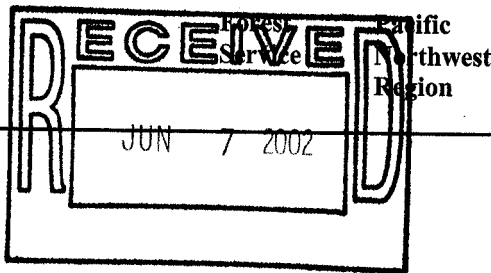




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Date: May 15, 2002


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Please find the enclosed revised All H Progress Report for the Forest-Service (FS) for fiscal year-2001. This replaces our previously transmitted report. We have identified 4 key messages. Our key messages focus on Habitat Protection, Habitat Restoration, Coordination and Interagency Partnerships, and Integration of FS programs.

The Forest Service manages approximately 50 percent of the accessible anadromous fish habitat in the Columbia River Basin. Over the last several years, the FS has made significant progress in protecting and improving aquatic habitat. Coordination with other groups and interagency partnerships has allowed us to leverage our funding and maximize the benefits to the resource. Integration of FS programs allows us to work towards common restoration goals.

The enclosed Progress Report provides a more detailed description of progress made in each of the areas. Questions regarding the contents of the Progress Reports can be directed to Paul Anderson for the FS 503-808-2930.


HARV FORSGREN
Regional Forester

Enclosure



cc:

Paul Anderson, RO

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**Salmon Recovery Strategy
USDA Forest Service
May 2002 Report on Progress**

KEY FOREST SERVICE MESSAGES

- **Habitat Protection – Our focus is to protect and maintain habitat by implementing Forest Plan management direction and environmentally sound on-site projects.**
- **Restoration – The Forest Service (FS) strategy is to maintain high quality aquatic core habitats and rebuild connecting habitats through restoration activities, such as improving fish passage to increase spawning and rearing opportunities for listed salmonids.**
- **Coordination and Interagency Partnerships– Coordination and partnering with local communities, States, Tribal Governments, and other federal agencies are critical components of FS efforts to achieve priority restoration activities, watershed planning, data sharing, and monitoring.**
- **Integration – Aquatic habitat restoration is an integral part of National Fire Plan (NFP) and Clean Water Act (CWA) restoration efforts. To more efficiently use our Agency resources, we need to better integrate the All-H Strategy, NFP and CWA objectives within our on-site projects.**

Overview

This paper provides a discussion of ongoing activities and accomplishments related to the Basinwide Salmon Recovery Strategy (All-H Strategy) for the Columbia River Basin. The aquatic restoration objectives of the strategy are being addressed through integration within site-specific projects that implement forest plans, the NFP, and forest health restoration objectives. Site-specific projects are developed through extensive collaboration with local communities, States, Tribal Governments, other Federal agencies, and interested members of the public. Projects are designed to achieve a wide-ranging integrated set of objectives such as restoring fire to fire-dependant ecosystems, curbing the risk of wildfire to communities, reducing sediment from road systems, and improving fish passage through culverts. The following discussion provides context with related policy and the objectives of the All-H Strategy, and identifies examples of both planning and project accomplishments.

Policy Direction Interaction

The Forest Service operates under a multiple-use concept that requires the integration of numerous laws, regulations, and policies. The All-H Strategy is one of many important management issues being dealt with at this time. This section describes important

policies that influence management on National Forest (NF) System lands within the Columbia basin.

National Forest Management Act – Forest Plans – Direction to manage National Forests and Grasslands is provided by existing Forest Plans for each administrative unit. All projects must be consistent with their Forest Plan. Since the release of initial Forest Plans, new policy was established to manage aquatic species. The Forest Plans were amended to incorporate this policy through 3 documents:

