

Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration/Recommendations Group

Meeting Summary

January 29, 2026, 8:30 am – 12:00 pm PT / 9:30 am – 1:00 pm MT
Offices of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Portland, Oregon

Welcome and Agenda Review

Liz Mack, Kearns & West (KW), opened the meeting, reviewed the hybrid meeting guidelines, and gave an overview of the discussion from January 28. Liz reviewed the agenda items, which included discussing next steps for engaging with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program, federal funding requests, and next steps for the CBC.

Next Steps for Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program

Liz invited I/RG members to continue the discussion on potential actions that the CBC could take in relation to the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member noted the importance of the program and encouraged all members to review it but flagged that the program amendment process must be completed before the CBC considers taking any actions. They noted that it could be a powerful regional strategy for the basin if all four states (WA, OR, ID, MT), Tribal sovereigns, and other stakeholders of the CBC can support the updated program.
 - Several other group members agreed with this comment, noting that the program can provide a roadmap and credibility for federal advocacy efforts.
- Several group members supported the CBC submitting a comment to the draft Fish and Wildlife Program, although a few members were wary of conflicting interests. Group members discussed submitting comments in support of monitoring progress against the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF) goals and noted the value of submitting something as the CBC to build credibility.
 - One member suggested attaching a list of the CBC recommendations to the comment submission while others suggested keeping the submission tightly focused to the CBPTF goals.
- One group member welcomed other I/RG members to review the comments their entity will be submitting. The group member flagged a concern in their comment to NPCC related to the definition of blocked areas and the lack of glossary and welcomed other I/RG members to include this issue in their own comments.
- One group member expressed concerns about submitting comments as the CBC, voicing capacity constraints and wariness of conflicting interests.

- Liz reminded the group the CBC operates in consensus and that any comment letter would be fully reviewed before submission. If the I/RG was not aligned, then the comment would not be submitted.

The CBC members agreed to develop and review a draft comment letter for the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program that supports the inclusion of CBPTF goals, recognizes the importance of a whole-of-government approach, and shares the CBC recommendations for NPCC's consideration.

Federal Funding Requests

Liz provided a brief overview of the FY (fiscal year) 2026 federal funding request letter that was submitted by the CBC. Liz then invited Meagan West, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), to present on the status of FY2026 federal appropriations. Meagan reviewed the packages passed by Congress, noting similarities and differences in funding levels compared to previous years. Meagan gave agency-specific overviews of funding received including the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Meagan highlighted alignment between the CBC's funding requests and funding received as well as other areas for future CBC consideration, such as monitoring for invasive mussels. Meagan also noted that the U.S. Department of Commerce requires any request above \$100,000 to be reviewed at the secretary level which is anticipated to delay funding distribution. Meagan also noted a directive from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) that requires review for any requests over \$50,000.

Liz reviewed the list of approved CBC recommendations. Liz then invited Sarah Dyrdaahl and Jaime Sigaran, American Rivers, to present on the American River's River Budget. Jaime reviewed the agenda of the River Budget, the appropriations process, and the current status of appropriations. Jaime highlighted the community and partnership aspects of the River Budget and reviewed key categories, highlighted recent wins from FY2026, and reviewed American Rivers' strategic funding request process.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member acknowledged the hard work involved in the CBC's FY2026 letter and noted their belief that it had a meaningful impact. They urged the group to consider developing another letter for FY2027.
 - Meagan agreed with this comment, noting that cohesive funding requests are often more effective.
- One group member asked if any of the funding held back was due to the issues with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement funding.
 - Meagan explained that the U.S. Department of State funding for the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty bill has not been signed into law and is one of six outstanding appropriations bills. Megan noted she doesn't know how the Senate will proceed, and they may advance a package without the U.S. Department of Homeland Security bill.
- One group member asked for clarification on the limitations applied to administrative overhead for Mitchell Act funding.
 - Meagan explained that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is directed to limit the amount of Mitchell Act hatcheries funding withheld for administrative expenses to 15%, with a long-term goal of less than 10%. The provision was adopted in the Joint Explanatory Statement that was passed and signed as part of the Commerce, Science, and Justice Appropriations bill.

