

SUBBASINS

The preceding sections of this program address fish and wildlife needs on two different levels: the Columbia River Basin as a whole and at the next level, the 11 ecological provinces within the basin. This section addresses the third level, the more than 50 subbasins within those ecological provinces. For each of these subbasins a locally developed “plan” will be adopted into the program. Each plan will have its own vision and biological objectives and will identify specific actions needed for fish and wildlife in that subbasin. The plans must be consistent with the visions, biological objectives, and strategies adopted at the basin and province levels, but otherwise are free to make unique choices and reflect local policies and priorities. The subbasin plans will be the basis for review and funding of most fish and wildlife projects in this program.

A. SUBBASIN PLANS

The fish and wildlife program is implemented principally at the subbasin level. It is at this subbasin level that the more general guidance provided by the basin and province level visions, principles, objectives, and strategies is refined in light of local scientific knowledge, policies, and priorities.

The subbasin plans will be adopted into the program, becoming the third tier of the program structure. If the vision for the basin is to be realized, it will be through successful selection and implementation of subbasin level goals, objectives, and strategies. Plans at this level will guide Bonneville funding of fish and wildlife activities. Subbasin level plans should also provide an opportunity for the integration and coordination of projects and programs funded by entities other than Bonneville, including Canadian entities in

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transboundary areas of the subbasins.

Subbasin plans will be reviewed for their consistency with biological objectives and strategies at the basin and province levels. Similarly, as subbasin plans are adopted into the program, higher level objectives and strategies may be modified to reflect and accommodate the information and initiatives of the plan.

Subbasin plans will also be the context for review of proposals for Bonneville funding each year by the fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, the Independent Scientific Review Panel and the Council. Once subbasin plans are approved, all of these entities will be able to review the projects proposed for Bonneville funding to determine if they are scientifically sound in light of existing and desired ecological conditions in the subbasin and the goals and objectives presented in subbasin plans.

1. Required Elements of Subbasin Plans

For purposes of the program a subbasin level plan must include the following three general components in order to be eligible for adoption into the fish and wildlife program:

- A subbasin assessment providing a description of historical and existing conditions;

- A clear and comprehensive inventory of existing projects and past accomplishments;
- A 10-15 year management plan.

Each of these components is discussed below. The Technical Appendix contains a detailed description of each element and of the process that the Council will use to develop the subbasin level of the program. A template for the plan will be developed collaboratively and included in the Technical Appendix.

It is anticipated that subbasin plans will be revised and updated every three to five years as new information becomes available and conditions change.

2. General Principles for Subbasin Plans

- Planning in any subbasin will start from the information contained in subbasin summaries and existing plans and documents. The program will only fund new planning activities where there are clear gaps and omissions.
- The Council’s subbasin plans will not duplicate plans that have been developed or will soon be developed by others, including states, tribes, or the federal government.
- Wherever possible and scientifically warranted, the Council will adopt existing plans into the subbasin plans.
- The final subbasin plan to be adopted by the Council should enjoy a wide range of support from all interested parties.

3. Subbasin Assessment

The assessment is a technical phase that describes existing and historic resource conditions and characteristics. The assessment scope covers both aquatic and terrestrial

environments and addresses anadromous and resident fish, and wildlife. This initial assessment will rely primarily on existing information already compiled by fish and wildlife agencies, water resource agencies, and other interested parties within the subbasins.

A template for subbasin assessment has been developed for this program through the collaborative efforts of regional scientists. This template has broad support, and will be accepted for both the plans adopted as part of the fish and wildlife program, for ESA recovery planning activities, and for water quality management plans under the Clean Water Act.

A full copy of the assessment template is contained in the Technical Appendix. The template has seven separate sections:

- Background and Introduction
- Subbasin description
- Habitat condition and trends, historic and current (at a level of detail consistent with the 6th level habitat unit code, HUC)
- Synthesis and interpretation (narrative descriptions coupled with maps indicating habitats and species of interest)
- Summary
- Assessment validation and monitoring
- References

The Council will provide assistance and work with the region's federal, state, and tribal fish and wildlife managers and all other interested parties to complete assessments, using this template, for each of the subbasins by early 2001. These assessments will then be made available to local, state, federal, and tribal planners to use as a foundation for developing the management plan component of subbasin plans.

