

# The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership



Implementing the  
National Fish Habitat Action Plan  
in arid landscapes of the American West

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# What is the DFHP?

- State, Federal, Tribal, NGO and private interests working together to protect and enhance arid land aquatic habitats and the species dependent on those habitats
  - 11 States
  - 7 Federal partners
  - 6 NGOs and Tribal organizations
  - 179 species/subspecies of greatest conservation need
- Recognized as a formal NFHAP Fish Habitat Partnership in Spring 2009



# Why a Desert Fish Partnership?

- 52% of U.S. threatened and endangered fishes occur in the arid Southwest
- Habitat loss is a primary threat to aquatic ecosystems in this region
- Conservation of aquatic resources is a fundamental issue facing people and fish sharing limited waters of the western states and Mexico

# Why a Desert Fish Partnership?

- Lack of a geographically relevant approach to improving aquatic habitat across the range of desert fishes in the arid West
- Need for better coordination with habitat restoration efforts for other aquatic and terrestrial species
- A clear need to prioritize limited resources to insure conservation of important species and habitats in the face of both anthropogenic impacts and ongoing climate change

- Individual partner state Wildlife Action Plans identify detailed actions and strategies for species and habitats but don't provide a regional focus to *prioritize the most critical needs across the intermountain west* or *identify opportunities for cross-jurisdictional conservation*

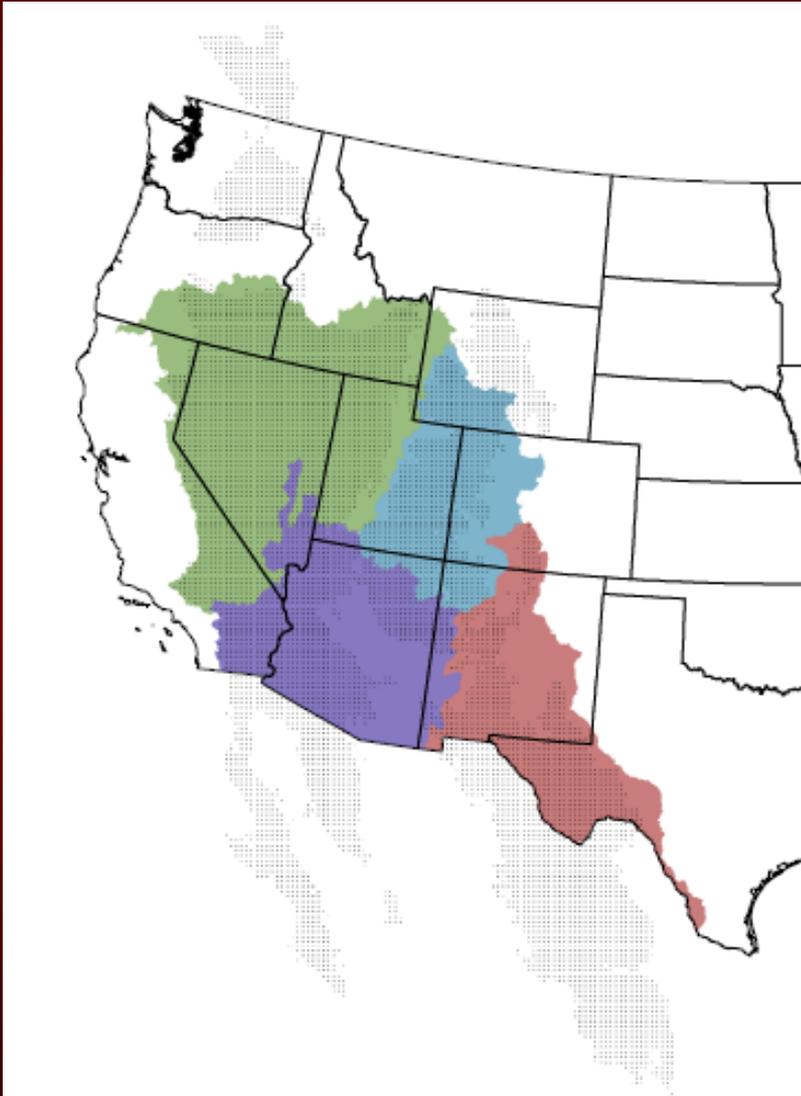


# DFHP Purpose

- To conserve aquatic habitat in the arid West for desert fishes by protecting, restoring and enhancing these unique habitats in cooperation with and support of state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, tribal governments, local partners, and other stakeholders.



