

backgrounder

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Healthier habitat for fish and wildlife

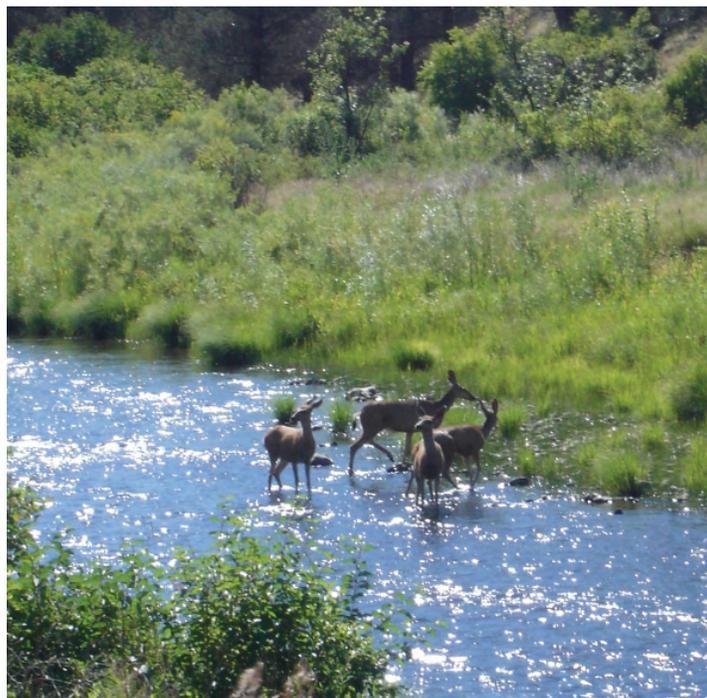
Water flows in once-dry streambeds. Salmon spawn in creeks that had been blocked to them for decades. Shade from young willows keeps creeks cool.

Hundreds of these better homes for fish and wildlife are appearing throughout the Columbia River Basin thanks to numerous habitat improvement projects sponsored by the Bonneville Power Administration. More creeks, streams and rivers wait for similar attention.

BPA has funded fish habitat restoration in the Columbia River Basin for more than a quarter-century. The work is part of BPA's program to enhance and protect fish and wildlife affected by the Northwest federal hydro-power system. The program

has a special emphasis on efforts to recover salmon runs and other fish listed as threatened or endangered. BPA works with local and regional partners to increase healthy habitat for salmon throughout the Columbia River Basin.

In fiscal year 2006 alone, BPA projects gave fish access to more than 200 miles of previously blocked streams and protected and enhanced more than 1,550 miles of salmon habitat on tributaries. In the last six years, more than 1,480 miles of salmon habitat have been opened and more than 2,500 miles of habitat secured and protected. Out of the approximately \$143 million BPA spends annually on fish and wildlife projects, more than \$35 million go for habitat improvement projects.



Restoring healthy streams for fish also improves habitat for wildlife.

Giving fish what they need to succeed

Salmon and most other fish native to Northwest lakes and streams need cold, clear water with plenty of bugs

and larvae to eat. This means, first, that fish have to be able to get to the streams from the ocean. Second, spawning streams must have water in them. Third, spawning streams must have deep, shady pools, trees, rocks and branches to provide cover where fish can rest and hide from predators. They also must have clean gravel to receive and protect salmon eggs.

BPA's funds habitat efforts to improve the quantity and quality of important fish habitat. They provide:

- 1. More access:** BPA opens access to more spawning and rearing habitat by removing barriers, installing fish-friendly road culverts and improving stream channels.
- 2. More streamflows:** BPA increases streamflows by working with landowners and local organizations to meet their needs while leaving more water in streams.
- 3. More healthy watersheds:** BPA-funded projects protect and enhance fish habitat by adding trees, removing invasive plants, fencing stock from streambeds and expanding protected lands through conservation easements and land acquisitions.





BPA-funded habitat projects return degraded streambeds to health and productivity.

Working with communities

Habitat projects are community affairs. BPA works with and through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council; state, tribal and local governments; public interest groups; and local citizens to identify, prioritize and develop habitat projects for BPA funding. The Council, in coordination with BPA, solicits projects from state fish and wildlife agencies, Northwest tribes and other interested parties, subjects them to scientific review and prioritization, and then proposes them to BPA for funding.

New community and regional organizations are emerging to identify and support habitat improvement. For



BPA works with local groups and landowners on habitat projects.

example, in 2002, BPA helped launch the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program, a nonprofit organization that helps

landowners who wish to restore streamflows to existing habitat. So far, the program is restoring more than 65,000 acre-feet of water annually to Northwest streams, which will add more than 1.6 million acre-feet in streams over the life of the transactions.

Realizing results

Hundreds of BPA-funded habitat projects have improved fish survival today; others will help more fish survive and thrive in the future. These projects reflect BPA's commitment to environmental stewardship and mitigation for the environmental effects of development and operation of the Northwest federal hydropower system.

For more information

To find out more about these projects, visit the following Web sites:

- Bonneville Power Administration – www.bpa.gov
- Northwest Power and Conservation Council – www.nwccouncil.org
- Protecting Salmon: Highlights 2005 Progress Report – www.salmonrecovery.gov