

CBFWF's Status of the Resources Website: 2012 Survey Results



 **COLUMBIA BASIN
FISH AND WILDLIFE
AUTHORITY**

- Basinwide Summary
 - Anadromous Fish
 - Resident Fish
 - Wildlife
- Geographic Provinces
 - Province Summary
 - Status & Trends
 - Harvest
 - Hatchery
 - Limiting Factors
- ESU/DPS
 - ESU/DPS Summary
 - Status & Trends
 - Harvest
- Focal Species
- About the Project

Status of Fish and Wildlife Resources in the Columbia River Basin

This project presents data about the current status of subbasins within the Columbia River Basin. Explore the links to the left to view historical abundance data for focal species in each subbasin, interact with geographic data representing species distribution, population status, Endangered Species Act status, and species limiting factors, and see what projects are currently in place to help fish and wildlife.

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This document should be cited as:

CBFWF. 2012. CBFWF's Status of the Resources Website: 2012 Survey Results. Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Portland, Oregon.

This report was funded by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Department of Energy, under Project No. 198996201, as part of BPA's program to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and its tributaries. The views in this report are the author's and do not necessarily represent the views of BPA.

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Executive Summary

The Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation) has been producing the Status of the Resources (SOTR) report and website since 2005. The report and website have undergone annual modifications in response to the demands of the decision- and policy-makers within the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC), and Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife managers. To address Independent Science Review Panel (ISRP) comments, and to continue efforts to improve and upgrade the SOTR website, a user satisfaction survey was conducted between February 10 and March 1, 2012.

The survey was sent via email to over 1,800 individuals on the Foundation's current contact list of natural resource professionals in the Columbia River Basin. A total of 88 individuals responded to the survey consisting of 27 federal employees, 19 tribal employees, 17 state employees, 3 BPA employees, 5 NPCC employees, 8 non-governmental organization employees and 9 others.

The survey respondents indicated that their primary purpose for visiting the SOTR website was to: View/obtain high level summaries on focal species (48%), Obtain/download status and trends data (43%), Obtain references to locate source data (35%), Viewing site out of interest (37%), and Download reports (32%).

Equally diverse were the sections of the website that were most commonly visited by the survey participants. Sections visited included: Status and Trends of Focal Species (57%), Basin-wide Summaries of Anadromous Fish (50%), Summaries by Province/Subbasin (46%), and Limiting Factors (42%). Other sections that were of interest included: ESU/DPS for Salmon and Steelhead (38%), Basin-wide Summary for Resident Fish (31%), and Basin-wide Summary for Wildlife (24%). Less visited were the Harvest, Hatchery, and Printed Report sections; however, these sections are of high interest to the users that access them. These results indicate that the SOTR is meeting its objective to provide comprehensive information to a broad interest group that spans anadromous fish, resident fish, and wildlife.

Over 81% of the survey respondents determined that they were able to easily find the information they were seeking and 88% of the respondents felt that the SOTR website was useful or very useful. Factors that contribute to the continued use of the SOTR website are that data are up-to-date, the website is easy to use, and the information is comprehensive.

Only 16 of the respondents suggested improvements to the SOTR website which focused on two specific activities: 1) improve data accuracy and review, and 2) provide more types of data.

The Foundation staff will be taking results from this survey into account as they update and improve the SOTR website in the upcoming year and into the future.

Introduction

In 2000, the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP 2000-3) suggested no systematic data inventory had been performed in the Columbia River Basin and that “no organization has taken responsibility for a coordinated basin-wide design, and no organization has taken responsibility for uniform consistent implementation of such a design.” The ISRP questioned “whether any existing organization has broad enough authority to take command of basin-wide implementation.”

Although several data management projects (e.g., StreamNet, Columbia River Data Access in Real Time (DART), Fish Passage Center) existed when the ISRP provided their opinion in 2000, none of these projects could be described as having a comprehensive, basin-wide data delivery design that not only included anadromous fish, but also provided status and trend data for resident fish and wildlife. Also missing, and just as important, was the lack of context for the data being shared. The existing projects did not present data in the context of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council’s (NPCC) Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Program (Program). Although data such as numbers of fish passing a dam or redd counts were available, website users, especially decision- and policy-makers, were unable to track the trajectory of the populations relative to existing biological/management/recovery objectives.

The NPCC’s 2000 Program recommended that data be collected in a standard format and that “the Council will initiate a process for establishing an Internet-based system for the efficient dissemination of data for the Columbia Basin.” In 2003, the NPCC recommended funding the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s (Foundation) Status of the Resources (SOTR) Project to develop a website for the purpose of reporting the status and trends of fish and wildlife populations throughout the Columbia River Basin in the context of the Program’s subbasin plans.

By 2004, subbasin plans for the Columbia River Basin were completed and biological and management objectives were clearly stated for many focal species. Following the completion of the subbasin plans, the ISRP (ISRP 2005-14) reported “there is the need for readily accessible data on numbers of adults returning to the subbasin (i.e., escapement estimates)” and “that Council and BPA ensure that data generated by public funds is readily available through publicly accessible websites.” The Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB 2006-5) suggested that “a process to compile and coordinate data for the Columbia Basin is an obvious need.”