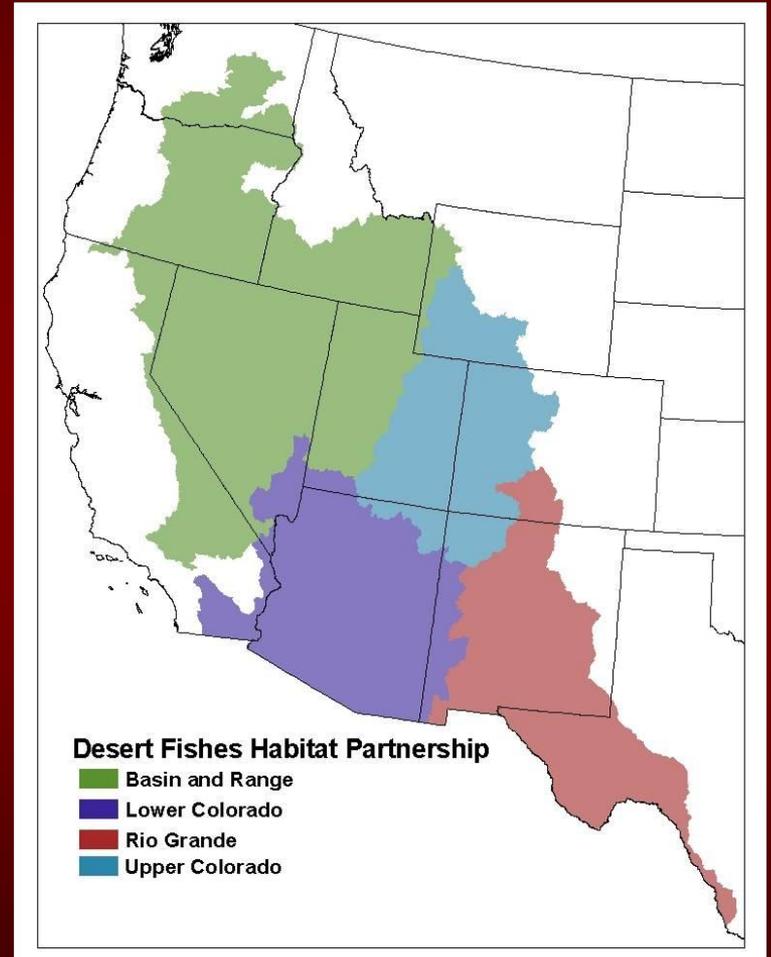
# Geographic scope



- DFHP partnership area is defined by *drainage basins that support the Deserts of North America*
- HUC boundaries within the *North American Desert Ecoregion*
- DFHP waters must *flow into, through, out of or within* ecoregion areas

