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# Northwest Power and Conservation Council

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July 8, 2025

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Mark Fritsch and Maureen Hess

**SUBJECT:** Update on Project Review – Fish and Wildlife Lands

## BACKGROUND:

**Presenter:** Council Staff

**Summary:** Staff will provide a brief summary of the updated review process for existing projects that implement the Fish and Wildlife Program. At the May 2024 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting, staff proposed using the updated approach to begin a review during fall 2024 of a subset of projects focused on mitigation lands that benefit fish<sup>1</sup> and wildlife<sup>2</sup>. Based on feedback from regional fish and wildlife managers regarding the overlap in timing with the Program Amendment process and implementation plans for new projects, the Council deferred the start of the Lands review to 2025. Staff plan to initiate the Lands review to begin in October 2025 and will preview the timeline, with intent to notify project sponsors after the July Council meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Those lands purchased and/or enhanced as mitigation through the Program to benefit aquatic focal species are termed "Fish Lands."

<sup>2</sup> Those lands purchased and/or enhanced through the Program to benefit wildlife focal species, as mitigation for losses attributable to construction, inundation, and operation of the federal hydrosystem, are termed "Wildlife Lands."

- Relevance: Section 4h(10)(D) of the Northwest Power Act directs the Council to review projects proposed for funding by Bonneville to implement the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. The Council engages in this review process with the assistance of the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP). The Council and Bonneville work together to develop the information necessary to make the review process successful.
- Workplan: Fish and Wildlife Division work plan 2025; Program Implementation; A. Project Review.
- Background: For over 25 years, the Council has developed and conducted reviews of projects directly funded by Bonneville that are implemented to mitigate, protect and enhance fish and wildlife as directed under the Northwest Power Act. These rigorous reviews have resulted in clear documentation of each project's purpose, objectives, and results; project improvements through independent scientific review and feedback; facilitation of sharing project data and information; increased transparency and accountability; and the identification of project contributions to the Program and to the region.

Many of the projects implementing the Council's mitigation Program have been reviewed and recommended by the Council numerous times, and their continued implementation and overall scientific soundness has been accepted. For these existing and ongoing projects, an extensive project review is not needed going forward. Staff have worked over the last couple of years to update the review process for these types of projects to be focused on an implementation check-in that is more efficient, and value added.

Staff previewed the draft approach and received initial input from the fish and wildlife managers through the Regional Coordination Forum (April 2023), the Independent Science Review Panel (June 2023) and Bonneville staff (September 2023) to further develop and refine the new project review process. The updated review process was described in detail during the following Council, and Fish and Wildlife Committee meetings: [May 2023](#), [October 2023](#), and [May 2024](#).

Key components to the revised review process include:

- Recognition that the basic premises and scientific soundness of existing projects have been accepted. The ISRP report and Council recommendations will offer guidance intended to strengthen aspects of the projects into the future.
- Minimal review materials submitted by project sponsors – it will be an addendum built on the last recommended project proposal.
- Recommendations will be value-added based on information received from addendum summary and responses to targeted questions. Advanced clarification on which projects are not amenable to the science review

component will be provided (e.g., coordination, planning, operations and maintenance).

- The substantive project information we are going to focus on most in this check-in is whether projects are making progress to meet their own internal goals and objectives.

### Fish and Wildlife Lands Review

The next review, using the updated process, will be focused on projects that acquire and maintain mitigation lands that benefit fish and wildlife. This set of projects was selected based on both the time since the last review (2017 for most projects in the set), and alignment to other Council work on assessing Program Performance. Council staff are working to identify Strategy Performance Indicators on wildlife lands and to track progress toward achieving Wildlife Program goals. Both tracking efforts would benefit from project sponsor review materials and results.

To prepare for this initial review of Lands projects (Table 1), staff are working to define and develop the following:

- Clarify how each project may participate in the review (e.g., BPA Program Support projects and O&M project elements may not warrant scientific review).
- Develop a review template to include targeted questions to guide projects and the review process.
- Continue to seek additional input and feedback on the project review process with fish and wildlife managers (through the Regional Coordination Forum), Bonneville staff, and the ISRP.

