

# Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration/Recommendations Group

## Meeting Summary

January 28, 2026, 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm PT / 1:30 pm – 5:30 pm MT  
Offices of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Portland, Oregon

### Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Agenda Review

Liz Mack, Kearns & West (KW), opened the meeting and invited Donella Miller, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and Liz Hamilton, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, to provide opening remarks. Liz noted that there were observers, both in-person and virtually, joining the meeting. Liz then reviewed the agenda items, which included updates from around the region, external forums updates, updates on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program, and next steps, and then reviewed the hybrid meeting guidelines.

### Updates from Around the Region

Liz M. invited the Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) members to introduce themselves and to share any updates that were pertinent to the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC).

The I/RG members shared the following updates:

- Several group members shared memories of Joel Kawahara considering his passing in 2025.
- One group member shared updates related to recent Tribal elections and I/RG representation changes.
- Many group members shared funding and advocacy-related updates at the state and federal levels, including impacts related to losses or reductions of federal funds.
- Two group members expressed concerns about this year's water quantity and snowpack levels in the Cascade Range.
- Multiple members provided status updates on other forums and processes that they participate in across the Basin, including the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process, which was discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.
- One group member shared an update related to the Hells Canyon Complex Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as well as updates on project work in the Upper Snake River Basin, including collection, transport, and habitat assessment.
- Several group members highlighted the importance of the efforts of the CBC and expressed their continued commitment to the collaborative process.
- One group member highlighted the upcoming [Pacific Northwest Sportmen's Show](#) which will take place in Portland, Oregon from February 11-15, 2026.

### External Forum Updates

Liz M. invited several I/RG members and guest presenters to share updates on external forums in the Columbia River Basin.

## Phase 2 Implementation Plan (P2IP)

BJ Kieffer, Spokane Tribe of Indians, provided an update on P2IP. Reviewing 2025, BJ highlighted rearing and release activities, study implementation, trap and transport, and fish passage. BJ's review of 2025 rearing and release activities focused on summer and fall Chinook and Sockeye while the 2025 study overview highlighted the status of the yearling Chinook acoustic behavior and survival study (completed fourth and final year of study), the juvenile Sockeye active migrant study, and the sub-yearling Sockeye behavior and survival study. Trap and transport activities in 2025 focused on surplus hatchery-origin summer Chinook and blocked area-origin adult Chinook, while fish passage activity highlights included the convening of the Upper Columbia Salmon Passage (UCSP) Workgroup and updates related to the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams design process goals.

Looking ahead to 2026, the team will continue rearing and release activities for summer and fall Chinook and Sockeye. The juvenile Sockeye active migrant study will continue as planned, the sub-yearling Sockeye behavior and survival study will be paused while the outcomes of the first year of study are reviewed, and a sub-yearling Chinook behavior and survival study will be designed for 2027 implementation. 2026 trap and transport activities will largely continue the 2025 activities of transporting surplus summer Chinook and blocked area-origin fish, while fish passage activity will continue through the convening of the UCSP and Chief Joseph Dam and Grand Coulee Dam design processes.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member asked if the fish captured above Wells Dam were released above Grand Coulee Dam.
  - BJ confirmed that they were released using trap and haul.
- One group member thanked BJ for the presentation, noting the collaborative effort between the Spokane Tribe of Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and expressed gratitude for seeing progress with fish returns, continued study implementation, and fish passage facility development.

## Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI)

Michael Garrity, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), provided context on the creation of the CBRI and the goal of having a roadmap for healthy and abundant salmon. Michael noted that the federal government terminated the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement (RCBA) and that the Six Sovereigns (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Nez Perce Tribe, State of Oregon, and State of Washington) will continue to coordinate their implementation efforts. Michael also noted the alignment between the many of the goals of CBRI and the CBC and noted that the Six Sovereigns would recommend that the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program reflect the goals of the CBRI and advocate for a whole-of-government approach to secure more robust congressional funding. The group had the following comments and questions:

- Two group members noted that the goals of the CBRI are aimed at restoring healthy and abundant salmon but also look at other uses and services of the river to enable future management for the entire basin.

