U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Adaptive Management of Lower Columbia River and Estuary Ecosystem Restoration

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Columbia River Estuary Restoration Program Goal

Implementation of well-coordinated, scientifically sound projects designed to enhance, protect, conserve, restore, and create tidal wetlands and other key habitats to aid rebuilding of ESA-listed salmon populations and native species using the Columbia River estuary.
Corps authorities for ecological restoration in the LCRE

- Small Project Authorities -- WRDA Sec. 104, 206, 536, and 1135 are restoration authorities intended to be tactical projects, on the ground quickly.

- Lower Columbia River Ecosystem General Investigations Study
  - a comprehensive, strategic restoration program; current plan is to not slow down, continue more local on the ground projects and allow the GI to catch up and be more all inclusive as funding becomes available.

- The Corps is in transition from large construction & concrete to more of an environmental focus.
  - For example: In 2003, WRDA Sec 536 was the only “new start” for the Corps in the nation
Additional ecosystem restoration “drivers”

- Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion requirements
- Assist with ESA recovery
- Assist regional partners like the LCREP and the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan
- In reality we have multiple influences
Corps ecosystem restoration adaptive management approach

1. Establish Goals and Objectives

2. Design and Plan Monitoring and Research

3. Coordinate and Implement Monitoring

4. Manage, Analyze, and Disseminate Data

5. Report Information

6. Assess Implementation/Compliance

7. Synthesize, Evaluate, and Make Decisions

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7. Synthesize, Evaluate, and Make Decisions
Project Selection and Funding

- A clear Federal interest
- Cost-share partners/sponsors
- FCRPS BiOp requirements
- Action Agencies' project selection guidelines
- ERTG project selection criteria
- Coordination with regional partners
Adaptive management lessons learned

- The Corps is working with regional partners in the lower Columbia River and estuary to improve process.
  - We continue working with partners on a regional ecosystem restoration Adaptive Management Plan
  - Continue to coordinate regional efforts like the LCREP ecosystem restoration.
  - Need to focus limited funding on action effectiveness research whenever possible.
  - Insure products like those produced in Corps funded research (like Cumulative Effects) are able to become regional restoration tools.

- For success we need the scientific and restoration communities’ advice, input, and support.
Management implications of the restoration program

- Promotion of regional and local collaboration
- Informed spending of public funds
- Environmental stewardship
- Recovery of endangered salmon stocks