

Request for Participation in Decision Support Tool Project:
Aquatic Habitats and Threats in North Atlantic Watersheds and Estuaries

Working with the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) initiated a project in 2013 to develop a decision support tool to assess aquatic habitats and threats in North Atlantic watersheds and estuaries. *Through a stakeholder-driven process*, Downstream Strategies is leading the development of the modeling process and decision support tool. For the project results to be useful, credible, and accessible, the North Atlantic LCC and ACFHP are now seeking stakeholder input and participation.

Why should my organization be involved?

- The project and decision support tool will produce results that can be used by your organization to:
 - Characterize current *and* future aquatic and coastal conditions
 - Understand how climate and land-use changes could affect aquatic conditions
 - Target and prescribe future conservation and restoration actions
 - Set strategic priorities for conservation and restoration of aquatic resources
 - Monitor and evaluate management efforts
 - Understand the regional context of aquatic habitat in the Maine to Virginia area
- By participating, your organization will shape the direction of the effort and make sure your priorities are reflected in the project
- Your input has the potential to help raise awareness and direct resources toward conservation of critical fish and other aquatic species in areas that are important to you
- This project will help meet the requirements and goals of ACFHP and other partner organizations in which your organization participates

What kind of participation are we looking for?

We are looking for participants with expertise in fish and other aquatic resources in freshwater, estuarine, and coastal environments across the geographical scope of the project, which encompasses the watersheds and estuaries that flow into the North Atlantic from Maine to Virginia (Chesapeake Bay). The project will involve state, federal, tribal, and NGO participation. Ideally, each of the 13 states in the project region will be represented by at least one agency representative (possibly more to reflect inland and coastal regions).

Participants can be involved in one or both of two specific roles in the project:

1) Technical review committees: The project process relies on key stakeholders with local knowledge of species occurrence, distribution, and existing habitat conditions. This knowledge will be used to provide feedback to the modeling team to assure results are useful and relevant to existing conditions. Committee members would provide oversight in the development of one or more models in the North Atlantic LCC region. This role would include selecting the models to be developed, identifying key datasets, reviewing preliminary results and suggesting refinements, and providing feedback for final models and outputs.

2) Data development and acquisition committees: Provide technical data and GIS advice for one or more of the modeling efforts and teams. This would include working with the project teams to identify key datasets, including response variables (fish species/biological endpoints) and predictor datasets (landscape data/ in-stream measurements/other conditions), assist with processing datasets, and provide expertise on model inputs and outputs.

The species or other aquatic endpoints (e.g., multispecies indices) to be modeled have not yet been selected; selecting the endpoints will be an important role of project participants. As species are chosen, the set of participants is anticipated to evolve to reflect personnel expertise.

What kind of commitment is expected?

Participation can be expected to involve periodic conference calls and webinars and at least one stakeholder workshop (1-2 days) during the early stages of the project (Fall 2013). Data analysis and model development will be carried out by Downstream Strategies and its partners; participants will be asked to review results and recommend refinements. Data development and acquisition committees will be asked to identify data sources and help acquire needed fish/biological data if maintained by their organizations. The project will be completed in January 2015.

How do I provide contact names or get more information?

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Project webpage: <http://northatlanticlcc.org/projects/downstream-strategies-project>