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October 6, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Patty O'Toole, Fish and Wildlife Division Director, and Kate Self, Program Scientist, Kris Homel, Biologist for Program Performance

SUBJECT: Follow-up discussion on Implementation of 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Fish and Wildlife Division Staff

Summary: Following the adoption of an amended Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program in June, staff began working with the Council's Fish and Wildlife Committee in July to discuss next steps and implementation. In September, staff provided a detailed list of implementation tasks identified in the 2026 Program along with appropriate tools for each of the identified tasks. Staff also provided a short list of potential near-term tasks for Fish and Wildlife Committee members' consideration. While Council members generally supported staff starting with these near-term tasks, given that we ran short on time in September, the agenda provides additional time for further discussion in October.

Relevance: The 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife [Program](#) was adopted by the Council on June 16, 2026.

Background: The Council adopted its final 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program in June. A prepublication version is available on the Council’s website pending completion and adoption of the Findings and Response to Recommendations, anticipated in late fall 2026.

To review, first, a reminder that the Council does not implement much of the Program on its own. We rely on federal agencies such as Bonneville, the Corps, and the Bureau of Reclamation implementing the Program through the standards of the Northwest Power Act. This requires working with many federal, tribal and state entities and others. We look for and create opportunities to bring the influence of the Fish and Wildlife Program into federal decision-making, also advancing policy discussions and supporting best available science.

From prior discussions regarding the Fish and Wildlife Division Work Plan, you will recall there are ongoing tasks the staff does on behalf of the Council and the Northwest Power Act. These include:

- Project Review and Recommendation (including follow-up and Step reviews, tracking project implementation and description of ongoing activities in Part Six of the 2026 Program)
- Assessing and reporting on Program Performance (including reporting on goals, objectives, indicators, and implementation, and description of activities in Part Seven of the 2026 Program)
- Coordination and collaboration with external entities (tracking and participating in various meetings, etc.) about the Fish and Wildlife Program, the Council and the Northwest Power Act.

To these basic responsibilities we add new tasks associated with the implementation of the 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program. In July, staff reviewed a few fundamental elements for developing a work plan for Program implementation. First, we summarized the tasks included in the final Program decision, including directives noted at the time of decision, Program measures, and Program priorities for near-term implementation. Second, we reviewed the “tools” or ways the Council works to help get the Program implemented. Council members requested that staff identify potential tools that would be appropriate for making progress on the set of tasks, considering available resources, priorities, timeframes, etc.

In September, staff provided a detailed list of implementation tasks identified in the 2026 Program, identified appropriate tools for each of the tasks, and suggested first and future steps for the tools, timing, and likely participants. Staff also provided a short list of potential near-term tasks for Fish and Wildlife Committee members’ consideration. Council members generally supported staff starting with these near-term tasks but there was insufficient time to review the entire list of implementation tasks and there is need for further discussion. If the

Council prefers alternative tasks for near-term implementation, these could be substituted for something on the current list.

The objectives for the October Committee meeting are to (1) confirm whether Council members support the proposed list of tasks for near-term implementation and (2) review the remaining implementation tasks that were not reviewed in September (some of which are new, some are ongoing). Once the near-term task list is confirmed, staff propose to initiate next steps which will involve building out a work plan for these new implementation tasks and timelines and incorporating that into the division workplan of ongoing tasks.

As a reminder, in identifying a set of tasks ready for near-term implementation, staff considered the following: specific language in the Program, the level of interest around the topics, current status of implementation, whether a due date had been identified, and staff capacity and expertise across tasks (aiming to spread the work across multiple staff). The identified tasks are not more important than any of the others but represent a reasonable starting place.

Suggested list ready for near-term implementation

1. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity - Corps infrastructure list and funding; ongoing coordination with Bonneville on asset management
2. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity - ongoing coordination with Bonneville on annual project funding and long-term O&M; improved communication; emphasis on inflation adjustments
3. 2026 Program Priority- predator management- workgroup, etc.
4. Wildlife settlement agreement progress- annual report
5. Update critical uncertainties/ research plan- ISAB assignment
6. Objective S2 (SAR targets)- status update on data needs- by 2027

Additional topics to discuss:

1. State of the Science review on summer hydro operations
2. Whole of Government as a tool

Attached to this memo is a brief synopsis of the proposed near-term implementation tasks and the remaining tasks for Fish and Wildlife Committee member consideration. For the full details on the staff proposed list of tasks suggested for near-term implementation, associated tools, timelines, participants, and initial steps, please review Attachment A from September. For full details on the remaining tasks (listed in Program order) and tools, please see Attachment B from September. As a reminder, the tasks in the September memo, Attachments A and B are of equal importance, but those in A reflect a proposed place to start.

