

Dear Colleagues,

February 1, 2016

We're pleased to announce that the National Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Summit will be held **May 17-19, 2016 in Annapolis, MD at the Westin Annapolis**. We are writing to extend this letter of invitation, and request that you support the participation of approximately 3-5 attendees from your council.

We look forward to sharing a draft agenda in the next few weeks, and encourage you to communicate with us about your council's participation as we identify speakers and regional examples to share at the EFH Summit. We ask that you identify attendees from your council by **Friday, April 1, 2016**.

Online [registration](#) is now open. Please note that councils must cover travel costs for their attendees.

This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the EFH provisions of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act. The EFH Summit will acknowledge this milestone by convening council and NOAA Fisheries habitat experts to share ideas and approaches across regions. The EFH Summit is a collaborative effort. The Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum is coordinating the planning process, with the help of an EFH Summit Steering Committee and an Advisory Group that include council and NOAA Fisheries staff and leadership from across the country. The NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation and the Office of Science and Technology are providing financial support.

The EFH Summit Terms of Reference were developed with input from the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) and the CCC Habitat Workgroup. Participants at the EFH Summit will explore successes, challenges, and new opportunities to advance the effective implementation and use of EFH authorities. The attached EFH Summit Overview includes the EFH Summit TOR and a summary of discussion opportunities. The TOR will be used to guide the development of a draft agenda, which will be available along with additional information early this spring.

Council participation

Participation at the EFH Summit will be limited in order to support productive working discussions. We are requesting the participation of approximately 3-5 attendees per council. We encourage each council to prioritize the participation of staff who lead and support your council's EFH and habitat responsibilities. We also ask you to consider additional council staff and other participants who are directly involved in your council's EFH, habitat, and ecosystem-related initiatives, including council members, Scientific and Statistical Committee members, and other habitat-related committee members and advisors. The attached EFH Summit Overview provides additional information to help you identify participants who can contribute to, and benefit from, participation in the EFH Summit. Please circulate this invitation among your council and advisory bodies.

All attendees will be asked to participate in discussion. In addition, participants (and particularly council staff) may be asked to share your council's experience in the form of panel discussions and short presentations. We may follow up with specific requests for participation as the EFH Summit agenda takes shape, and also encourage you to help us identify opportunities to share your region's experience and expertise.

Public participation

The primary audience for the EFH Summit includes council and NOAA Fisheries participants. The EFH Summit is a public meeting and will be open to interested members of the public. We are able to accommodate a limited number of additional participants on a first-come, first-served basis. Advance registration will be required. We encourage you to share information about the EFH Summit with interested stakeholders in your region using the channels you feel are most appropriate (for example, by adding the EFH Summit to your council calendar or newsletter, or mentioning the EFH Summit at your upcoming council meetings). The meeting will also be announced in the Federal Register.

Additional information about the EFH Summit, including information for public participants, will be available on the [EFH Summit website](#) in the coming months. You are welcome to share the following link as needed in your communications: <http://www.fisheriesforum.org/our-work/special-projects/efh-summit>

Travel and registration

[Online registration](#) for the EFH Summit is now open. Participants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Westin Annapolis and will be open on a first-come, first-served basis through [online booking](#). Please note that councils must cover travel costs for attendees.

The EFH Summit is an exciting opportunity to build on 20 years of experience with EFH, and engage in constructive conversation across councils and NOAA Fisheries regions. We look forward to a productive meeting and to your council's participation. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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National Essential Fish Habitat Summit
May 17-19, 2016 • Annapolis, MD • Westin Annapolis

Draft Topic Agenda, February 2016

Share your work, and build your habitat network!

This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act. The National EFH Summit will convene council and NOAA Fisheries habitat experts to share ideas and experience, support communication within and across regions, and help build a community of practice around the effective implementation and use of EFH authorities.

The EFH Summit is a participatory working meeting, with an emphasis on conversation across roles and regions. Short presentations and regional examples will be included as a starting point for facilitated breakouts and large group discussions. **The final agenda will be responsive to the interests, questions, and areas of expertise among registered participants. The majority of featured speakers will be identified by aligning participating council and NOAA Fisheries attendees with agenda topics for which they can share insight and regional experience.**

We encourage you to contact us (katie.latanich@duke.edu) with any questions and to suggest speakers and examples to share.

The EFH Summit will begin at 8:30 am on Tuesday, May 17th and conclude at 3:00 pm on Thursday, May 19th.

I. Setting the context

- Opening remarks by council and NOAA Fisheries leadership
- Habitat science orientation and update

II. Where are we now? 20 years of EFH identification and review

Explore approaches to identifying and reviewing EFH, focusing on regional differences, adaptations, and innovations for implementing shared mandates in a regional context. Identify successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the first 20 years of implementing EFH authorities.

Roles, responsibilities, and process

This session will begin with a regional round robin. Council and/or NOAA Fisheries staff from each region and Atlantic HMS will provide short (5- minute) talks describing distinctive features of their region's EFH process, focusing on a clearly identified question or theme. Presentations will be followed by breakout discussions and a full group facilitated discussion.

Science-management handoff

This session will feature perspectives on the key policy considerations involved in implementing EFH authorities, including use of Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) designations, approaches to minimizing adverse impacts and defining practicability, and evaluating the effectiveness of habitat protections. Presentations will be followed by breakout discussions and a full group facilitated discussion.

III. Where are we going? EFH and the changing environment

Examine how EFH authorities will support fishery productivity, sustainability, and resilience in a changing world. Identify emerging opportunities, questions, and information needs to support and enhance the effectiveness of EFH authorities.

The changing science environment

Highlight advances and innovations in data collection, research, and monitoring that will shape the future implementation of EFH authorities.

The changing ocean and coastal development environment

Share regional processes for communicating about EFH consultations, and perspectives on the opportunities for effective and meaningful council engagement.

- *TBD: A primer on the EFH consultation process (optional orientation session)*
- *TBD: Emerging development activities*

The changing marine environment

Explore the role of habitat science and EFH authorities in supporting ecosystem productivity and resilience, at all levels of information availability and in different regional contexts.

- *TBD: EFH authorities in a dynamic and changing environment*
- *TBD: EFH authorities as an EBFM strategy*

The changing management and policy environment

Identify opportunities to leverage and enhance the value of EFH efforts through communication, information sharing, cooperative research, partnerships, and collaborations.

- *TBD: Mapping networks for habitat research and collaboration*

IV. Looking ahead: The next 20 years

Reflect on EFH Summit discussions and identify key information and takeaways, questions and information needs, and new ideas and opportunities for advancing and refining the implementation of EFH authorities.

- Breakout discussions
- Facilitated full group discussion
- Closing remarks

EFH Summit Objective

The purpose of the EFH Summit is to assess and identify opportunities, challenges, and successful approaches for the effective implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act EFH authorities.

Terms of Reference:

1. Share perspectives on successful approaches to EFH designation and review.
2. Consider approaches for evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken to minimize adverse effects of fishing on EFH.
3. Identify opportunities to ensure effective communication between NOAA Fisheries and councils on the implementation and use of EFH authorities, including the EFH consultation process.
4. Identify opportunities to integrate habitat information into the fishery management process and ecosystem-based fisheries management.
5. Consider how advances in habitat science can support the effective implementation and use of EFH authorities, and identify opportunities and challenges to aligning habitat science with management needs.