

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON HABITAT ISSUES

Pier Wind Terminal Development Project

The Port of Long Beach and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Pier Wind Terminal Development Project in November 2023. The Project proposes to construct a 400-acre terminal and 30-acre transportation corridor to support offshore wind development off the West Coast and is within essential fish habitat (EFH) for coastal pelagic species (CPS) and groundfish. The Project may result in the direct loss of approximately 400 acres of water column and deep water soft-bottom benthic habitat for the construction of the terminal and wharf, approximately 30 acres of water column for the transportation corridor fill, and approximately 15.4 acres of shallow water habitat. The Project may also result in impacts to seagrass and canopy kelp habitat areas of particular concern. The NOI comment period closed in February; however, the Habitat Committee (HC) will keep the Council informed when the Draft EIS is out for public comment.

Columbia Basin Restoration Agreement

A [plan](#) to help recover depleted salmon populations in the Columbia River Basin was announced in December and approved by a Federal court in early February. The plan was formally launched on February 23rd when the Biden administration, the four lower Columbia River Basin Tribes, and the Governors of Oregon and Washington (collectively the “six sovereigns”) signed the agreement ceremonially. The agreement is composed of a series of U.S. Government Commitments in response to the six sovereigns’ [Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative](#); the agreement is for five years, though it may be extended to 10 if the commitments are being met on schedule. The agreement commits \$200 million in new funding to salmon and steelhead hatcheries and \$100 million for actions that improve salmon and steelhead populations, including habitat improvements, predation reduction, and ecosystem function recovery work with the six sovereigns.

Future Reporting

The HC discussed how we can provide information to the Council and others in advance of Council meetings, to improve efficiency. The HC thinks that a brief webinar meeting in advance of the regular HC meeting would facilitate this idea and allow for an HC report in the advanced briefing book to cover some habitat items. The HC proposes conducting one of these pre-meeting webinars as a trial prior to the June meeting. This should free up agenda time at the June in-person HC meeting and make the supplemental HC report more concise.

Upcoming Topics

- Hells Canyon Supplemental EIS - The most recent estimated deadline for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to produce the EIS draft was the end of February 2024. As of the March meeting, no draft has been produced. As previously noted, the HC will continue to track and prepare comments, if necessary.
- Lower Columbia River Dredge Material Management Plan draft EIS - The most recent estimated release of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ EIS draft is mid-May. This has been delayed since November 2022 and the Habitat Committee will continue to track it.