



The mission of the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board is to restore viable and sustainable populations of salmon, steelhead, and other at-risk species through the collaborative, economically sensitive efforts, combined resources, and wise resource management of the Upper Columbia region.

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March 27, 2008

Steve Crow, Executive Director
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth Avenue
Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Crow:

In response to the Council's request for recommendations to amend its Fish and Wildlife Program (Council Document No. 2007-17), we respectfully submit this letter for your consideration. Our comments are focused on two areas of the current program:

1. Sub-basin Plans; and
2. Certain Basin-wide Strategies.

Our recommendations below seek to:

- Implement the Fish and Wildlife Program consistent with the approved *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan* (October 2007), which can be found at <http://www.ucsrb.com/plan.asp>.
- Increase efforts and funding to monitor and evaluate implementation actions; and
- Develop consistency and collaboration in data management.

Sub-basin Plans

The UCSRB developed sub-basin plans for the Columbia Cascade Province for the Council. Since then, the UCSRB has developed the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan*, which incorporates elements of these sub-basin plans. NOAA approved the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan* in October 2007. While we are now formally in the implementation phase of the recovery plan, it is important to recognize that many of our partners have been implementing recovery activities for a number of years. We encourage the Council to fund Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed fish projects in the Columbia

Cascade Province in a manner that is consistent with our prioritized implementation schedule in the recovery plan. The Upper Columbia implementation schedule is updated annually based on information generated from our draft adaptive management framework (see Attachment 1: Habitat Adaptive Management Framework).

Therefore, the UCSRB offers the following recommendations:

- Integrate the implementation direction and schedule of our recovery plan and the implementation schedule into existing Columbia Cascade Province sub-basin plans, and any future revisions of those plans.
- Accommodate changes to our implementation schedule resulting from our adaptive management process into any future sub-basin plan updates.
- Work through the existing, locally established implementation structure for project development and review, and determination of project consistency with the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan*.

Certain Basin-wide Strategies

The *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan* includes a description of the critical research uncertainties in the region (Chapter 8). The Upper Columbia Regional Technical Team has been working with NOAA to further articulate these uncertainties, and to finalize the Upper Columbia Monitoring Plan. All of these elements are part of the adaptive management framework in place to manage the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan over time. These elements will help us identify what we need to know, how to feed that information into on-going recovery activities, and to track the changes as a result of those actions.

The UCSRB supports coordination between the Council and the region with respect to research, monitoring and evaluation. The following recommendations are based on the Council's strategy for *Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation*. Monitoring is a critical step in the overall process; without knowing how our actions are affecting fish and wildlife species, we will never be able to report the efficacy of our collective actions. We realize monitoring and data management can be expensive, and the UCSRB has identified ways to maximize the return on investing in monitoring and data management.

Research

The UCSRB offers the following recommendations.

- Identify and disseminate the key uncertainties for the Fish and Wildlife Program, and the steps needed to resolve them.
- Incorporate the research uncertainties described in the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan*.
- Adopt the UCSRB priorities for research funding.

Monitoring and Data Management

Discussions at the Columbia Basin and Pacific Northwest scales about how to best organize the coordination of monitoring and data management, and how to best share

information produced from monitoring data, have been stimulated by the need for good information to support decision making in implementing recovery plans. The Upper Columbia is at the forefront in the Columbia Basin in monitoring coordination and organization of data management, curation, and information sharing.

Monitoring efforts in the Upper Columbia are guided by an Upper Columbia Monitoring Strategy (Hillman 2006, see <http://www.ucsrb.com/resources.asp>) that identifies the physical habitat and biological attributes that must be collected to indicate the status of fish species, the trends of their populations, and the effectiveness of actions implemented to restore those populations. Coordination groups in each sub-basin work to organize the efforts of monitoring data collectors within their sub-basins.