More info:

- Brief synopsis of proposed tasks for near-term implementation and the full set of tasks (attached)
- September 2026 Council meeting, [Fish and Wildlife Committee Memo](#) (Attachment A includes a proposed short list of tasks for near-term implementation and Attachment B includes a comprehensive list of other new and ongoing tasks for implementation)
- July 2026 Council meeting, [Fish and Wildlife Committee Memo](#) (includes the list of tasks, detail on the available tools, and information on workgroup structures)

Synopsis of 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program tasks and tools

October Fish and Wildlife Committee Meeting Update

Timeline review:

- July: staff reviewed a menu of tasks from the 2026 Program and identified a set of tools at our disposal. Members directed staff to work on identifying tasks and tools that may be ready for near-term implementation (August staff work).
- September: staff provided a suggested list of six tasks ready for near-term implementation ([September Attachment A](#)) and a more comprehensive list of other new and ongoing tasks for implementation ([September Attachment B](#)).

Considerations:

- Staff worked to 1) identify which tools are appropriate for which tasks and 2) suggest first and future steps for the tools, timing, and likely participants.
- There is opportunity to discuss alternative near-term task prioritization based on Council Member input.

→ If an alternative task for near-term implementation is exchanged for a current task, we ask the group to consider the specific language in the Program, the level of interest around the topics, current status of implementation, whether a due date has been identified, and staff capacity and expertise across tasks (as we are aiming to spread the work across multiple staff).
- Many tasks included in the comprehensive list are ongoing and will occur at the same time as some of the tasks identified for near-term implementation.
- It is expected that as initial tasks slated for near-term implementation are mobilized (or completed), other tasks will be addressed in a logical order.
- We acknowledge that many strategies and measures in the Program overlap or are related. We have selected a key strategy or measure(s) to represent these topics.

Suggested list ready for near-term implementation

See *Attachment A* from September Fish and Wildlife Committee Meeting for detail

1. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity - ongoing coordination with Bonneville on annual project funding and long-term O&M/ Asset Management; improved communication; emphasis on inflation adjustments (includes tasks in Part Six: Implementation)
2. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity - Corps infrastructure list and funding
3. 2026 Program Priority- predator management- workgroup, etc.
4. Wildlife settlement agreement progress- annual report
5. Update critical uncertainties/ research plan- ISAB assignment
6. Objective S2 (SAR targets)- status update on data needs- by 2027

Remaining implementation tasks, in Program order

See *Attachment B* from September Fish and Wildlife Committee Meeting for detail

1. Mainstem Hydrosystem Flow and Passage, Measure (ongoing): H 12, H 18, H 19 - Power system considerations – update emergency operations to have least impact on fish and work to improve ecosystem conditions without impacting power system.
2. Mainstem Hydrosystem Flow and Passage, Measure (no immediate action needed- track through time): H 24- Investigations to refine operations at Libby and Hungry Horse dams that improve conditions for fish.
3. Mainstem Hydrosystem Flow and Passage, Measure (ongoing): H 32- Review the outcome of the Hells Canyon Complex FERC proceeding and include relevant provisions in the Program.
4. Habitat Restoration and Protection, Measure (new): HAB 46- Develop a standardized approach to calculate resident fish losses due to C&I (via an independent third party)
5. Strategy: Habitat Restoration and Protection, Measure (new): HAB 49- Develop lists of habitat measures for other subbasins.
6. Habitat Restoration and Protection, Measure (ongoing and new): HAB 65- Urge Congress to continue to provide funding to protect and restore water quality in the Columbia River Basin.

