

## **Habitat Assessment and Prioritization of Actions on the Columbia Mainstem**

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### Abstract:

Salmonid habitat in the middle mainstem Columbia River is frequently viewed as too altered to achieve meaningful restoration. As a result, past management has focused primarily on getting fish through the hydrosystem as quickly as possible. However, research shows that fish still use these habitats, with some fish using them extensively. In 2012, the Mid-Columbia Fish Enhancement Group led an effort to assess shoreline habitat conditions in the middle Columbia mainstem and to evaluate the potential benefits of restoration. The study area included the north shoreline of the Columbia River from the White Salmon River confluence to the Yakima River confluence. Shoreline habitat types and conditions were identified and mapped. Potential restoration treatments were identified that address a range of species and life-stages. Restoration types fell into 3 major categories: 1) restoration of mainstem shoreline habitat, 2) restoration of off-channel habitat, and 3) restoration of tributary confluence areas. In collaboration with a technical oversight group, restoration projects were prioritized. Several example projects were further developed into conceptual designs. This effort is intended to contribute to the discussion about the importance of mainstem habitats and the potential benefits and feasibility for restoration.