

Exhibit I



**National Fish Habitat Board
FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP APPLICATION**

Date: August 13, 2007

PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION

Partnership Name: Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV)

Partnership web site: www.easternbrooktrout.org

Vision statement: *The vision of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture is to ensure healthy, fishable brook trout populations throughout their historic eastern United States range.*

ABSTRACT (500 word maximum)

Describe the need or problem the partnership was formed to address. How will a strategic approach supported by a broad partnership help to meet the need or solve the problem? What benefits will accrue to fish and aquatic habitat and to public use of affected resources? Identify major species and/or biological communities that will benefit from habitat conservation by the partnership. How will the National Fish Habitat Action Plan help to achieve the partnership's conservation goals and objectives, and how will the partnership help to achieve the goals and objectives of the Action Plan?

The brook trout, *Salvelinus fontinalis*, is a recreationally and culturally important species, regional icon, and indicator of high water quality. In 2005, the EBTJV completed a range-wide assessment of brook trout populations throughout the Appalachian region from Maine to Georgia (Hudy et al. 2005). The study area encompassed approximately 25% of the native range of brook trout in North America and 70% of its native range in the United States. The assessment revealed wild brook trout populations in the eastern United States are impaired. Intact stream populations of brook trout (where wild brook trout occupy 90-100% of their historical habitat) exist in only 5% of the watersheds (6th level Hydrologic Unit) assessed.

In addition to compiling data on brook trout population status, Hudy et al. (2005) also interviewed regional fishery managers and asked them to rank perturbations and threats for all watersheds that historically supported reproducing brook trout populations. Across the entire study area, the top five perturbations for stream-dwelling populations were high water

temperature, poor agricultural practices, impaired riparian conditions, one or more non-native fish species, and urbanization. Non-native fish species were considered the greatest threats to lake populations, while acid precipitation, low dissolved oxygen, eutrophication, and poor forestry management practices were also significant concerns.

Brook trout are also listed as species of conservation concern in many of the eastern states Wildlife Action Plans (WAP) and many of the focal watersheds identified within the EBTJV Brook Trout Conservation Strategy overlap with state WAP focal areas.

The EBTJV is a partnership that was formed based on the consensus that a collaborative approach to brook trout management is justified because (1) brook trout are declining across their entire historic eastern U.S. range; (2) causes for these declines are similar; (3) an integrated approach would be cost effective; and, (4) watersheds of concern span state borders and agency jurisdictions. The EBTJV partners also agreed that a broad-scale, range-wide conservation strategy is necessary to stop brook trout declines, improve technology transfer, and effectively prioritize funds and projects to restore this keystone species.

The EBTJV partnership will enhance public use of brook trout by increasing the number of healthy fishable populations throughout its eastern U.S. range. Additionally, strengthening brook trout populations through habitat protection, enhancement, and restoration will improve ecosystems within the watersheds they inhabit, and demonstrate that water quality in these watersheds is in excellent condition.

The EBTJV embodies the attributes contained within the National Fish Habitat Action Plan because the partnership is action oriented, its Conservation Strategy is science based, we have identified priority needs and acknowledge gaps, our actions identify and achieve measurable outcomes, we are building on existing collaborative efforts, we are focusing resources and funding where they will make a measurable difference, we encourage public-private partnerships, and we monitor and disseminate results.

HISTORY (500 word maximum)

When was the partnership formed? Describe significant accomplishments of the partnership to date (optional). What, if any, financial resources are available to the partnership to support its operations, based on its past operations independent of the Action Plan?

