

Lower Columbia River Summit

Habitat Restoration in the Next Decade

May 1, 2009

Community Leaders ~ Scientists Set Direction for Estuary Partnership for Habitat Restoration

Over 100 community leaders, policy makers, practitioners and scientists joined the Estuary Partnership Friday May 1, 2009 to discuss habitat restoration in the lower river and estuary. Since 1999, the Estuary Partnership and regional partners have restored over 13,000 acres of habitat.

As we near ten years of habitat restoration in the lower river, the approaches of the past decade will not take us to the next: ready-to-go projects are diminishing; emphasis on fish survivability is now paramount; projects are more complex and need more technical assistance; and the impact of toxics on habitat needs to be integrated into restoration programs.

Oregon State Senator Jackie Dingfelder and Washington State Representative Deb Wallace again invited participants to reinforce cross river coordination and partnership required to manage and improve the lower Columbia River.

The Columbia Land Trust and the Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force hosted the forum with the Estuary Partnership. The turn out was great. We received excellent feedback with a great mix of practitioners, policymakers, community leaders and scientists – all of whom work every day on these issues.

forums are designed to bring those involved with emerging science together with policy makers,

This forum is the fourth in the Estuary Partnership's Science to Policy Series initiated formally in 2007. These community leaders and practitioners to assess what we know, what decisions and questions we can answer, and what we need to learn in order to take our actions to the next level.

We brought parties together to:

- ◆ Share where we are,
- ◆ Share what we each do,
- ◆ Set the course for Estuary Partnership to build on efforts and fill gaps.

Key issues on May 1:

- ◆ The region has 13 species of salmonids listed as threatened and endangered - recovery is a priority.
- ◆ All the major planning efforts since 1999 indicate habitat restoration and toxics reduction are essential for salmon recovery and sustainable ecosystem.
- ◆ There has been a great deal of work in the last decade that has significantly improved conditions; we are now facing a new 'level' of complexity.

At the end of the session, participants agreed on three next steps for the Estuary Partnership

- ◆ Expand regional coordination and collaboration to support local work and expand capacities.
- ◆ Expand and Diversify Funding to cover more components of habitat restoration – from project development to design to construction to monitoring.
- ◆ Increase on-the-ground results that address salmonid recovery in the context of the whole ecosystem.
- ◆ Complete the restoration prioritization to guide more strategic efforts.

A quick look at what has happened from 1999 to June 2008

- ◆ 123 habitat restoration projects including 13,054 acres have been restored by the major entities, nearly half of what has been lost since European settlement and provides critical habitat for all threatened and endangered salmonids.
- ◆ More coordination provided by the Estuary Partnership Science Work Group.
- ◆ A significant investment of money.
- ◆ New information and data, such as our shoreline inventory and landscape classification.

What we have learned –

Responses to our requests for projects are getting fewer and the project complexities are increasing. The accessible, ready to go projects have been mostly completed.

We identified a few key factors:

- ◆ Restoration and conservation efforts need to incorporate community needs.
- ◆ Developing projects require more access to technical expertise.
- ◆ Current funding is not diverse enough: allowable portions of projects and funding cycles are limited.
- ◆ We must be more strategic.
- ◆ It takes time to acquire land.
- ◆ We need to work on the impact of restoration on other species' health, develop more acknowledgement (and funding) of link between toxics, habitat restoration and fish recovery (and species health), and better address fish survivability.

What we heard –

The strong consensus was that the Estuary Partnership is both a convener and a facilitator for the partners and lower river.

As the **convener**, the Estuary Partnership has helped ensure a more recognized, more coordinated habitat restoration network. The “network” helps us all share information and leverage more work and money, support what each partner is doing and what they do best and avoid duplication.

In our **facilitator** role, the Estuary Partnership is the voice for the estuary and region: we should be identifying regional needs and strategies and the supporting local needs. The Estuary Partnership should continue as the lead on activities such as restoration priorities and strategic project development, establishing the importance of the estuary, providing access to technical assistance and expanding effectiveness monitoring.

Participants agreed that:

- ◆ The most sustainable restoration and conservation is supported by local communities and addresses local needs.
- ◆ Local restoration and conservation are the building blocks for regional ecosystem health.
- ◆ Collaboration gives more cost effective on-the-ground results.
- ◆ We need to increase on-the-ground results to restore more habitat, recover species, and sustain ecosystem health.
- ◆ The Estuary Partnership was created to be the regional collaborator and to develop regional approaches and priorities.