## Litigation Schedule

Jim McKenna, Office of Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, reviewed the litigation schedule and broader context of *National Wildlife Federation (NWF) v. the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)*. Jim

reviewed the creation of the CBRI and the RCBA and the impact of the Trump administration terminating the RCBA in 2025. Jim noted that NWF and the State of Oregon have filed motions for preliminary injunctive relief. Jim shared that the parties submitted declarations and responses, and all submittals available on the United States District of Oregon's website. Jim noted that the hearing on arguments on the motion to seek preliminary injunctive relief and to dismiss is scheduled for February 6.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member noted that the February 6 hearing is related to preliminary injunctive relief, but they expect another hearing in spring 2026 related to the legality of the termination of the RCBA.
- One group member asked if there was any accounting of the funds distributed under the settlement agreement (before the RCBA was terminated).
  - Jim explained that the federal government distributed some funding, including approximately \$100 million distributed to the Six Sovereigns and approximately \$200 million distributed to the Lower Snake River Basin. However, one group member noted that funding they were allotted was rescinded, so the amount received was minimal.
- One group member asked how much effort has been directed to the litigation from members of this group since the filing in September.
  - Jim noted that this has been a tremendous lift for those involved, including state-level Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and litigation staff.
- One group member clarified that while federal funding was rescinded, the State of Washington continues to fund its transportation study.
- One group member noted that the Bureau of Reclamation was far enough along with its study which it passed off to the Washington State Department of Ecology, while the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) transportation study was cancelled. Washington is now conducting a transportation study with a narrowed scope. The group member noted that seeking funding via legislation could be one way to continue the studies that were paused due to the loss of federal funds.

#### Enloe Dam Removal

Warren Colyer, Trout Unlimited, reviewed the collaborative effort between Trout Unlimited and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation to remove Enloe Dam. Warren provided background information on the location and size of Enloe Dam and noted that it has not been operational since 1958. Warren noted that the dam blocks 1,520 miles of upstream habitat and highlighted the value of that upstream habitat in the context of climate change given the colder water temperatures and reviewed the estimated salmonid status in the Similkameen Basin. Warren reviewed the Enloe Dam removal project timeline and the process for dam removal. The results of the feasibility study yielded a major shift in understanding pertaining to sediment impacts, toxicity, and cost, which increased the feasibility of removing the dam. Warren reviewed the next steps for the dam removal process, which included sediment management, public outreach, a 30% design report, identifying the dam removal entity, developing the liability management plan, and moving towards 60% design and permitting.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member asked what led to the major reduction in estimated sediment behind the dam and where the funding for dam removal will come from.
  - Warren explained that the valley above the dam is very narrow and creates a pinch in the stream. Before the dam was placed, this pinch created a backwater that trapped

alluvium. The original sediment assessment detected bedrock and assumed everything above the bedrock was post-dam sediment accumulation. The feasibility study showed that the river's natural constriction kept the river from flowing over bedrock but instead on alluvial debris. With dam removal, the river will flow over sediment above the natural pinch point, and the dam removal will have less impact on sediment release than the team previously estimated. The team has not determined the funding sources for dam removal. Some federal funds exist but private and state funds may also be leveraged. The team has secured \$10 million for ongoing work and the next stages of permit application.

- One group member asked if there are maps to showcase the suitability (water temperature) and elevation of the upstream habitat.
  - Warren shared anecdotally that the temperatures recorded upstream were over 10 degrees Celsius cooler than downstream last summer and that no maps are currently available to showcase the upstream habitat suitability.
- One group member asked that Trout Unlimited let the CBC know if they would like the CBC or entities within the CBC to make funding requests on behalf of the Enloe Dam removal project.

#### Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP)

Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District, shared an update on the status of YBIP. Urban shared background information, key partners, and the goals of the YBIP, highlighting the theme of protecting both the ecosystem and economy. Urban reviewed water storage goals and highlighted activities related to the Cle Elum Dam fish passage and intake facility and the recent partner-driven purchase of ranch land for a surface storage project. Urban also reviewed YBIP's tributary supplementation system and thanked YBIP's partners and their willingness to collaborate.