Data management and data sharing in the Upper Columbia are coordinated by the Upper Columbia Data Steward, who is responsible for the aggregation and curation of Upper Columbia monitoring data, for the transfer of those data to the Status, Trend and Effectiveness Monitoring (STEM) database at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and for the reporting of information developed based on those data. The Data Steward is also responsible for the development of a data management strategy and associated quality assurance/quality control policy for the Upper Columbia.

The *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan* recognizes that although monitoring efforts, especially effectiveness monitoring, can take decades to produce results and require long-term funding, information from that monitoring is needed now. Annual and three-year check-ins are built into the adaptive management structure to make status and trend information regularly available.

The availability of information is predicated on the appropriate flow of quality data. In the Columbia Cascade Province (Upper Columbia) the flow of data works through a data management infrastructure that follows both vertical and horizontal characteristics. The agencies that collect monitoring data in the Upper Columbia, the groups that coordinate their efforts and the relationship of the data collectors to each other, to the coordinating groups, and to the Data Steward (horizontal organization) are specific to the situation in the Upper Columbia. Horizontal organization must be tailored to the needs of each DPS and ESU. However, the vertical organization of monitoring efforts that has been adopted in the Upper Columbia, with data collectors coordinated at logical sub-basin or MPG scales, and data collected from local coordinators by a ESU- or DPS-level data steward to be curated and sent on to a broader regional database (the STEM databank), is both cost-effective and replicable across the Columbia Basin and the Pacific Northwest (see Attachment 2: Potential Salmon Recovery Monitoring Data Flow (24 March 2008)).

Therefore, the UCSRB offers the following recommendations.

- Implement the Upper Columbia's decentralized approach to monitoring and data management for coordination across the Council's provinces.

- Utilize existing coordination structures (e.g. regional recovery boards)
- Promote the vertical organization of monitoring efforts described above, with horizontal organization tailored to fit the needs and circumstances of each region.
- Establish a Data Steward in regions where one does not already exist.
- Ensure that regional monitoring and data management programs develop:
 - Regional monitoring and data management strategies.
 - Standardized protocols consistent with the format in Oakley 2003 (Oakley, K; Thomas, L; Fancy, S. 2003. Guidelines for long-term monitoring protocols. Wildlife Society Bulletin. 31(4) 1000-1003).
 - A quality assurance / quality control protocol.
 - Data management tools built around a standard data structure, and that focus on highly-normalized databases.
- Include the STEM databank at NOAA as one of the systems to which information from the Council will be disseminated.
- Coordinate with the Upper Columbia Data Steward with respect to establishing “guidelines appropriate for the collection and reporting of data in the Columbia River Basin.”
- Ensure that new funds are made available for long-term monitoring of responses to specific preservation and restoration actions across the region. Implementation, effectiveness, status and trend, and research monitoring are all important, and the results will be communicated to decision makers at defined 3-year and annual milestones.
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation results are available to the Upper Columbia Data Steward so that they can be incorporated into our adaptive management framework.
- Coordinate with the Upper Columbia Data Steward to integrate our regional data gaps into the Council's needs.

All H-Integration

The UCSRB recommends that program amendments, such as *Artificial Production Strategies*, support coordination of H-Integration consistent with the recommendations in the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan*.

Artificial Production Strategies

The Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) is developing recommendations for ensuring that hatchery practices and related harvest management decisions are consistent with recovery goals and implementation of recovery plans for ESA-listed and non-listed salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia Basin. The HSRG recommendations will be completed by the end of 2008, and their recommendations will be considered by the decision making processes in place in the Upper Columbia (e.g. Habitat Conservation Plans and Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee) to improve current hatchery facilities and practices where needed. If any recommendations from the HSRG are adopted in the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, the UCSRB requests

the opportunity to review those recommendations with the Council and our partner to ensure consistency with the *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan*.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these recommendations, and we look forward to hearing how they will be addressed. Please do not hesitate to contact me (509) 865-5121 (ext. 6363) or Julie Morgan at (509) 662-4710 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Ward" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Ward
Chair, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

Attachments:
Habitat Adaptive Management Framework
Potential Salmon Recovery Monitoring Data Flow (24 March 2008)