The EBTJV was created at a meeting held at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, during June 2004. Meeting participants resolved to establish a partnership that would focus on a three-part strategy for reversing declines in eastern brook trout populations. First, the available scientific information on these populations would be collected from the various management agencies and integrated into a unified, geographic information system (GIS) database. Subsequently, a report on the status of brook trout populations would be prepared and additional data needs and monitoring protocols would be identified. The population data would also be overlaid with information about threats to brook trout and their habitats. Second, this information would serve as the basis to develop a range-wide conservation strategy that would be used to coordinate and set priorities for state and federal agencies, as well as other entities engaged in brook trout management and restoration. Finally, EBTJV partners

would implement an outreach program aimed at informing the public about the importance of brook trout and brook trout habitat.

Significant EBTJV achievements to date include:

- Completion of a range-wide status and threats assessments for brook trout (Hudy, M., T. M. Thieling, N. Gillespie, and E. P. Smith. 2005. Distribution, Status and Perturbations to Brook trout within the eastern United States. Final Report: Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV).)
- Completion of a watershed risk assessment model. (EBTJV Data Workgroup)
- Development of a web-based interactive data management system with GIS capabilities (Hosted by USGS NBII/SAINS).
- Development of a predictive model for brook trout population status in the eastern United States (Thieling, T.M. 2006. Assessment and predictive model for brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) population status in the eastern United States. Master's Thesis. James Madison University.)
- Completion of Brook Trout Conservation Strategy (EBTJV Conservation Strategy/Habitat Workgroup)
- Outreach products that include an EBTJV Fact Sheet, Display Poster, two PowerPoint presentations, Status and Threats Report, and Roadmap to Restoration Report.
- Establishment of a web site for the EBTJV (Hosted by CMI).

The financial resources available to support EBTJV operational functions include a two year Multi-state Conservation Grant (2005-2007), which consisted of \$431,591 in grant funding matched with \$187,925 in funding from partners. Currently, the EBTJV has submitted grant applications to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), under its Bring Back the Natives program, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), under its Multi-state Conservation Grant (MSCG) program. Although these grant awards are still pending, the NFWF application is seeking \$36,536 in grant funding that is matched with \$73,072 of non-federal match from EBTJV partners and the MSCG is requesting \$375,401 in funding, which will be matched with a minimum of \$77,066 in partner funding. Both the NFWF and the MSCG grants cover a two year time frame.

The following questions are based on the *Guidance for Establishing Fish Habitat Partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan* (<http://www.fishhabitat.org/partner/guidance.htm>). Please refer to the *Guidance* and to the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan* (<http://www.fishhabitat.org/plan/index.htm>) as you prepare responses. Address questions to partner@fishhabitat.org.

STRONG AND DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS

Short answers (1-2 sentences each)

1. Describe the “community of interest” around which the partnership is organized.

The EBTJV partnership is formed around brook trout as a keystone species that represents the health of aquatic ecosystems contained within its historic eastern U.S. range. The EBTJV is a geographically focused, locally driven, and scientifically based effort to protect, restore and enhance brook trout habitat throughout its eastern us range.

2. Describe the governance structure and the decision-making protocol used by the management board and subsidiary committees (e.g. consensus, majority vote).

The Steering Committee is the decision-making body for the EBTJV partnership and has oversight responsibility for all EBTJV activities. A quorum consisting of at least 10 members is required for Steering Committee actions that require a vote. All Steering Committee members have the right to vote on motions, and Steering Committee members may designate proxies to vote in their absence. A simple majority of voting members will carry a motion. However, the EBTJV acknowledges the Steering Committee may not include representation from every agency and organization in the partnership, therefore; each partnering agency and organization can designate a person of contact to expedite communications; and, decisions of funding and project selection is conducted by the Steering Committee with the full input of the Partnership-At-Large.

