

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON LOWER COLUMBIA COHO HARVEST MATRIX

The Habitat Committee (HC) was asked to provide the Council with a status report on habitat conditions in the Lower Columbia River coho salmon evolutionarily significant unit (ESU). The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) assembled available information for the portions of the ESU lying within the two states.

Both States reported that they do not have adequate monitoring information available for a meaningful trend analysis of habitat conditions at this time. Habitat restoration activities have been initiated in both States but the lack of monitoring information makes the effectiveness of this work difficult to assess.

Oregon has initiated an aquatic inventory program which examines a series of habitat variables. Limited assessment to date indicates that habitat quality in the ESU remains in the low to moderate range.

ODFW also conducted an analysis of coho parr density within a recent eight year period. This study indicates that coho habitat quality remains low and is not demonstrating an upward trajectory. The HC is concerned that this analysis was not portrayed in terms of juveniles/spawners, but recognizes the preliminary nature of the analysis.

Habitat restoration projects continue in watersheds in the ESU in both States. While there have been significant accomplishments in some watersheds, completion of projects in most areas in Oregon appear to be well below the pace necessary to meet the 2025 restoration goals.

Washington has not identified comparable goals but their pace of habitat project implementation is similar (see complete Oregon and Washington reports). Until last year, projects needed to implement the long-term Intensively Monitored Watershed studies in Washington State were stalled because of funding shortfalls. Starting in 2015, these projects will move ahead, however it could take at least 10 years to detect trends in habitat restoration effectiveness at the population level.

Both states report that the pace of habitat restoration activities, as well as monitoring programs, are limited by lack of funding. It must be noted that significant habitat degradation continues to occur and available monitoring information does not allow this factor to be quantified. In addition, there are emerging threats including climate change, human population growth, and potential water reallocations associated with the Columbia River Treaty.

If the Council will be forwarding recommendations to NOAA in regards to management of ESA-listed species, the HC recommends that monitoring of habitat status and trends be adequately funded.