

Columbia Basin Collaborative
Estuary, Tributary & Mainstem Habitat Work Group
March 27, 2023 from 2:00pm – 4:00pm PT/3:00pm - 5:00pm MT
Meeting Summary

Work Group Members in Attendance: Amelia Johnson (Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board), Bob Lessard (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Cynthia Studebaker (United States Army Corps of Engineers), David Bain (Orca Conservancy), Jay Backus (Port of Clarkston), Jeff McLaughlin (Bureau of Reclamation), Jim Brick (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Laura Brown (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Leslie Bach (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Michelle Rub (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Mike Edmondson (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation), Norman Semanko (Norman Semanko (Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District), Patty Dornbusch (National Marine Fisheries Service), Stephen Waste (United States Geological Survey), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries)

Observers in Attendance: Cathy Kellon (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Daniel Bertram (Governor's Office of Species Conservation), Dennis Rohr (DRohr & Associates), Heather Nicholson (Public), Jerry Klemm (Port of Lewiston), Stuart Crane (Yakama Nation Water Resources Program), Scott Turo (United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service)

Facilitation Team: Amira Streeter (Kearns & West) and Colin Johnson (Kearns & West)

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Updates

Amira Streeter, Kearns & West, welcomed the workgroup members and provided meeting guidelines and a review of the agenda. The meeting agenda focused on discussing the NOAA 5-Year Review recommendation. Amira reminded group members of the role played by the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC), and how recommendations produced by the CBC are refined via a feedback loop with the Integration/Recommendation Committee (I/RG). Group members also reviewed the timeline for round 1 recommendations.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 5-Year Review Recommendation

Amira invited members of the subgroup tasked with finalizing the NOAA 5-Year status review recommendation to share the process and outcome of their work. Group member specified that the recommendation is a combination of tributary habitat recommendations taken from the 5-Year Reviews. Subgroup members discussed the following elements of the recommendation:

- Group members shared that every study has concluded that all stocks need additional habitat restoration, and current recovery plans are intended to meet de-listing goals outlined by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that do not reach targets set by the Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP).
- The subgroup included language in the recommendation to encourage fully funding and implementing specific habitat related actions identified in the 2022 5-Year status reviews. However, the group developed six distinct general recommended actions based on existing actions from the 5-Year status review that offer guidance on how to approach habitat restoration.

- It would be possible to fund or implement these actions through a number of basin-wide and regional programs in the basin, however, a marked increase in funding and capacity would be necessary.
- It was estimated that implementation of actions may take 15-20+ years, and it can take multiple generations after an action is completed before benefits will be realized.
- Cost estimates were adapted from the 5-year review, additional studies, and by assuming a general cost of \$1M per mile when restoring floodplain.
- Existing constraints include the amount of area that is on private land, existing infrastructure such as roads that block restoration efforts, and the time necessary to navigate permitting and regulatory requirements.
- Members summarized five key adaptive management elements to support implementation: Establish a common goal, Embrace science, Learn from each other, Commit and be a determined implementer, Consistently implement a governance and decision-making structure.

Amira invited work group members to share comments, questions, and suggestions regarding the draft recommendation.

- Members suggested developing a table of programs currently implementing habitat restoration in the basin, what that program's current funding levels are and the sources of that funding, and what we recommend for that specific program.
- This should include federal, state, tribal, and local programs and include programs that can support expanded capacity for projects.
- Compiling information about stocks covered by each program would provide data to determine which stocks are being missed and if existing programs can be expanded into areas, and stocks, where there are currently no restoration efforts.
 - Language highlighting the potential for entities to expand efforts to manage non-listed stocks in their geographic purview can be added to the recommendation.
- The overall focus should be to go beyond the ESA-listed species recovery plans and pursue abundance of all impacted stocks.
- Group members discussed the feasibility of accurately producing this table in time to send the recommendation to the SWIG before March 30th, and noted that adding the table as appendix to the recommendation may be the best course of action.
- The importance of adaptive management was reiterated as needs may change based on the response of fish to any restoration efforts.
 - Group members highlighted that there are gaps in understanding in legislative bodies regarding the level of underfunding for recovery efforts.
- Group members discussed the variability of programs and the challenge in trying to take a uniformed funding approach to each project, and suggested using a multiplier with a basic set of guidelines for what a basin can expect in terms of recovery and declaring what percentage is needed to achieve that target.

Additional comments, questions, and suggestions include:

- Include each of the specific habitat recommendations from the 5-year status reviews as an appendix to send to the SIWG and I/RG.

- Consider highlighting Columbia Basin Partnership stocks identified as high priority due to impacts from habitat loss and degradation.
- While focusing on habitat alone will not achieve abundance goals, it is an important factor in recovery as it will provide capacity for fish as populations grow.
 - As blocked areas are reopened, additional habitat restoration funding may be required to expand habitat.
- When sharing this recommendation, it should be explicitly stated that this is a first step which will require adaptive management and ongoing monitoring.

Work group members reached consensus on sending the recommendation to the SIWG and I/RG. Group members will build out a table of programs implementing projects in the basin, and refine a full list of habitat recommendations from the 5-year status reviews, to include as appendices. An ongoing area of focus will be identifying funding for each of the salmon recovery programs in the basin. This information will eventually be partnered with the comprehensive table of programs.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Amira summarized next steps and encouraged members to complete the feedback survey so that the facilitation team can continue to be responsive to the needs of the group. The following next steps were shared with the group:

Action Items

- **All:** Please complete this brief Estuary, Tributary & Mainstem Habitat Meeting 6 survey to share feedback on the meeting by **end of day, 3/31**.
- **All:** Please complete this Doodle poll **by 3/31** to capture the group's availability for Meetings 8 and 9.
- **All:** Review draft CBC Habitat NOAA 5-Year Review Recommendation appendices.
- **KW:** Draft a meeting summary and circulate it to the workgroup

This meeting concluded at 4:00pm PT/5:00PM MT