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July 8, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Erik Merrill, Independent Science Manager

SUBJECT: ISRP Habitat Retrospective Report

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Kurt Fresh, Kurt Fausch, and Rich Carmichael (Chair), Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP); and Stan Gregory, ISRP Peer Review Group

Summary: The ISRP's Habitat Retrospective Report provides a review and synthesis of progress and challenges in Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program habitat protection and restoration projects. The review looks at several major project components, including planning and prioritization, implementation methods, and research, monitoring, and evaluation. Overall, the ISRP found significant improvements in all the major components and commended the Program's restoration efforts for evolving and expanding over time in a manner consistent with the science. However, challenges remain, particularly for understanding watershed scale restoration responses and research, monitoring, and evaluation. Specifically, the ISRP continues to recommend improvements to the research, monitoring, and evaluation component in order to better understand how much restoration is needed to produce biologically meaningful results and under what conditions effects achieve the greatest benefits.

Relevance: A retrospective review of habitat protection and restoration in the Program is consistent with directions provided in the 1996 Amendment to the Power Act for the ISRP to review "*the results of prior-year expenditures*" (i.e., retrospective

reviews). The Council’s 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program provides further guidance for the ISRP to conduct retrospective reviews stating that, among other items, the ISRP’s report should summarize “*major basinwide programmatic issues identified during project reviews.*” The ISRP accomplishes this by looking at themes that emerged in previous retrospectives and major category reviews, drawing on scientific publications and reports, and examining a subset of projects and investigating how they applied their results to proposed future actions.

Workplan: Scientific reviews are an integral part of the Council’s workplan for the Fish and Wildlife Program.

Background: For 28 years, the ISRP has reviewed projects that implement the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. The completion of the Anadromous Fish Habitat and Hatchery Review in 2022 marked the end of the sixth major iteration of project reviews. To take advantage of lessons learned and restoration advancements over these three decades of review, the ISRP, in consultation with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, determined that habitat restoration would benefit from a retrospective report that evaluates progress in habitat protection and restoration projects in the Program, evidence for their success, and ongoing and future challenges. The ISRP’s presentation will highlight the report’s major findings and selected recommendations to improve Program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

More info: See the full report ([ISRP 2025-2](#)).