

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

Draft Supplemental EIS for Hells Canyon Complex Relicensing

The most recent estimated deadline for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to produce the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the end of April 2024, with a likely 60-day comment period. The hydropower license was last updated in 2005 and has been operating under an extension of the original license. As mandated under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council is required to comment on actions that, in the view of the Council, are likely to substantially affect the habitat, including essential fish habitat, of an anadromous fishery resource under its authority. Of further importance and consideration is that this area, currently below the dams and historically above, is the primary Snake River production area for fall Chinook salmon, which are the most significant Snake Basin contributor for salmon ocean fisheries and the Council. The Habitat Committee is ready to draft a comment letter on the Draft Hells Canyon Supplemental EIS for the June briefing book for Council review. Habitat-related topics of interest are likely to include flow management, habitat improvements, and water quality considerations.

Topics in late spring

Several other actions are likely to be released for comment between late May and July, and warrant discussion about which should be prioritized for review by the Habitat Committee. These include the Dredge Material Management Plan draft EIS, the draft programmatic EIS for California's offshore wind leases, the Humboldt Bay EIR for the deep draft terminal project, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) proposed sale notice for Oregon Offshore Wind Lease Areas, and BOEM's Environmental Assessment on site assessment and characterization for Oregon offshore Wind Energy Areas.

PFMC
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