CTUIR Fisheries Habitat Program Strategic Framework for Restoration Activities

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Habitat Program

Introduction
The Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Habitat Program of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) is restoring salmon habitat in the Aboriginal Title Lands including the Umatilla, Walla Walla, John Day, Tucannon and Grande Ronde subbasins (Figure 1). Guiding the Fisheries Habitat Program is the Umatilla River Vision (Jones et al. 2008), which identifies physical and ecological processes (“key touchstones”) of a highly functional and dynamic river system important for providing water quality and fish habitat that supports aquatic First Foods (Figure 2).

The Fisheries Habitat Program goal and objectives supports a highly functioning restored floodplains resulting in self-sustaining processes which protects and enhances sustainable First Foods for Tribal use.

Fisheries Habitat Program Goal: Protect, enhance and restore functional floodplain, channel and watershed processes to provide sustainable and healthy habitat for aquatic specific of the First Food order.
1) Develop comprehensive and scientifically defensible restoration strategies based on the most recent and best available scientific information. (Includes prioritizing actions and geographic areas), and
2) Maintain and apply an updated knowledge of floodplain, channel and watershed function as it relates to healthy aquatic conditions and fish populations, and
3) Build and maintain cooperative and coordinated relationships with other key agencies and stakeholders in order to maximize project efficiency, effectiveness and success.

Fisheries Habitat Program Annual Work Plan
- Design, implement and maintain habitat enhancement projects throughout ceded areas
- Provide technical input regarding potential habitat impacts of land management/development
- Provide funding and technical support for priority land and water acquisition

Our planning process integrates these criteria along with Primary Limiting Factors from the 2008 Fish Accords MOA, Steelhead Recovery Planning documents, subbasin plans, TMDL reports, local assessments and strategies, and fish life history and habitat use. Designated high priority areas, with a preference for ecologically connected or contiguous project locations are the focus of the Fisheries Habitat Program, which addresses channel and floodplain function and aquatic habitat deficiencies through a systematic, holistic planning approach termed the Riverine Ecosystem Planning Approach (Figure 3). This includes the prioritization of focal areas and management practices based on key species utilization of existing and historic available habitat, and limiting factors with a mechanism for riverine planning that utilizes scientifically defensible techniques. Five basic stages have been identified to develop lists of prioritized restoration actions including a general protocol for identifying and prioritizing restoration actions, which includes:

Step 1: Define the restoration goal
Step 2: Choose prioritization approach
Step 3: Assess problems and identify restoration actions
Step 4: Prioritize restoration actions

Using a First Foods-Based River Vision to Guide Fisheries Restoration

Figure 2. Diagram outlining a River Vision guided Fisheries Habitat Program that supports floodplain restoration and increased First Foods for Tribal use.

Strategic Framework for Restoration Activities
Our CTUIR Fisheries Habitat Program’s hierarchical approach to stream restoration planning and project development is supported by the Umatilla River Vision (Jones et al. 2008), and local and regional plans and assessments in 1) protecting high functioning habitat, 2) removal of fish migration barriers, 3) restoration of watershed processes, and 4) enhancement of in-stream habitat. Roni et al. (2002) supports this broadly applicable approach to sequencing stream and watershed restoration projects. Beechie et al. (2008) expanded on Roni et al.’s (2002) approach, incorporating it into a “General Protocol for Identifying and Prioritizing Restoration Actions”, which includes:

- Define the restoration goal
- Choose prioritization approach
- Assess problems and identify restoration actions
- Prioritize restoration actions


Figure 3. The CTUIR integrates the River Vision into the Fisheries Habitat Program approach (e.g. Meacham Creek Project).

Acknowledgments
Primary Funders

Figure 1. CTUIR Fisheries Habitat Program projects completed within the Aboriginal Title Lands from 2008-2015.

Figure 3. CTUIR Riverine Ecosystem Planning Approach