The initiation for this review was planned to occur in 2024, however, based on feedback from project sponsors and regional coordination forum entities, the Council deferred the start of the Lands review to 2025. This deferral not only provided better alignment for both project sponsors and staff to the anticipated workload associated with the Program amendment process but also allowed fish and wildlife managers more time to initiate implementation of new projects and workload associated with recent settlements and agreements. The anticipated review schedule is:

[illegible]

**Table 1: Existing Fish and wildlife lands projects to be reviewed beginning October 2025<sup>3</sup>.**

Project Number	Proponent Orgs	Project Title	Project Focus – wildlife or fish lands
1990-092-00	CTUIR	Wanaket Wildlife Area	Wildlife Lands
1991-061-00	WDFW	Swanson Lake Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
1992-048-00	CCT	Hellsgate Big Game Winter Range	Wildlife Lands
1992-061-02	KT	Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation-Kalispel Tribe	Wildlife Lands
1992-061-03	IDFG	Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation-Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)	Wildlife Lands
1992-061-05	KTOI	Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation-Kootenai Tribe	Wildlife Lands
1992-061-06	CDT	Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation-Coeur D'Alene Tribe	Wildlife Lands
1994-044-00	WDFW	Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
1995-057-02	SBT	Shoshone-Bannock Wildlife Mitigation Projects	Wildlife Lands
1995-057-03	SPT	Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation--Shoshone-Paiute Tribes	Wildlife Lands
1995-060-01	CTUIR	Isq'ulktpe Watershed Project	Wildlife Lands
1996-080-00	NPT	Northeast Oregon Wildlife Project	Wildlife Lands

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<sup>3</sup> Note that there are 4 new Lands projects that are currently *in development*, no proposal received to date and will be reviewed later when submitted: #2024-003-00, #2024-005-00, #2027-003-00, #2028-002-00. Developing project information is located on CBFish.org.

1996-094-01	WDFW	Scotch Creek Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
1998-003-00	STOI	Wildlife Mitigation/Operations and Maintenance (O&M) for Spokane Tribe Land Acquisitions	Wildlife Lands
1998-022-00	CTWSO	Pine Creek Conservation Area	Wildlife Lands
2000-009-00	BPT	Logan Valley Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2000-015-00	CTWSO	Upper John Day Conservation Lands Program	Fish Lands
2000-026-00	CTUIR	Rainwater Wildlife Area Operations	Wildlife Lands
2000-027-00	BPT	Malheur River Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2002-003-00	CSKT	Secure and Restore Fish and Wildlife Habitat in Montana	Fish Lands
2002-014-00	WDFW	Sunnyside Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2003-012-00	WDFW	Shillapoo Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2006-003-00	WDFW	Desert Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2006-004-00	WDFW	Wenas Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2006-005-00	WDFW	Asotin Creek Wildlife Mitigation	Wildlife Lands
2008-007-00	UCUT	Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Program	Wildlife Lands
2008-102-00	CCT	Upper Columbia Land Operation and Maintenance	Fish Lands
2008-104-00	CCT	Upper Columbia Land & Water Acquisition	Fish Lands
2011-003-00	ODFW	Willamette Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Wildlife Lands

2024-004-00 <sup>4</sup>	STOI	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	Wildlife Lands
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**BPA Program Support** - These 7 projects administratively support (i.e., BPA Program Support) the Lands category of projects and receive direct funding from Bonneville associated with the Northwest Power Act. These projects are not part of the review. For regional transparency, this informational table outlines how these projects contribute to Fish and Wildlife Program Lands.

Project Number	Proponent Orgs	Project Title	Project Description of Work Implemented
1992-061-00	IDFG, CDT, KT and KTOI	Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation Capital Land Acquisitions	Oversight and administration of Albeni Falls wildlife mitigation project activities.
2008-303-00	CTWSO	Columbia and Willamette Rivers Operations Administration	Provides the necessary support to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to coordinate with and participate in the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP).
2008-800-00	MFWP	Montana Resident Fish Habitat Acquisition	Implements the Montana Fish Accord MOA.
2010-088-00	OSC	Upper and Lower Lemhi Acquisition/Easements	Assists in acquiring interests in land and water in the Lemhi Watershed. In conjunction with OSC's Lemhi River Restoration Project, 2010-072-00.
2011-004-00	ODFW	ODFW Operation & Maintenance (O&M)	Provides the funding necessary for ODFW to implement the Willamette Wildlife MOA.
2013-002-00	BPA	Land Acquisition Monitoring	This project funds the annual monitoring work completed by BPA's GIS staff for baseline surveys for lands secured through the Program. On the Transmission side of BPA.
2018-001-00	BPA	BPA Pre-Acquisition	This project funds the BPA realty group to do the pre-acquisition activities needed to acquire an acquisition such as title review, site visits, etc. On the Transmission side of BPA.

<sup>4</sup> Proposal received on March 6, 2025, ISRP review received on May 30, 2025 (ISRP document 2025-1). Council recommendation in process.