- **Northwest Forest Plan:** The Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), issued in 1994, amended Forest Plan management direction for NF that are both in the Columbia River Basin and within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. The direction includes an Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) that provides protective stream measures. The ACS contains four parts, 1) Riparian Reserves, 2) Key Watersheds, 3) Watershed Analysis, and 4) Prioritization of watersheds for restoration although no timeframe is specified for implementation. Full implementation of ACS objectives has been complicated by several court decisions that have altered the successful conclusion of environmental analysis and decision processes, and funding limitations. In one of these lawsuits, the Ninth Circuit upheld a district court's ruling that four biological opinions analyzed the impact on fish habitat at too broad a scale and over too long a time period. This ruling, and a subsequent preliminary injunction affecting 20 other biological opinions, has halted hundreds of projects in the area.
- **PACFISH/INFISH:** Two Aquatic Conservation Strategies were amended to Forest Plans within the interior Columbia River basin in 1995. These ACSs provided interim direction to protect aquatic habitats for ESA-listed salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and other inland native fish species. PACFISH, INFISH and associated Biological Opinions (1998) provided management direction utilized by NF in project identification and design. Connected with these Biological Opinions (BOs) was the development of an Interim Watershed Restoration Strategy (2000) that identified priority subbasins for restoration activities to support recovery of listed salmonids. PACFISH and INFISH will be replaced as appropriate by Forest Plan revisions or amendments.

Successful implementation of Forest Plans, including the ACSs, has been impacted by the inability of field units to complete project planning, arrive at sound decisions, and resolve post-decisional challenges in a timely manner, i.e. "process gridlock". More focus is needed on getting projects implemented to achieve habitat restoration, protection of species, and production of resources within limited budgets.

NEPA/ESA: A key element of management relates to, the design of and decisions for, specific projects prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This is accomplished through individual project NEPA analysis and ESA consultation, as appropriate. Through these processes multiple-use forest plan objectives are integrated and appropriate project design

is achieved. The NEPA planning process paves the way for successful accomplishment of projects on the ground.

National Fire Plan: After the severe fire season in 2000 there was a national effort to improve federal wild fire management activities to:

- Improve firefighter preparedness;
- Reduce natural fuels;
- Restore and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems;
- Promote community assistance; and,
- Ensure agency accountability.

As a part of this effort the FS has identified numerous projects and activities that will also provide benefits to salmon recovery. These include prescribed fire and other hazardous fuels reduction efforts, noxious weed treatments, road and trail rehabilitation after fires, etc. For example, in FY2001 the FS treated nearly 200,000 acres in the States of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana (numbers include the entire State of Montana). An additional 217,000 acres of fuels treatments were done by other state and federal wildland fire agencies. A number of these acres are in watersheds and tributary streams that are priorities for salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery. Collectively, they provide for overall improvement of the ecological system. There were also numerous fire rehabilitation and restoration projects that improved ecological conditions.

There is always a dynamic tension between projects that reduce long-term risk versus potential short-term effects on species. The potential for short-term effects are considered through project level NEPA analysis and consultation.

Stewardship Contracting Pilot: The FS is currently testing stewardship contracting under pilot authority enacted by Congress. This authority allows the exchange of goods for services that would normally be acquired through the use of appropriated funds. This authority, if continued, represents an additional tool to achieve restoration objectives. Currently, the FS is testing 84 projects under the pilot authority, the vast majority of which are designed to accomplish restoration of terrestrial and aquatic systems. Of the 84 projects, 35 are located within the Columbia River Basin. Use of the authority is focused to achieve on-the-ground results through projects ranging from vegetative treatments that restore fire to fire-dependent ecosystems to construction of in-stream structures that restore aquatic function.

Northwest Power Planning Council's Subbasin Planning Process: Led by the States of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, and Columbia Basin tribes, this three-phase planning process is scheduled for completion for all 62 subbasins within the Columbia River basin by 2005. As described in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion and the All-H Strategy, subbasin plans will provide the long-term habitat restoration strategy for listed fish within the Columbia River basin. The Subbasin Plans will identify future Bonneville Power

Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, and Corps of Engineers funding of restoration projects across both federal and non-federal lands.

Managing Transportation Systems: Currently, the FS is operating under an interim manual directive (FSM 7710) that provides direction for managing transportation systems. Included in this is the requirement for a Forest wide roads analysis by January 2003. These analyses are providing the information needed to determine the future makeup of road networks for each NF and Grassland. This information is also helping Forest and Grassland managers prioritize road restoration and maintenance needs.

Clean Water Act: The Forest Service is working cooperatively with EPA and State agencies to implement Section 303d CWA requirements to address water quality limited stream segments. This includes development of total maximum daily load (TMDL) analyses that will identify restoration needs and priorities. These will affect a number of watersheds and tributary streams that are priorities for salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery.

Oregon/Washington Plans for Salmon and Watershed Management: The States of Oregon and Washington are developing plans for salmon and watershed management. The FS is an active collaborator with the States and signed a related Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with the State of Oregon in 1997.

