



Three days left to comment on the All-H paper

Public comment period closes Friday, March 17

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – Federal agencies have reached a critical juncture in the effort to restore Columbia River Basin salmon species. What happens next will shape crucial actions federal agencies need to take to shepherd juvenile salmon to the sea.

Federal officials are poised to close comment on the All-H paper and their Biological Opinion on hydro operations in the Snake and Columbia rivers. The comment period for the public process on these documents closes Friday. Comments on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Impact Statement are being accepted through March 31.

"We have collected comments from around the region through an unprecedented public meeting process, electronically over the Internet and through the postal service," said Lorri Bodi, a BPA senior policy advisor. "The next step is to move forward with the process. That means study the comments, incorporate what we can and publish the final documents so we can take actions to continue recovering the species."

Federal agencies are working together to finish a comprehensive analysis of actions needed to recover endangered fish. This analysis, known as the All-H paper, is accompanied by the National Marine Service's Biological Opinion for the hydrosystem. Both documents need to be complete by this spring so they can guide this year's actions of the federal agencies working to restore threatened and endangered salmon, steelhead and resident fish in the Columbia River Basin.

"This unified planning approach is unprecedented," said Bodi. "It will allow for coordinated, comprehensive action across all four Hs and will be the best available method for recovering these fish. But we have to finish the plan before we can implement it. That's why we're closing comment, so we can move on with the process and arrive at a complete ready-to-use plan."

The All-H paper analyzes and proposes alternative approaches to improving actions in all of the Hs: habitat, harvest, hydropower and hatcheries. In its final form, it will guide the actions of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bonneville Power Administration.

Nearly 9,000 citizens attended the 15 public meetings that stretched from Alaska to Portland, Ore., to Twin Falls, Idaho.

"We are looking for the quality in the comments we've received, not the number of comments we've gotten," said Bodi. "Still, it is interesting to note that the public submitted more than 35,000 comments during this two-month public process. I think that speaks to the level of participation that occurred during these meetings. It was quite remarkable."

A draft Biological Opinion and a revised All-H paper both are scheduled for release in mid-May with a final BO due in July. A final Corps EIS will come sometime this fall.

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