# DFHP sub-regions

- Basin and Range
- Lower Colorado
- Rio Grande
- Upper Colorado



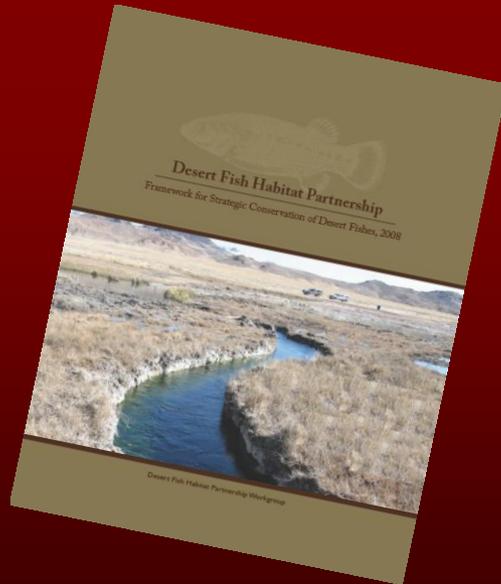
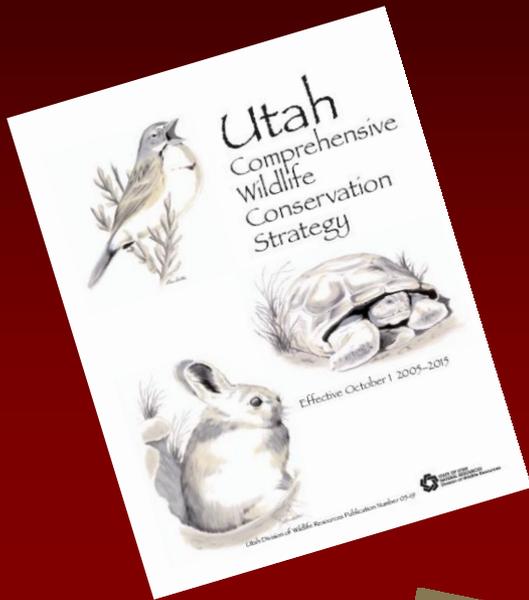
# Five DFHP Goals

1. Protect and maintain intact healthy aquatic systems supporting desert fish habitats;
2. Prevent further degradation of desert fish habitats that have been impaired;
3. Reverse declines in the quality and quantity of desert fish habitats to improve the overall health and resiliency of arid aquatic ecosystems, desert fish and other aquatic organisms;

# Five DFHP Goals

4. Increase the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats that support a broad natural diversity of desert fish and other aquatic species; and
5. Contribute to the success of national efforts to protect and enhance aquatic habitats by participating as a partner in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP)

# Objectives



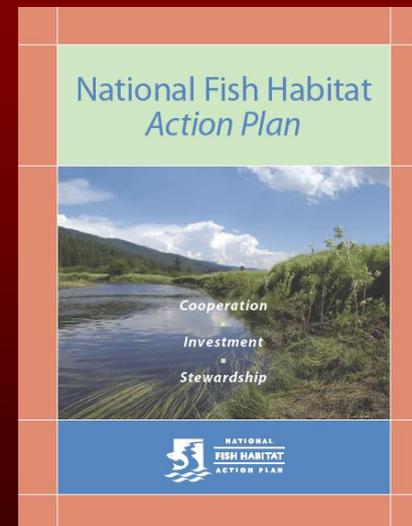
- Contribute to the successful implementation of strategies and actions for desert fish identified in State Wildlife Action Plans;
- Implement the Framework for Strategic Conservation of Desert Fishes;
- Support implementation of priority habitat-based actions.

# Objectives



- Build partnerships to develop additional resources for desert fish habitat restoration

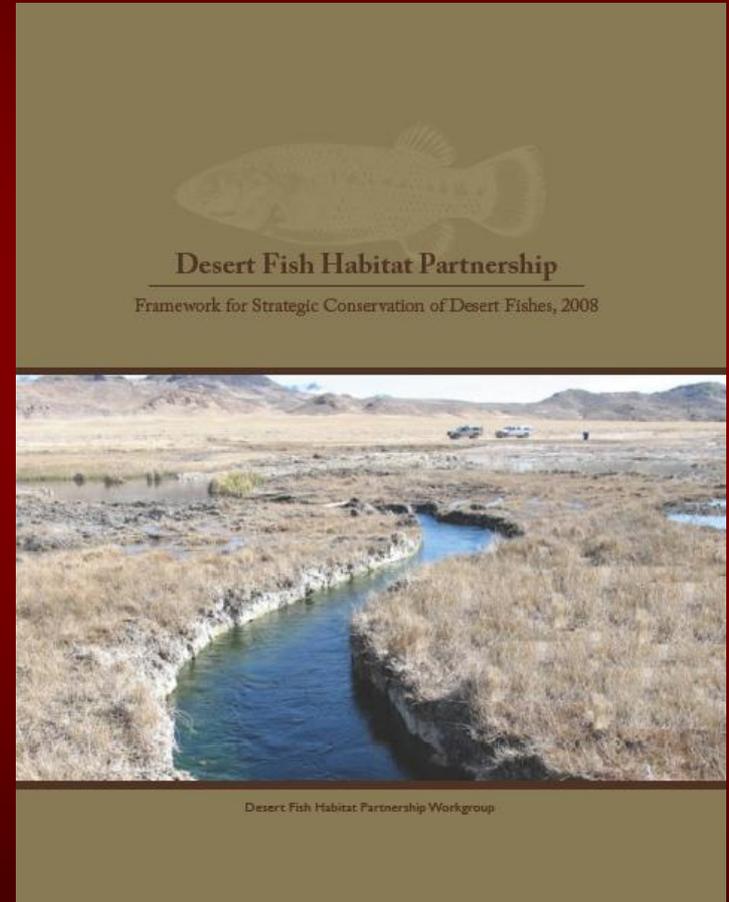
- Support successful implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in arid land aquatic habitats



