

Mike Milburn
Chair
Montana

Doug Grob
Montana

Jeffery C. Allen
Idaho

Ed Schriever
Idaho



Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Thomas L (Les) Purce
Vice Chair
Washington

KC Golden
Washington

Margaret Hoffmann
Oregon

Charles F. Sams III
Oregon

November 26, 2025

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Patty O'Toole
Fish and Wildlife Division Director

SUBJECT: Final review and possible decision to release draft Fish and Wildlife Program for public review and comment

PROPOSED ACTION: Staff will review revisions to a working draft of the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program with the Council. Following that discussion, staff will incorporate any suggested changes. If the Council completes its review at the work session, staff recommend the Council vote to release the revised draft for public review and comment. The regular December Council meeting on December 16 and 17 is also an option for a Council decision if further review and discussion is needed.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Northwest Power Act calls for the Council to amend its Fish and Wildlife Program prior to the review and revision of the Council's Power Plan, which occurs every five years. The Council decision to release a draft for review and comment is an important milestone in the process to adopt an amended Fish and Wildlife Program.

BACKGROUND

Under the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act), Congress charged the Council with developing and periodically amending a Fish and Wildlife Program for the Columbia River Basin to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of hydroelectric facilities while assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical, and reliable power supply. The Council's current

Fish and Wildlife Program consists of the 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and its 2020 Addendum.

In January of 2025, the Council began its Program amendment process with a formal request in writing to the region's tribes and state and federal fish and wildlife agencies for recommendations for (as described in the Northwest Power Act):

- “measures which can be expected to be implemented by the [Bonneville] Administrator, using authorities under this Act and other laws, and other Federal agencies to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife, including related spawning grounds and habitat, affected by the development and operation of any hydroelectric project on the Columbia River;
- establishing objectives for the development and operation of such projects on the Columbia River and its tributaries in a manner designed to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife; and
- fish and wildlife management coordination and research and development (including funding) which, among other things, will assist protection, mitigation, and enhancement of anadromous fish at, and between, the region's hydroelectric dams.”

ANALYSIS

Recommendations and comments

The Council called for recommendations to amend its Fish and Wildlife Program in January of 2025 and accepted recommendations through May 19, 2025. The Council received a large set of recommendations, including 15 tribes and tribal coordinating entities, two federal agencies, and seven state or state-supported agencies. Recommendations were also received from local and other governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals. Collectively, the recommendations addressed nearly every aspect of the Council's Program.

Many of the recommendations the Council received were lengthy and detailed, representing a substantial time and energy investment by the recommending entities. All the amendment proposals are posted on the Council's website.

Immediately following the receipt of the recommendations, the Council provided notice of the recommendations and made them available for public comment on the Council's website. Comments were received through July 3, 2025. The Council received more than 1600 comments, including those from three state fish and wildlife agencies, seven tribes or tribal entities, two federal agencies, almost 50 of Bonneville customer utilities and utility groups, other river and water user groups, eleven environmental groups or coalition organizations, and thousands of individuals representing perspectives from environmental groups, public power and a lithium-free battery organization. As with the recommendations, the comments are also available on the Council's website.

Since that time, the Council has been working to develop a draft amended Fish and Wildlife Program based on the recommendations and comments. The Council is scheduled for discussion and a *possible* decision to release the draft for public review on December 3 and 4.

Following the decision of the Council to release a draft Fish and Wildlife Program, staff will publish the draft on the Council's website, circulate notice of the draft, schedule public hearings and begin to receive written public comments through its website.

If the Council reaches a decision to release the draft in early December, the staff recommends that the comment period be closed on February 20, 2026. This allows for at least a 74-day comment period. If the Council opts to make its decision in later December at the regular Council meeting, the staff will provide an adjusted comment timeline recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS

The proposed final draft of the amended Fish and Wildlife Program will be provided to Council members and staff before the meeting.



Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program Amendments Council Member Work Session

Northwest Power and Conservation Council

December 3 & 4, 2025

Council members and staff



Northwest **Power** and
Conservation Council

Work session topics:

1. Process check-in
2. Discuss draft amended Program
3. Possible decision to release draft for public review and comment, with changes from December 3 & 4.