7. Non-native and Invasive Species, Measure (ongoing): NNIS 21- Assist regional entities with legislative efforts to prevent the invasion and control the spread of non-native invasive species in the Columbia Basin.
8. Plume and Nearshore Ocean, Measure (ongoing – early 2027): PNO 12- Ocean and Plume Science and Management Forum and science/policy exchanges.
9. Artificial Production, Rationale (ongoing): Ensure that research, data collection, and reporting methods allow for meaningful evaluation of hatcheries and fish propagation measures at both the local and landscape level. Ensure consistency with Program goals and objectives.
10. Artificial Production, Measure (new): AP 13- Develop lists of hatchery measures for other subbasins.
11. Subbasin Plans (as needed) - Where warranted, the Council will receive these updated plans and identify a path for scientific review and adoption into the Program.
12. 2026 Program Priority (ongoing and new): Hydrosystem operations (H 17, 18, 19, 33, 44)
 - The Council recognizes the importance of consistent, stable operations over the long term, including prioritizing operations that keep water flowing, increase velocities, and minimize fluctuations during peak juvenile migration.
 - The Council also commits to help establish one or more work groups to investigate further changes in operations, including:
 - Updating flood risk management for reservoir operations (rule curves)
 - Evaluating the specific parameters of limiting or allowing system flexibility to alter flow regimes – more attention is being directed at this during the Power Plan process.
 - Considering additional changes to increase velocities (decrease fish travel time) – spring and summer including the benefits, costs, and implementation challenges.
 - Planning for preserving and rehabilitating passage infrastructure.
13. 2026 Program Priority (ongoing and begin in 2027): Habitat protection and restoration- Bonneville should continue the habitat restoration and protection efforts under the Program in the tributaries, mainstem reaches, and estuary at the same pace and scale as over the last decade at a minimum. See also Hab 49.
 - The Council also supports work in the ocean to understand this critical environment and its influence on program effectiveness.

- The Council also supports efforts to obtain additional non-ratepayer funding for the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other federal agencies to implement their existing and additional habitat protection and restoration activities, including significant mainstem habitat restoration.
- The Council will convene and facilitate discussion to identify an order of new habitat actions to implement that have the best potential to effectively increase juvenile abundance and productivity. See also task 18- developing list of additional habitat actions.

14. Program Part Five: Concepts Guiding Adaptive Management: Planning and Prioritization (new, as needed): establish and convene science and policy workshops on topics relevant to contemporary decision-making, implementation, or identified critical uncertainties. Possible topics include hydrosystem operations, predator management, non-native and invasive species, or climate change and climate adaptation.

15. Program Part Five: Concepts Guiding Adaptive Management: Reporting (ongoing): Bonneville should continue implementing a concise, useful template for annual reports for research and monitoring projects. Continue to work with Bonneville and the ISRP to identify and assemble the information needed to produce an annual summary of results for Council review.

16. Program Part Six: Provisions for Program Implementation: Coordination (ongoing, before March 2027): The Council will convene a forum of regional coordination representatives to discuss Program-related issues as needed.

17. Program Part Seven: Provisions for Tracking and Reporting on Program Performance: Performance indicators (ongoing, before the end of 2027): Convene the Performance Indicator Workgroup to discuss the feasibility of adding candidate indicators to the Program Tracker. In addition, the workgroup may be convened to identify, evaluate, and refine other indicators in the future.

Additional discussion topics

Hydrosystem Operations, late summer spill (August/Sept):

State of the Science on fish benefits and power system impacts

- Not explicitly in the Program but lengthy discussions and direction from the Chair at the end of the amendment process

Hydrosystem Operations (H 17, 18, 19, 33, 44):

2026 Program Priority (ongoing and new):

- The Council recognizes the importance of consistent, stable operations over the long term, including prioritizing operations that keep water flowing, increase velocities, and minimize fluctuations during peak juvenile migration.
- The Council also commits to help establish one or more work groups to investigate further changes in operations, including:
 - Updating flood risk management for reservoir operations (rule curves)
 - Evaluating the specific parameters of limiting or allowing system flexibility to alter flow regimes – more attention is being directed at this during the Power Plan process.
 - Considering additional changes to increase velocities (decrease fish travel time) – spring and summer including the benefits, costs, and implementation challenges.
 - Planning for preserving and rehabilitating passage infrastructure.

