An Overview of the NOAA Habitat Blueprint

Improving fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities through habitat conservation

NOAA Library Brown Bag Seminar
May 1, 2013

NOAA

NOAA's Habitat Conservation Mission

- ***NOAA's Objective—***
  Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities
- **We protect and restore habitat for:**
  - Sustainable and productive fisheries
  - Threatened and endangered species
  - Protected coastal and marine areas and habitats at risk
  - Resilient coastal communities and economies
  - Coastal and ocean tourism, recreation, and access

The Challenge

- Widespread habitat loss and degradation
  - **111,000 acres of estuarine wetlands lost between 2004-2007**
  - **45% increase in coastal watershed county population from 1970 to 2010**

Organizational Drivers

- Need to be more efficient with limited resources
- Small-scale conservation activities have limited impact
- Charge to coordinate habitat activities across NOAA

NOAA's Strategy: the Habitat Blueprint

- A *framework* to improve habitat for fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities
  - Improving the way we do business
- Built around Guiding Principles
- Implemented through key approaches

Blueprint Guiding Principles

- **Prioritize resources and activities across NOAA** to improve habitat conditions
- **Make decisions in an ecosystem context** and consider competing priorities
- **Foster and leverage partnerships**
- **Improve delivery of habitat science** to facilitate decision-making

First Step: Regional Habitat Initiatives

- **Example Underway: Puget Sound Habitat Initiative**
  - Driver: Tribal concern over loss of salmon habitat
  - Leverages partnerships: federal agencies, states, tribes, NGOs
  - Prioritizes specific actions to improve habitat
  - Strengthens scientific foundation for action

Blueprint Key Approaches

1) Implement a Systematic and Strategic Approach to **Habitat Science**

2) Strengthen **Policy and Legislation**

3) Establish long-term **Habitat Focus Areas**

1) Habitat Science

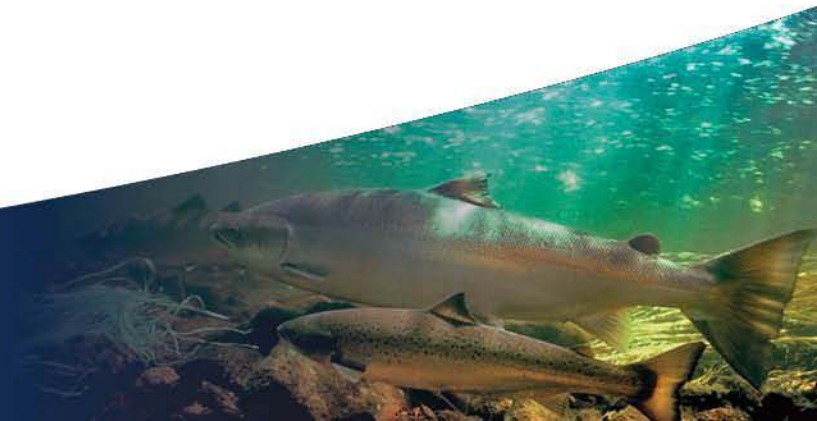
Goals:

- **Integrate science with management** actions to foster better decisions
- **Prioritize science activities** to fulfill habitat data needs
- **Improve delivery** of habitat science

1) Habitat Science

Key Actions:

- **Implement the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard** (CMECS)
- **Improve communication and coordination in habitat science**
  - National Habitat Assessment Workshop 2
- **Prioritizing fisheries stocks** for habitat assessment