The group had no comments or questions.

#### Bateman Island Causeway

Jerimiah Bonifer, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), shared an update on the removal of the Bateman Island Causeway. Jerimiah highlighted key partners, including the Yakama Nation, and reviewed the ecological and social impacts of the causeway, noting harmful algal blooms, warm water temperatures, and poor water quality, all of which negatively impacted the river's ability to produce and host healthy fish. Jerimiah reviewed the key challenges related to the removal of the causeway, noting the use of Bateman Island for recreation as well as a nearby marina and related infrastructure. He thanked WDFW and Trout Unlimited for mitigating the removal of the marina. Jerimiah and partners from the Yakama Nation showed drone footage from the breaching of the causeway and reviewed the timeline for finishing the removal.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member noted that the causeway had been in place for 85 years and that this removal effort was the third removal effort coordinated under the YBIP. The group member also noted that the project has improved the habitat quality of the island by reducing the impacts from human use.
- One group member asked how well the silt curtains work.
  - David Blodgett, Yakama Nation, explained that the silt curtains work well and are still in place as removal efforts continue but will be adjusted as needed. The team paused the removal for a day or two to monitor the silt but they did not observe silt escaping the

curtains. They hope that sediment will move naturally and expect a channel to develop by next year.

- One group member asked how the team managed the removal of the marina and related infrastructure. The member also asked if there was any mitigation for lost recreation opportunities, noting that there are several studies on replacement services for the Lower Snake River dams, and asking if the team looked at options for replacing recreation opportunities.
  - Jerimiah and David explained that the team completely removed the marina infrastructure in consultation with the marina owners, who supported the action. The downstream marina was private, and the owners were experiencing issues re-permitting it. Bateman Island remains open if accessed by boat, but some people are calling for additional access. The team is working to communicate the ecological benefits of reduced access to stakeholders and the public.
- One group member asked who manages the island.
  - Jerimiah noted that the United States Army Corps of Engineers manage it.

### Walla Walla 2050 Planning

Jerimiah Bonifer, CTUIR, provided an update on the Walla Walla 2050 Plan, which is a 30-year strategic plan for the Walla Walla River Basin. Jerimiah noted the management difficulties due to the basin being in two states (Oregon and Washington) and highlighted the goals of the plan, which are to seek ecological, agricultural, and recreational improvements. Jerimiah noted that a Basin Advisory Committee has been established to identify priority strategies for the plan and reviewed elements of the plan, including addressing water resources via a pumping station and/or reservoir and prioritizing actions for fishery resources and restoration. Jerimiah shared an example of fish passage and levee modification activities at Mill Creek to illustrate the impact of the Walla Walla 2050 planning process. Jerimiah shared that due to the plan, legislation has been passed in Washington and Oregon which now allows for the application of resources and protective measures related to the Walla Walla 2050 Plan in cross-state boundary projects.

The group had no comments or questions.

### Columbia River Restoration Program

Kevin Scribner, Salmon-Safe, gave a presentation on the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 Columbia River Basin Restoration Act. Kevin provided background context on the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act, noting that it augments support for addressing toxics and pollutants. He emphasized the role of the Northwest delegation in getting the act passed. Kevin highlighted the four pillars of the Clean Water Act Section 123 and reviewed the program's funding amounts over time as well as the [most recent series](#) of grants and recipients. Kevin reviewed the goals of the Toxic Monitoring Working Group as an example of a recipient of the grant funding via the program but noted the group's closure in 2025. Kevin noted that the group is currently making a strategic effort to renew the Act, sharing that it successfully passed through the House but is now being introduced to the Senate.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member shared that they will be working with the Northwest delegation to push for passing the Act, flagging that the collaborative effort demonstrates the power of partnership. They highlighted the accomplishments of the Toxic Monitoring Working Group and asked the I/RG to consider how the CBC can support the Working Group.

- One group member noted that the individual entities of the CBC can support the Working Group in addition to providing support under the auspices of the CBC.

