

Current Restoration Activities in the Lower Columbia River and Estuary

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Since settlement, the lower river and estuary have lost more than 50% of its habitats; some of it has decreased by as much as 75% from historic levels. In addition, beneficial uses are impaired, levels of legacy contaminants in some areas exceed reference levels, contaminants are bioaccumulating, new contaminants are emerging, and water temperatures exceed levels that support fish. Since 1997, twelve species of salmonids have been listed as threatened or endangered. Emerging data concludes that the estuary plays a significant role in the life cycle of these salmonids, and of course many other species, including humans, depend on its health.

Since 1999, significant efforts have been placed on restoring habitat and expanding our knowledge base of contaminants in the lower river and estuary. The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership has been coordinating regional efforts in these areas and has expanded funding to achieve on-the-ground improvements. The key funders of the restoration program include: the State of Oregon, State of Washington, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. Project supporters include:

Bonneville Power Administration
Georgia-Pacific Foundation
Metro
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
State of Oregon
The Nature Conservancy
US Environmental Protection Agency
Corps of Engineers

To date, over 122 restoration projects have restored nearly 13,000 acres of habitat. The Estuary Partnership has directly funded restoration of 4,204 acres with funds from the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and Bonneville Power Administration, EPA Targeted Watersheds program, and NOAA Community Based Restoration partnerships. These 30 projects include: land acquisition, tidegate removal and retrofits, dike and berm breaches, pile dike removal, revegetation, and wetland habitat assessments.

In addition, the Estuary Partnership is working with the Lower Columbia Solutions Group to develop a regional sediment management plan to guide dredge material management with a more strategic comprehensive approach.

The Estuary Partnership is now developing its effectiveness monitoring program to analyze restoration project monitoring data so that we can determine what impact restoration is having on fish and wildlife recovery and water quality.