

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) met online February 25 – 26, 2025 to discuss current habitat-related issues. The following report highlights relevant items for Council consideration.

At the November Council meeting the Council tasked the HC with providing a status report on the invasive golden mussel following its detection in California in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in October 2024. The HC provides this update in G.1.a, Supplemental HC Report 2.

### Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The 2020 CRSO Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzed the ongoing operations, maintenance, and configuration of 14 Federal dams and related facilities in the Columbia River Basin. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation issued a [notice of intent](#) (NOI) to prepare a Supplemental EIS to analyze new information and circumstances identified since the 2020 EIS, in alignment with the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement (RCBA) signed in 2023, and additional input from Federal and state agencies, Tribes, and stakeholders in fall 2024. The comment deadline on the NOI is May 9, 2025. The Co-Lead Agencies anticipate holding virtual public meetings the week of April 7. The [Council commented](#) on the 2020 CRSO EIS and it may be beneficial for the Council to comment on the NOI for the Supplemental EIS. The states and Tribes are working to coordinate comments on the NOI. Pending that coordination, the HC would then be able to prepare a draft comment letter on behalf of the Council in mid-April using the Quick Response process, if the Council wishes.

### Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment

[The NPCC is requesting recommendations](#) for amending its Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program). The NPCC amends the Program every five years based largely on recommendations from the Federal and state fish and wildlife agencies and the region's Tribes. Other Federal and state agencies, the Bonneville utility customers and other regional utilities, river users, local governments, and the general public may also submit program amendment recommendations for the NPCC to consider. The current version of the Program is the [2014 Program](#) with a [2020 Addendum](#), plus more than 50 separate subbasin plans. The deadline for amendment recommendations is April 17, 2025. The HC is not recommending the Council comment on the NPCC Program relative to habitat issues but wanted the Council and the public to be aware of the Program amendment process.

### Port of Coos Bay Channel Modification Project

The Port of Coos Bay (Oregon) is proposing a [Channel Modification Project](#) that would modify the Coos Bay Federal Navigation Channel (FNC) to increase import/export capacity on the West Coast for large deep-draft container ships. The Channel Modification Project is one component of the Port's [Pacific Coast Intermodal Port Project \(PCIP\)](#) that includes building a container terminal and new rail yard on the North Spit of Coos Bay and upgrading the existing Coos Bay Rail Line (CBRL) across multiple counties. The PCIP aims to transport containers between the new terminal

and inland destinations entirely by rail. When fully operational, the PCIP would handle up to two million containers per year creating a new international gateway for imports and exports.

The major elements of the Channel Modification Project include:

- ❖ Widening and deepening the navigation channel
- ❖ Extending the navigation channel one mile into the ocean
- ❖ Creating two deep-draft turning basins in the estuary
- ❖ New ocean disposal sites for 20 million cubic yards of dredged material, including rock
- ❖ Constructing a new rock apron at the North Jetty
- ❖ Shifting the centerline of the navigation channel and relocating the majority of channel markers

The proposed Channel Modification Project and construction of the new container terminal would have substantial effects on estuarine and freshwater habitats, including altering hydrodynamics, water quality, salinity regimes and saltwater intrusion, impacts to eelgrass beds, and introduction of invasive species. Upgrades to the Coos Bay Rail Line are likely to affect a number of fish-bearing streams and riparian habitat. A Notice of Intent (scoping) to prepare a draft EIS for the Channel Modification Project is anticipated for June 2025. The HC intends to track the Channel Modification Project and may recommend the Council comment on this action. The HC also intends to track the overall Pacific Coast Intermodal Port Project as it develops.

#### National Fish Habitat Partnership

The [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) seeks a candidate representing the commercial fishing industry to join the [National Fish Habitat \(Board\)](#). The board facilitates the coordination of fish habitat conservation efforts through [Fish Habitat Partnerships](#) across the United States. Applications are due March 31, 2025. If interested, you can email your resume and letter of interest to [info@fishhabitat.org](mailto:info@fishhabitat.org).

#### **Potential Council Guidance**

- ❖ Task the Habitat Committee with preparing a draft comment letter on the Notice of Intent for the Columbia River System Operations Supplemental EIS

PFMC  
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