## Updates on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council Fish and Wildlife Program

Liz M. invited Tom Iverson, Yakama Nation, to provide a presentation on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program. Tom presented a set of slides from the NPCC which reviewed the background information; primary functions including regional power planning, addressing fish needs, and public process; and the Fish and Wildlife Program amendment steps, planning process, and timeline. Tom noted a recent effort for more comprehensive sub-basin plans, reviewed major accomplishments of the Fish and Wildlife Program and Bonneville Power Authority (BPA)-funded activities, and highlighted near-term priorities of the Fish and Wildlife Program. Tom shared the timeline for the public comment period (deadline March 2, 2026) and how to provide comments.

Tom then shared a second set of slides which focused on the involvement of Yakama Nation Fisheries with the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program and suggestions for how the CBC could engage with the program amendment process. Tom reviewed alignment between CBC recommendations and the draft program, noted that the draft program goals are aligned with the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF) goals, and proposed that the CBC review the program as a potential comprehensive strategy for regional management and as an opportunity to seek future funding.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member asked for more information about whether deference is given to fish managers in their comments on the Fish and Wildlife Program.
  - Tom noted that the Northwest Power Act has language about deference to fish managers, but all parties are welcome to comment. However, if conflicting comments or recommendations are received, the NPCC must defer to state agencies and Tribes and provide documentation about their decision.
- Members discussed if this process was an opportunity for the CBC to be a voice in favor of the whole-of-government approach.
  - One group member noted that during the convening of the CBC, some of the state representatives were also NPCC Members, so the NPCC was closely tied to the CBC. The member also noted that maintaining a whole-of-government approach is helpful for working with ratepayers and other stakeholders.
  - However, another group member flagged that one difference between the CBC and the NPCC is that the NPCC has eight members while the CBC has over 25 members. The member also noted that the CBC can help support appropriation requests, conduct studies, pilot projects, and other actions. While there are differences between the NPCC and the CBC, both are working to achieve similar goals.
- One group member shared that they would have liked the opportunity to present their recommendations and perspective for engaging with the NPCC.
  - The facilitation team offered to hold additional time during the 1/29 meeting for further discussion on this topic.
- One group member expressed concern about the CBC making a decision about engaging with the NPCC, noting the need for detailed review with their entity to ensure there are no conflicts of interest.

- Members shared that there is no action being asked of the CBC from this presentation. The NPCC program has not yet been adopted, so there is nothing for the CBC to sign on to at present. The goal of this presentation was to draw attention to the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process and encourage parties to comment on it.
- Other members noted that any decisions of the CBC will provide time for each party to review.
- One group member noted that they would like to hear other perspectives and comments on the five million fish goal, noting that it has historically been based on returns to Bonneville Dam but now with ocean fisheries and harvests below the dam, it seems to lack specificity.
  - One member clarified that the five million fish goal consists of ocean fisheries plus the river mouth, including harvest below Bonneville Dam and natural spawners, and Bonneville Dam counts. However, it should be flagged that the mitigation was prior to 1980 (when the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program was created) and involved moving fish from upstream where Tribes could access them to downstream where they could not. The Council has committed to track progress against the CBPTF goals, so it should be possible to see how the five million fish are distributed geographically.
  - Another group member echoed the concern, noting that the CBPTF goals focused on stock-specific numbers.
- One group member shared that they liked the notion of the CBC commenting as a body on the suitability of the draft program in addition to individual entities submitting their own comments. This member noted that the draft calls for a reduction of aggressive spill in August which is a concern for fishers, and they asked other members to consider commenting on this.
- Group members agreed that fully supporting the Fish and Wildlife Program as the CBC would be challenging. They noted that reviewing the Program will benefit the CBC and that the program could be a useful tool for the CBC to use to advocate for funding. They suggested that the CBC voice its support of the NPCC tracking progress against the CBPTF goals.

## Next Steps and Summary

Liz previewed the next day's meeting agenda, which included time for continuing the discussion on how the CBC may engage with the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process, in addition to federal funding considerations and next steps for the CBC.

### Action Items

- Please see the January 29 I/RG meeting summary notes for a comprehensive list of action items.

*The meeting adjourned at 4:30pm PT.*