Whole of government as a tool

The Program includes onsite and offsite actions, and we expect them to continue to be funded as they already are. The Program also identifies additional actions that could be taken or recognizes that the work under the Program is part of the tapestry of mitigation, restoration, conservation, and enhancement actions in the basin. As such, there are funding or implementation responsibilities that are broader than the ratepayer responsibilities.

- Whole of government is about applying funding and authorities to specific issues associated with given scales...this means that for each issue, we must define the appropriate “whole” of government.
- Whole of government is also about recognizing that if other government entities in the Basin don’t do their part to fully mitigate issues within their purview, it negatively impacts outcomes from the F&W Program.
- This is a high priority for the Council. It is somewhat new and somewhat ongoing, as we have worked with Congress in the past to increase funding for certain activities-like the Corps watercraft inspection stations.
- See [Attachment B](#) (pg. 11) for specific Program language related to Whole of Government.



2026 Fish and Wildlife Program tasks and tools for near-term implementation

October 2026

Fish and Wildlife Committee Meeting

Donnelly, ID



Northwest **Power** and
Conservation Council

Outline

- Quick review on ongoing Council and staff tasks
- Finish discussion on the 6 proposed tasks for near-term implementation (memo)
- Other discussion topics
 - State of the science review on summer hydrosystem operations
 - Whole of government
- Staff objective: confirm starting tasks, next steps



Columbia River
Basin Fish and
Wildlife Program

2026 Fish and Wildlife Program Measures

Measures for others
to implement

Measures for the Council to implement

Not in current work
plan

In the current
workplan

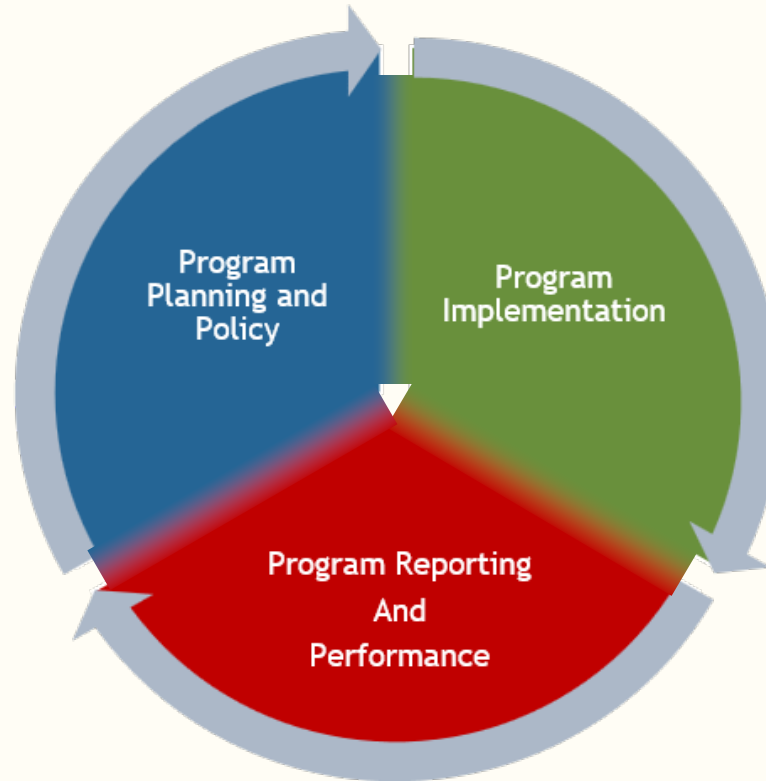
Fish and Wildlife Division Work Plan Areas

Program Planning and Policy

- Develop and amend F&W Program
- Policy and coordination
- ISAB Reviews

Program Reporting

- Goals
- Objectives
- Indicators
- Implementation and performance assessment



Project Reviews

ISRP Reviews

Program Implementation

- Ongoing – participate in many topic-based committees, work groups, initiatives
- Implement 2026 Program and priority new work

2026 Fish and Wildlife Program Measures

**Measures for
others to
implement**

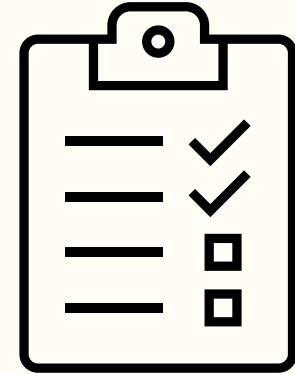
Measures for the Council to implement

**Not in current work
plan**

**In the current
workplan**

Criteria used to identify tasks ready for implementation

- Recent and sufficient discussion around these topics
- Some planning or implementation has already started
- A due date has been identified
- Staff capacity
- Some proposed tasks are ongoing because they take time, but many are new tasks to prioritize



Staff note: We welcome feedback on the suggestions for near-term implementation. Remaining tasks may be ongoing, not sufficiently defined to begin now, or beyond Council staff capacity given the suggested starting tasks.

