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Endangered Columbia Basin salmon benefit from federal actions - new report shows

Portland, Ore. - Federal agencies issued a report that evaluates eight years of progress as they work to protect and improve conditions for Columbia and Snake river salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The [Federal Columbia River Power System 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation](#) describes the federal actions implemented since NOAA Fisheries issued the 2008 FCRPS Biological Opinion, as supplemented in 2014. The federal agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration and Bureau of Reclamation, will continue to implement the biological opinion until a new one is issued in 2018.

“Federal agency efforts have contributed to a significant increase in the survival of salmon and steelhead migrating past Columbia and Snake river dams,” says Lorri Bodi, vice president of BPA Environment, Fish and Wildlife. “Through hard work and regional partnerships, we are helping bring fish back to the Columbia River Basin.”

Providing safe fish passage through dams is the centerpiece of federal conservation efforts.

“Performance tests indicate juvenile fish passage survival rates at eight mainstem dams along the lower Columbia and Snake rivers are on track to meet the biological opinion performance standards for young downstream migrating fish,” says Rock Peters, fishery program manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division.

Part of this success is due to science-based spill levels and the significant investment in new surface passage systems that allow young fish to move past dams near the water's surface where they naturally migrate.

Federal agencies and their partners have also made significant improvements to salmon and steelhead habitat in Columbia River Basin tributaries and the estuary, thanks to partnerships with tribal, state, local and non-government organizations across the region.

"Together with our partners, we have improved natal habitat, and our monitoring has demonstrated that tributary restoration projects increase the size and abundance of smolts before they enter the mainstem Columbia River system," says David Mabe, deputy regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Highlights from the report include the following:

- Restoration projects have opened more than 3,445 miles of spawning and rearing habitat to salmon and steelhead — roughly equivalent to the driving distance between Seattle, Washington and Miami, Florida.
- More than 8,835 acres of estuary habitat — an area equivalent to nearly 6,700 football fields has been protected and restored, providing critical feeding habitat for young fish migrating to sea.
- Water temperatures for adult salmon migrating through the Lower Granite Dam fish ladder during hot weather have been improved by the addition of cool water pumps.

The [2016 Citizen's Guide to the Comprehensive Evaluation](#) is a 16-page companion publication to understanding the Comprehensive Evaluation. Printed copies are available on request at the BPA Visitor Center by calling 503-230-4636 and the electronic version is available at salmonrecovery.gov.