

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This plan covers two subbasin: the Columbia River Estuary subbasin and the Mainstem Lower Columbia subbasin. The subbasin plan has five chapters and three appendices. These include:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Assessment

Chapter 3 Inventory

Chapter 4 Management Plan

Chapter 5 Management Plan Supplement

Appendix A: Species Technical foundation (Assessment)

Appendix B: Willamette/Lower Columbia Technical Review Team population identification information for the Western Oregon tributaries

Appendix C: Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board Programs Inventory

Planning entity

The Northwest Power Act of 1980 directs the Northwest Power Planning Council (Council) to develop a program to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife of the Columbia River Basin and make annual funding recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) for projects to implement the program. Subbasin plans will contain the strategies that drive the implementation of the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program at the subbasin level.

Because the mainstem Lower Columbia River and Lower Columbia River Estuary subbasins share many of the same issues, and include many of the same agency representatives with the charge to address these issues, this plan combines both geographic areas for efficiency in coordination.

The lead agency identified by Oregon for the Mainstem Lower Columbia and Lower Columbia River Estuary is the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (Estuary Partnership). To ensure coordination of the bi-state effort and integrated planning, the Estuary Partnership worked closely with the Washington Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB), the lead entity for these subbasins in Washington.

Participants

At the project's outset, the project team organized a Planning Group to monitor all aspects of the plan and recommend technical and sub-group work as needed. This Planning Group assisted in the development of all plan elements including the vision, objectives and strategies. It also directed technical review and public involvement efforts. The Planning Group met nine times throughout the process. It includes many of the LCREP Board members directly involved with developing and implementing related planning efforts, including federal, state and local government representatives as well as other interests.

The project's Planning Group includes representatives of:

- Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
- NOAA Fisheries
- Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Fish & Wildlife (U.S., Oregon, Washington)
- Bonneville Power Administration
- Army Corps of Engineers
- City of Portland
- Clatsop County
- Economic Development Commission
- States (Oregon, Washington)
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Planning group participants have included:

- The Blaine Ebberts, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Cathy Tortorici, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- Cedric Cooney, ODF&W (Oregon Technical Support)
- Dave Ward, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Debrah Marriott, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership
- Gustavo Bisbal, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Jeff Breckel, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
- Jessica Wilcox, Bonneville Power Administration
- Jim Middaugh, City of Portland
- Jim Owens, Oregon Coordinating Group (Tier II)
- John Marsh, Parametrix
- Lee Van Tussenbrook, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Matt Van Ess, Columbia River Estuarine Task Force
- Patty Dornbusch, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- Paul Lumley, Columbia Intertribal Fish Commission
- Phil Miller, Washington Governor's Office
- Phil Trask, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
- Rhon Rhew, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Rick Bastasch, Willamette Restoration Initiative
- Taunja Berquam, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Todd Jones, CEDC Fisheries
- Tom Byler, Oregon Governor's Office
- Phil Rogers, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission
- Tony Grover, Northwest Planning and Conservation Council (Tier II)

Stakeholder and Public involvement

The project team conducted this planning effort in an open, public process including the participation of a wide range of state, federal, and tribal governments, local managers, fish and wildlife managers, land and water resources managers, landowners, local governments, interest groups and other stakeholders.

The participation structure ensured that known interests have had opportunities for involvement and that other interests could become involved as well. The project team expects that this transparency will continue through the ISRP, Tier II and NPCC reviews and the adoption process.

Stakeholder interviews early in the process helped identify interests for involvement on the Planning Group. Further outreach included open houses, presentations, workshops, and electronic notifications sent to a broad list acquired from CBFWA and an interested parties list developed throughout this project.

In Oregon, open houses were held in Astoria, St. Helens and Portland in September, 2003. In Washington the open houses were held in Longview, Cathlamet, Stevenson and Vancouver (2). Washington hosted a spring, 2004, series of workshops as well. Additionally, the project team gave presentations in late 2004 to the Lower Columbia-Clatskanie Watershed Association and the Nicolli-Wickiup watershed Council. (An early June, 2004, presentation to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners is also scheduled.) Also as part of the Western Oregon tributaries analysis, the project team hosted workshops in Clackamas, Astoria and with watershed council representatives and ODFW staff.

Overall Approach

The purpose of the subbasin planning process is to conduct a thorough scientific assessment, define a vision and goals for fish, wildlife, and habitat in the Lower Mainstem Columbia and Estuary Subbasins, define objectives that measure progress toward those goals, and establish strategies to meet objectives.

The plan will be used by National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to aid recovery planning for species listed under the Endangered Species Act and will be evaluated for consistency with the Clean Water Act, federal treaty and trust responsibilities with the basin Native American Tribes, and the Council's 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program. The plan also will incorporate the goals and actions of the FCRPS Biological Opinion issued by the NOAA Fisheries.

Because they are at the river's end, these subbasins are unique from all of the other subbasins and present unique challenges. As such, NPCC guidance did not apply or could not be used in many cases. In upriver tributaries, models--such as Ecosystem Diagnostics and Treatment (EDT)--were available to compare historic conditions in the watershed to current conditions and to identify restoration and protection values in a given production area. These valuations are possible because the modeling allows for an outcome-based assessment of possible management actions. In a system such as the mainstem and estuary, this mechanism for prioritizing restoration and protection measures was not available. The science of the estuary and mainstem does not currently support such a model. Also, the inclusion of species that produce outside the subbasin would make the application of such a model, if it existed, even more

difficult. Indeed, the development of an adaptive management model for systematically ranking geographic areas of the subbasin emerged from this process as a priority strategy for the region.