All-H Strategy

The FS manages National Forest System (NFS) land that provide about 50 percent of the accessible habitat and about 60 percent of the high quality habitat for salmonids in the Columbia River Basin. Compared to historic conditions, the quality and quantity of aquatic habitat have declined across all ownerships in the basin. Although the basin is capable of supporting ESA-listed salmonids (salmon, steelhead, and bull trout) at near-historic levels, restoration needs exist and are associated with fish passage, water diversions, and past management practices.

Findings of the Cumulative Risk Initiative (Karevia 2000) described existing status of salmon and steelhead populations as poor and anticipated further decline unless conditions improve. As described in the All-H Strategy, the focus continues to be on actions that provide immediate and long-term benefits to the species and stocks that are at highest risk and that provide the greatest improvement in survival for all listed salmonids.

The All-H Strategy represents a framework for implementing federal agency activities over 10 years (2000 – 2010) to achieve restoration of ecological processes that maintain the function and integrity of aquatic ecosystems and support recovery goals for ESA-listed salmonids. Increasing spawning and rearing survival of salmon and steelhead in tributary streams is an important component of this strategy.

Actions Contributing to Implementation of the All-H Strategy

In the All-H Strategy, the nine federal agencies agreed that the “Habitat” component of the strategy would provide significant measurable benefits for listed anadromous and resident fish in the tributaries by protecting existing high quality habitat and restoring degraded habitat on a priority basis. The All-H Strategy identified goals, objectives, and priority actions at the scale of the entire basin. The goal was to conserve species and ecosystems while balancing the needs of people and other species. Objectives identified in the All-H Strategy that are relevant to Forest Service actions include:

Biological – identified objectives focus on maintaining and restoring current distribution of native species within historic range, increasing trends in naturally sustained salmonid populations, and conserving genetic diversity.

Ecological – ecological objectives emphasize protection of existing high quality habitat and restoration of tributary habitat conditions on a priority basis.

Water Quality – objectives over the long-term focus on working with states and tribes to attain water quality standards.

Socio-Economic – addressing socio-economic objectives requires that actions be designed and implemented to efficiently meet FS objectives while addressing tribal treaty trust responsibilities and commitments to state partners and local communities.

The following actions have been implemented by the FS and contribute to achieving All-H Strategy goals and objectives:

- ❑ Revisions and amendments to forest plans designed to improve salmonid habitat.
- ❑ Annual field reviews with interagency teams to assist national forest staff in integrating aquatic conservation strategies into project design.
- ❑ Full participation in interagency teams to ensure compliance with biological opinion obligations within the Columbia River Basin.
- ❑ Stronger partnership with research to develop tools and methods for application to management issues associated with restoration of aquatic ecosystems.
- ❑ Increased collaboration with federal and state agencies, tribes, and non-governmental partners to ensure that actions implemented on national forest system lands contribute to restoration of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- ❑ Provided descriptions of restoration actions and fiscal accounting for internal and external use on Fire and Flood Recovery Actions (Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER), Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO)).

- ❑ Conducted rigorous analyses and prepared environmental assessments to evaluate effects of proposed land management actions on native fish species and apply necessary measures to mitigate short-term impacts (NEPA, ESA) while achieving long-term benefits.
- ❑ Complied with the Magnuson-Stevens Act requiring consultation with NMFS to protect "Essential Fish Habitat".
- ❑ Participated on NMFS's Technical Recovery Teams (Lower Columbia/Willamette, Interior Columbia) for development of Recovery Plans.
- ❑ Assisted US Fish and Wildlife Service in identifying population objectives for bull trout and habitat restoration goals for the Recovery Plan.
- ❑ Established full-time liaison positions with the States of Oregon and Washington to implement the state recovery plans for salmon.
- ❑ Provided technical assistance to numerous Watershed Councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Resource Advisory Councils.
- ❑ Participated in development of State and tribal restoration plans for native salmonids including; bull trout, cutthroat subspecies, and salmon (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington).
- ❑ Participated in the Oregon Implementation Team for implementation of the 'Salmon and Watersheds' Plan.
- ❑ Participated on Watershed Councils for implementation of the "Idaho Bull Trout Plan."
- ❑ Worked closely with local governments and Bureau of Land Management (BLM)--the FS has helped establish new Resource Advisory Councils to identify watershed restoration opportunities west of the Cascades.
- ❑ Across the Columbia basin, the FS has convened and participates in Resource Advisory Councils for co-management of resources. In the western portion of the basin, Provincial Advisory Committees have been established.
- ❑ Continued collaboration with all Columbia basin tribes to integrate and prioritize actions leading to restoration of aquatic ecosystems and recovery of listed salmonids.
- ❑ Developed strategies to prioritize restoration work on national forest system lands through a collaborative process, which is responsive to local needs and issues (e.g. large-scale cooperative restoration projects in the Grande Ronde and Middle Fork (MF) John Day watersheds; North Locsha and Meadow Face in upper basin). Restoration projects on the Grande Ronde and MF John Day were initiated in 1995 and involve a wide array of partners including watershed councils, tribal governments, federal and state agencies.
- ❑ Contributed technical assistance and pooled funds to accomplish restoration actions on non-federal land under the Wyden Amendment (e.g. replacement of culverts on 15-mile creek, Mt. Hood NF).

