

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON HABITAT ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) met online on November 10, 2025, to consider issues on the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) November agenda and to provide updates on matters relevant to the Council's habitat protection authorities. The HC offers the following recommendations for Council consideration:

- **Forgo development of a comment letter on the state draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chehalis Basin "Flow Through" Dam EIS and instead comment on the federal draft EIS when it becomes available in spring 2026.**
- **Request briefings from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on operational changes to California water management and potential impacts to Pacific salmon habitats.**
- **Task the HC with writing letters to BOR, NMFS, and the SWRCB as appropriate to voice concerns regarding harm the proposed changes may have to Pacific salmon and habitats within the Council's jurisdiction.**
- **Extend the Pacific salmon essential fish habitat review [Call for Information](#) comment period, to ensure adequate opportunity for interested parties, including federal government agencies, to submit information.**

Idaho

Snake River Quagga Mussels

Following previous reports to the Council on this topic, in early September 2025, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) confirmed the detection of quagga mussels in a portion of the previously infested area of the Snake River, Idaho. The impact area is near Twin Falls, Idaho and is approximately 280 river miles upriver of the Hells Canyon Dam, the most upriver extent of anadromous fish. However, if quagga mussels were to move downstream, this could result in impacts to migratory salmon. While this was the third consecutive year of positive sampling, the area impacted by quagga mussels dropped from 7.2 river miles in 2024 to approximately 3.5 river miles in 2025. ISDA indicates these results demonstrate progress from ongoing treatment. In mid-October, ISDA once again treated the river with the copper-based product Natrix. Treatment methodologies have evolved over the three year treatment cycle with more emphasis on deep pools (deep pump injection of chemical) and ephemeral ponds not connected to the main river at low flows. Treatment was isolated to the infected 3.5 river miles. While treatment has impacts on all aquatic organisms, those impacts continue to be monitored and isolated to the treatment reach.

Washington

Chehalis Basin "Flow Through" Dam EIS

The Washington State Department of Ecology is expected to release an updated draft EIS on a proposed "flow through" flood control dam on the mainstem Chehalis River upriver from Pe Ell, Washington. The proposed dam, which would close its gates and store water only during flood events, is intended to reduce the frequency of catastrophic flooding downstream. The dam's

construction and operation would impact steelhead, coho, fall Chinook, and spring Chinook salmon spawning and rearing habitat and passage. The state-convened Chehalis Basin Board is expected to make a decision on a broader flood management and fish restoration plan in the fall of 2026, and they may or may not choose to include the new dam as part of that strategy. A federal EIS is expected to follow in the spring of 2026 and would include a deeper analysis of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species; primarily southern-resident killer whales and would also analyze impacts on salmon (though not through the ESA lens, as there are no listed salmon in the project area). The Washington state draft EIS is expected to be released in late November 2025 and will have a 75-day comment period.

The HC will be tracking this process as it develops, as various strategies are still under consideration at the state and Tribal level. As such, **the HC recommends forgoing a comment letter on the state draft EIS and instead commenting on the federal draft EIS when it becomes available in spring 2026.**

Oregon

Pacific Coast Intermodal Port Project (PCIP) in Coos Bay

The HC briefed the Council on the status of the PCIP at the September Council meeting. At that time, the Port of Coos Bay anticipated a December timeline for publishing a *Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement*. The Council tasked the HC with preparing a draft comment letter on the NOI when the public comment period opens. At this time, however, it is unclear if the NOI is on track for December in light of delays caused by the government shutdown and other factors specific to the proposed project. The HC will continue to track this process and prepare a draft letter for Council consideration at the appropriate time.

California

California Water Issues

The Council has commented numerous times on the impacts of water management in California on freshwater habitat for Pacific salmon, including two stocks listed under the ESA. To provide more information on these topics, and as requested by the Council, the HC wrote a report (E.1.a, Supplemental HC Report 2). This report summarizes ten projects and strategies related to California water issues and anticipated changes as a result of these actions, many of which are still under development. From this summary, the HC concludes that despite the potential that some of these projects will improve salmonid habitat, many of the actions, such as large-scale water diversion and storage projects as well as water management policies, will likely result in wide-ranging adverse effects on salmon.

To better understand specific changes in these systems and characterize potential impacts to salmon and their habitats, **the HC recommends requesting briefings from BOR, NMFS, and SWRCB representatives at a future Council meeting.** In addition, **the Council should task the HC with writing letters to BOR, NMFS, and the CA SWRCB as appropriate to voice concerns regarding harm these changes may have to Pacific salmon and habitats within the Council's jurisdiction.**

Regional

Columbia-Snake River dams/salmon litigation

In September, the HC briefed the Council on the status of the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement (RCBA) for recovering depleted salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin. The RCBA resulted in a court-ordered stay in ongoing litigation but was later rescinded by Presidential Memorandum (June 12, 2025). In September 2025, U.S. District Court lifted the stay and the plaintiffs reinitiated litigation. The court is now reviewing briefs for and against a preliminary injunction. The preliminary injunction is proposed by National Wildlife Federation and Oregon and is supported by amici Washington, Yakama Nation, and Nez Perce Tribes. It seeks to benefit salmon and steelhead by increasing spill over the dams, limiting reservoir elevation changes, and implementing targeted predation management and habitat improvement actions. The court is accepting briefs in support and in opposition through January 2026, and a decision on the preliminary injunction is expected as soon as February. The underlying case will be briefed and argued after the decision on the preliminary injunction, but there is no schedule set yet for that phase of the litigation.

Salmon Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review Update

In September, the Council posted a [Call for Information \(CFI\) and Data](#) for the Salmon EFH Review, with the comment period ending on December 3. The Government shutdown has hampered efforts by the states, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and others for coordinating with NMFS staff on preparing and providing data products. Under these challenging circumstances, **the HC recommends the Council extend the CFI to allow for this important coordination.** The HC notes that a CFI extension could also affect the timeline of the EFH Phase 1 Report and/or other aspects of the EFH Review timeline. However, the HC believes that preparing the volume of habitat-related information is foundational to a well-informed Phase 1 Report and the EFH Review and should be given ample time for that work, and for coordination with NMFS management and technical staff.

National

Call for Board Candidates: National Fish Habitat Partnership

The [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) is [seeking three new Board members](#) (term limit three years) to represent any of the following sectors:

- Recreational sportfishing industry
- Commercial fishing industry
- Freshwater anglers
- Habitat conservation organizations
- Science-based fishery organizations

This is an opportunity to help lead a national effort to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat. Board members play a vital role in coordinating conservation efforts of 20 regional Fish Habitat Partnerships, collaborating to ensure healthier waters, stronger fisheries, and lasting benefits for communities nationwide. Interested candidates should submit a resume and letter of interest to info@fishhabitat.org by December 31, 2025.

PFMC

11/13/25