- One group member noted that they would follow up with Meagan later to discuss potential additions to the CBC FY2027 letter based on what she shared in her presentation. They suggested not only updating the numbers from the FY2026 letter but also adding other relevant requests.
- A group member asked if agencies could be directed to amend the rules for reviewing requests above \$50,000 or \$100,000.
 - Meagan noted that many have shared interest in this topic, and Congressional offices will likely advocate for an amendment to the review rules.
- One group member noted that American Rivers has been a critical partner in the work of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and thanked them for their involvement.
- One group member recommended using the River Budget as guidance for the CBC to develop a whole-of-government, cross-cutting salmon-related or Columbia Basin-related budget for achieving the goals of the CBPTF.
 - Several other group members echoed support for this proposal.
- One group member asked that American Rivers include rivers upriver of terminal blockages in their proposed budgets.

Next Steps for the CBC

Liz invited the I/RG to consider how they would like the CBC to move forward. Liz asked the group to share what policies and investments they would like to have the CBC advocate for and asked for recommendations on next steps. Liz also asked the group to share thoughts on the scope of the CBC and work planning, noting that the current contract for the facilitation team ends in June 2026, flagging past work group activity for consideration, and encouraging members to share thoughts on the timing and location of the next I/RG meeting.

The group had the following comments and questions:

- One group member proposed updating the federal funding request letter from FY2026 for use in FY2027. Once the letter is drafted and reviewed by the I/RG, the group member proposed a virtual meeting to discuss a strategy for advocating for the requests detailed in the letter.
 - Other group members agreed with this idea, noting that the letter should be drafted by the end of February and then a coordinated strategy for lobbying the letter should be identified and implemented.
 - Group members noted that the strategy could include in-person lobbying efforts, sharing contact information, developing talking points, and more.
- One group member noted that the CBC should also advocate for funding for operating the CBC .
 - One member suggested pursuing congressionally directed spending requests for securing funding for the CBC and potentially including a request for CBC funding in the FY27 federal funding letter.
 - A member shared that some Tribes will not endorse CBC funding requests that compete with Tribal funding.
 - Other group members recommended keeping the FY2027 federal funding request letter focused and succinct and seeking funding for CBC operations through a separate avenue.
- One group member noted that the CBC should also consider developing a cross-cutting budget for Columbia River Basin salmon to guide long-term advocacy efforts.
- One group member flagged that some parties were not pleased that the CBC received funding from the latest round of the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) over other projects.

- Several members noted that the States are aware of this issue, and it is a reason for identifying other funding sources for the CBC.
- One group member asked where the FY2027 federal funding letter will go.
 - Michael Garrity, WDFW, explained that the letter goes to the appropriations committee and can also be shared with the northwest congressional delegation. Some parties could meet with the Office of Management and Budget, USACE, or DOI to further discuss.
- Several group members supported coordinating in-person lobbying efforts in Washington D.C. in spring 2026, based on the details of the letter.
- Group members agreed that the first step is for the CBC to draft and review a FY2027 federal funding letter, then a subgroup can develop an advocacy strategy.
- Several group members noted that the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Pilot Project has continued informally while the CBC work groups were paused and asked the I/RG to consider reconvening the work group if capacity allows.
 - Several group members agreed that the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Pilot Project is a good fit for the CBC. However, given the current funding and facilitation uncertainties, they suggested delaying its reconvening until the CBC has secured more funding.
 - The group members decided to revisit the status of the work group at the next I/RG meeting.
- One group member stated that they would like to see the CBC create a strategy for advancing the quantitative and qualitative goals of CBPTF.
 - Another group member suggested that the fish managers present ongoing efforts to the CBC, noting the need to connect current efforts with how they help achieve CBPTF quantitative or qualitative goals. The member noted that current CBC recommendations do not focus on habitat and suggested providing a high-level endorsement of improving habitat and increasing carrying capacities as a general recommendation.
 - Another group member agreed with the habitat restoration recommendation proposal and noted that a recent study showed significant suitable habitat not being used in the Upper Snake River Basin and asked the group to consider incorporating suitable habitat not currently being used as an aspect of the habitat recommendation.
 - Another group member noted that the near-term priorities outlined in the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program could be something the CBC considers in tandem with a habitat recommendation, as the NPCC proposes fully funding habitat work.
 - One group member highlighted the idea of collaborating with the NPCC for tracking progress towards the CBPTF goals.
 - Another group member reminded the group that there is CBC recommendation about tracking progress toward the CBPTF goals that focuses on collaboration with NPCC via StreamNet, although Tribal data are not included in StreamNet.
- One group member suggested conducting outreach to reengage less active members of the CBC.
 - Group members agreed with this proposal and asked the project team to conduct this outreach.
- One group member inquired about including local government representatives in the CBC, noting the role of county commissioners.
 - Members noted that this change would require the CBC to revise its charter. The Advocacy Strategy Work Group could consider expanding CBC membership as part of its discussions.

