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**HARPETH RIVER DAM REMOVAL IN TENNESSEE RECEIVES NATIONAL LEGACY PROJECT RECOGNITION**

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE – This year, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) nominated Harpeth River Lowhead Dam Removal and Stream Restoration Project was recognized as one of the National Fish Habitat Partnership's (NFHP) 10 "Waters to Watch" Legacy projects <http://bit.ly/1XpTcuO>. The Harpeth River, one of the most ecologically, culturally, historically, and recreationally significant rivers in Tennessee, drains nearly 900 square miles in Middle Tennessee and flows through one of the fastest growing areas in the country. It is a state designated Scenic River in Nashville.

In 2010, the Harpeth River Watershed Association (HRWA) secured \$350,000 from collaborative funding programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, and the National Fish Habitat Partnership for activities that improve fish habitat and remove barriers to fish passage. This project removed the only barrier on the Harpeth River, a lowhead dam, and eliminated a 1.7-mile-long impoundment in order to reconnect 36 miles of river and restore riffle/run aquatic habitat that was submerged. The project was a collaboration between HRWA, the City of Franklin, the TN Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), and other state and federal agencies, businesses, and non-profit partners that contributed another \$70,000 toward the total project cost of \$750,000.

"Though our organization was the overall coordinator, this new national recognition really goes out to all the staff and volunteers involved in over 14 agencies, cities, businesses, and non-profits, that pulled together so many resources and their time to make this amazing project happen on the State Scenic Harpeth in Franklin," said Dorene Bolze, Executive Director for the Harpeth River Watershed Association.

With the removal of the lowhead dam, the entire river system is now a free-flowing river, making the Harpeth one of only three rivers in Tennessee to date to achieve this status. The project was designed by Beaver Creek Hydrology, a civil engineering firm based in Kentucky. The project is national a demonstration of the use of the modern natural channel design approach that significantly improved water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and public recreation, while enabling continued water withdrawal by the city of Franklin under recently re-established state permit conditions.

Completed in 2012, the Harpeth River and the associated "Lowhead Dam Removal and Stream Restoration Project" was first recognized as a NFHP "Water to Watch" <http://fishhabitat.org/content/harpeth-river->

[tennessee](#). The Harpeth River Dam Removal Project has received national recognition by the Department of the Interior as part of the President's America's Great Outdoors Rivers Initiative and received a Tennessee Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award in 2013. Click [here](#) for project details.

Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency biologists did pre and post-project fish community studies on the Harpeth River in April 2011 and April 2015. According to the 2015 assessment, "The physical aspects of the habitat restoration project appear to be very successful. The new habitat was stable and connectivity for fish greatly improved." In addition to improving fish habitat, removing fish barriers, and improving water quality, the project was intended to significantly enhance recreational opportunities on the Harpeth in the Franklin area for fishing and paddling. As part of this project, HRWA worked with several departments of the City of Franklin, the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, TN State Scenic Rivers Program, and new developments along the Harpeth to improve public access in the upper section of the river by establishing recreational accesses in the upper section of the river. This is part of a series of public accesses that have been constructed as part of the Harpeth River Blueway along the entire 125-mile long river.

### **Project Partners**

Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)  
National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHAP)  
US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Harpeth River Watershed Association (HRWA)  
City of Franklin, Tennessee  
Beaver Creek Hydrology, LLC (BCH)  
Waste Management (funded the "Dam Cam")

Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC)  
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)  
Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association (TSRA)  
United States Geological Survey (USGS)  
LP (funded the materials for the access stairs)

### **NFHP's 10 "Waters to Watch"**

The National Fish Habitat Partnership ([www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)) has unveiled its list of 10 "Waters to Watch" for 2016, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, lakes and watershed systems that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition. These voluntary, locally-driven projects represent some of the top conservation activities in progress implemented by 19 regional Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout the country. These projects are carried out under the goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2012). The conservation projects are designed to conserve freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats essential to the many fish and wildlife species that call these areas home. These examples of conservation have been fundamental to the overall success of the National Fish Habitat Partnership since 2006.

Over time, these conservation efforts are reversing persistent declines in our nation's aquatic habitats. Having featured 100 partnership projects since 2007, these "Waters to Watch" are proving that science-based on-the-ground conservation efforts are truly making a difference in improving fish habitat across the United States.

"In celebrating 10 Years of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, these conservation projects embolden the spirit of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, and showcase the complexities and challenges in making these

projects successful,” said **Tom Champeau, Chair of the National Fish Habitat Board**. “We are highlighting these projects today in hopes that over time these projects will make a marked difference in the conservation of fish habitat. For 2016, we highlighted three of our "Waters to Watch" as "legacy" projects that are making a positive impact both regionally and nationally to help celebrate the success of the partnership since 2006.” Three of the 10 nominations this year are deemed "Legacy Projects" which have made a significant impact on fish habitat conservation. These projects are selected from previous years “Waters to Watch” projects and help to highlight the National Fish Habitat Partnership as it celebrates its 10-year Anniversary in 2016.

Visit the Waters to Watch Homepage for all of the National Fish Habitat Partnership’s 10 “Waters to Watch” awarded projects from 2007-2016: <http://bit.ly/1HeYzWj>

#### **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. For more information visit [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org).

#### **About Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership:**

The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) is a regional collaboration of natural resource and science agencies, conservation organizations and private interests developed to strengthen the management and conservation of aquatic resources in the southeastern United States. SARP’s mission is to, with partners, protect, conserve and restore aquatic resources, including habitats throughout the Southeast, for the continuing benefit, use and enjoyment of the American people. Nationally recognized as one of the first groups designated as an official “Fish Habitat Partnership” by the National Fish Habitat Board, SARP is implementing the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan in the southeast region in some of the most ecologically and economically significant watersheds in the country. To learn more about SARP and its programs and other resources, visit SARP’s website at [www.southeastaquatics.net](http://www.southeastaquatics.net).

#### **About the Harpeth River Watershed Association:**

Founded in 1999, Harpeth River Watershed Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, science-based, conservation organization whose mission is to protect the State Scenic Harpeth River and clean water in Tennessee. To effect change, HRWA collaborates with landowners, businesses, local, state and federal decision makers, and others to put solutions in place to reduce pollution, implement restoration, and maintain healthy landscapes in order to achieve water quality standards set to protect public health and wildlife. For more information, visit [www.harpethriver.org](http://www.harpethriver.org)

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