6 tasks proposed for near-term implementation

Attachment A

1. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity- ongoing coordination and improved communication with Bonneville on annual project funding and long-term O&M/ Asset Management; emphasis on inflation adjustments (includes tasks in Part Six: Implementation)
2. 2026 Program Priority- Program integrity - Corps infrastructure list and funding
3. 2026 Program Priority- Predator management- workgroup, etc.
4. Wildlife settlement agreement progress- annual report
5. Update critical uncertainties/ research plan- ISAB assignment
6. Objective S2 (SAR targets)- status update on data needs- by 2027

Next steps

- **Build out work plan for each new task**
- **Possible first steps**

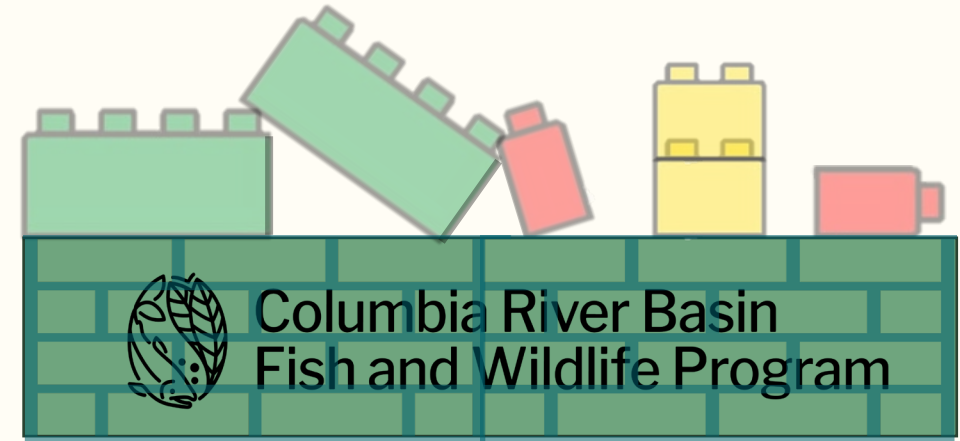
Starting 6 tasks	Possible first step (example)
Communication with BPA	Staff and Council review strengths and challenges of current processes / Reach out to RCF to assess current needs regarding inflation adjustment.
Corps infrastructure	Council members to D.C. / Assess current state of infrastructure information.
Predator Management	Staff identifying current predation topics and scheduling Council presentations.
Wildlife Settlement Agreements	Staff conversations with BPA and managers to identify challenges and a path forward.
Critical uncertainties- ISAB	Last updated in 2019. Define how research plan will be useful to Council in the future.
Objective S2 (SAR targets)	Define “who” is providing a status update, “who” is responsible for developing new targets or a sample design, “who” would review the validity of any proposed targets.

