multiple objectives, providing a long-term foundation to address current and future challenges, including invasive species; impacts from drought, floods, and other extreme weather events; and increasing public demands on natural resources. The goals and objectives contained in this strategy will better enable the Forest Service to take advantage of new opportunities such as emerging research technologies and innovative and nontraditional partnerships.



**Fish and aquatic resources on the national forests and grasslands have tremendous economic value.
Credit: Ron Medel, USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest**



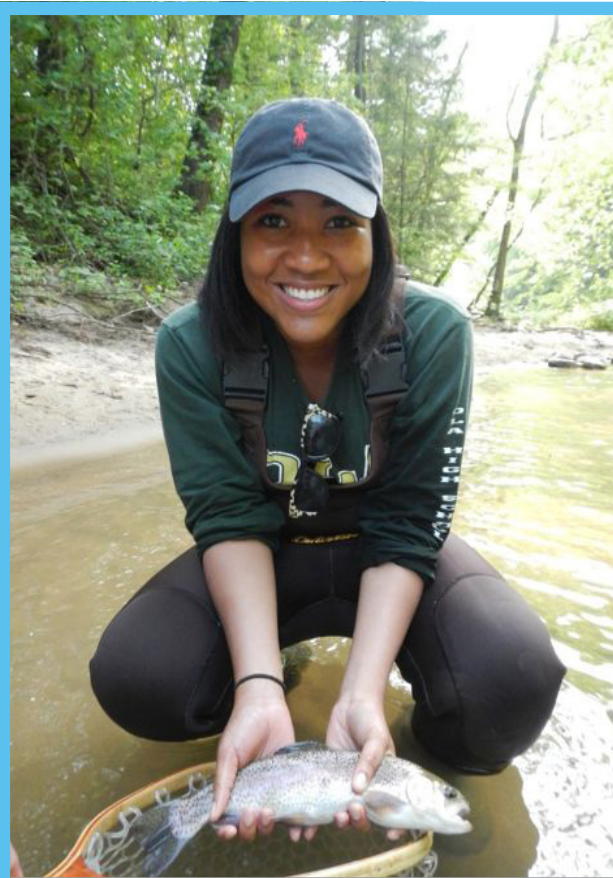
**Connecting communities and youth to the outdoors is an agency priority.
Credit: Freshwaters Illustrated**



**Science is the foundation for collaborative fish and aquatic stewardship.
Credit: USDA Forest Service, Center for Aquatic Technology Transfer**

High-priority action items

Eight actions are highlighted as near-term priorities to focus implementation of the strategy. The Forest Service will work in cooperation with States, especially State fish and wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies, and tribal governments and in partnership with nongovernmental organizations, private businesses, landowners, and water users and others to implement these near-term priorities. Each action is associated with a clear deliverable and timeframe.



*Fishing on national forests provides enjoyment.
Credit: Trout Unlimited*

1. Increase the number of youth and adults connecting to the outdoors through recreational fishing and other aquatic activities by 50 percent, from fiscal year 2017 levels, by 2023.
2. Increase partnerships with States, other Federal agencies, tribal governments, water providers, corporations, and multistakeholder groups that result in meaningful fish and aquatic stewardship outcomes with multiple benefits by 20 percent, from fiscal year 2017 levels, by 2023.
3. Identify barriers to increasing recreational fishing participation and identify high-priority actions that will yield the greatest increase in participation by 2019.
4. Develop a coarse-scale national assessment of aquatic biodiversity by 2019.
5. Develop criteria for identifying “conservation watersheds” for fish and aquatic species on national forests and grasslands. Select conservation watersheds by 2020. Update list as needed.
6. Conduct and distribute a national fish and aquatic ecology research needs assessment by 2019.
7. Develop business practices and protocols for effective mentoring of fisheries biologists and aquatic ecologists by 2018.
8. Develop and implement a communications and outreach plan by 2018.



For a copy of the “Rise to the Future: National Fish and Aquatic Strategy, visit:
<https://www.fs.fed.us/naturalresources/fisheries/about.shtml>

USDA is and equal opportunity employer, provider, and lender.