2) Policy & Legislation

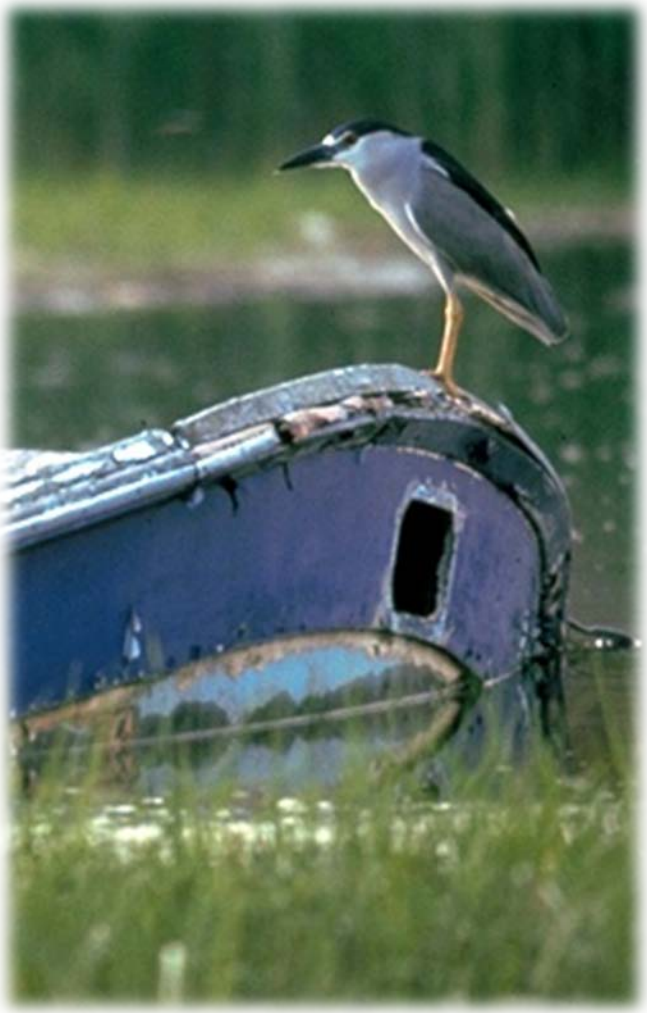
Goals:

- Explore ways to **strengthen and apply existing authorities** (MSA, ESA, CZM)
- **Investigate innovative habitat policies and cross-agency partnerships**
- **Consider developing new policies and/or legislation** to provide a strong mandate for conservation

2) Policy & Legislation

- **Key Actions:**
  - Developing a coordinated NOAA approach on living shorelines
  - Identifying opportunities to increase coordination on grants and legislative responses
  - Using our Essential Fish Habitat consultation authorities more efficiently