- **DFHP is the only National Fish Habitat Partnership with specific emphasis on non-game fish species and habitats that support them**
- **Partnership goals and objectives are linked to the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

# The DFHP Framework

- DFHP's strategic plan for desert fish habitat conservation
- Completed in December 2008
  - Identifies
    - Critical threats
    - Conservation priorities for species and habitats
    - Key conservation actions and strategies on regional and local scales



# Framework Conservation Priorities

- Integrate State Wildlife Action Plan priorities with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) strategies
- Implement on-the-ground projects that focus actions to protect the most under-served, imperiled desert fish species identified in SWAPs to enhance their conservation status and prevent their extirpation and extinction.
- Prioritize projects to conserve and restore habitat for the most under-served, imperiled desert fish species.

# Conservation priorities and approach



© Peter Rissler

Moorman White River springfish



Owens Tui Chub, Owens Valley, CA

- **Coordination without boundaries**
- **Utilize existing planning efforts to identify needs and set priorities**
  - **State Wildlife Action Plans**
  - **Recovery plans**
  - **Conservation Plans and Conservation Agreements**
- **Partner with other NFHP partnership efforts**
  - **Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI)**

# Conservation priorities and approach

- Address major sources of imperilment for desert fishes
- Integrate NFHAP Science and Data guidelines with assessment and conservation actions



- Emphasize aquatic habitats that contribute to coordinated watershed level conservation and restoration
- Address climate change by building resiliency and restoring ecological function in arid land aquatic systems

# Conservation outputs



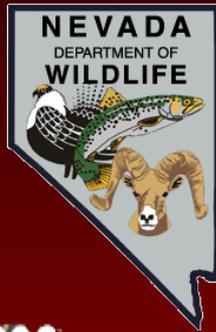
- Increased flexibility with current funding sources
- Contribute to current funding resources (SWG, Section 6, State funds, etc...)
- Speed conservation and recovery
- Increase resources available for “overlooked and underserved” species and habitats

# Challenges to partnership implementation

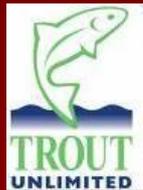
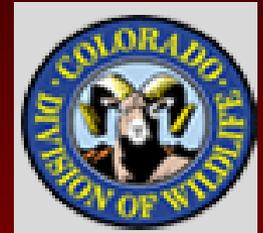
- **Limited resources in difficult economic times**
  - Developing a partnership on a “part time as available” basis
  - Finding support and funding for the primary objective of “on-ground, habitat-based conservation actions”
  - Limited national level support through NFHAP for non-sport fish conservation priorities
- **Communications and coordination across a broad geographic scale**
  - Absence of a dedicated partnership coordinator
  - Coordination across 4 FWS regions and 11 states

# Progress is being made...

- 2009 RFP generated multiple project pre-proposals across the partnership area
- Four priority projects funded partially or completely through NFHAP or other partner funding sources
- Partnership coordinator to be funded in 2010 through FWS Region 2
- Science and Data committee established to integrate our strategy implementation with NFHAP and facilitate integration between managers and researchers



IDAHO FISH AND GAME



National Park Service

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



[http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/DFH\\_partnership.cfm](http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/DFH_partnership.cfm)



Fairbanks Spring restored channel  
Ash Meadows NWR  
Photo – US FWS