



Federal agencies submit comprehensive proposal for salmon and steelhead recovery

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A publication of the Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

On May 21, 2007, the federal action agencies – the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation – submitted a new proposal to recover Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead.

The Proposed Action/Reasonable and Prudent Action (proposed action) describes how the action agencies will operate the federal dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers to protect fish listed under the Endangered Species Act. It is the result of well over a year of collaboration among federal agencies, states and tribes.

The collaboration began in October 2005 when U.S. District Court Judge James Redden directed NOAA Fisheries to revise its “Biological Opinion” on the action agencies’ operation of the federal hydro system for Pacific salmon and steelhead.

The District Court told NOAA Fisheries and the action agencies to collaborate with Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana and seven Columbia Basin tribes on a new proposed action and biological opinion that is better linked to fish recovery.

A comprehensive plan for fish

The new proposed action takes a comprehensive approach, addressing the needs of the fish at all stages of their lifecycle and the many factors that have led to their decline. We have identified science-based biological objectives, recovery strategies and actions for each listed stock affected by operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System.

Higher standards for juvenile survival at the dams

The proposed action builds on existing improvements in hydropower operations, adding more spill for fish, improved water management and transport strategies that are better linked to science.



It adds scheduled new structural improvements to dams where about \$1 billion has already been invested make them safer for fish.

It includes commitments from the action agencies to achieve at least 95 percent juvenile survival for spring migrants and 93 percent for summer migrants on average, per dam.

Expanded habitat projects target biological needs

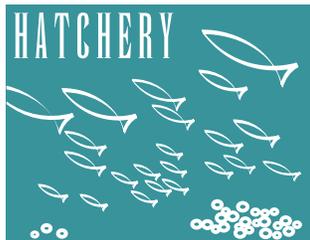
The proposed action includes an extensive habitat program with specific actions and funding commitments, targeting populations with the greatest needs. These include the Upper Columbia fish in eastern Washington and populations of the Snake River fish in eastern Washington and Oregon.





Hatcheries that contribute to recovery

The action agencies are responsible for hatcheries as mitigation for the impacts of the Federal Columbia River Power System. We will continue to meet that obligation, while calling for a programmatic hatchery review and hatchery reform.



We will undertake reforms in cooperation with hatchery operators to ensure that mitigation hatcheries do not impede recovery of listed fish. New hatchery programs may be initiated if scientific review

shows that doing so can help to advance the agencies' goals for recovery of listed species.

We will continue to provide artificial propagation safety-net programs for populations at risk of extinction.

Finding selective harvest opportunities

The proposed action identifies an encouraging pilot project that focuses harvest more on hatchery fish, allowing more wild fish to return to spawning grounds.



We are actively seeking other creative harvest projects to fund. Our goal must be to allow enough wild fish to spawn so these depressed stocks can rebuild.

Predator Management

Predation on juvenile and adult salmon has increased, with many new predators that were not present in the Columbia Basin or as active as they were only three or four years ago.

The proposal continues the aggressive management actions for pikeminnow. There are actions for Caspian terns and double-crested cormorants in the estuary and inland areas where large colonies have established. We also are increasing efforts for hazing and excluding sea lions at Bonneville Dam.

Accountability

We have learned a lot over the past 10 years about what's really helping the fish. With this expanded set of commitments, it's important to ensure that we continue to do the right things and that our "all H" approach is having the intended success.

To do this, the proposed action identifies planning and reporting dates, including check-ins in 2012 and 2015 on how well we are doing. It identifies a robust research, monitoring and evaluation program that will provide information to continuously refine and improve our approaches during the 10-year period of the proposed action.

What's next

The action agencies will now submit the proposed action to NOAA Fisheries. Together the federal agencies may make further refinements to the proposal, adding or clarifying actions as needed as NOAA develops a new Biological Opinion for the Federal Columbia River Power System.

A status conference with Judge Redden is set for June 20, 2007.

Meanwhile, the action agencies will continue to build on the progress and actions that are already in place in the Columbia River Basin. We are committed to the joint regional effort that's needed to be successful in recovering this Northwest treasure.

For more information on Columbia Basin salmon recovery, go to www.salmonrecovery.gov.