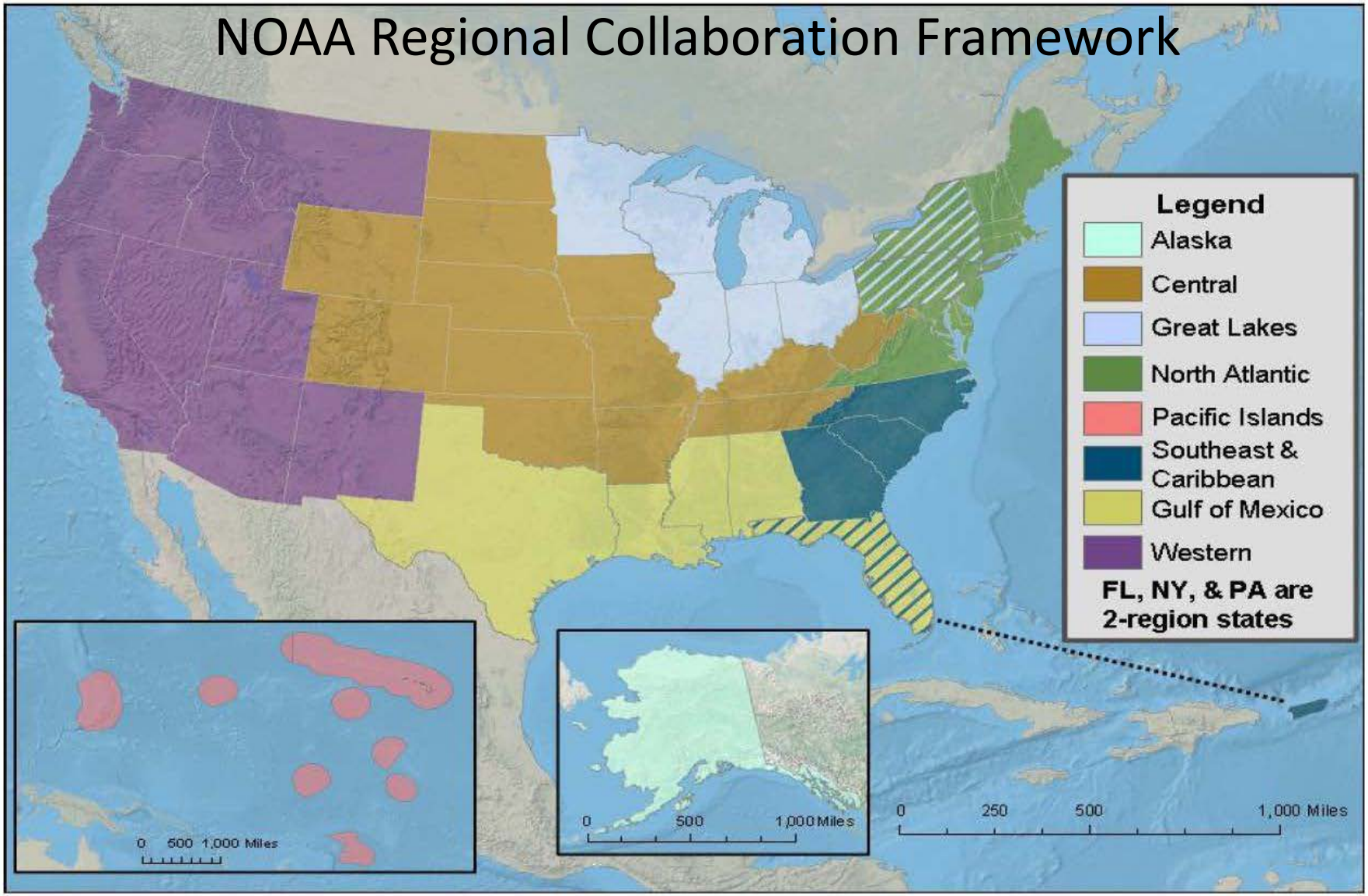
3) Establish Habitat Focus Areas



Goals:

- Prioritize long-term habitat science and conservation efforts
- Achieve measurable benefits for multiple objectives and mandates
- Maximize our investments by seeking to build synergies