CATEGORIES OF PARTNERS INVOLVED (Check all that apply)	
State Agencies	X
Native American Tribes / Alaska Native Communities	
Federal Agencies	X
Local Governments	X
Conservation NGO's	X
Watershed Coalitions	X
Industry Groups	X
Corporations and Other Businesses	X
Other: Academic Institutions	X
Other: Private Landowners	X
Other:	

Narrative (maximum 500 words)

Describe the range of your partners’ associations, including jurisdictional and land/water ownership types, and their interests in conserving fish habitat. How have you engaged State agencies, FWS, NOAA, and other Federal agencies with fisheries responsibilities? How have you engaged Tribal and/or Native Alaskan entities, local communities, landowners, and non-traditional partners in your efforts? Describe the roles and responsibilities of various partner organizations within the governance structure. How does the governance structure promote joint strategic planning and decision-making by the partnership? What capabilities are in place for communicating with partners and for recruiting additional partners?

Partners

The EBTJV identified ‘*Encourage partnerships between management agencies and stakeholders*’ as one of four Conservation Goals critical to meeting its vision and so it has developed four scales for providing partnering opportunities: Range-wide, Regional, State, and Local.

The Steering Committee represents the range-wide partnership level. Thus far, it is composed of 22 state and federal agencies, conservation organizations and universities who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The range-wide partnership has been in existence for the longest period and therefore is the most organized and structured.

The EBTJV has identified three regions that share similar issues regarding brook trout status and threats. Each regional partnership is represented by four to seven states. Regional partnerships are in a formative stage, so the infrastructure for supporting this level of partnership is still being developed.

Many state level partnerships existed prior to the formation of the EBTJV; nevertheless, the EBTJV is providing a forum for building stronger, more capable partnerships that support brook trout conservation at this scale. An example of a state level partnership is the Maryland Brook Trout Alliance, formed in 2006 to support MD DNR’s brook trout management efforts.

Brook trout conservation projects require local partnerships to get on-the-ground work implemented. These locally driven public/private partnerships are already helping the EBTJV implement high priority projects, as a diversity of local partners are involved with 15 brook trout projects funded through the EBTJV/USFWS NFHAP initiative. Building local partnerships is crucial for implementing conservation work on private lands, in reaches where multiple owners are present, and in mixed private/public ownership situations.

The EBTJV’s partnership strategy is a critical component of its overall program since it raises awareness and support for its vision, goals, and objectives. Providing the infrastructure to build partnerships has been addressed in the Brook Trout Conservation Strategy.

Governance

The business of the EBTJV Steering Committee includes, but is not limited to: guiding the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of brook trout conservation strategies at rangewide, regional and local scales; promoting cooperation and coordination among partners and stakeholders that leads to enhanced protection of brook trout and their habitat; prioritizing EBTJV projects for funding; providing direction and input to the EBTJV workgroups; creating additional EBTJV workgroups and ad-hoc task groups as needed; supporting the partnerships and initiatives of the EBTJV with financial and/or staff resources; participating in lobbying efforts/information campaigns to garner additional resources to meet EBTJV objectives (within agency/organization guidelines); and, reporting to partners and stakeholders on the status and accomplishments of the EBTJV’s Brook Trout Conservation Strategy.

Communications

The EBTJV Steering Committee has established a Communications Workgroup as a standing committee that is charged with addressing two of the partnerships four principal goals:

“Develop and implement outreach and educational programs to ensure public awareness of the challenges which face brook trout populations.”

and,

“Encourage partnerships among management agencies and stakeholders to seek solutions to regional environmental and ecological threats.”

Supporting documentation

1. Provide a list of entities that serve on the partnership’s management board and subsidiary committees. **(SEE APPENDIX I)**
2. Provide a list of all partners that have demonstrated their support of the partnership, including those that do not serve on the governance structure. **(SEE APPENDIX II)**
3. Provide copies of letters and other documentation that indicate the level of support shown by partners. **(SEE APPENDIX III)**
4. Provide documentation that demonstrates outreach to State agencies that have fisheries and fish habitat responsibilities within the geographic area of the Partnership, as well as appropriate offices of FWS, NOAA, and other Federal agencies with fisheries responsibilities. **(SEE APPENDIX I AND II)**
5. Provide copies of governance documents (e.g. charter, memorandum of understanding, other). **(SEE APPENDIX III)**

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Short answers (1-2 sentences each)

1. What are the geographic boundaries of the partnership?

The boundary of the EBTJV partnership encompasses the historic eastern range of brook trout and includes all or portions of the following states: CT, DE, GA, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NH, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, SC, TN, VT, VA, WV.