Community Needs

Glenn Lamb, Executive Director of the Columbia Land Trust, discussed habitat restoration from the community perspective. Restoration must incorporate and address local needs. The Columbia Land Trust works to permanently conserve, restore, and manage signature landscapes, vital habitats, and working farms and forests in Oregon and Washington from east of the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. These lands are at risk from overdevelopment, unsustainable practices, and other threats.

The Columbia Land Trust works with landowners and local communities to sustain the unique qualities of the region. Restoration must address community needs first and build restoration into economic and social goals. Community and landowner engagement will ensure that the restoration addresses the multitude of factors (erosion, dams, logging) that influence land decisions in the region.



Project Development

Micah Russell, Director of the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST) addressed project development and offered suggestions on how to improve restoration results. CREST is a council of governments that includes counties, cities and port districts surrounding the estuary in both Oregon and Washington. It provides technical services for members; coordinates activities among agencies; and provides information to citizens.

Micah noted that keys to successful projects have included strategic collaboration combined with good funding and community support. The greatest successes have been realized by building consensus among local stakeholders and emphasizing what can be done collectively. This has enabled CREST to complete projects and meet the needs of multiple resources users.

Current gaps he sees include the need for multi-year funding, project development support, standardized monitoring, and the timing of funding awards to coincide better with in-water work opportunities. He offered a few ideas:

- targeted acquisitions with adequate funding,
- funding to develop projects design and costs,
- a regional technical review body that communicates early with feedback on *early* conceptual designs,
- resources for conceptual pre-design and technical assistance,
- workshops and mentoring.



Habitat Restoration 1999 – 2009

The Plans

In the past ten years, many entities have engaged in a great deal of planning.

- ◆ 1987 - Spirit of the Salmon Report issued by the Tribes
- ◆ 1999 - 13 species listed as threatened or endangered
- ◆ 1999 Estuary Partnership Management Plan completed
- ◆ 1999 - State Recovery Plans Released
- ◆ 2000 - Hydropower Biological Opinion issued by NOAA
- ◆ 2000 - Water Resources Development Act passed
- ◆ 2001 - Washington Fish Recovery Board Established
- ◆ 2001 - ESA Executive Committee convened Estuary Partnership
- ◆ 2004 - Sub Basin Planning completed by Northwest Power and Conservation Council
- ◆ 2004 - Hydropower Biological Opinion issued by NOAA 2.0
- ◆ 2005 - Washington Fish Recovery Board Recovery Plan completed
- ◆ 2008 - Sub Basin Amendments Completed
- ◆ 2008 - Hydropower Biological Opinion issued by NOAA 3.0
- ◆ 2009 - Oregon Recovery Plan Issued
- ◆ 2009 - NOAA Recovery Module for lower river and estuary released

What the Estuary Partnership is Doing

The Coordination & Network

With partners, the Estuary Partnership has set regional priorities to integrate approaches and build relationships that foster results - building on what we each contribute. The Estuary Partnership's Management Plan was the first regional bi-state plan to articulate the estuary's importance and identify a set of actions to address these problems.



In 1999, the Governors and EPA signed the Implementation Agreement committing the states and EPA to the Management Plan. In 2000, at the request of the Governors, we convened a policy level executive committee to coordinate responses among federal, state and local entities to the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

We worked with the Council and NOAA to merge their planning and recovery efforts and produce their plans, ensuring consistency. Since 1999, other regional plans have been developed that support and build on the objectives of the Estuary Partnership Management Plan and each plan calls for lower river and estuary habitat restoration. Among them: the Council Sub Basin plans; NOAA's Estuary Recovery Module; EPA's Strategic Plan; Washington and Oregon Salmon Recovery Plans; and the Federal Columbia River Hydropower System Biological Opinions of 2000 and 2008(BiOp). They all follow the Estuary Partnership Management Plan in calling for reducing hydrosystem effects; restoring habitat; addressing toxic contaminants; slowing the introduction of non-native species; reducing predation; and managing uncertainty.

The Results

Habitat *Implementing these plans resulted in the following as of June 2008;*

123 projects and 13,054 acres by major partners
45 Estuary Partnership projects and 2,600 acres and
41.7 miles of stream:

Coordination The Estuary Partnership Science Work Group was formed in 1995 and continues to provide direction and guidance on all Estuary Partnership technical programs. Membership is open and includes over 40 technical experts from federal, state, and local government, private sector consultants, non-government entities, watershed councils and conservation organizations and academe. They meet monthly.

The Funding Sources

Funding for the Estuary Partnership projects included:

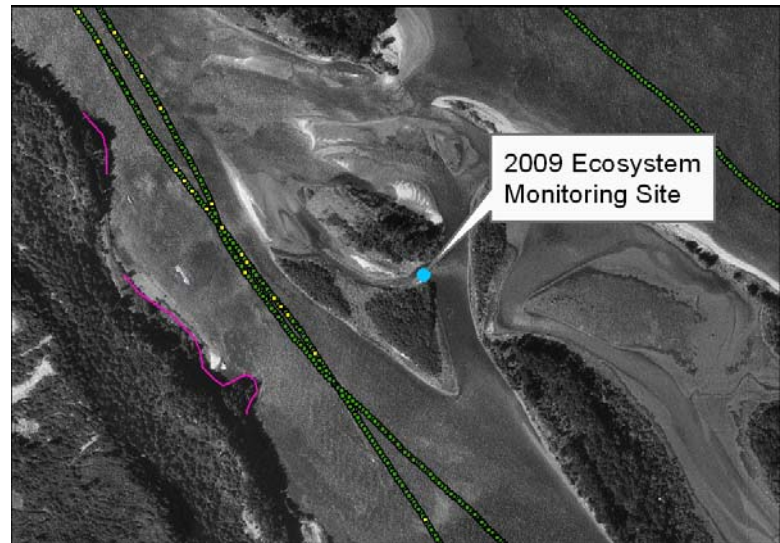
- ◆ BPA - \$9,100,000
- ◆ EPA Targeted Watershed - \$700,000
- ◆ NOAA - \$966,250

The Science

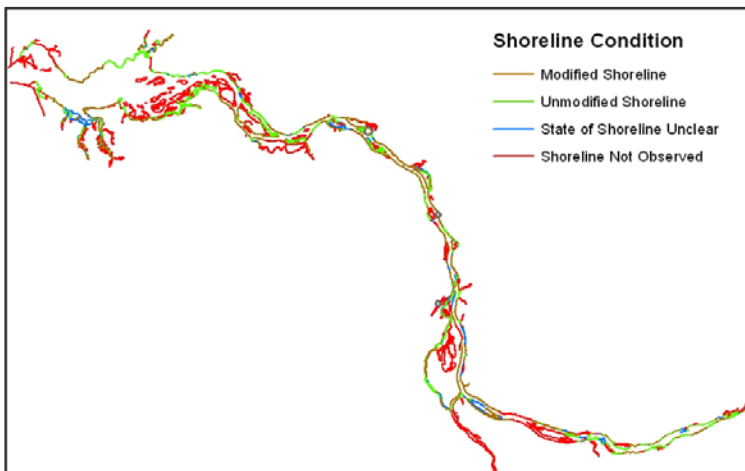
Anticipating the need to move to more strategic identification of restoration projects, the Estuary Partnership has been developing new scientific tools and information to help guide the next generation of habitat restoration and make it more strategic.

Beginning in 2000, the Estuary Partnership....

- ◆ Developed criteria for habitat restoration with over 100 scientists and we have updated it as new data emerges.
- ◆ Initiated a landscape classification system now nearing completion.
- ◆ Are completing a regional Ecosystem Classification system to help identify ideal restoration sites, using bathymetry, Lidar, soil and geology, and vegetative cover analysis. We contracted with U Washington, PNNL and USGS as key experts to help develop it. This is the foundation from which we can now develop a regional strategic prioritization.
- ◆ Developed GIS tools now sought after by many of our partners.
- ◆ Completed three years of toxics monitoring.



These tools and this knowledge are critical to identifying and implementing more complex restoration projects.



- ◆ Completed videography of the entire shoreline and a landscape analysis.
- ◆ Defined reaches based on hydrology and geomorphology.
- ◆ Acquired and assessed 2002 Landsat imagery as well as ground-truthed it.
- ◆ Initiated project effectiveness monitoring to evaluate the results of individual restoration activities and compare results among projects and help answer questions about how projects work, what they need to succeed long term.

The Regional Framework

All of this is done with significant collaboration of regional technical experts. We have brought scientists together over a dozen times to tackle a specific issue, share data and research. We have brought policy makers, scientists and practitioners to the same table to set specific courses for the Estuary Partnership in habitat restoration and toxic reduction.

In establishing the Estuary Partnership in 1995, the Governors of Washington and Oregon and US EPA wanted a regional entity to both coordinate efforts and deliver on-the-ground results in the lower Columbia River and estuary. The Estuary Partnership's role on habitat restoration was reaffirmed at the May 1 Forum and at the January 2008 forum on toxics reduction.

Regional coordination reduces fragmentation and duplication while maximizing results. Regional leaders, policy makers, practitioners and scientists affirmed the role of the Estuary Partnership as the regional convener, collaborator and coordinator.

What We Need

By 2008, the Estuary Partnership recognized that current approaches to restoration would not take us to the next level. We convened practitioners in June 2008 to hear about their experiences and what they saw as needs for the lower river. The previous ten years of experience gave practitioners the insight needed to adaptively manage habitat restoration in the lower river. We now know we need to move to even more strategic restoration. We need a continued emphasis on advancing science to meet this higher test of fish survivability results.

The May 2009 forum brought those practitioners back with scientists and policy makers to confirm the issues and set a course for the Estuary Partnership.

Participants agreed:

Successful habitat restoration projects in the lower Columbia River require many components: landowner interest and commitment; community support; a sponsoring organization; the hydrologic, geotechnical, engineering, and fisheries knowledge to develop and design a project; partners; a variety of funding sources, and long term monitoring to evaluate the project's effectiveness.

A few specific needs emerged:

Continued advancement of knowledge. Science needs to be developed to support the region's emphasis on fish survivability so we can adaptively manage restoration. We also need to focus on the quality of habitat and other species.

Technical Capacity. Those involved with developing and implementing projects need access to specific technical expertise required to develop complex projects that will succeed on both an ecologic and economic basis. The goal is to increase the quality and number of restoration project proposals in the lower Columbia River and improve their likelihood for success. Funders now are making funds available to the Estuary Partnership to help local project sponsors increase their capacity to develop projects.

Community and Landowner Engagement. Moving projects from idea to design requires skilled, knowledgeable people who understand the needs of the people who live and work in the community. It is critical that restoration projects fit a community's goal and that regional, state and federal entities work within the community to understand local needs. Local sponsors bring the community needs to the forefront of discussions. Engaging landowners and recognizing their needs is essential. Restoration on private land will only occur where it makes sense for private landowners.

Increased and Diversified Funding. The Estuary Partnership Habitat Restoration Program has provided critical financial support to more than 45 restoration projects. Funding to date has established a significant, effective restoration program. Funding needs to be increased and diversified in order to implement the larger more complex project ahead. Funding cycles need to accommodate and support longer project time frames and include all phases of projects from development to design, permitting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Regional Coordination and Collaboration. We heard that the Estuary Partnership should also be a facilitator for regional needs and the local needs. Funding is one example: the Estuary Partnership should continue its efforts to get more funding also from more sources to the region to address local and regional needs. Effectiveness monitoring was another example of where the Estuary Partnership should expand its efforts to provide more information to all partners. Other areas include providing technical assistance, strategic project development and prioritization and establishing the importance of the estuary – giving voice to the region for the region.



What's Next

Everyone agreed that it is most important that we get environmental results. There are many drivers, and the Biological Opinion is perhaps weighing heavy on everyone's minds. We need to address the full ecosystem.

Since the forum, the Estuary Partnership Board of Directors reviewed the input to determine how we can best support partner and regional needs and make sure the region's ecosystem needs are fully addressed.

- ◆ We will continue to develop the ecosystem based prioritization for habitat restoration.
- ◆ We will step up efforts to access more funds for partners to help expand their capacity with project development and technical resources.
- ◆ We will continue to help implement the BiOp as it stipulates and integrate those goals into the ecological system to achieve more environmental successes in toxic reduction, multi-species protection and water quality improvement.
- ◆ We will convene an informal discussion group with key partners to share information, keep up to speed on what we each are doing, and seek opportunities to collaborate on projects to maximize results and avoid duplication.
- ◆ The results we need to show will take policy and strategic thinking, unified agreement and on the ground work – lots of it.



What Do We Need to Work On?

- ◆ Function and type of restoration in addition to acres & stream miles
- ◆ Impact of restoration on other species health
- ◆ Stronger acknowledgement of links with habitat, toxics and recovery
- ◆ Fish survivability

We proceed by:

- ◆ Evaluating and building on past successes and challenges,
- ◆ Integrating emerging science, and
- ◆ Applying new tools.

We consider quantity of fish and acres and we recognize the full complexity of the system and the importance of the quality of all habitat. We need to address salmon recovery *as an indicator of the overall ecosystem health* to ensure a diverse, thriving ecosystem.



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