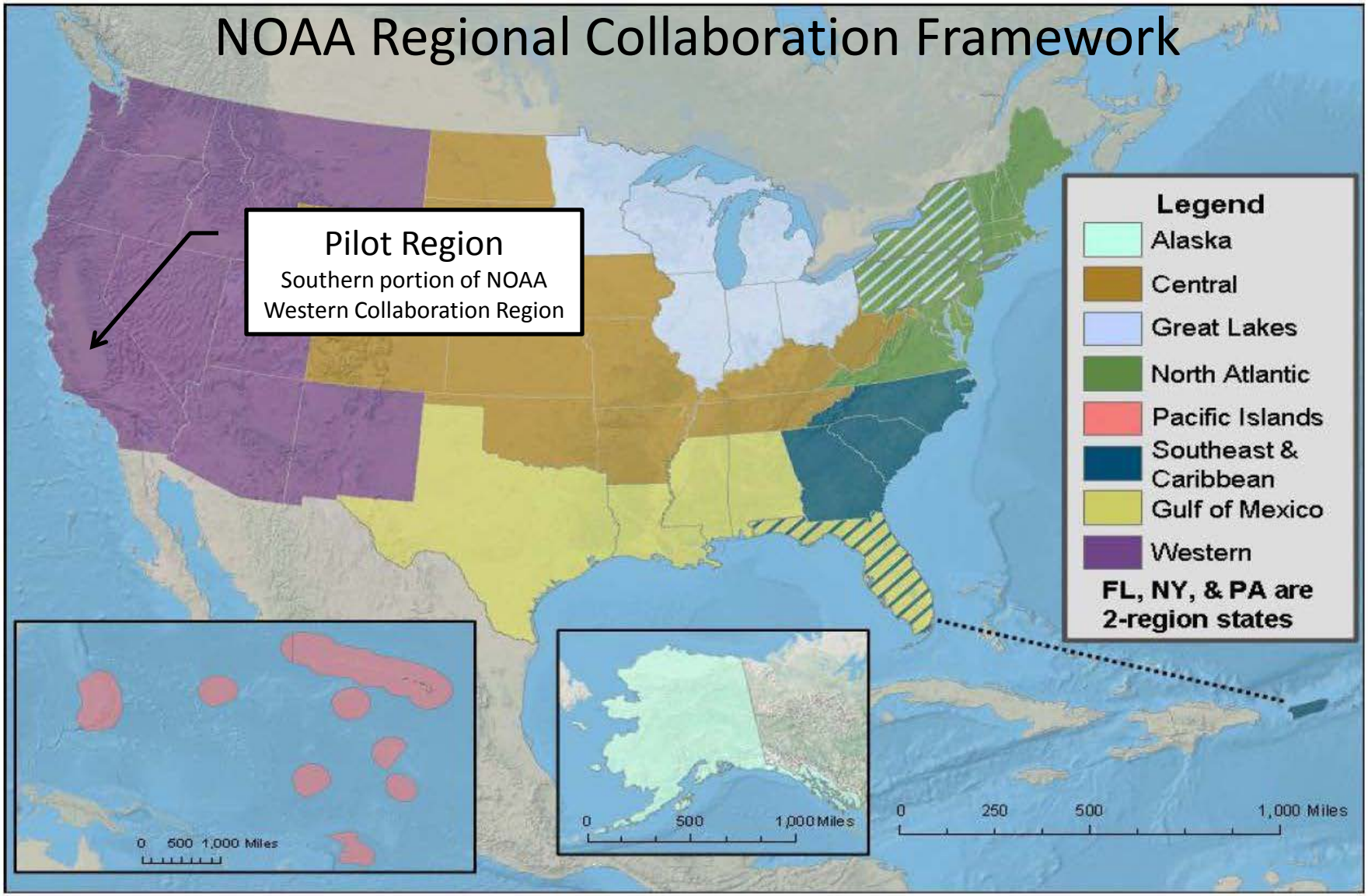
Habitat Focus Area Regions



The Focus Area Selection Process

1. Form Focus Area Selection Teams (FASTs)
2. Identify candidate Habitat Focus Areas
3. Seek stakeholder input
4. Select one or more NOAA Habitat Focus Areas
5. Develop an implementation plan and strengthen partnerships