Overview of Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment steps



Planned Fish and Wildlife Amendment work sessions

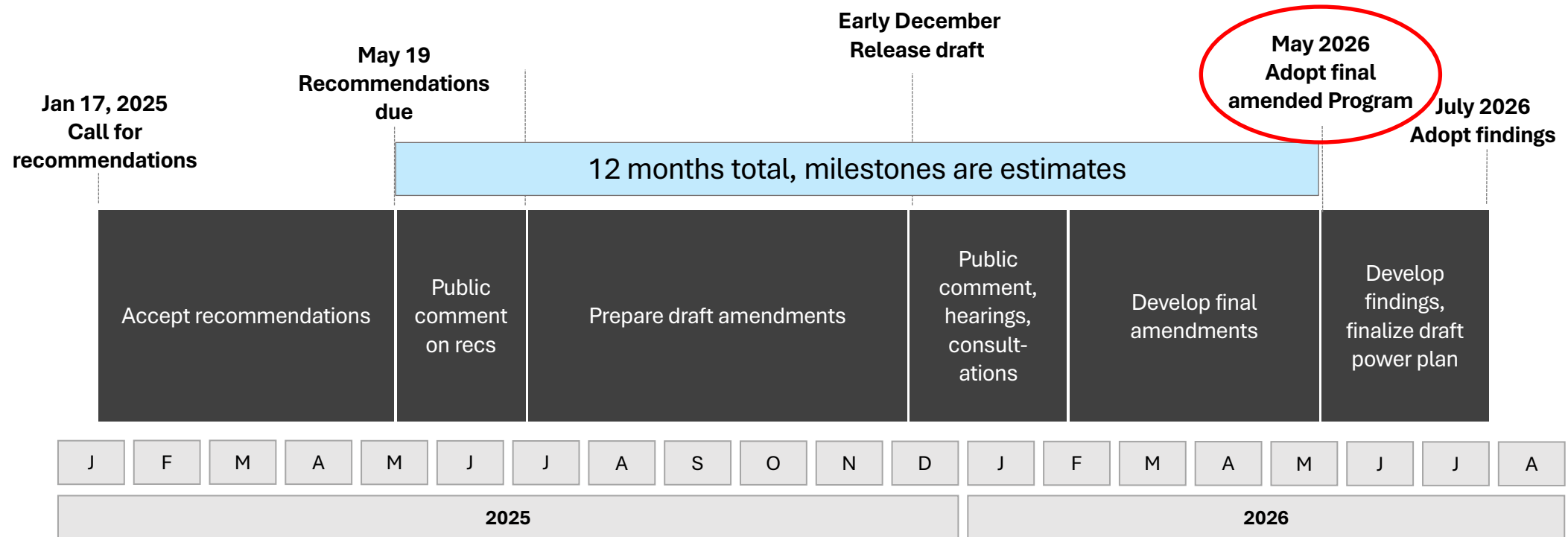
December 3 - 4

Webinar (possible decision to release draft)

December 16 - 17

Webinar (if needed, decision to release draft)

Estimated timeline for Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment Process



Public review consideration

Assumptions:

- Goal for adoption of final Program is May 2026
- Minimum of three months of work sessions to consider comments, adopt final Fish and Wildlife Program

Two variables considered:

- Date of release (early or mid December)
- 60 and 74 day review periods

Next steps

Option A (early Dec, 74 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 3-4, 2025
- Release for public comment by December 8, 2025
- Close of public comment: February 20, 2026 (74 days)

Council meeting: March 10-12

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: **May 12-14**

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)



What happens after decision to release the draft?

- Final edits are incorporated, and draft program is readied for publishing on website
- Notice provided to the region through email, newsletter, social media outlets
- The Council accepts written comment through its website and email
- The Council accepts oral comment at Council meetings during the comment period
- The Council accepts comment through formal public hearings, at least one in each state, and virtual as needed
- The Council accepts comment through consultations

Discuss draft amendments

Extra Slides

Schedule options for next steps

Option B (Mid December, 60 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 16-17, 2025
- Release for public comment: December 22, 2025
- Close of public comment: February 20, 2026 (60 days)

Council meeting: March 10-12

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: **May 12-14**

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)



Schedule options for next steps

Option C (Early December, 60 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 3-4, 2025
- Release for public comment: Estimated Release December 8, 2025
- Close of public comment: February 6, 2026 (60 days)

Council meeting: February 10~~11~~1

Council meeting: March 10-12

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: **May 12-14**

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)



Schedule options for next steps

Option D (Mid December, 74 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 16-17, 2025
- Release for public comment: Estimated Release December 22, 2025
- Close of public comment: March 6, 2026 (74 days)

Council meeting: March 10~~11~~12

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: **May 12-14**

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)



Schedule options for next steps

Option E (Early December, 90 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 3-4, 2025
- Release for public comment: Estimated Release December 8, 2025
- Close of public comment: March 6, 2026 (88 days)

Council meeting: March 10~~1~~2

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: May 12-14

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)



Schedule options for next steps

Option F (Mid December, 90 days)

- Decision to release draft program: December 16-17, 2025
- Release for public comment: Estimated Release December 22, 2025
- Close of public comment: March 23, 2026 (91 days)

Council meeting: April 14-16

(Hold for extra work session: April 28, 29)

Council meeting – Decision on final Program: May 12-14

(Hold for extra work session (if needed): May 27-29)

