

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

2019 STATEWIDE FISH PASSAGE PRIORITIZATION LIST:

Fish passage is a critical component to many facets of fishery resource management. Connectivity between aquatic habitats is an integral component of healthy fish populations. Without habitat connectivity, native migratory fish species such as native salmon, trout, suckers, and whitefish become isolated. This can result in population isolation, increased exposure to disturbance, diminished reproductive potential, and often results in declining population size and diminished recovery potential.

Fish passage barriers are prevalent throughout the Oregon landscape. Over time, despite fish passage rules and regulations, access to native fish habitats has been blocked or impaired by the construction of impassable artificial obstructions such as culverts, dams, tide gates, dikes, water diversions and other man-made infrastructure. Providing passage at these artificial obstructions is vital to recovering Oregon's native migratory fish populations. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) latest inventory identifies 42,780 artificial obstructions to fish passage in the State of Oregon. ODFW has documented that 19% of these obstructions are documented as providing full fish passage for native migratory fish.

Identification of priority fish passage barriers is a critical component of ODFW's Fish Screening and Passage Program (FSPP). Barrier prioritization will provide a more focused effort in restoring passage and meeting the critical needs of Oregon's native migratory fish. Fish passage inventory and prioritization is a requirement of Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 509.585 (3). This statute states that ODFW shall "complete and maintain a statewide inventory in order to prioritize enforcement actions based on the needs of native migratory fish." Furthermore, the statute states that the Department shall update the priority list every 5 years. The last fish passage priority list was approved by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2013.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In advance of updating the fish passage priority list, ODFW's Fish Screening and Passage Program compiled barrier inventory data from multiple sources throughout the state beginning in early March, 2018. ODFW obtained data from local ODFW staff, federal agencies, watershed councils, tribes, counties, and other entities that possessed fish passage barrier data. These data were compiled, standardized to match the requirements of the Oregon Fish Passage Barrier Data Standards, and were loaded into a GIS database. This database represents the most thorough statewide inventory of artificial obstructions to date, and includes information on the number and type of artificial obstructions in the state, as well as the level of fish passage at each barrier, and the physical characteristics of each obstruction.

In addition to data collection, the prioritization process was vetted through the Fish Passage Task Force (FPTF) at meetings in May and October 2018 and again in February 2019. The FPTF is comprised of nine volunteer members, appointed by the ODFW Director, whom represent interests subject to the installation of fish passage facilities (also referred to “water users” as a generic term), Fishing and Conservation, and Public-at-Large constituencies. The FPTF makes recommendations to the Department and advises ODFW on rulemaking, funding, waivers, exemptions, and fish passage prioritization. The FPTF played a vital role in the development of the 2019 fish passage priority list and approved a motion in February 2019 to recommend adoption of the new prioritization methods and present the prioritization list to the OFWC.

FPTF meetings are open to the public and during the public comment opportunities at these meetings; ODFW received a few comments regarding specific barriers on the list. Public comments were addressed in the 2019 prioritization list based on best available information. In addition, ODFW received a letter from 17 fishing and conservation groups regarding the fish passage and prioritization of Winchester Dam on the North Umpqua River (Attachment 5). The letter requested that Winchester Dam receive an appropriate ranking on the upcoming iteration of the ODFW statewide fish passage priority list. Winchester Dam was ranked in Group 8 on the 2013 Fish Passage Priority List. Winchester Dam is ranked in Group 2 on the 2019 Fish Passage Priority List.

ISSUE 1

APPROVAL OF THE 2019 FISH PASSAGE PRIORITY LIST.

ANALYSIS

With the creation of the new 2019 Fish Passage Priority List, the intent was to build upon the successes of the 2013 priority list by creating a more comprehensive priority list that represents the high volume of fish passage issues in the State. The primary goal of this process was to create a list based on the biological needs of native migratory fish, by using the best science available. ODFW accomplished this by selecting the highest priority barriers within each of the 18 ODFW Fish Districts across the State. Then scoring each artificial obstruction based on standardized methods to develop a list of statewide priority barriers that are ranked within similar groups.

Consistent with OAR 635-412-0015, staff used the information available at each barrier to create a prioritization equation based on the needs of native migratory fish. This prioritization equation used “habitat quantity” upstream of the barrier, “habitat quality” upstream of the barrier, current “level of passage” provided, “species present” at the obstruction, “biological status” (# of NMF species present and listing under the Endangered Species Act) of species present, and other unique or limiting factors provided by District Biologists (“auto ups” or “auto downs”) to calculate a barrier’s priority score.

The methodology and information used to develop the list are described in Attachment 2 and are consistent with the requirements of ORS 509.585 and OAR 635-412-0015. Significant changes were made to the Habitat

Quality methods to better quantify fish habitat and limit the subjectivity of this parameter. Habitat Quality is based on a multivariate regression tree analysis that partitions habitat quality values into seven stream classification types. Additional changes were made to weight the score based on the status of listed endangered, threatened, and special concern species compared to the 2013 method.

Based on input from the FPTF members, and to account for similarity in final scores within the data and prioritization methodology, the final 2019 Statewide Fish Passage Priority List utilized a grouping system to rank priorities rather than a numerical ranking for each barrier. The final priority list contains 591 high priority fish passage barriers (Attachment 3). **It is important to note that all barriers on the list are high priorities for ODFW and have been ranked into similar groups.**

OPTIONS

1. Review the priority list and the procedures and methods used to develop it, and **recommend approval of the 2019 fish passage priority list.** Direct department staff, as time and funding allows, to work cooperatively with owners of artificial obstructions on the priority list to provide fish passage.
2. Review the priority list and the procedures and methods used to develop it, and **recommend approval of the 2019 fish passage priority list, with the following amendments_____.** Direct department staff, as time and funding allows, to work cooperatively with owners of artificial obstructions on the priority list to provide fish passage.
3. Review the priority list and the procedures and methods used to develop it, and **recommend approval of the 2019 fish passage priority list at a later date, after the following amendments are made_____.** Direct department staff, as time and funding allows, to work cooperatively with owners of artificial obstructions on the priority list to provide fish passage.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1: Approve the 2019 Statewide Priority List as developed.

DRAFT MOTION	“After reviewing the 2019 Statewide Fish Passage Priority List, I recommend approval of the Priority List, and direct department staff to work cooperatively with owners of artificial obstructions on the priority list to provide fish passage.”
EFFECTIVE DATE	April 19, 2019