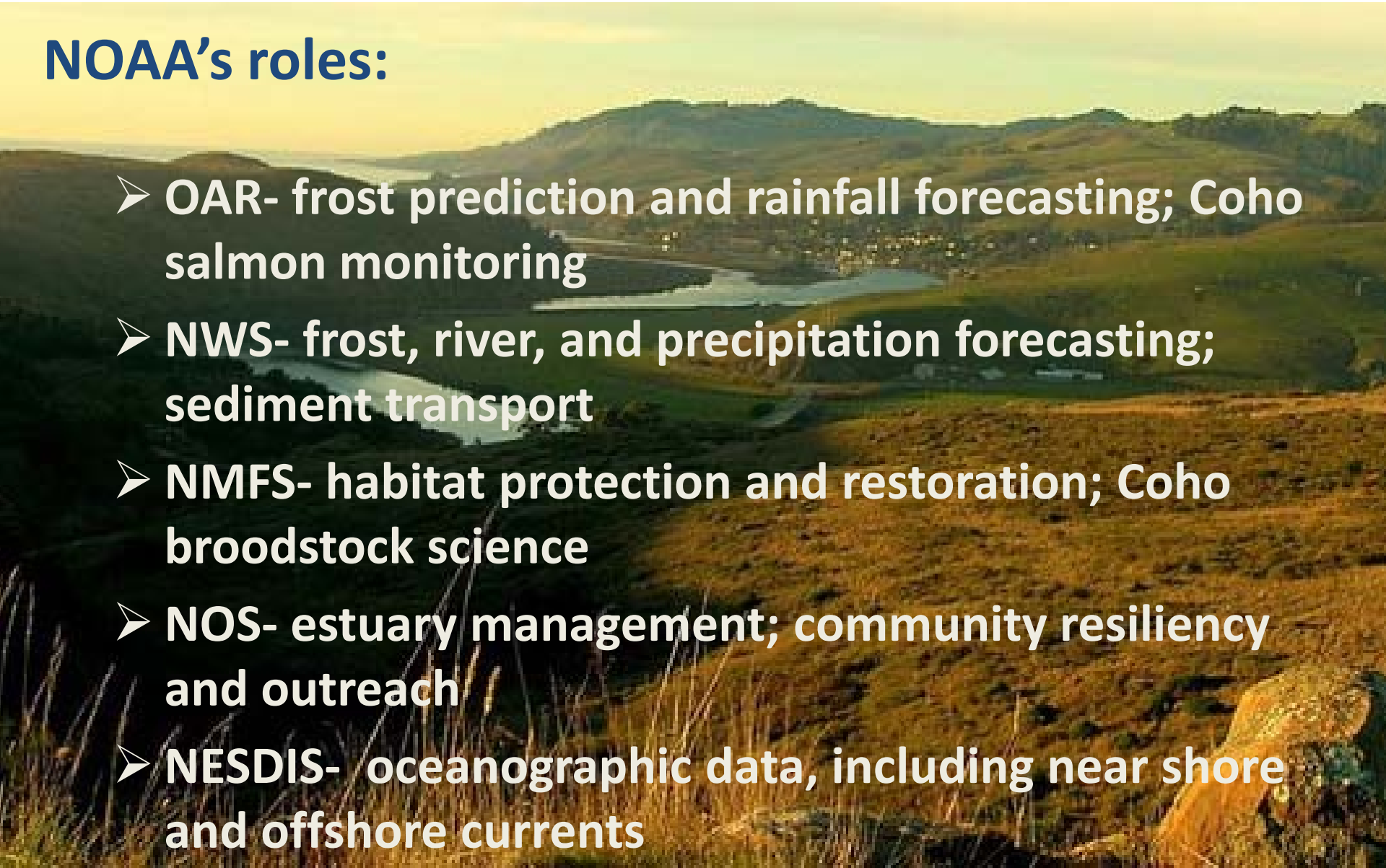
California Pilot



Russian River Habitat Focus Area

- **Objectives:**
  - Rebuilding endangered Coho and threatened Chinook and steelhead stocks
  - Improving frost, rainfall, and river forecasts
  - Increasing community resiliency to flooding damage

Russian River Habitat Focus Area



NOAA's roles:

- OAR- frost prediction and rainfall forecasting; Coho salmon monitoring
- NWS- frost, river, and precipitation forecasting; sediment transport
- NMFS- habitat protection and restoration; Coho broodstock science
- NOS- estuary management; community resiliency and outreach
- NESDIS- oceanographic data, including near shore and offshore currents

Recap—Why the Blueprint?

- **Increasing need to be even more effective with our habitat programs:**
  - Continued habitat loss and degradation
  - Limited funding
  - Pressure to consolidate/be more efficient
- **Blueprint principles = our strategy to be even stronger**
  - Prioritize resources and activities
  - Make decisions in an ecosystem context
  - Link science to decision-making
  - Leverage partnerships

Connections with Other Efforts

- Many related efforts…
  - RESTORE/DWH
  - NOAA Sentinel Site Program
  - Interagency initiatives (e.g. LCCs)
- Blueprint approach:
  - Collaboration across NOAA
  - Regional flexibility
  - Improve efficiency and effectiveness
- NOAA Habitat Conservation Team

Opportunities To Get Involved

- Provide input into the Habitat Focus Area selection process
  - Pacific Islands, Alaska, Great Lakes, Southeast/Caribbean, North Atlantic
- Help identify opportunities to build collaboration and efficiency in NOAA's science and policy work

For More Information

Visit:

www.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint.html

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