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The Council is aware that there is a large number of watershed and subbasin level activities throughout the basin that are using a wide variety of formats for assessments and planning. The Council intends to rely on the information gathered in those activities as much as possible and does not intend this template to undermine or displace these on-going efforts. However, for purposes of this program it is important to compile this information in a consistent format that permits the coordination of Bonneville-funded activities and planning under the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act.

The Council expects that the initial assessments in some subbasins will encounter significant data gaps requiring additional information. In such cases, the subbasin plan should identify this need, and include the measures necessary to meet it. In all cases, it is expected that the body of information on which the assessment is based will continue to grow and that, as a regular part of each project review and funding cycle, the assessments and plans will be updated.

Most of the fish species of interest for subbasin planning move beyond their subbasins of origin for at least some stages of their life cycle. Subbasin planners will need information and analytical tools that allow them to understand the biological constraints on their fish populations that stem from areas outside the subbasin, such as mainstem survival rates, ocean and inriver harvest rates, effects of interactions with fish from other subbasins, and ocean conditions. The Council will ensure that subbasin planners have access to information of this type.

4. Inventory of Existing Activities

In most subbasins, there are already several programs underway that in some way are involved in watershed planning or restoration. The Council believes that the projects funded under its program should take into account these existing programs and be coordinated with them. This coordination will yield a more scientifically and biologically sound fish and wildlife plan and reduce costs.

Thus, the second general component of a subbasin level plan will be a description of the existing fish and wildlife and habitat projects that are occurring, or have occurred, in the recent past in the subbasin. This element should include: 1) all activities that are taking place or are planned in the subbasin and 2) objectives related to protecting, mitigating or enhancing fish, wildlife, or their habitats, regardless of funding source or management entity. Both implementation and planning activities should be addressed. The description for each project or activity should include:

- a description of activity, including its term, its monitoring and evaluation elements, and its goals and objectives
- identification of management or lead entities for each activity
- identification of authorizing process or entity (Northwest Power

Planning Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, state watershed planning agency, etc.)

- identification of relationship to other activities in the subbasin
- identification of funding source
- a synopsis of accomplishments or failures of activity — related to established goals and objectives where possible
- identification of limiting factors or ecological processes the activity is designed to address

5. Management Plan

The management plan is the heart of the subbasin plan. It sets forth the strategies that will be implemented at a local level. The management plan should be the last major component of the subbasin plan to be developed because the goals and objectives that are included within it will need to reflect what is learned in the assessment and inventory work. It is in the management plan that policy, legal, and ecological considerations are merged. The management plan should have a 10-15 year horizon. Management plans adopted into the Council's program must be consistent with the Northwest Power Act and specifically section 4(h)(6) of the act. Necessary elements of the management plan include:

- A vision for the subbasin
- Biological objectives for fish and wildlife that:
 - are consistent with province and basin level visions, objectives, and strategies adopted in the program
 - are responsive to the subbasin assessment findings
 - are consistent with legal rights and obligations of fish and wildlife agencies and tribes

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with jurisdiction over fish and wildlife in the subbasin, and agreed upon by co-managers in the subbasin. Where there are disagreements among co-managers that translate into differing biological objectives, the differences and the alternative biological objectives should be fully presented

- complement the programs of tribal, state and federal land or water quality management agencies in the subbasin
- integrate Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act requirements as fully as possible
- have measurable outcomes
- Strategies that will be employed over the term of the plan to meet the established vision and biological objectives, including:
 - an explanation linking the strategies to the established subbasin biological objectives and vision and the subbasin assessment
 - an explanation of how and why the strategies presented were selected over other alternative strategies (e.g. passive restoration strategies v. intervention strategies)
 - a proposed sequence and prioritization
 - additional steps required to compile a more complete or detailed assessment