Additional discussion topics

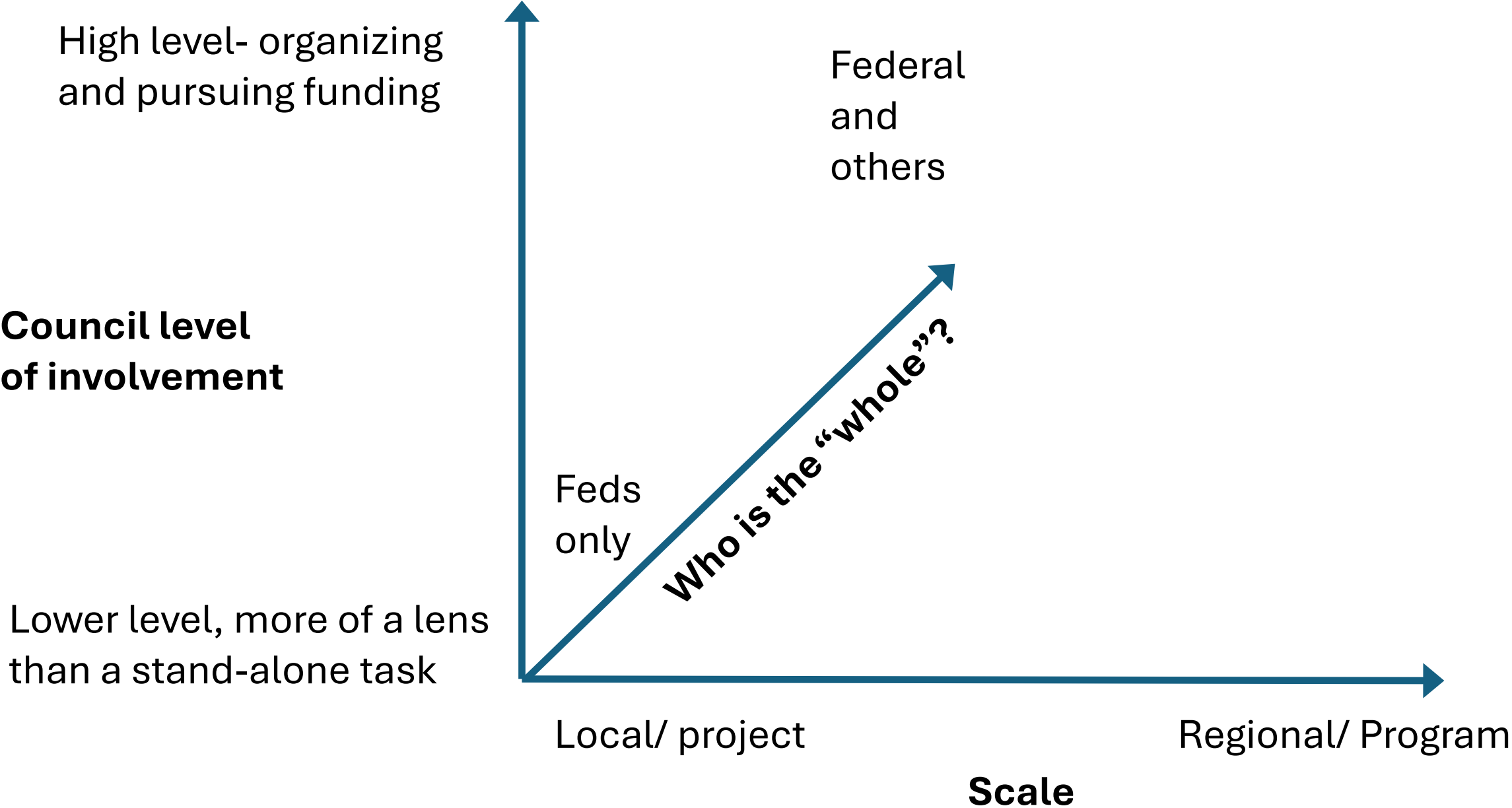
8. Whole of Government as a tool

Taking into account:

- Mitigation is both onsite and offsite
- Council's main influence is over BPA with some over action agencies and less over others
- Program does not operate in a vacuum
- What is needed to address significant issues in the basin, etc.?

