Overview and Approaches to Ecosystem Restoration in the Lower Columbia River and Estuary

Catherine Corbett[1] and Ian Sinks[2]

[1]Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, 811 SW Naito Parkway, Suite 410, Portland, OR; tel: (503) 226-1565 ext 240; email: corbett@lcrep.org
[2]Columbia Land Trust, 1351 Officer's Row, Vancouver, WA; tel: (360) 213-1206; email: isinks@columbialandtrust.org

The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership with key partners such as the Columbia Land Trust, Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, watershed councils and others, has developed an ecosystem restoration approach with an overarching goal of implementing well coordinated, scientifically sound projects restoring tidal wetlands and other key aquatic habitats. This presentation will provide an overview of the ecosystem restoration approach at two different scales—the larger programmatic scale and the individual project scale. On the programmatic level, several efforts will be reviewed that are characterizing ecosystem status, developing a system of reference sites, and evaluating the effectiveness of individual restoration actions. These programs include the ecosystem monitoring project, action effectiveness monitoring, reference sites, and the cumulative effects of restoration. The programs in combination will result in integral information to further prioritize locations and refine methods for future habitat restoration and protection actions in the lower river. Having this regional coordination allows for consistency in restoration goals and in assessment methods so that program success can be evaluated over time and throughout the entire lower river. On the project level, the presentation will review examples of the types of restoration projects currently used to achieve restoration ecosystem structure and function; the steps needed to complete individual projects; and the invaluable lessons learned within each step from over a decade of concerted habitat restoration and protection efforts involving numerous partners.