- A projected budget for the term of the subbasin plan, including:
 - a detailed three-year implementation budget
 - a more general long-term (10-15 year) budget
- A monitoring and evaluation plan that will show whether the actions taken to implement the subbasin plan are achieving their objectives
- Any additional steps that are necessary to achieve compliance with Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act requirements applicable to that subbasin

6. Developing Plans at the Subbasin Level

Starting in 2001, the Council intends to begin accepting subbasin level plans for adoption into the program. The Council knows that this schedule is very aggressive. However, there is little support in the region for either several more years of discussion and planning or for starting actions that are not grounded in science-based, subbasin level plans. The Council believes that the first attempt to develop comprehensive subbasin plans must be completed as soon as possible, and that improvements can be made as new information and experience dictates.

The Council sees subbasin plans as flexible documents that will be

FAST FACT

Of the original salmon and steelhead habitat available in the Columbia River Basin, 55 percent of the area and 31 percent of the stream miles have been eliminated by dam construction.

revised and updated approximately every three years. For those who are unable to participate in this timeframe, and for those topics that can not be addressed as fully as may be ideal, there will be other opportunities in the near future.

The Council believes that subbasin plans must be developed within an open public process that provides ample opportunity for participation by a wide range of state, federal, tribal, and local managers, experts, landowners, local governments, and stakeholders. The details of that process will vary from subbasin to subbasin, but there are essentially two stages.

First, at the local level, interested parties need to work together to develop a plan that, as far as possible, embodies the knowledge, policies, and support of the people in that subbasin. Recognizing that this effort will need to be undertaken somewhat differently in each subbasin, the Council will work with state, tribal, federal, and local parties to determine which approach is most likely to succeed in a particular subbasin, and then help support that approach. The Council believes that other entities are better equipped to take the lead in the local effort, and does not intend to become a lead entity at the local level in the subbasin planning process.

Second, when a subbasin plan is proposed for adoption into the program, the Power Act's program

amendment standards require a public process with full opportunity for public comment and participation. The Act also requires that, at the end of the process, the Council make a decision based on statutory standards.

It is important to recognize that, while the Council can encourage interested parties to work together on a common plan for each subbasin, it cannot preclude any person from submitting a plan. Under the Power Act, the Council is obliged to consider and make a decision on each recommendation it receives.

After the basin and province levels are fixed in the current program amendment cycle, the Council will:

- Make subbasin assessments available on its website and through other means to the planners, decision-makers, and the public as soon as they are completed
- Issue a formal notice and request for recommendations to amend the program. This notice will be limited, and explain that only recommendations at the subbasin level of the program will be considered
- Take extra steps to target this subbasin notice at local governments, stakeholders, planners, watershed groups and land and water managers in each subbasin
- Organize recommendations it receives subbasin by subbasin,

