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# Northwest **Power** and **Conservation** Council

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April 7, 2026

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Patty O'Toole, Fish and Wildlife Division Director

**SUBJECT:** Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment April Work session

## BACKGROUND:

**Presenter:** Council staff

**Summary:** At the April Council meeting, the staff will review the amendment process and next steps and discuss with the members the comments received on the draft 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and proposed revisions.

**Relevance:** The Council is currently in a Program amendment process as directed by the Northwest Power Act

**Workplan:** This work addresses a primary responsibility under the Northwest Power Act and tasks A. 5,6,7,8 of the 2026 Fish and Wildlife Division Work Plan under the Program Policy and Planning function.

## Background:

The Council released the draft 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) on December 17, 2025. The Council received over 1300 written comments in addition to those comments collected at public hearings and one-on-one consultations with individual entities. The written comments received are available on the [amendment webpage](#).

At the April work session, the staff will briefly review the amendment process and timelines. The remainder of the work session will be focused on staff working directly with Council members to review the comments and discuss revisions for consideration to the draft Program. This work will be similar to how the staff and Council members worked through the recommendations, and comments on the recommendations, to develop a draft Program, working deliberately through each part of the draft Program. Materials will be emailed to Council members and paper copies provided ahead of the meeting. Please keep these materials internal to the Council.

Looking ahead, Council meetings in late April and May will be used to continue to work through the draft Program and edits based on the comments.

Following are the dates of anticipated Council meetings when portions of the meetings (Power plan work will be needed as well) will be focused on this amendment work:

- April 14, 15, 16 Council meeting in Whitefish Montana
- April 28, 29 virtual Council meeting
- May 12, 13, 14 Council meeting in Pendleton, Oregon
- May 27, 28, 29 virtual Council meetings, however if the Council is ready to make its decision in late May, we would propose a day in person to make final revisions and hold the vote to adopt the Program (probably Portland, Oregon but TBD)
- Other dates TBD

As discussed in March, now that the formal written comment period has ended, we are winding down the input for the Council to consider as we work towards final amendments for adoption. There will come a moment before the final decision when the Council shuts off *all external communication* on the draft Program and makes its final decision solely on the accumulated record. The Council has some discretion as to when to choose to close off any further external discussion. Our past practice is to have that occur *roughly a month* before the final decision. At the March Council meeting, Council members wanted another opportunity to revisit the timeline for this at the April meeting. The staff will discuss options with the Council in April.

Until the Council closes its external record, members and staff may continue to talk with people outside the Council about the draft Fish and Wildlife Program and about the issues in the Program. All external conversations – oral and written **MUST** be followed by writing a summary note about the conversation and sending that note to Kendra Coles or John Shurts for circulation to all members and relevant staff and inclusion in the administrative record. The note should state who the conversation was with and summarize the topics of the conversation. If you do not feel comfortable documenting the conversation, please do not have it. Note that this is not the time for substantial comments or new comments – those should have come in during the formal comment period. This is a period for only *clarification, questions to understand comments, points of emphasis, and limited dialogue*.