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## Northwest Power and Conservation Council

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March 30, 2026

Drs. Tom Turner and Pat Connolly, ISRP Co-Chairs  
Mr. Erik Merrill, Independent Science Manager  
Northwest Power and Conservation Council  
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100  
Portland, OR 97204

*Sent via electronic mail*

Dear Tom, Pat, and Erik,

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council) began its 2026 Lands Project Review process on November 6, 2025. There are 35 projects funded by Bonneville through the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program that protect habitat through land acquisitions. Twenty-eight of these projects are being reviewed during this cycle; six projects that provide administrative support<sup>1</sup> and one new project will not be reviewed at this time.<sup>2</sup> The Council appreciates the participation of project sponsors and the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) in this review. We hope this review process will continue to provide technical assistance to project sponsors and improve projects under the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, while meeting the requirements under the Northwest Power Act.

All 28 projects included in the review have an existing Council recommendation from prior reviews. For these types of long-term, ongoing projects, the Council has updated its review process for efficiency whereby each project's basic premise and scientific soundness is

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<sup>1</sup> See [guidance document](#) for project list and description.

<sup>2</sup> Project #2024-004-00, *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management*, was recently reviewed and recommended by the Council in August 2025.

generally accepted. The Council would like to use this Lands review as more of a check-in with a focus on project actions and accomplishments and questions tailored to individual projects. The Council would also like to better understand the status of implementation for Lands projects, and collect valuable information related to our efforts to track [Program performance](#) and [details related to land acquisitions](#) (e.g., individual parcel polygon data, associated land management plans, number of acres, etc., if appropriate and available). Council recommendations may include suggestions to improve project implementation, and Program- or policy-level recommendations related to habitat protection.

The Council received review material submissions for all 28 projects. For each project, two files are available on the [Council's website](#): project-specific questions from the Council to the project sponsors, and project sponsors' submissions with answers to the Council's questions. Additional supporting information (e.g., land management plans) will also be provided to the ISRP for the projects outlined below. Council staff developed these questions after careful study of existing information for each project, including existing project proposals, prior reviews and other supplementary information.

Most Lands projects focus on stewardship activities conducted through operations and maintenance (O&M) on acquired land parcels. These activities generally include managing vegetation, boundaries, roads, and fences. Some projects also include components of managing public access or use (like hunting or grazing) and mitigating wildlife risks. These projects have about 5% of their budgets dedicated to compliance monitoring activities (for additional details, see [BPA's Fish and Wildlife Lands Desk Book](#)). These projects differ from habitat restoration projects in that their primary purpose is habitat protection through acquisition and stewardship.

While some projects under the Lands category include enhancement activities (e.g., forest thinning, planting native vegetation, prescribed fire) to protect the integrity of the properties, these stewardship activities are not reviewed in the same way as habitat restoration projects. Projects reviewed under the Habitat Restoration category are typically subbasin and/or reach specific addressing limiting factors through restoration activities (e.g., earthmoving or construction, culvert removal), and as such may require prioritization tools and additional science review.

The Council is not requesting additional ISRP review for the individual O&M projects as they have been reviewed in the past and additional review is not necessary at this time. While the ISRP is free to provide comments and recommendations to the Council on any aspect of the project information, the Council asks the ISRP to address the specific requests for the 13 projects listed below.

This list includes one project that warrants standard ISRP review and 12 projects that requested additional guidance and assistance<sup>3</sup> from the ISRP. In addition, each project has a link to the project specific questions template, responses to the questions, and appropriate support documents.

**Project warranting focused science review, based on the emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of restoration activities and results on mitigation lands for five of the UCUT member tribes.**

- [Project #2008-007-00](#), Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Program  
Project sponsor contact: [Cody Thomas](#)
  - *We have attached the 2018 Assessment and Analysis of the UWMEP Program and the current Field Methods Manual to provide more information. We can provide examples of the yearly reports out to the Tribes as well, if requested.*
  - *Furthermore, we see the value in developing interim success criteria to capture successional communities that may be trending towards the reference conditions and are open to suggestions on best ways to approach that.*

**Projects (12) requested additional guidance and assistance from the ISRP:**

Guidance and suggestions on developing and refining quantitative objectives:

- [Project #1990-092-00](#), Wanaket Wildlife Area  
Project sponsor contact: [Lindsay Chiono](#)
  - *CTUIR welcomes ISRP guidance on developing quantitative management objectives, particularly metrics that can be assessed at regular intervals with modest resource commitments. The review committee may be aware of metrics being successfully applied by other projects that are applicable to Wanaket's habitat types.*
- [Project #1995-060-01](#), Isq'ulktpe Watershed Project  
Project sponsor contact: [Lindsay Chiono](#)
  - *CTUIR welcomes ISRP guidance on developing quantitative management objectives, particularly metrics that can be assessed at regular intervals with modest resource commitments. Grassland metrics/targets are especially*

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<sup>3</sup> The list includes the sponsors response to the question regarding ISRP guidance. The responses are italicized.

