Salmon Recovery at Your Fingertips

Efforts to recover Pacific salmon from near extinction are happening all around Washington. Now, with the Habitat Work Schedule (HWS), people have an easy way to learn about what's happening in their neighborhoods as well as all across the state.

HWS is an online database at http://hws.ekosystem.us/ that displays information on salmon recovery actions and goals.

HWS makes it easy to see how projects relate to each other, what needs to be done next for salmon, who to contact with questions, and how progress is being made to address the problems harming salmon.

This online tool makes information on more than 8,300 projects statewide available at your fingertips. But more than that, HWS helps those taking action more efficiently manage the public money being spent to recover salmon. HWS allows them to track, prioritize, and sequence salmon recovery projects.

It is by far the most comprehensive state database of species recovery actions in the nation and is the model for the new federal Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS) system.

Types of Information Available

Here’s some of the information you can get on completed, active, and proposed projects:

- Project goals and objectives
- Funding status and sources
- Contact information
- Partners
- Description and type of project
- Recovery strategy priority
- Reference documents
- Maps and photographs
- Expected project results
- Status of project
- Type of habitat restored
- Factors limiting salmon
- Salmon species benefitted

Why is HWS Needed?

The 1998 Salmon Recovery Act requires salmon recovery projects to be coordinated and sequenced. Those funding salmon recovery couldn’t see what activities were being funded across multiple programs and agencies. Congress asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to bring transparency, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness to salmon recovery in Washington State by funding a system to track recovery actions and to create a way for work to be coordinated across hundreds of jurisdictions. The resulting HWS was developed by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2006, co-managed with RCO beginning in 2010, and transferred to RCO in 2012.
Benefits of HWS

- Improves project effectiveness because the system prompts project managers to establish project goals.
- Improves planning and program performance because project managers and funders can organize and share planned actions with each other and with technical reviewers. It allows them to see how recovery actions fit together and where future opportunities might be.
- Can expand support from citizens, Congress, and the Legislature because information is easily retrieved, transparent, and shows accountability. Also, the information is displayed at a large scale, covering an entire watershed.
- Uses funding more effectively because funders and project managers can see the problems limiting salmon and develop projects to address those priority needs. It also allows them to leverage funds from other federal, state, local, tribal, and private entities for the priority projects.
- Reduces duplication and improves collaboration because all projects and actions are planned in a single system that is accessible across all agencies.

How Is HWS Used?

Salmon recovery organizations use HWS to track, report, and map their actions for planning, accountability, monitoring, and management, both geographically and over time. Salmon recovery organizations have no other central location that houses statewide salmon recovery information on restoration, conservation, and educational activities at multiple scales and across multiple agencies. Through HWS, they are able to track projects from multiple funding programs, including the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board, agricultural incentive programs, federal road management programs, and multiple conservation programs.

HWS also tracks and reports information about the effectiveness of salmon recovery actions. This provides good coordination of data and a way to measure progress toward meeting recovery goals. HWS tracks conservation projects such as easements and land acquisitions, restoration projects, activities such as road management to control sediment and agricultural practices that are better for fish, effectiveness monitoring activities, and changes in habitat over time.

What’s the Future?

RCO has these future improvements planned: Connecting HWS with RCO’s grants and contracts management tool, linking to hatchery and harvest information; increasing regulatory and program action tracking; expanding tools that link implementation and monitoring information to management of salmon recovery projects; and continuing to improve data quality, reporting, and recent enhancements.