

Towards Ecosystem-Based Management and Salmon Recovery in the Columbia River Basin: Cooperative Approaches to Addressing Transboundary Issues and Concerns

This Conference Prospectus provides a description of a proposal to convene a major international conference on ecosystem-based management of water and other natural resources in the Columbia River Basin. As a follow-up to the two previous transboundary conferences, which were held in 1994 and 1998, it is proposed that this conference be convened in Spokane, Washington during April of 2002.

Conference Prospectus

Background:

The Columbia River is the dominant river system in the Pacific Northwest United States and southeastern British Columbia. Its health is of vital importance to communities and stakeholders on both sides of the border. Resource managers in Canada and the United States recognize that open, honest communication and effective information sharing are important foundations for resolving land and water use conflicts, and are essential to economic and environmental sustainability in the Columbia Basin. For this reason, an international technical workshop on the Upper Columbia River Basin was organized and convened in 1994 to encourage information sharing among First Nations, conservation groups, resource managers, policy makers, scientists, and concerned citizens. The initial workshop was an unqualified success, attracting over 300 participants and addressing such issues as water quality monitoring and management, contaminants, watershed management, fish and fish habitats, limnology, hydroelectric facilities, and human and environmental health.

Four years later (April, 1998), a second international workshop, entitled *Toward Ecosystem-Based Management in the Upper Columbia River Basin*, was convened to foster information exchange and cooperation among resource managers, First Nations, policy makers, scientists, industry, environmental groups and concerned citizens. The workshop, which was held in Castlegar, B.C., consisted of plenary sessions, technical presentations, exhibits, and work group sessions. This design was used to provide delegates with opportunities to explore a wide range of technical,

environmental, and community issues and to develop recommendations for fostering proactive aquatic resource management in the entire basin. The four-day workshop was attended by some 400 delegates from throughout the basin on both sides of the border.

Workshop delegates advocated an ecosystem-based approach to managing the Upper Columbia River Basin. Unlike past approaches to resource management which consider community, economic and environmental factors separately and in isolation of each other, ecosystem-based management integrates and inextricably links all these factors from planning through decision-making, law-making and implementation. Ecosystems managed in this way are healthy, livable and prosperous. Workshop delegates responded to the challenge of fostering ecosystem-based management in the Upper Columbia River Basin by developing a common vision for the future, identifying the factors that are constraining our ability to achieve this vision, and recommending a series of strategic actions to support watershed sustainability. Some of the key recommendations developed include:

- Incorporate the results of the workshop into to series of Principles for Ecosystem-Based Management;
- Develop a Sustainability Charter for the Upper Columbia River Basin that encompasses the common vision for the future and the Principles for Ecosystem-Based Management. Encourage interested organizations to sign on to the Charter and use it to guide their activities;
- Conduct an independent assessment of the state of ecosystem management in the Upper Columbia River Basin (reporting by 2001);
- Use the re-licencing of dams as an opportunity to explore alternate governance models, encourage collaborative decision-making, and consider a broader range of societal values;
- Establish Watershed Councils and, possibly, International Watershed Boards to coordinate planning and decision-making functions;
- Develop watershed management plans on a sub-basin and basin wide basis.

The international workshop was intended to be one step in a longer-term process to advance ecosystem management objectives in the

Upper Columbia River Basin. In addition to completing a number of tasks in the near-term, workshop participants recognized that there was a need to convene another workshop in the long-term to share new information, report on the progress that has been made, continue the strategic planning process, and renew our shared commitment to sustainability in the Upper Columbia River Basin.

Purpose: The third transboundary conference, *Towards Ecosystem-Based Management and Salmon Recovery in the Columbia River Basin: Cooperative Approaches to Addressing Transboundary Issues and Concerns*, is intended to provide an major international forum for exchanging information and engaging in technical debates on a wide variety of issues related to transboundary management of water and other natural resources in the Columbia River Basin. More specifically, the third transboundary conference will enable participants to share new information, to report on the progress that has been made on the transition toward ecosystem-based management and salmon recovery, to build the partnerships needed to implement effective strategic planning processes, and to renew our shared commitment to sustainability in the Upper Columbia River Basin. As such, the conference will represent an opportunity for policy makers, scientists, resource users, First Nations, tribal organizations, community groups, and concerned citizens to present information on ecosystem-based management and salmon recovery efforts, identify the factors that are contributing to the success of these initiatives, describe the challenges that we are facing in terms of fully implementing these programs, and develop recommendations for further improving and coordinating these efforts in the future.

Program Focus: The Program and Agenda for the *Towards Ecosystem-Based Management and Salmon Recovery* conference will be developed cooperatively by the Steering Committee and Program Planning Committee that are assembled during the course of the project. The 1998 *Towards Ecosystem-Based Management* conference was a four-day event, which consisted of Plenary Sessions, Technical Sessions, and Work Group Sessions. The event attracted high profile speakers from both Canada and the United States. This general format could be used as a basis for structuring the 2002 conference as well. It is proposed that the conference be convened

in Spokane, Washington during April, 2002 (i.e., four years after the last conference). It is anticipated that 300 to 700 people would attend the event.

Based on the initial discussions among the interested organizations, it is likely that a broad range of issues will be addressed at the conference. Some of the themes that have been identified thus far include:

- Grassroots public involvement in decision-making;
- Water use planning;
- Formation and empowerment of watershed councils;
- Strategic planning to support watershed management;
- Preparation for renewal of the Columbia River Treaty;
- First Nations treaties and natural resource management;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of sub-basin level planning for fish and wildlife recovery;
- Fostering transboundary partnerships;
- Transboundary monitoring and management of TGP;
- Economic and cultural considerations in ecosystem management;
- The role of traditional knowledge in watershed management;
- Management of resident fish species; and,
- Salmon recovery efforts.

Project Overview: A number of activities will need to be successfully completed to support full implementation of this project, including:

- Identifying participating organizations;
- Establishing Steering, Program Planning, and Local Arrangements Committees;
- Developing a prospectus for the conference;
- Establishing a Time and Place for the conference (and booking the facilities);
- Identifying key speakers and facilitators;
- Preparing and disseminating the Conference Prospectus and First Call for Papers, Second Call for Papers, and Final Call for Papers to representatives from all stakeholder groups, including First Nations, local government, provincial, and federal leaders, industry, and non-government organizations;

- Raising the funds necessary to support the organization and implementation of the event;
- Making the necessary local arrangements;
- Developing the conference Agenda and Abstracts
- Convening conference;
- Developing a proceedings report ;
- Distributing draft report;
- Reviewing comments and finalizing report; and,
- Publishing and distributing report to user groups.

Estimated Budget: \$80,000 - 120,000 US

Sponsors: Northwest Power Planning Council
Columbia Basin Trust
Sustainable Fisheries Foundation
Other Interested Organizations