*challenging, given the continued expansion of invasive annual grasses in recent years and the difficulty of restoring native plant abundance in this habitat type. The review committee may be aware of metrics being successfully applied by other projects that are applicable to Isqúulktpe's varied habitat types.*

- [Project #2000-026-00](#), Tat'win Wildlife Area Operations  
Project sponsor contact: [Gerald Middel](#)
  - *CTUIR welcomes ISRP guidance on refining and developing quantitative objectives, particularly for habitat complexity and species response metrics.*
  
- [Project #2006-005-00](#), Asotin Creek Wildlife Mitigation  
Project sponsor contact: [Bob Dice](#), [Darric Lowery](#)
  - *If the ISRP would like to make suggestions towards developing quantitative objectives, we would welcome what you may share with us.*
  
- [Project #1998-022-00](#), Pine Creek Conservation Area  
Project sponsor contact: [Kevin Pullen](#)
  - *Suggestions for quantitative objectives or any other aspect of the project deemed noteworthy or necessary would be appreciated.*
  
- [Project #2000-015-00](#), Upper John Day Conservation Lands Program  
Project sponsor contact: [Zach Cunningham](#)
  - *Project work scheduled for the future involve addressing upland health in relation to riparian corridor work. What would be the ISRP's guidance in a direction to quantify objectives?*
  
- [Project #2008-102-00](#), Upper Columbia Land Operation and Maintenance  
Project sponsor contact: [Justin Wilson](#)
  - *We have initiated a few quantitative objectives (see response to Question 6). What other standard quantitative objectives should be incorporated in future land management plans for this area, mostly a low elevation (< 1,000 ft.), arid ecosystem?*

Guidance and suggestions related to general project implementation:

- [Project #1996-094-01](#), Scotch Creek Wildlife Mitigation  
Project sponsor contact: [Bryan Dupont](#), [Darric Lowery](#)

- *What aspects of the project would you like to see improved, need more attention or are lacking?*
- *Are there any specific restoration activities you would like to see implemented?*
  
- [Project #2003-012-00](#), Shillapoo Wildlife Mitigation  
Project sponsor contact: [Daren Hauswald](#), [Zachary Breitenstein](#), [Darric Lowery](#)
  - *The management team looks forward to the ISRP's evaluation and welcomes any technical feedback regarding the proposed management actions for the Shillapoo Wildlife Area.*
  
- [Project #1992-061-05](#), Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation-Kootenai Tribe  
Project sponsor contact: [Shelby Therrian](#)
  - *The KTOI Wildlife Program believes the 2026 AMP framework and the many documents and project designs included by reference provide a comprehensive summary of our project. We welcome any feedback the ISRP is willing to provide to strengthen or clarify this framework.*
  
- [Project #1995-057-03](#), Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation--Shoshone-Paiute Tribes  
Project sponsor contact: [Carol Perugini](#), [TyRee Lee](#) and [Joey Thomas](#)
  - *Received in Pole Creek Response - The Tribes would appreciate some direction as to what specific implementation and compliance monitoring ISRP would feel is adequate for this project given the limited funding available.*
  - *Received in the Wilson 101 Ranch Response - The SPT would appreciate any/all direction as to what specific implementations and compliance monitoring ISRP would feel is adequate for this project given the limited funding available. Any direction or clarification will be accepted.*
  
- [Project #1995-057-02](#), Shoshone-Bannock Wildlife Mitigation Projects  
Project sponsor contact: [Hunter Osborne](#)
  - *Request general guidance on improvements to wildlife mitigation programs (per teleconference with Hunter on February 20<sup>th</sup>).*

The Council appreciates the long-standing efforts of the ISRP, and we look forward to your guidance and assistance with this Lands project review.

Sincerely,



Patty O'Toole  
Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

cc: Dorothy Welch, BPA  
Rodrigo George, BPA  
Scott Donahue, BPA  
Peter Lofy, BPA  
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Lindsay Chiono, CTUIR  
Gerald Middel, CTUIR  
Bob Dice, WDFW  
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Daren Hauswald, WDFW  
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