2. What is the approximate area covered by the partnership (square miles)?

The approximate area covered under EBTJV partnership is 490,000 square miles.

Narrative (maximum 500 words)

Describe how the geographic boundaries of the partnership were determined. Why are these boundaries considered to be most appropriate to achieve effective regional prioritization of habitat needs and to demonstrate success in strategically addressing those needs? How and why is the scope of issues and priorities addressed by the partnership considered to be nationally significant? Do the partnership’s boundaries overlap with other pilot or candidate Fish Habitat

Partnerships? If so, how have you coordinated with those partnerships?

Biologists have long known that brook trout populations are declining across their historic range in the eastern portion of the United States, which extends from Maine to Georgia. In recognition of the of long-term decline and continued vulnerability of brook trout, more than 50 representatives from state and federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions met in June 2004 to consider a collaborative landscape-scale approach to their conservation.

The EBTJV believes the geographic boundaries of the partnership are justified given that the causes for brook trout declines within this 18-state region are similar and many watersheds of concern span state borders and agency jurisdictions. Also, by functioning at this large geographic scale, the EBTJV is better positioned to secure adoption of policies favoring brook trout habitat conservation while maximizing the energies and expertise of pre-existing partnerships.

The issues and priorities being addressed by the EBTJV are nationally significant because they help meet many of the goals and objectives contained within the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. More specifically, the EBTJV has four overarching range-wide objectives: 1) Protect and maintain the current number of watersheds that are classified as containing intact brook trout populations; 2) Establish self-sustaining brook trout populations in 10% of the watersheds where they are known to have been extirpated; 3) upgrade the classification of 30% of the reduced watersheds by strengthening the brook trout populations that currently exist and maintain the classification of 70% of the reduced watersheds by curbing the decline of brook trout populations; and, 4) determine the status of brook trout in watersheds where sufficient data are lacking.

The EBTJV boundaries overlap those of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), with which it shares some partners thereby providing a limited level of coordination. It is the EBTJV's intent to establish a more formal liaison process with SARP and other FHPs regardless of any boundary overlaps.

Supporting documentation

1. Provide a USGS or equivalent map illustrating the geographic scope of the FHP of at least 1 inch to a mile or 1:63,360 or larger scale. (**SEE APPENDIX IV**)
2. Provide a list of major landowners and/or maps showing major land holdings within the geographic scope of the FHP. (**SEE APPENDIX V**) Identify major landowners or land/water management agencies that are members of the partnership. (**SEE APPENDIX II**)

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Short answers (1-2 sentences each)

1. What is the status of the partnership's strategic plan?

The final working draft of the EBTJV's Brook Trout Conservation Strategy has been completed.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CHECKLIST (Check all that apply)	
Strategic plan links to one or more goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan	X
Strategic plan identifies desired outcomes in terms of habitat conditions and/or fish and aquatic community conditions	X
Strategic plan identifies strategic priorities in the form of geographic focus areas or key stressors or impairments	X
Strategic plan links priorities of the partnership to state wildlife action plans, watershed plans, recovery plans, land and water use plans, or other regional-scale plans	X
Strategic plan identifies information gaps and priorities for filling gaps	X
Strategic plan includes specific, measurable, achievable, time-bound goals and objectives	X
Strategic plan identifies conservation actions needed to address strategic priorities and achieve desired outcomes	X

Narrative (500 words maximum)

Describe the process used to identify strategic priorities and to develop a strategic plan. Summarize the strategic priorities of the partnership, i.e. geographic focus areas or key stressors or impairments. Which goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are addressed by the strategic priorities? Are the priorities of the partnership also identified as priorities in state wildlife action plans, watershed plans, recovery plans, or other regional-scale land and water use plans? How will the strategic priorities be addressed through conservation action (assuming availability of funds)? How will the strategic plan be used to prioritize conservation projects, and who will make that decision?

