

THE COLUMBIA BASIN PARTNERSHIP TASKFORCE – SUMMARY OF EFFORTS 2017 - 2018

The Columbia Basin is home to 24 salmon and steelhead stocks (13 listed under ESA) – for which the states, tribes, and NOAA Fisheries have multiple management responsibilities and plans. Without common goals it is difficult for any one entity to successfully achieve its conservation and management goals.

To identify common goals in cooperation with the states and tribes, NOAA Fisheries convened the Columbia Basin Partnership Taskforce (CBP) in 2017 under the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (more commonly referred to as MAFAC). The CBP itself is a group of diverse regional sovereigns and stakeholders, whose aim is shared, aspirational, long-term qualitative and quantitative management and conservation goals for both listed and non-listed Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead stocks.

The purpose of the CBP is to provide a science-based, transparent, and public process to recommend “broad-sense” goals for Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead. The goals must incorporate long-term conservation needs, satisfy tribal treaty/trust responsibilities while providing harvest/fishing opportunities.

The provisional qualitative goals developed by the CBP address natural production, fishing and harvest opportunities, hatchery production/mitigation needs, and social, cultural, economic and ecological considerations across the basin for both ESA-listed and non-listed species; the qualitative goals provided a framework for the quantitative goals.

The CBP developed provisional quantitative goals for similar categories – natural and hatchery production, harvest, and total run size – for each stock. For each category, they also developed goals in low, medium and high ranges. Although focused on abundance, low-end quantitative goals also include de-listing and therefore the other Viable Salmon Population parameters, i.e., productivity, diversity, and spatial distribution goals are included. High-end goals are intended to be broad sense and aspirational, but not necessarily a return to pristine levels; taking into account habitat constraints, density dependence, cultural needs, sustainable fishing interests and mitigation responsibilities (including salmon and steelhead populations currently blocked from historical spawning and rearing habitat).

The CBP recommendations do not commit the member parties to specific activities or binding regulatory decisions; however, the hope is that having a set of common, long-term goals will inspire people to use them in similar ways, and to integrate efforts and seek efficient ways to achieve these common goals. NOAA Fisheries intends to use the goals the CBP recommends to guide its future management decisions.

In addition to shared goals, the CBP has also provided an arena to foster engagement and build relationships among different interests. Constructive relationships for building common ground based on joint interests have emerged from these interactions.

The CBP will finalize both qualitative and quantitative goals at its October 2-3 meeting in Portland. After this meeting, the CBP will be drafting its recommendations to the MAFAC for consideration and transmission to the NOAA Fisheries Administrator. The CBP is also seeking an extension from the MAFAC to continue its work by further refining the provisional goals. These refinements may include integrating the goals across all species and considering all limiting factors and potential constraints to achieving the goals.