The Mainstem Lower Columbia River and Columbia River Estuary subbasin plan utilizes a qualitative approach in recognition of the limits of ecosystem modeling available for these highly complex mainstem environments. We structured the qualitative assessment and subsequent management planning effort to meet the intent of Council guidance, with major elements that parallel other subbasin plans. In doing so, the project team attempted to formally articulate the links between the elements of this plan whenever possible and provide transparency to the logic supporting such links.

Organization and Coordination: Two States, Two Subbasins, One Plan.

The planning process in the Mainstem Lower Columbia River and Columbia River Estuary subbasin involves a number of federal and state agencies, and regional organizations, and managed primarily by the lead entities: the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (LCREP) in partnership with the Lower Columbia fish Recovery Board (LCFRB).

The Mainstem Lower Columbia and Columbia River Estuary subbasins fall within the jurisdictions of both Oregon and Washington and encompass nearly the same geographic area covered by the LCREP. The Estuary Partnership is a two-state, public/private partnership that has developed a management plan for the lower 146 miles of the Columbia River and which has a board of directors comprised of individuals and interests from both states. The Estuary Partnership works to restore habitat, provide education and information and eliminate pollution from the lower river. It was asked by the Governors of Washington and Oregon to coordinate a policy-level committee of federal and state partners to address efforts to recover threatened and endangered species. In developing its own management plan, the Estuary Partnership used an extensive process to involved stakeholders, constituents and members of the public from both states and all other jurisdictions within its study area. This effort also capitalizes on the LCREP organizational framework. It also utilizes information and involvement opportunities presented by LCFRB's ongoing recovery planning efforts.

The Oregon and Washington Coordinating (Level II) Groups have agreed to combine the two subbasins and to develop one plan that covers both subbasins. In addition, as noted, the geography of the two subbasins aligns closely with the area within the Estuary Partnership study area. The Estuary Partnership aimed to use the same two-state integrated approach to developing the plan that it employs in all its work and organizational structure.

For purposes of subbasin planning, the study area ends at the confluence of tributaries, The Columbia River for tributaries that are part of other subbasins and subbasin processes. The exception to this rule covers tributaries, or sub-areas, that are not otherwise being addressed in separate subbasin planning processes. These included the Western-most Oregon tributaries. In addressing these tributaries, the plan will be specific to particular salmon populations. In these sub-areas, the planning processes included subcommittees formed to work specific tributaries.

Coordination with the Lower Columbia River Fish Recovery Board.

Because of the relationship with Washington planning efforts and the overlap in jurisdictions and ecosystems, the Estuary Partnership worked closely and directly with the LCFRB. The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board has served as the lead entity for nine additional subbasin planning processes in Washington along with the Lower Columbia River and

Columbia Estuary subbasins. The LCFRB led the assessment-development effort, provided inventory-related information and expertise along with funding to the Estuary Partnership for development of this two-subbasin plan.

Additionally, the Estuary Partnership and the LCFRB coordinated efforts and hosted stakeholder and public meetings and other events as appropriate. Staff and consultants from both organizations worked closely throughout the planning processes.

Decision structure

At the project's outset, an infrastructure for product development and decision-making was designed including a planning group, technical advisory groups and subcommittees.

Planning Group--The Planning Group monitored all aspects of the plan and recommended technical and sub-group work as needed. This Planning Group assisted in the development of all plan elements including the vision, objectives and strategies. It also directed technical review and public involvement efforts. The planning group met nine times throughout the process.

Technical Advisory groups (TAC): The Estuary Partnership Science Work Group provided a pool of resources from which to draw upon for assistance with the plan's technical issues. In taking the lead on the assessment, the LCFRB enlisted its technical resources in gathering detailed information about the estuary and mainstem ecosystems and species of interest. The project team used these technical resources extensively for the development and review of the management plan sections.

Subcommittees—The subbasin project team also used subcommittees to address specific issues, such as the Western Oregon tributaries analysis, assessment structure development and the vision development.

Process and schedule for revising and updating the Plan

The project team expects to present this plan before the ISRP in early July and participate in the public review process during the latter half of 2004. The project team and Planning Group have recognized that the state of the science relative to ecosystem processes and salmon in the Columbia River estuary is dissimilar to that of the tributaries. In particular, the ability to model productive capacity and predict responses to management action is limited. Focused efforts currently are underway that will further define the limiting factors, research, monitoring and evaluation. Significant progress will be made in these areas during the last half of 2004 and in early 2005.

As such, this plan moves forward with assumptions about which the degree of certainty is not always high. While the assumptions in this subbasin plan are derived from currently available information, the project team expects that these will likely need adjustments as new information becomes available.

The project team has attempted, whenever possible, to develop and articulate the links between limiting factors, objectives and strategies and explain the logic behind making such links. The project team also attempted to articulate the level of certainty on which assumptions and decisions are based. This transparency should help keep this plan dynamic and allow for adjustments and plan adaptations based on more refined data and information.