



US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office

CONSERVATION AND HYDROPOWER PLANNING DIVISION

Hydropower Planning Branch

Background

The Division of Conservation and Hydropower Planning works with non-federal land owners conserving fish and wildlife resources under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through long term agreements called *Habitat Conservation Plans*. We also conserve species and their habitats through our work with utilities in the licensing or re-licensing of hydropower projects.

Hydropower Planning

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses hydropower projects for periods of 30 to 50 years. At the end of the license term project owners must apply for a new license to continue operating the project. At the re-licensing point, the FWS is authorized by the Federal Power Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act to recommend and, in some instances, require changes to the project or its operation to improve conditions for fish and wildlife. We are also authorized to work on new hydropower projects, which include power generation in tidal or wave environments, also licensed by FERC.



Cushman Dam, built in 1924, is a complete block to fish passage. A new license, when issued, will include fishways to provide migratory access for salmon and bull trout.(USFWS, LouEllyn Jones)

Who We Are

We are a team of fish and wildlife biologists who have interdisciplinary knowledge about conservation biology, landscape ecology, watershed processes, habitat and species relationships, and threatened and endangered species ecology. We routinely work with diverse stakeholders in a collaborative approach to find solutions to ESA land management issues.

Who We Serve

- The Public
- Small forest and industrial timber landowners
- Other private industry
- State land managers
- City and county water resource management entities
- Utilities
- Tribes
- Non-governmental organizations
- Other federal, state or local agencies

What We Do

Hydropower projects in Washington state have had enormous impacts on fish and wildlife resources. They block fish from spawning and rearing habitat, kill fish passing through turbines, destroy stream habitat by reducing flows or affecting the quality of water in our rivers, and flood important wildlife habitat along streams and river bottoms.

Participation by the Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office in re-licensing actions has helped negotiate agreements that have or will result in greatly improved habitat conditions for wildlife and anadromous and resident fish. We have worked with our partners to come up with long term agreements for operating hydroelectric projects under new licenses on the Skagit, Cowlitz, Nisqually, Baker, and Lewis Rivers.

As utilities explore alternate methods of power generation using renewable resources, our office will be participating in licensing processes for new technologies, including wave and tidal energy projects. Initially, our participation will help to determine which studies are needed to determine impacts and appropriate mitigation of those impacts on fish and wildlife. Later we will work with the utilities and other stakeholders to develop terms for the license and post-license implementation.

We also participate with our partners in the planning for dam removal when hydroelectric projects have outlived their usefulness. Two old, large hydroelectric dams on the Elwha River will be removed and the river restored within the next several years.

Recent Projects and Accomplishments

- Completed the settlement agreement for the re-licensing of four Lewis River Hydroelectric Projects, opening up over 170 miles of mainstem and tributary waters to anadromous salmonids and providing connectivity for bull trout. The agreement provides for funding for land acquisition, and restoration and enhancement projects for fish and wildlife. It also provides for management of over 12,000 acres of land to benefit elk and deer, bald eagles, northern spotted owls, cavity nesting birds, small mammals and migratory birds. Future efforts will include monitoring and genetic work on bull trout to improve migratory connectivity past 4 dams.

- Completed the settlement agreement for the relicensing of the Baker River hydroelectric project, including improved fish passage for salmon and bull trout and provisions for flow regimes to protect salmon spawning below the dams. The agreement has provisions for land acquisition, restoration and/or management to benefit elk, grizzly bear, bull trout, mountain goats, marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls and coho, sockeye, Chinook, steelhead and bull trout and migratory birds.



Spillway of Yale Dam on the Lewis River. Under the Settlement Agreement and new license the utility has committed to reconstruct the spillway so that injury to listed bull trout is minimized. Currently, fish that are swept over the rough rocks of the spillway during a spill event can be injured or killed. (USFWS, LouEllyn Jones)

Contact:
Jim Michaels
Division Manager
510 Desmond Drive S.E.
Lacey, Washington 98503
360-753-9440