

**Short-Term
Sandy River Basin
Salmon Habitat Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Updated 2010**

Note: The intended audience for this cover memo is the Partner organizations. The purpose is to clarify the agreements that the Partner organizations are making with each other. The memo is a companion to our table of prioritized actions.

Introduction

The listing of threatened species and PGE's decision to remove dams in the Sandy River Basin catalyzed formation of a coalition to recover Sandy River salmon and steelhead. The coalition became the Sandy River Basin Partners (the Partners). The Partners include more than a dozen public and private organizations: Association of Northwest Steelheaders, Clackamas County, East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, Multnomah County, National Marine Fisheries Service, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Trout, Portland General Electric, Portland Water Bureau, Sandy River Basin Watershed Council, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and Western Rivers Conservancy. The members share expertise in fish habitat conservation and restoration as well as related fields and specialties. The Partner's vision is to restore the rivers and streams of the basin for fish and for people through a coordinated basin-wide strategy built from a solid scientific foundation.

In 2001, the Partners worked collaboratively to develop a fish habitat database and model to help assess conditions for Chinook, steelhead and coho within the Sandy River Basin (database and model are based on Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment methodology). The Partners also participated in accelerating the schedule and providing funding to collect water temperature data for Oregon DEQ's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Sandy River. Results of these assessments were used to identify approximately 150 restoration opportunities targeted to address limiting factors for the fish. Biologists and others affiliated with the Partners then completed a companion assessment of anchor habitats, meaning locations that currently produce the most fish. Fisheries science supports protection of the best currently-functioning habitats and then improving adjacent habitat upstream and downstream.

In 2006, the Partners completed a habitat conservation and restoration strategy which identifies priority locations and priority action types. The strategy is a scientifically-based approach to conserving streams currently in good condition, and restoring impaired streams to improve fish habitat and salmonid populations. The strategy has two parts: the attached short-term plan, and a framework for long-term planning and implementation.

Priorities

Over the next 5-10 years, the Partners have agreed to focus their collective effort and attention on three priority watersheds within the Sandy River Basin. All three watersheds are anchor habitats for salmon and steelhead. The three priority watersheds are:

- ❑ the Mainstem Sandy River Corridor (mouth to Zigzag River confluence),
- ❑ the Salmon River Watershed, and
- ❑ Still Creek.

Within the priority watersheds, the Partners have agreed to use a hierarchical approach to prioritize the type of conservation and restoration projects. Conservation and restoration is defined in the broadest sense including acquisition for protection, and active intervention to manage riparian vegetation and instream conditions. Planting native trees on streambanks, placing large woody debris instream and purchasing key riparian habitat would all be considered conservation and restoration actions. The hierarchical approach is as follows:

- 1st priority:** Reconnect isolated habitats (e.g., improving fish passage and reconnecting side channels)
- 2nd priority:** Restore long-term watershed processes (e.g., forest road stormproofing and decommissioning)
- 3rd priority:** Restore long-term riparian processes (e.g., replacing non-native with native vegetation and increasing conifer, versus hardwood, density)
- 4th priority:** Restore short-term instream processes (e.g., by reintroducing large woody debris)

This hierarchy is based on current scientific literature about the effectiveness of various types of projects for improving long-term productivity of salmonid populations (Roni et al. 2002).

Multi-Party Effort

The Partners recognize that, for a variety of reasons, some of the effort by the partnership in the next 5-10 years will not strictly follow the prioritization of watersheds and project types described above. The Partners agree, therefore, to use an “80 percent-20 percent” guideline in prioritizing their joint efforts. The Partners interpret the guideline as follows:

Approximately 80% of the coordinated effort of the Partners will focus on implementing high priority conservation and restoration actions identified within the priority watersheds.

Up to approximately 20% of the coordinated effort of the Partners will focus on implementing lower priority project types and projects of various types in other watersheds in the basin. While the Partners recognize these are lower priority efforts from a strictly scientific point of view, they may capitalize on other

important aspects of the overall strategy: funding opportunities, landowner willingness or real estate opportunities, volunteer education and availability, etc.

A **“coordinated effort”** by the Partners is defined as two or more Partners jointly seeking external funds and/or allocating existing financial resources toward executing one or more projects.

Effort by Individual Partner Organizations

Each Partner organization has its own mandates, preferences and opportunities to fund conservation and restoration work that will contribute to recovery and long-term protection of the Sandy River Basin as a functioning ecosystem. This work includes fish habitat as well as other watershed attributes (e.g., water quality). In some cases, those mandates, preferences and opportunities will lead to implementing project types of lower priority in other watersheds than the three identified above. The Partners also understand the importance of the priorities identified here and the value of a coordinated and focused strategy. The Partners agree, therefore, that when considering conservation and restoration actions within their individual organizations, they will:

Take into serious consideration the priority watersheds and priority project types when choosing to implement their own projects.

Choose projects that complement and leverage the joint efforts of the Partners and the individual efforts of other Partner organizations whenever possible.

Inform the other Partners, as early as possible, of their intent to implement specific projects to enable coordination and avoid conflict.

Acknowledge the role of the Partners, when undertaking and communicating about actions derived from the restoration strategy, to help increase visibility of the Partner effort.