



Southeast Regional Office

Fisheries: Fish Passage Program

National Fish Passage Program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) is a voluntary, non-regulatory program that works to restore native fish and other aquatic species to self-sustaining levels by reconnecting artificially fragmented habitats. Since 1999, the Service has worked with numerous partners in providing Federal funds and technical assistance to remove barriers and reconnect important aquatic habitats. The removal of barriers or installing devices that permit unobstructed fish movement have ecological, recreational, and economic benefits such as:

- Increasing river connectivity
- Improving water quality and quantity
- Improving sediment management
- Restoring aquatic and riparian habitat
- Providing access to critical habitats
- Restoring wildlife related opportunities
- Minimizing expenses for managing obsolete barriers
- Removing human health and safety risks, and
- Promoting local job opportunities.

The Issue: fish passage

The Southeast Region has over 613,000 stream miles that move across mountains and meander their way to the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico. With over 21,000 barriers, and many more which have not been identified, the streams and rivers of the Southeast that support a multitude of fish and other aquatic species have become highly fragmented. Culverts, road crossings and dams have disconnected habitats critical to spawning or population sustainability. Many coastal barriers affect the migration route of diadromous fish species – those dependent upon freshwater and saltwater as part of their life cycle. Other species are cut off from historical habitat by improperly designed culverts or damming of the stream.



Credit: USFWS

Federal and state biologists collect American shad to transport above New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, on the Savannah River (GA/SC) due to the operational failure of the lock in 2008.

Dealing with the Issue

A fish passage project is an activity that directly improves the ability of fish or other aquatic species to move by reconnecting habitat that has been fragmented by barriers. This includes projects that help understand the extent of habitat fragmentation by conducting barrier inventories and assessments. Project proposals may be initiated by any individual, organization, or agency in cooperation with the Service's Fish and Wildlife Coordination Offices. The Service aims for a 1:1 partner match, including in-kind contributions. Fish passage projects that are not suitable for funding include projects eligible for any Federal or state compensatory mitigation or where fish passage is a condition provided by existing Federal or state regulatory programs.

Potential projects can be submitted at any time to the Regional Fish Passage Coordinator. In the fall, project review and prioritization of potential projects begins. Projects receiving the highest consideration are those that show the greatest ecological benefits, exhibit long-term fish passage benefits, apply proven, current science and technology, have public support, and meet or exceed matching contributions.



Fish Passage Program

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<http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/facilities/nfpp.html>