

NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT

A framework to improve habitat for fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities

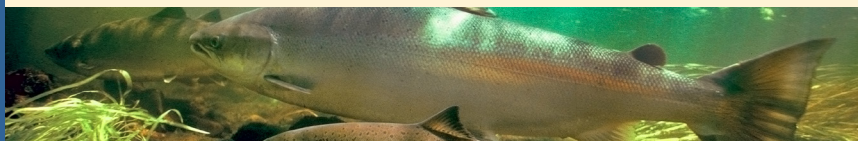
PURPOSE

The Habitat Blueprint provides a forward-looking framework for NOAA to think and act strategically across programs and with partner organizations to address the growing challenge of coastal and marine habitat loss and degradation.

We will increase the effectiveness of our efforts to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, and coastal and marine life, along with other economic, cultural, and environmental benefits our society needs and enjoys.

VISION

Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine and coastal resources, communities, and economies.



OUTCOMES

- Sustainable and abundant fish populations
- Recovered threatened and endangered species
- Protected coastal and marine areas and habitats at risk
- Resilient coastal communities
- Increased coastal/marine tourism, access, and recreation

Why do we need the Habitat Blueprint now?

Protecting our natural infrastructure—our global life support systems—is vital to protecting our communities and their economies as well as fisheries and recreational opportunities along our coasts. With continued widespread loss and deterioration of coastal and marine habitats, we are in danger of losing this infrastructure. Congress has charged the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with protecting habitat for fish, threatened and endangered species, marine mammals, and other natural resources within the coastal zone.

As NOAA works to ensure healthy oceans for future generations, we need to increase the sustainability and productivity of our fisheries by focusing on the habitat that fish need to spawn and grow, as well as protecting the coastal resources on which our communities depend. Recognizing the need for more concerted efforts to conserve (protect and restore) habitat, we developed the NOAA Habitat Blueprint to build on existing programs, prioritize our activities, and guide our future actions. Simply put—we are improving the way we do business.



What is the Habitat Blueprint framework?

NOAA is developing and implementing new habitat-based solutions to support healthy and productive ecosystems. We will expand our partnerships, prioritize our activities, and direct our focus to better understand, protect, and restore habitat for the benefit of our living marine resources and coastal communities.

The Habitat Blueprint has a three-pronged approach:

1. Establish NOAA Habitat Focus Areas

to prioritize long-term habitat science and conservation efforts. We will direct our expertise, resources for science, and on-the-ground conservation efforts in targeted areas to maximize our investments and the benefits to marine resources and coastal communities.

2. Implement a systematic and strategic approach to habitat science

to inform effective decision-making. We will prioritize our science and use a more integrative approach for planning and conducting quality habitat science.

3. Strengthen policy and legislation

at the national level to enhance our ability to achieve meaningful habitat conservation. We will strive to remove barriers and seize opportunities to improve our policies, regulations, and legal authorities. This will ensure that habitat considerations are an integral part of marine and coastal resource management and will strengthen NOAA's habitat conservation focus overall.



Guiding Principles

- Prioritize resources and activities across NOAA to monitor, understand, and improve habitat conditions.
- Implement innovative place-based habitat solutions to address coastal and marine resource challenges.
- Make natural resource management decisions and recommendations in an ecosystem context that considers competing priorities.
- Foster and leverage partnerships.
- Integrate and improve the delivery of habitat science across disciplines to facilitate conservation actions.
- Anticipate and address changes to coastal and ocean habitats due to environmental change; including development, climate, and other pressures.

Spotlight On: Habitat Focus Areas

NOAA has selected seven Habitat Focus Areas around the country, with more on the way. They include:

- Russian River, CA
- West Hawai'i, HI
- Manell-Geus watershed, Guam
- Choptank River, MD/DE
- Muskegon Lake, MI
- St. Louis River, MN/WI
- Penobscot River, ME

To learn more, visit: www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint