

Great Plains Fish Habitat Coordinator Employment Opportunity at WAFWA

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is seeking a skilled person to lead the **Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (GP-FHP)**, a **National Fish Habitat Partnership**, and serve as the **Program Coordinator**. The coordinator serves as an advisor to WAFWA's executive team and senior leader responsible for program deliverables, organizing priorities from state fisheries divisions, and engaging partners. The daily tasks are diverse and require a highly motivated, independent, and disciplined individual with administrative skills focused on building operational capacity, cultivating relationships with key decision-makers, and pursuit of additional funding and leveraged resources. Working through a shared vision from WAFWA leadership and a Steering Committee representing fish habitat interests in the Great Plains region, the Coordinator may oversee work products of additional contractors and needed service providers as appropriate.

BACKGROUND ON GP-FHP

GP-FHP is a funded program housed within WAFWA's Western Fisheries Initiatives and administered through an award from the USFWS and the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), it is one of three Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHP's) operating under WAFWA and is the newest to join. Covering a portion of 13 states found in the core of the Great Plains it is an expansive partnership extending from the Canadian to Mexican border with a primary focus on aquatic and riparian habitats and fish species within the working grasslands of the plains of the US. It is also an FHP in transition. WAFWA has been working with USFWS and NFHP since 2024 to do a strategic assessment of the partnership and determine what needs and opportunities may exist. A significant portion of the coordinator's time in the next 2 years will be dedicated to working with leadership and partners to further refine the strategic goals and shape the outcomes of the GP-FHP which was recently expanded to include the southern Great Plains geography (OK, TX, & NM).

NEAR-TERM NEEDS FOR GP-FHP

Objectives for this position include 1) development and implementation of a Strategic Plan, 2) management of the Steering Committee and governance requirements, and 3) fulfillment of the obligations as an FHP under NFHP and as an Initiative under WAFWA. **To assist the Coordinator in their understanding of the position a conceptual workplan to address these objectives in the first three years includes:**

Year 1: Develop and launch a revised strategic plan for GP-FHP and maintain operations of the FHP required under the NFHP program, assist WAFWA in integrating GP-FHP with its other primary fisheries programs under the emerging WAFWA Western Fish Initiatives effort, and work closely with all parties to create a strong informed foundation for GP-FHP operations. This work will require reengaging and supplementing the existing Steering Committee to ensure that all states and other relevant entities are represented in the strategic planning processes.

Year 2: Secure and leverage additional funds under the newly formed strategic vision, ensure corrective actions are completed to attend to any remaining needs for establishing the GP-FHP. Establish workflow for regular operations, reporting, and communications.

Year 3: Assess value and continuity among existing partnerships and opportunities for growth with others. Revisit work plans from years 1 and 2 to determine what needs remain and which might no longer be needed for the strategic delivery of a nearly mature FHP.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Core Responsibilities include:

- WAFWA and NFHP related coordination, grant reporting, and team development
- Steering Committee coordination
- Strategic Development and Operational planning of workflow within budget

- Operations/Administration and Budget from any additional leveraged funds
- Reporting and Compliance assistance for USFWS project awards to support the FHP
- Coordinate deliverables and work assigned to other contractors

The Coordinator will work under the guidance of the WAFWA Executive Team and the GP-FHP Steering Committee to develop and meet its vision, mission, goals and objectives. The Coordinator organizes and assigns the work of GP-FHP and is responsible for improving upon and implementing the duties detailed below. This requires proficiency in facilitation, leadership coordination, project management, and strong writing skills. WAFWA will administer funds related to this contract and all grants and awards within to support the Coordinator. All invoices and related documentation will be submitted through WAFWA's business offices for processing, accounting, and inclusion in the annual reporting, budget and audit cycle.

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES. Most activities for this position are administrative in nature and performed from a desk in an office setting. The Coordinator typically travels to meetings approximately 3-5 times each year, and travel expenses are reimbursed. All anticipated tasks are listed below and specific work related to each task will be further refined through coordination among Steering Committee, WAFWA, and NFHP leaderships.

A. Establish Strategic Plan focused for needed revisioning of GP-FHP (40% of time)

- Engage the Steering Committee, with guidance from WAFWA, in developing consensus and documenting strategic needs and near-term actionable priorities among the states, NFHP, relevant NGOs, and Federal Partners.
- Establish required Governance Documents and operations under WAFWA's vision that embrace the intentions of NFHP Board and allow for the adaptive leadership of an FHP that is redefining its operations and mission.
- Coordinate and engage an expanded Steering Committee and lead operation within its revised By-laws.
- Coordinate and conduct bi-monthly Steering Committee Zoom meetings, and up to two annual in-person Steering Committee meetings. Prepare and distribute meeting notes following conference calls and meetings while maintaining historic copies.
- Develop an annual operations calendar for business activities in coordination with WAFWA business office and shared experiences of other FHP's.

National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP)-related coordination

- The coordinator liaises with USFWS personnel and project proponents and is critical to ensuring program deliverables and need reporting and administration as one of many FHP's.
- Represent GP-FHP at NFHP Board meetings and functions, including monthly coordination conference calls of the Board staff and other NFHP FHP's nationwide. Serve as point of contact for information requests pertaining to the Board.
- Interpret NFHP Board policy and program guidance to ensure operations and program delivery are in accordance with that policy and guidance.
- Coordinate with other FHP's and identify ways to work together to leverage resources to meet objectives.
- Support NFHP national projects database development, populate GP-FHP entries, and all associated reporting requirements for FHP's.

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)-related coordination

- Maintain communications and administrative direction and operations with WAFWA business office and Executive Leadership.
- Participate in WAFWA summer conference; present updates to WAFWA Fish Chiefs, build a vision for GP-FHP with Fisheries Committee, and provide updates as requested by Executive

Committee.

- Interact with Fish Chiefs, Fisheries Committee, Directors, and Executive Leadership (as requested) as required to maintain strategic priorities from the Board.
- Provide updates for WAFWA website, and articles for WAFWA e-newsletters as requested.
- Coordinate with other Western landscape initiatives within WAFWA to maximize impacts.

B. Operations/Administration and Budget (40% of time)

WAFWA tasks

- Prepare GP-FHP's annual budget and workplan.
- Coordinate deliverables and work assigned to any potential contractors, which may include: Science and Data Specialist, Technical Writer, Communications Specialist, partner biologist coordination.
- Lead development of grants to other funding sources to amplify NFHP funding and deliver specific conservation outputs that align with portion of the strategic plan.
- Oversee award reporting, be accountable for budgets and deliverables, approve and submit invoices, produce interim and final reports.

NFHP tasks

- Coordinate program workflow with GP-FHP Steering Committee.
- Coordinate and write annual NFHP allocation report including completing GP-FHP recommended projects' data entry into national projects database.
- Coordinate and write report for NFHP Board evaluation of GP-FHP
- Ensure GP-FHP meets requirements for maintaining NFHP operational support, annual FWS compliance for program continuation, and seeks non-federal match and additional operational funding as needed.

C. Development, Outreach, and Marketing (20% of time)

- Coordinator's annual goal is to raise a minimum of \$250K/year in funding to support operations. This is an aspirational goal, subject to WAFWA flexibility, especially in the first year or two of the new Coordinator's term.
- Outreach to partner agencies and organizations to enhance and expand support and participation in GP-FHP's delivery of conservation actions. Foster collaborative partnerships capable of implementing on-the-ground projects.
- Coordinate directly with WAFWA's working lands specialist staff positions and the wildlife movement and connectivity initiative to explore joint funding and strategic opportunities.

D. DESIRED EDUCATION/KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS

- Bachelor's degree or higher in public/nonprofit administration, communications, fisheries biology, aquatic ecology or related field.
- A demonstrable history of partnership cultivation and fundraising.
- Knowledge of fisheries biology, aquatic ecology, and conservation.
- Previous involvement with natural resource conservation issues and programs within the Great Plains, Farm Bill, and private lands conservation.
- Experience managing a Steering Committee (or Board) and other key partners and leaders.
- Familiarity with non-profit, state, federal, and tribal fish management resource entities or past experience that demonstrates the ability to grow relationships with these entities.

E. DESIRED QUALITIES

- High degree of energy, integrity and determination, as well as the intellectual, organizational, and personal qualities to quickly earn respect and foster collaboration.
- Ability to think strategically and create competitive and innovative strategies and plans.
- Highly efficient in priority setting, time management, and meeting deadlines under pressure.
- Ability to work and make judgments independently and take initiative.
- Confidence to experiment to find creative solutions.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.

F. **PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES.** The manner in which the Services are to be performed and the specific hours to be worked within the limits of the program budget, shall be determined by WAFWA with the successful applicant. The fulfillment of these duties has multiple options for the status of employment and associated compensation. Options include the following - can be Term (3 year) or longer but depends on renewed funding:

- a) Term Staff position at WAFWA with associated benefits**
- b) Term Contract Position in service to WAFWA**
- c) Term Fisheries Conservation Fellowship, targeting the professional advancement of mid-career member staff as a split appointment between WAFWA member agency staff in coordination with WAFWA and host Agency. (Similar to WAFWA's Western Native Trout Initiative coordinator, the Wild Sheep Initiative Lead and the Senior Wildlife Health Coordinator positions)**

Duty location is flexible, but preferred within the Great Plains region.

G. **COMPENSATION.** WAFWA has budgeted an annual compensation to include all the above duties in 40 hours/week "full-time" equivalent position estimated at \$75K-95K per year for three years depending on type of employment (a, b, or c from above), experience, and possible % FTE under a fellowship. Hours are variable per week depending on workload and must be contained within total budget "not to exceed" caps over 12 months. Under various *Performance of Services* scenarios above a "part time appointment" can be made in any of the employment status to accommodate as little as 50% appointment with the remaining percentage to be administered to specific contract services as determined by WAFWA and the successful candidate. We recognize that this type of "yet to be determined" employment structure may be unusual to some. Our intention is to get the best applicant for the job duties requested and work with that individual to finalize a compensation package that fits their professional needs and abilities under the requirements of the WAFWA and GP-FHP. The coordinator is monitored and evaluated by the Steering Committee through annual performance metrics, oversight by WAFWA's Executive Director and Board, and GP-FHP annual performance evaluation by the NFHP Board.

H. **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT.** Coordinator shall be entitled to reimbursement from WAFWA for the following "out-of-pocket" expenses which are preapproved and supported by budget: travel expenses (common carrier, federal mileage rates, and government room rates), meals when in travel status (federal per diem IRS guidelines), postage, printing, copying, and other office expenses excluding base phone or cell phone. The Coordinator typically travels to meetings 3-5 times per year. Requests for reimbursement shall be made on forms provided by the WAFWA staff and substantiated by receipts.

I. **SUPPORT SERVICES.** Support from WAFWA includes a nimble and capable business office, grants management, and communications workforce, including IT support, webtools, and designed outreach materials. As needs arise, WAFWA will work to assist you and leverage these resources for your work. In addition, active and engaged Steering Committee members, chair, and vice chair offer ready guidance and support, especially during the initial year for the new Coordinator.

J. **ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS.** Coordinator acknowledges and agrees that Coordinator shall, during the term of this agreement, act at all times in WAFWA's best interests, and shall not perform any act that would be reasonably foreseeable to injure WAFWA's business, interests, or reputation. Such duty shall include, but not be limited to:

- Not permit personal interests or other client or employer relationships to interfere with their professional judgment.
- Not undertake any activities, particularly commercial activities, which may in any way adversely affect WAFWA, or any of its affiliates, or involves a possible conflict of interest or its affiliates.
- Disclose any outside activities or interests, including ownership or participation in other projects, that conflict or may conflict with the best interests of WAFWA.
- Work openly and directly with WAFWA's Executive Leadership to advance the GP-FHP in the best interest of WAFWA members and in accordance to the by-laws and strategic direction set by the board.

APPLICATION

Interested applicants should contact Cortney Mycroft (cortney.mycroft@wafwa.org) and Zachary Lowe (zach.lowe@wafwa.org) with a brief cover letter/email stating their interest in the program, resume/cv, a summary of skills/experience relative to the stated duties, 3 references, and any predetermined preference of employment structure from the options provided. WAFWA and GP-FHP have no preference for the exact type of employment model and are focused on the skills and abilities of the best applicant available.

This position is open until it is filled. However, interested applicants are encouraged to reach out to declare interest and apply quickly as we are hopeful to have a qualified applicant identified and in place by March/April of 2026.