

River Plan / North Reach Science Panel Overview

The River Plan / North Reach was unanimously adopted by City Council on April 15, 2010. The plan allows applicants for development in the River Environmental Zone to pay for off-site mitigation under certain circumstances. The off-site mitigation payment will be paid to the City in the form of a fee-in-lieu until a mitigation bank is operating in the North Reach (The fee-in-lieu is scheduled to sunset in 2 years). City staff and consultants are finalizing the method that will be used to determine the mitigation fee. City staff wanted the mitigation payment calculation method to be: 1) open and transparent; 2) represent the best available science - well tested on multiple habitat types and suitable for the Willamette River; 3) publicly available (non-proprietary); 4) allow for "in kind" tracking (i.e.: in-water restoration for in-water impacts); 5) accepted by multiple state and federal agencies; and 6) allow mitigation to stay in the North Reach service area. The proposed method combines two models, the Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) and the Habitat Equivalency Assessment (HEA).

City staff convened a science panel to review and provide feedback on the scientific integrity of the HEP/HEA approach. The City sent out a call for nominations of scientists, and selected a panel that collectively had experience with habitat valuation in the types of habitat found in the North Reach. The panel members chosen were:

- Derek Booth, PhD, PE, PG, President, Stillwater Sciences, Inc/University of Washington
- Bobby Cochran, Executive Director, Willamette Partnership
- Doug DeHart, PhD, Fisheries Biologist (retired, USFWS/ODFW)
- Brent Hadaway, ICF/ Jones and Stokes
- Jimmy Kagen, Director, Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center, OSU
- Mary Kentula, PhD, Wetland Ecologist, EPA
- Brian Lightcap, Wetland Ecologist, (retired, Army Corps of Engineers)
- Randy Moore, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, OSU
- Stan van de Wetering, Siletz Tribes

The panel met on June 18th for 4.5 hours. There was one public comment period prior to and the panel's deliberations, and a public report out session following the deliberations. The City asked the panel to provide responses to the following questions at the meeting and in writing:

1. To the extent known, or within your particular area of expertise, what are the pros and cons of using a combination of HEP and HEA and the HSI quantification? Are there other methodologies we should consider that meet or exceed the criteria identified?
2. Did we get the right species? Are we missing a species or habitat?
3. We are proposing to use peer reviewed HSIs to establish values for the HEP model. Are there some that need to be updated? Are there species/habitats that do not have HSIs? What process should we use in those situations?
4. By utilizing an "in kind" approach, rarity of different habitat types should be addressed. However other factors, such as proximity to other habitats, patch size, or diversity of contiguous habitats are all important ecological concepts that are not captured in this approach. Are there certain additional considerations ("weightings") that should be added?

The City presented initial results at a public briefing on July 27, 2010, and will present more detailed results in a summary report in August.

The following members of the public attended the Science Plan meeting on June 18 or the public briefing on June 27th. A summary of public comments will be included in the summary report released in August.

Ron Gouquet
Barbara Quinn
Bob Sallinger
Jan Secunda
Darise Weller
Debbie Deetz Silva
Andrew Jansky
David Harvey
Curt Schneider
Mary Vogel
Greg Theisen
Paul Fishman

For more information

Contact Kaitlin Lovell at (503) 823-7032 or Kaitlin.Lovell@PortlandOregon.gov.