The SOTR Project began in 2005 with the goal of developing and maintaining a comprehensive, easy to use website populated with up-to-date data in the context of the Program’s subbasin plans. To achieve the goal, Foundation staff coordinated with the fish and wildlife managers, NPCC, BPA, and others to develop a uniform basin-wide process that would make status and trend data for fish and wildlife populations available through a publicly accessible website. Coordination efforts included working with data generators and data user groups to ensure the: 1) Foundation’s effort was not duplicative but instead complimentary, 2) appropriate data were included in the inventory, and 3) website would be useful to interested entities, specifically decision-makers and the general public.

During the NPCC’s Fiscal Year 2007-2009 Project Solicitation and Review, the ISRP suggested the SOTR Project provide an opportunity for user evaluation of product utility. Surveys can be an invaluable

tool for reaching out to key audiences to assess a wide range of issues and obtain meaningful, actionable feedback. Survey findings can help support fact-based decisions or continuous improvements to allow a project to move towards a stated goal. For the Foundation, the survey would likely provide insight regarding the users desired upgrades or modifications to the website.

In 2011, the Foundation conducted a survey to evaluate the effectiveness and value of its services ([http://www.cbfwa.org/Committees/Members/meetings/2011_0310/2010CBFWAOrganizationandStaffSurveyReport\(FINAL\).pdf](http://www.cbfwa.org/Committees/Members/meetings/2011_0310/2010CBFWAOrganizationandStaffSurveyReport(FINAL).pdf)). Included in that survey was a general suite of questions pertaining to the SOTR website. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that they had visited the website. Of those individuals, 96% and 86% found the site to be somewhat to very informative and useful, respectively.

Although results from the 2011 survey provided general information regarding use, level of satisfaction, and usefulness of the SOTR website, the survey was not designed nor was it intended to provide an in-depth review that could provide data for the purpose of enhancing or extending the user services. Subsequently, because the Foundation recognizes the need to better ascertain the satisfaction of the user groups as well as the types of information that users desire when visiting the website, the Foundation solicited input, via a new survey, from individuals throughout the Columbia River Basin.

Objectives

Objectives for the 2012 survey of SOTR website users were to identify:

- User affiliations (e.g., tribal, state, federal, etc.)
- Reasons for visiting
- Preferred website sections
- Ease of locating information
- Overall usefulness
- Likelihood of returning and recommending to colleagues
- Desired changes/additions

Methods

The target population for this survey consisted of natural resource professionals in the Columbia River Basin that may have visited the SOTR website. The sample included tribal, state, federal, NPCC, and BPA employees, as well as representatives from other natural resource-oriented organizations.

On February 10, 2012, invitation emails were sent to approximately 1,800 individuals requesting their participation in the survey, assuring them their responses would remain anonymous. A link to the nine question web-based survey was included with the solicitation. A follow-up reminder email was sent

on February 29, and the survey was closed on March 1. In addition, a banner was posted on the SOTR website to solicit user participation as they entered the website during this time period.

Results

Groups using the SOTR Website

A total of 88 individuals participated in the survey (Table 1). Federal employees comprised 31% (N = 27) of the respondents while individuals from tribal entities (N = 19), state agencies (N = 17), and NPCC/BPA representatives (N = 8) represented 22%, 19%, and 9% of the respondents, respectively.

Table 1. - Participants' affiliation:

	Response Count	Response Percent
Federal	27	31%
Tribal	19	22%
State	17	19%
NGO	8	9%
NPCC	5	6%
BPA	3	3%
Local government	0	0%
Other	9	10%

Reasons for Visiting the SOTR Website

When asked why they visited the SOTR website, 66 of the 88 initial respondents answered the question. Results indicate that the most common reason for visiting the website was to obtain/download status and trends data (Table 2). Of the 66 respondents, 40 (61%) indicated they were seeking status and trends data for Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife populations. The reasons for visiting the SOTR website were diverse and equally distributed over the options provided.

Table 2. - What is the purpose of your visit to the SOTR website?

	Response Count	Response Percent
Obtain/download status and trends data	40	61%
View/obtain high-level summaries on focal species	36	55%
Just reviewing site out of interest	36	55%
Obtain references to locate source data	26	39%
Download reports	24	36%

Preferred Website Sections

Survey results show that the sections of the SOTR website that received the most interest align with the respondents' purposes for visiting the website. Of the 74 respondents to this question, 67% indicated they visited the website to view information in the Status and Trends section (Table 3). Fifty-four percent (N = 42) of the 74 participants indicated that the Anadromous Fish Basin-wide Summary (i.e., high-level summaries for focal species) is also a section of interest. It appears that most of the sections of the SOTR website are regularly used and that the website is appropriately balanced between areas of interest.

Table 3. - Which of the following sections of the website are of the most interest to you?