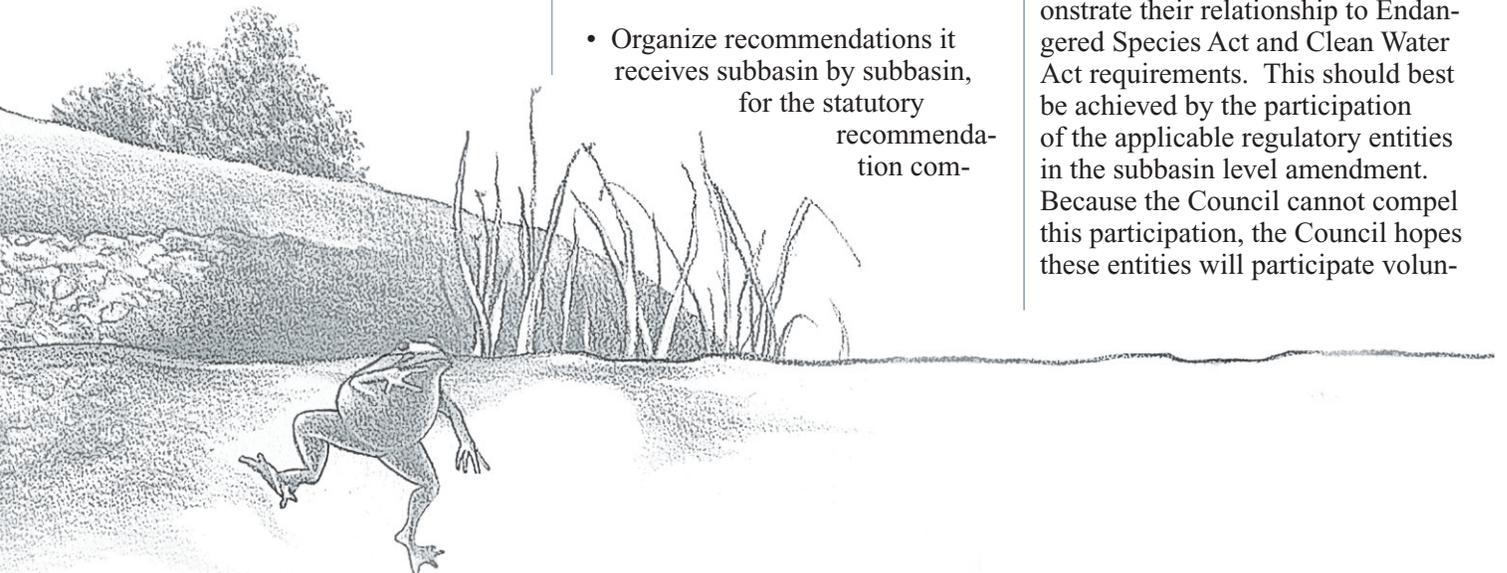
for the statutory
recommendation
com-

ment period. This is intended to facilitate coordination and discussion by those that have made recommendations in any particular subbasin

- Assist in facilitating the discussions in the subbasins aimed at reconciling the recommendations and ensuring that the program standards for plans are met
- Produce drafts of the subbasin plans that are crafted from the recommendations and the facilitated discussions for public comment
- Adopt into the program subbasin plans that meet the established standards. Where more time is needed, the Council may adopt placeholders for a subbasin, and establish a longer timeframe for adoption to facilitate continued discussions

The Act directs the Council to give special consideration to the recommendations of tribal, state and federal fish and wildlife management entities when considering matters related to fish and wildlife. Therefore, subbasin plans should be developed with the participation of fish and wildlife managers with jurisdiction in the subbasin.

As outlined above, the Council will require that subbasin plans demonstrate their relationship to Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act requirements. This should best be achieved by the participation of the applicable regulatory entities in the subbasin level amendment. Because the Council cannot compel this participation, the Council hopes these entities will participate volun-



tarily, and the Council expects that state and federal agencies and tribes will encourage and facilitate their involvement.

Local, state, tribal and federal land and water management entities have programs, authority, and jurisdiction beyond that of the fish and wildlife managers. The Council will not require the participation of these entities, but will evaluate the level of involvement provided to them in the planning process, and the level of agreement that they have with the completed plan, when it considers adopting a plan into the program and/or in making its funding recommendations to Bonneville.

Finally, it is anticipated that the Council and its staff will assist in a facilitation role as plans are developed, and will also seek to ensure that planners address all criteria that ultimately are developed.

7. Scientific Review of Subbasin Plans

The Council will utilize the expertise of independent scientists and boards to review subbasin plans. Examples of questions that may be asked of the reviewers are:

- Do the assessments contain the elements required by the criteria?
- Are the goals, objectives, and strategies scientifically appropriate in light of the assessment and inventory?
- Are the goals, objectives, and strategies consistent with those established at the province and basin levels?
- Do the plans demonstrate that alternative management responses have been adequately considered?

- Are subbasin plans within each province collectively consistent with the province goals, objectives, and strategies?

In addition, the Council believes that independent review of the subbasin plans will be an important part of ensuring they are appropriate and useful.

