



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 20, 2012

Contact:

Ryan Roberts

Communications Coordinator

202-624-5851

rroberts@fishwildlife.org

BEAR CREEK RESTORATION IN WISCONSIN RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL WATER TO WATCH

The National Fish Habitat Partnership (www.fishhabitat.org) has unveiled the **2012 10 "Waters to Watch"** list, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, watershed systems, shores and lakes that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition.

These waters represent a snapshot of this year's larger voluntary habitat conservation efforts in progress. These and other locally driven conservation projects are prioritized and implemented by regional Fish Habitat Partnerships that have formed throughout the country to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The objective, to conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats essential to the many fish and wildlife species that call these areas home is the foundation of the National Fish Habitat Partnership. In Wisconsin, Bear Creek has been selected as one of the 10 "Waters to Watch" for 2012 through the Driftless Area Restoration Effort.

Throughout the year, through the work of our partners these projects will be the showcase of conservation efforts working to avoid and reverse persistent declines in our nation's aquatic habitats. Having featured 60 partnership projects since 2007, the monitoring of these projects proves that partner efforts and strategies do make a difference.

Widespread bank erosion and heavy sediment and nutrient loading, were the main culprits in making Bear Creek a priority project. The Driftless Area Restoration Effort and its partners are restoring coldwater fish habitat, and seeking to improve Bear Creek from a Class II to a Class I trout stream. Four primary native fish species are present within the project area and all will benefit from the restoration project. The project provides public access to the restored stream, creating new angler opportunities within Southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless region. Building support for the project with neighboring landowners, local governmental bodies, community groups and area schools will help facilitate further phases of project in the coming years.

Project Timeline: Phase I (5080 linear feet) completed 2011 restoration season; Phase II (approximately 5400 linear feet) to be complete during 2012 restoration season. Volunteer LUNKER building day June 2, 2012 at project location, with construction planned to start shortly thereafter. Project will take about 6 weeks to complete. Further project phases expected for next three seasons on existing WIDNR public fishing easements downstream of current project.

Volunteers from 6 chapters of Trout Unlimited, partner agencies, a private heavy equipment contractor and the Bear Creek community combined forces in 2011 to complete Phase I of this project. This season, we expect to add other groups and volunteers for Phase II and to continue outreach for subsequent phases. Monitoring will be carried out to assess the impacts of the project on this promising stream, which has seen hard land use since settlement in the 19th century.

Partners in the project include: Aldo Leopold Chapter (Trout Unlimited), Trout Unlimited (Driftless Area Restoration Effort), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Sauk County Land Conservation (Planning and Zoning Department), University of Wisconsin Extension, Badger Fly Fishers, James Dutton Foundation, Trout and Salmon Foundation.

Bear Creek Web photo album:

<https://plus.google.com/photos/110127246369212738675/albums/5639270713168743425?banner=plwa>

Since 2006 The National Fish Habitat Partnership has been a partner in 342 projects in 45 states benefiting fish habitat. "Our approach—teaming local, state, tribal, and federal agencies with private partners and stakeholders is the most strategic way we can make a difference in benefiting fish habitats," said Kelly Hepler, Chairman of the National Fish Habitat Board. "By watching these 10 models of our nation's aquatic conservation efforts underway, we can see real progress. Too often we have focused on treatment of symptoms with limited success. Through sound science and on-the-ground locally driven partnerships, these select Action Plan projects can be held high as a vision of what quality habitat should and can be, and how it benefits all people throughout the United States."

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is built on a framework of National Fish Habitat Partnerships. These regional-scale efforts include, **the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Western Native Trout Initiative, the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, the Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership, the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, the Fishers and Farmers Partnership, the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership, the Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, the California Fish Passage Forum, the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership, the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership.** There are also four "Candidate" Fish Habitat Partnerships that have stated their intent to apply for full NFHAP Board recognition.

About the National Fish Habitat Partnership:

The National Fish Habitat Partnership works to conserve fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal, state, and private funding sources to achieve the greatest impact on fish populations through priority conservation projects. The national partnership implements the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and supports 18 regional grassroots partner organizations.

###

<http://www.fishhabitat.org>