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October 8, 2019

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Leslie Bach

**SUBJECT:** Update on Key Environmental Protection Agency Activities in the Columbia River Basin

### BACKGROUND:

**Presenter:** Chris Hladick, US EPA Region 10 Regional Administrator

**Summary:** Chris Hladick will provide the Council with an overview of US EPA responsibilities and key activities in the Columbia River Basin. He will describe the Columbia Basin Restoration Act (Section 123 of the Clean Water Act), including the establishment of a Working Group and development of a competitive grant program. He will also provide information on the draft Columbia River Cold Water Refuges Plan and timelines for review and feedback.

**Relevance:** Water quality is an important component of the Fish and Wildlife Program and can be found in different locations throughout the Program document. The Water Quality sub-strategy (pages 54-56) contains measures to evaluate and address temperature and toxic contaminants. The emerging program priorities section calls for the Council to preserve program effectiveness by supporting “mapping and determining hotspots for toxic contaminants” (page 116, Investment Strategy –Emerging Program Priorities).

Additionally, actions related to cold-water habitat are identified in numerous locations in the Program document. Protecting and restoring

habitat is a key sub-strategy in the Ecosystem Function section of the Program (page 41). An important aspect of this is ensuring that the habitats that are restored and protected are providing the appropriate thermal regimes for fish and other aquatic life. Under the Climate-Change sub-strategy, the general measures call for the action agencies to “evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of possible actions to mitigate effects of climate change...other actions to create or protect cool water refugia in mainstem reaches or reservoirs” (page 58).

**Background:** The Council supported a regional workgroup effort to raise awareness of the issue of toxic contaminant impacts on Columbia Basin fish and wildlife. The workgroup developed a story map that described the sources and impacts of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) as a pilot for toxic contaminant maps and public education tools for the Basin. <https://www.nwcouncil.org/news/mapping-toxics>

**More Info:** Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program  
<https://www.epa.gov/columbiariver/columbia-river-basin-restoration-funding-assistance-program>

Columbia River Cold Water Refuges:  
<https://www.epa.gov/columbiariver/columbia-river-cold-water-refuges>