The EBTJV strategic priorities were initially formulated at the inaugural meeting held in Shepherdstown, WV, during June 2004. In response to the outcomes of this meeting, a range-wide status and threats assessment for wild brook trout populations was developed and completed in 2005. After the final report (Hudy et al. 2005) was issued, a second meeting was convened in February 2006 in Berkeley Springs, WV to discuss the development of a strategic plan. Upon completion of this planning meeting, the EBTJV Conservation Strategy/Habitat Workgroup began development of a strategic plan, which used the findings from the range-wide status and threats assessment as the foundation for the plan’s vision, principal goals, key priorities, and conservation strategies. The Conservation Strategy/Habitat Workgroup met in December 2006 to establish regional objectives under the range-wide conservation goals and to set the stage for completing the EBTJV’s Brook Trout Conservation Strategy.

The principal goals of the Brook Trout Conservation Strategy are:

- I. Conserve, enhance or restore brook trout populations that have been impacted by habitat modification or other population level threats.
- II. Encourage partnerships among management agencies and stakeholders to seek solutions to regional environmental and ecological threats.
- III. Develop and implement outreach and educational programs to ensure public awareness of the

challenges that face brook trout populations.

IV. Develop support for program implementation that perpetuates and restores brook trout populations throughout their historic range.

The following key priorities were established to meet the principal goals:

- 1) Protect brook trout populations across the species eastern United States range.
- 2) Restore brook trout (subspecies, stocks and populations) throughout their historic ranges where original habitat conditions exist and where habitats can be feasibly restored.
- 3) Monitor and evaluate brook trout population responses to habitat protection, enhancement and restoration projects.
- 4) Complete quantitative status assessments of brook trout distribution throughout its eastern United States range.
- 5) Increase recreational fishing opportunities for wild brook trout.

The key priorities serve as the framework for the development of state-level brook trout conservation plans. These plans collectively form the basis for the broader regional and range-wide conservation strategies. Each plan prioritizes the specific strategies needed for brook trout conservation within that state. State plans were developed with input from a variety of federal, state, and nongovernmental partners and reflect a broad approach to brook trout conservation.

The actions of the Steering Committee directly support the Brook Trout Conservation Strategy and the partnership's brook trout database is utilized to target and prioritize brook trout conservation efforts. The EBTJV partnership has also developed a process to prioritize and implement actions in critical habitat areas. EBTJV project proposals are evaluated against established criteria by members of 3 regional review teams, which results in each proposal receiving a numeric score. Once all of the proposals have been evaluated and scored, the EBTJV Steering Committee reviews the projects and their respective scores and then makes its recommendations for project funding.

The EBTJV's Brook Trout Conservation Strategy addresses all four goals contained within the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Supporting documentation

1. Provide a copy of the partnership's draft or final strategic plan. (SEE APPENDIX VI)

CAPABILITIES FOR SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENT

Narrative (500 words maximum)

Describe coordination that has occurred between the partnership and the Board's Science and Data Committee. How will the partnership link its assessment activities to the national framework for assessing fish habitat? What capabilities have partner organizations made available and used to measure baseline conditions and progress in habitat conservation? What technical and financial resources does your proposed FHP currently have to support its assessment work? Describe the types of metrics that will be used by the partnership to report progress.

The EBTJV has imbedded the NFHAP Science and Data Strategy into its Brook Trout Conservation Strategy. This strategic plan focuses on the causative agents of brook trout declines and it identifies strategies that effectively protect, conserve, and restore brook trout habitats because they are directly aimed at the key threats.