- Another group member suggested including representatives from salmon recovery groups or boards, while a different group member suggested the addition of a new sector focused on salmon economics.
 - One group member shared support for this proposal, while others advocated for keeping the CBC focused on the priorities of active members.
- One group member suggested that the next I/RG meeting should take place in late May or early June.
 - Another group member noted that the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program will be finalized mid-May, so the proposed meeting timing aligns well. The rest of the I/RG agreed.
- One group member suggested that the CBC consider conducting a basin-wide gap analysis to help guide the advancement of CBPTF goals.
 - Another group member shared that this idea aligns with their earlier proposal of developing a cross-cutting salmon budget, identifying gaps for funding, and project work.

Michael Garrity agreed to draft the FY2027 federal funding request letter for I/RG consideration by the end of February. The group also agreed to convene an Advocacy Strategy Work Group to create a strategy for coordinating lobbying efforts, including in-person lobbying efforts in Washington DC in spring 2026. Kevin Scribner, Neil Maunu, Eric Crawford, Urban Eberhart, Leslie Druffel, and Paul Arrington volunteered for the Advocacy Strategy Work Group. The CBC Project Team agreed to conduct an initial round of outreach to less active members of the CBC and encouraged other I/RG members to conduct outreach as they see fit. The I/RG agreed to meet again in-person in late May or early June.

Next Steps and Summary

Liz M. reviewed the action items and invited Jim McKenna, Office of Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, to share closing remarks. The group ended the meeting by sharing reflections on the life and passing of Joel Kawahara and expressed appreciation for the reconvening of the CBC.

Action Items

- **Jim McKenna/Mike Edmondson/Michael Garrity:** Draft a CBC letter for submission to the NPCC on the Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment process.
- **Michael Garrity:** Draft a FY27 Federal Funding Letter addressed to appropriators for consideration by the CBC.
- **Advocacy Strategy Sub-group:** Produce an outline for advocacy strategy related to the FY27 Federal Funding Letter to bring forward to the I/RG. Current Advocacy Strategy Sub-group volunteers include Kevin Scribner, Eric Crawford, Neil Maunu, Urban Eberhart, Leslie Druffel, and Paul Arrington.
 - **KW:** Reach out to I/RG to see who would like to be a part of the Advocacy Strategy Sub-group.
- **Project Team:** Reach out to I/RG representatives who have been less active to re-engage.
- **I/RG Members:** If you'd like to share comments on the Northwest Power & Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program with the I/RG reps, please send them to the KW Facilitation Team.
- **I/RG Members:** Plan to meet virtually to review advocacy strategy and determine the next steps in March.

- **I/RG Members:** Plan to revisit the Mid-C Steelhead Pilot Project next steps at a future I/RG meeting.
- **I/RG Members:** Plan to hold a hybrid I/RG meeting in mid/late-May to follow up on advocacy and continue to work on the next steps for the CBC.
- **KW:** Draft a workplan to document next steps for the spring and remainder of 2026
- **KW:** Draft a meeting summary and share it with the I/RG for review.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm PT.