- ❑ Participated in a multi-year cooperative restoration program in the Wind River watershed. Restoration actions completed include in-stream habitat improvements (12 miles), road closures and decommissioning (20 miles), and completion of a study for an old FS dam.
- ❑ Inventories of fish passage on all existing culverts in high priority sub-basins (R-6 completed – 5,000 culverts; R-1 initiated in FY2002) with development of a complementary database, accessible by other state and federal agencies, tribes, and non-agency partners.
- ❑ Forest Service, Region 6 has completed an inventory of all diversions within Oregon and Washington on national forest system lands requiring screening;
- ❑ Screening of diversions in the Methow basin.
- ❑ Participation in the Federal Habitat Team which is focused on coordination of funding to achieve restoration, implementation of Northwest Power Planning Council (NWPPC) sub-basin planning, and research, monitoring, and evaluation strategies for federal and non-federal lands.
- ❑ Participation in a Bureau of Reclamation pilot study within the John Day Basin for development of a strategy to coordinate monitoring activities to evaluate restoration actions across land ownerships.
- ❑ The FS was the lead agency and provided for the majority of funding for the Columbia basin effectiveness monitoring strategy (interior basin, NW Forest Plan). This approach will provide the first trend information on aquatic conditions on national forest system lands across such a broad-scale.
- ❑ Actively involved with NWPPC and staff to assist in development of a shared vision for habitat restoration for entire sub-basins that will contribute to recovery of listed fish regardless of land ownership.
- ❑ Participated with the Sandy Basin Watershed Council, and Nez Perce Tribe in development of a restoration plan (Wenatchee and Clearwater National Forests).
- ❑ Watershed analyses have been completed for all the watersheds within the Columbia River Basin part of the NWFP and a large part of the remaining area has been through watershed analysis.
- ❑ The FS is an active participant in NWPPC sub-basin plans.
- ❑ Forest Service has worked collaboratively with tribes, watershed councils, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other Federal Agencies to develop watershed analyses, watershed plans and restoration plans for both federal and non-federal lands. Examples include:
 - Wind River Basin;
 - Lemhi Watershed;
 - Grande Ronde Model Watershed;
 - Blue Mountains Demonstration Project; and
 - Entiat Watershed.

- ❑ Forest Service and BLM have developed databases using common data standards from the Interagency Resources Information Coordinating Council.
- ❑ The FS, BLM and the States of Oregon and Washington are jointly developing a Hydrography Framework Clearinghouse.
- ❑ Forest Service established a database for assessing fish passage at road crossings in Oregon and Washington. This will be expanded to Idaho and Montana.
- ❑ In fiscal year 2001 more than 150 biologists from FS, BLM, State, watershed councils, and tribes attended a restoration-training program.
- ❑ The FS has established Regional and Forest websites to provide technical information to a wide range of users.
- ❑ Forest Service participates annually in the monitoring required for the NWFP and the requirements of the Bull Trout and Steelhead Biological Opinions.
- ❑ Examples of collaborative monitoring include John Day River Basin, Upper Deschutes River Basin and the Interagency Restoration Data Base used in Oregon and Washington.
- ❑ The FS has made valuable land acquisitions since 1995 (e.g. White River, Nason Creek, and Icicle Creek on the Wenatchee NF and Ramsey Creek and Fifteen Mile Creek on the Mt. Hood NF).
- ❑ The FS is working collaboratively with the States and other water rights holders to secure favorable flows for resource management. This includes working with the States of Oregon and Idaho to ensure flow to protect Wild and Scenic River corridor resources.