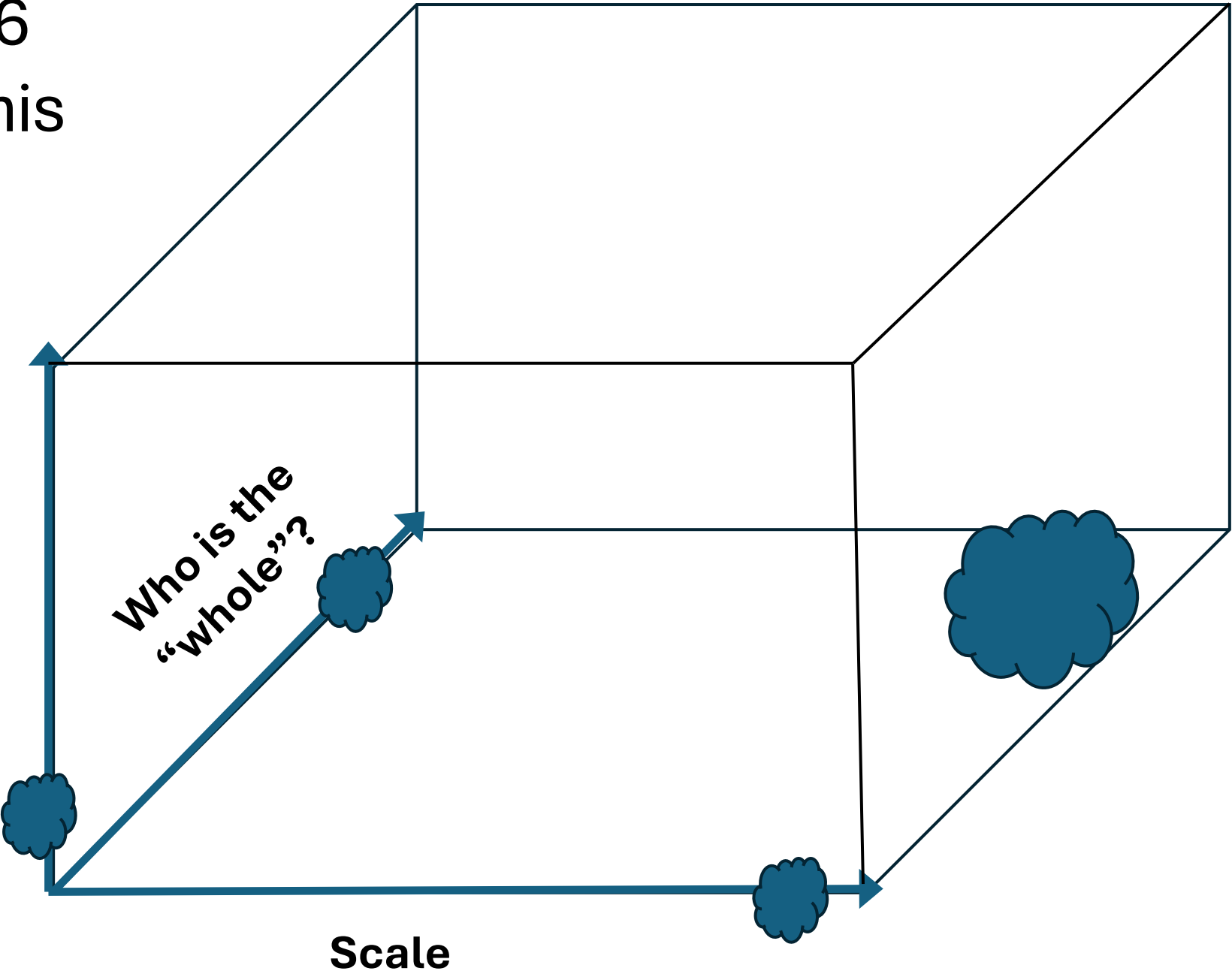


Conceptual space around whole of government



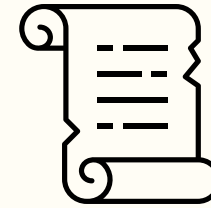
Where does the 2026
Program fall within this
space?

Council level
of involvement

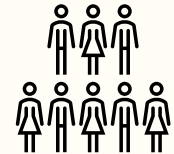
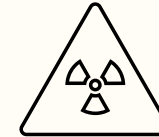
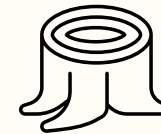


W.O.G. in context of Program

1) The Council expects substantial contributions from the federal agencies with responsibilities under the Power Act to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife impacted by the hydropower system.



2) The Council encourages additional substantial contributions from Congress and other federal agencies and non-federal entities to address impacts [...] from sources other than hydropower.



3) The Council commits to working with other government entities in the basin to seek authorizations and funding from Congress to the federal agencies to complement and help make more effective the efforts funded by the ratepayers.



Additional discussion topics

7. State of the Science review on summer hydro operations

Taking into account and determining the relative importance of variables, including but not limited to:

- Water flow and temperatures
- Fish travel time
- Predation
- Fish passage routes
- Both anadromous and native fish
- Hatchery releases
- Biological benefits and power system impacts

