



OWEB Focused Investment Partnership Priority COHO HABITAT AND POPULATIONS ALONG THE OREGON COAST

Summary Statement of Priority

The OWEB Board will consider proposals for investment in **Coho habitats and populations along the Oregon coast**, including estuaries, freshwater water bodies, and associated riparian and upland habitats, for initiatives that address habitat conservation and restoration needs to achieve ecological outcomes over time at the landscape scale¹.

OWEB's Focused Investment Priority for Oregon's coastal coho habitats and populations guides voluntary actions that address primary limiting factors related to the protection and restoration of the watershed functions and processes that support coho habitat and the health of coho populations. **These actions will be guided by the habitat, limiting factors, ecological outcomes, and conservation approaches outlined in the Oregon Coastal Coho Conservation Plan, NOAA Fisheries Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho Recovery Plan, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's limiting factors document, which are listed on page three of this document.**

This priority encompasses habitat needs for coho salmon listed in the Oregon Coast Coho (OCC) evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) and the Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho (SONCC) ESU. Focal areas for this Priority are coastal habitats identified as high conservation and restoration priorities for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed coho salmon. For the purposes of this Priority, OWEB investments would be focused in areas shown in green and yellow on the map. Within these identified areas, voluntary restoration and conservation actions are especially encouraged in locations where investments will also address identified non-point source water-quality concerns.

Background

Where it occurs – This Priority includes estuaries, freshwater water bodies, and associated riparian and upland habitats that support coho salmon and are connected to the Oregon coast. This priority includes restoration and protection of watershed functions and processes that increase and maintain instream complexity, good water quality, adequate instream flows, and floodplain connectivity, as well as actions that create and/or maintain an appropriate sediment regime throughout the range of the coho salmon.

Indicator species and/or species of interest supported by this habitat – Oregon has two coastal Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) that are listed under the ESA: 1) Oregon Coast Coho (OCC) ESU with 21 independent populations from the Necanicum River in the north and the Sixes River near Cape Blanco in the south, and 2) the Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho (SONCCC) ESU from Cape Blanco to the California border with seven independent populations.

The estuarine and freshwater coastal habitats that coho use also support many other native species, for at least some portion of their life cycle. These species include, but are not limited to: Chinook and chum salmon, steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout, Pacific lamprey, Western brook lamprey, sculpins, beavers, river otters, and giant salamanders, as well as hundreds of invertebrate species. Work is underway to further assess and refine the list of estuarine species associated with these habitat areas.

¹ The landscape scale refers to the scale at which environmental, economic, and social factors intersect.

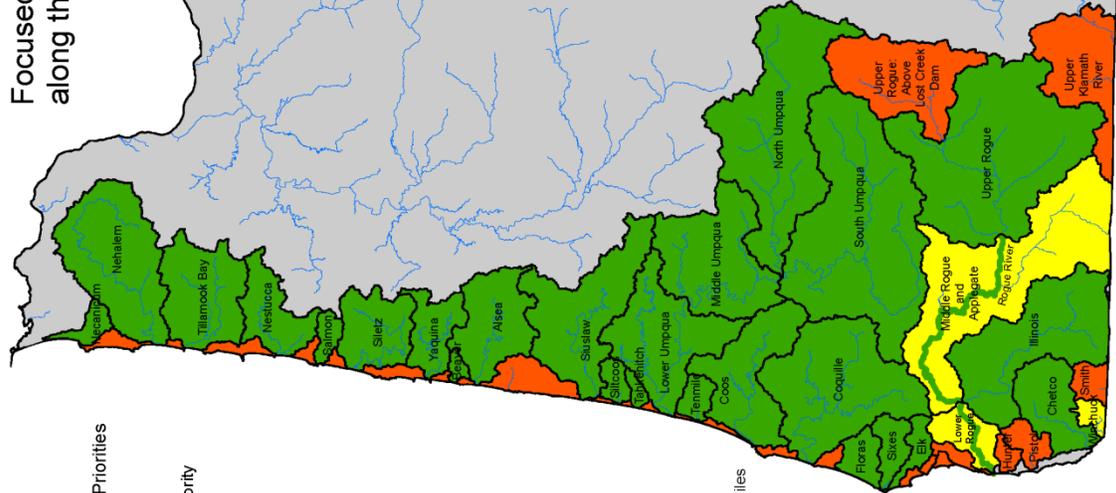
Focused Investment Priority for Coho Habitat and Populations along the Oregon Coast

Coastal Coho Restoration and Recovery Priorities

Highest Priority

Second Highest Priority

Lower Priority



Note: The GIS data used to create this map comes from both State and Federal conservation and recovery plans.

Why it is significant to the state – The presence of robust and sustainable populations of coho salmon are an indicator of properly functioning coastal ecosystems and can provide significant social, cultural, economic and ecological benefits to coastal communities. Because water quality has been significantly degraded and instream habitat impacted in areas along the coast, the populations of these fish have declined, thus requiring a federal ESA listing.

Several significant planning efforts have been underway to focus efforts on coho conservation. Oregon has developed a coho conservation plan (Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan), NOAA Fisheries has developed a federal recovery plan for the SONCC ESU that was recently approved, and a recovery plan is currently being developed by NOAA Fisheries for Oregon's OCC salmon populations.

The improvement in conditions and complexity for coastal coho habitat will also lead to improved water quality. Many of Oregon's coastal streams are designated on the federal 303(d) list as "water quality limited," which affects landowners and communities and creates economic impacts. Additionally, recreational and commercial fisheries are also severely impacted by the ESA listing of these fish. Restoring ecosystem function for coastal stream habitats will benefit coho populations, which may help support fisheries over time.

Key limiting factors and/or ecological threats, with a focus on ecosystem function and process –

- Impaired ecosystem functions that have resulted in decreased quantity and quality of instream complexity and degraded rearing and spawning habitats;
- Lack of habitat connectivity with floodplains;
- Degraded riparian areas;
- Insufficient water quantity/flows during critical flow periods; and
- Degraded water quality (i.e., dissolved oxygen, temperature, bacteria load, sedimentation)

Investments for the priority will focus on addressing primary limiting factors, as described in the reference plans below, with actions such as: 1) in estuaries and mainstem rivers, reconnecting and restoring floodplain, riparian, side-channel, and tidal habitat; and 2) in tributaries, restoring whole watersheds to address such limiting factors as loss of instream habitat complexity and degradation of riparian areas.

Reference plans –

- 1) Oregon Coastal Coho Conservation Plan
(http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/coastal_coho_conservation_plan.asp)
- 2) NOAA Fisheries Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho Recovery Plan
(http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/southern_oregon_northern_california_coast/southern_oregon_northern_california_coast_salmon_recovery_domain.html)
- 3) Limiting Factors and Threats to the Recovery of Oregon Coho Populations in the Southern Oregon-Northern California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit: Results of Expert Panel Deliberations
(http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/docs/coastal_coho/final/Oregon_SONCC_coho_limiting_factors_Final_Report_Sept_2008.pdf)