The EBTJV uses an integrated landscape approach with linkages among range-wide, regional, and local scales. The EBTJV partnership has developed a GIS-based data management system that is available via an interactive, central website capable of mapping threat data sets. This information, presented in a graphically compelling, watershed-by-watershed format, presents a significant, first-ever, comprehensive view of how brook trout are faring across their native range. Agency personnel can access these data and update it on a regular basis. This database will help target and prioritize brook trout conservation efforts, support the need for increased protection and funding, track conservation successes, and highlight areas in need of increased study and monitoring.

EBTJV efforts to improve the status of brook trout begin with protecting “the best of the best” habitat that supports healthy, stable populations. The next step is to improve and reconnect adjacent habitats that have a high likelihood of supporting stable populations. This approach also applies to the restoration of impacted or unstable brook trout populations. Restoration will focus on the habitat where portions of that population are doing relatively well and then extend to adjacent habitats. The EBTJV is also engaged in using a risk assessment model that allows watersheds to be prioritized for targeted actions.

The EBTJV’s technical resources include three standing committees that collectively have active participation from more than 30 professionals who represent the broad spectrum of the partnership. The Data Management Workgroup is a key component of these technical resources and its members are focused on establishing and implementing a centralized, web-based, data management system that permits all agencies with brook trout management responsibilities to contribute, store, and access data. Additionally, providing EBTJV partners, outside organizations, and the public with relevant data, maps, and reports is an important function of the EBTJV.

Implementation of the EBTJV Brook Trout Conservation Strategy also includes a process to evaluate the success of EBTJV conservation actions with respect to achieving desired goals and objectives. Since the ecosystems that support brook trout are inherently variable and highly complex, conservation actions must occur in an adaptive manner. Evaluation strategies include:

1. Creating benchmarks for measuring brook trout conservation success.

Short-term benchmarks will be set and evaluated in 2012 and subsequently at 5-year intervals. Short-term goals, objectives, key priorities, and strategies will be re-evaluated at this time.

Long-term benchmarks will be set and evaluated in 2025 and subsequently at 15-year intervals. Long-term goals, objectives, key priorities, and strategies will be re-evaluated at

this time.

2. Producing an annual evaluation report that provides an accounting of Brook Trout Conservation Strategy project accomplishments and operational costs.
3. Analyzing brook trout conservation actions and communicating the results through the EBTJV web site, reports, and outreach material.

Financial resources to support scientific assessment include non-federal match, federal funds, and other grant funds that are contributed by partners for specific on-the-ground conservation actions. For example in FY 2007, the EBTJV recommended that the USFWS fund 10 brook trout projects that had \$1.4 million in partnership funds being leveraged in requests for ~\$430,000 in USFWS NFHAP funding.

Supporting documentation

1. Provide documentation of resource assessments conducted by the partnership. (**SEE APPENDIX VII**)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Identify a primary contact person who will receive mail from the Board. Also provide complete contact information for each individual to be included on an e-mail list maintained by the Board staff.

Primary Contact Person: Stephen G. Perry
Affiliation: New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
Street: 11 Hazen Drive
City, State, Zip: Concord, NH 03301
Telephone: 603-271-1745
Fax: 603-271-1438
E-mail: stephen.g.perry@wildlife.nh.gov

YOUR FEEDBACK IS REQUESTED! Send suggestions for improving the application form to partner@fishhabitat.org.

Exhibit J National Fish Habitat Initiative Projects Funded in Pennsylvania

YEAR	WATER	PARTNERSHIP	AWARD	DRAINAGE
2006	Cross Fork Creek	EBTJV	\$ 20,000	Susquehanna
2007	Williams Run – Phase III	EBTJV	\$ 75,000	Ohio
2007	Upper Kettle Creek Drainage	EBTJV	\$ 45,000	Susquehanna
2007	Big Spring Creek	NFWF – <i>More Fish</i>	\$ 98,000	Susquehanna
		TOTAL	\$238,000	