	Response Count	Response Percent
Status and Trends of Focal Species	52	67%
Basin-wide Summary (Anadromous Fish)	42	54%
Summaries by Province/Subbasin	39	50%
Limiting Factors	35	45%
ESU/DPS (Salmon and Steelhead)	32	41%
Basin-wide Summary (Resident Fish)	26	33%
Basin-wide Summary (Wildlife)	20	26%
Hatchery	16	21%
Harvest	14	18%
Printed Report	9	12%
Other	6	8%

Ease of Locating Information

To determine whether the website's design ensured that users could find the information they were seeking, participants were asked whether they were able to easily find the information while browsing the website. Of the 88 respondents, 71 (81%) reported that they easily found the desired information (Table 4). For those that could not find their information of interest, the following comments were provided in response to the question "what type of information were you looking for?":

"Information is not useful, too generalized"

"Looking for GIS-based data for analysis"

"Stream condition trends"

"Need more recent data to reflect more recent response to recovery efforts"

"SARs with confidence intervals"

Table 4. - Are you able to easily find the information that you are seeking while browsing the website?

	Response Count	Response Percent
Yes	71	81%
No	17	19%

Use of Printed Annual Report

The SOTR website has historically provided an annual basin-wide summary report that can be downloaded and printed for ease of use and portability. Survey results show that only 17% of the respondents download the annual report (Table 5). Similar to the results for the “section of interest” question, the number of respondents that have downloaded the report aligns with the number of individuals that indicated the printed annual report section was an area of the website for which there was interest (12%, Table 3.). Although this level of interest appears low, the need and usefulness of the printed report to those individuals that rely on it should be more fully explored before consideration of eliminating that element of the SOTR website.

Table 5. - Have you downloaded the annual printed report?

	Response Count	Response Percent
Yes	15	17%
No	73	83%

Usefulness of SOTR Website

Through the years, input from fish and wildlife managers, NPCC/BPA staff, and others has been sought to ensure the SOTR website is comprehensive and useful for decision- and policy-makers in the Columbia River Basin, as well as fish and wildlife managers. In an attempt to evaluate the success of the effort, participants were asked to rate the overall usefulness of the website. Results indicated that 88% (N= 75) of the respondents judged the website to be useful (Table 6). Of those 75 respondents, 22 rated the SOTR website as very useful. It appears that the SOTR is meeting its intended purpose and audience.

Table 6. - How would you rate the overall usefulness of the SOTR website:

	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful
Overall usefulness of SOTR website	26% (N = 22)	62% (N = 53)	12% (N = 10)

Likelihood of returning to the SOTR Website

When asked whether they would continue to use the SOTR website, 91% of the respondents indicated that that would return (Table 7). Of the 70 individuals that provided a response to this question, 42 (60%) indicated that they would recommend the website to others.

Table 7. - How likely are you to:

	Response Count	Response Percent
Return to the website	64	91%
Recommend the website to others	42	60%

Features Influencing Continued Use of the SOTR Website

In an attempt to identify the features that have led to the participants’ continued use of the SOTR website, an open-ended question was presented asking the respondent to describe features that influenced their decision to return to the website. From the 37 responses that indicated future return visits, the features that were identified could be grouped into three categories: 1) current and up-to-date data, 2) ease of use, and 3) comprehensive information (Table 8). These are the goals of the SOTR website, and it is encouraging to see that they appear to have been met.

Table 8. - What features influenced your decision to continue using the website

	Response Count	Response Percent
Data are current and up-to-date	11	30%
Ease of use	11	30%
Comprehensive information	15	40%

User Suggested Additions/Changes to the SOTR Website

When the survey participants were asked what changes or additional features should be considered for the SOTR website, their responses could be placed in the following four categories: 1) none, 2) improved data review, 3) provide more types of data, and 4) other technical or policy changes (Table 9). The “other” category included a comment on technical issues in using the website and a comment on changing the focus of the website to a more scientific audience rather than a public audience. Thirty six percent of the respondents indicated a desire for more data. Examples of requests included:

“Resident fish high-level indicators for basin-wide scale”

“Keep incorporating data from other monitoring”

“More interactive maps”

“More information on high-level indicators”

“More VSP data”

“Habitat status and trends data”

“Provide reference to critical habitat designations”

Table 9. - What changes or additional features would you suggest for the SOTR website?

	Response Count	Response Percent
None	12	45%
Data review	4	14%
More data	10	36%
Other	2	7%

Discussion

The SOTR website was created by the Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife managers to address data availability needs previously identified by the ISRP, ISAB, and NPCC. The Foundation’s goal was to build, using the NPCC’s Program and subbasin plans as context, a publicly accessible website that would serve as a portal to up-to-date data for a broad range of users. In the most basic sense, the website was developed to function as a “one-stop shopping center” for users seeking general Program-related fish and wildlife data.

Because the initial development and continued maintenance of the website was a coordinated effort among individuals representing different natural resource user groups (e.g., decision- and policy-makers associated with utility groups, fish and wildlife managers representing tribes, state and federal entities, watershed council representatives, etc.), the Foundation has been successful in attracting a broad group of users that easily locate current information that spans a wide spectrum of interest. The results of this survey support this conclusion.

Despite most respondents expressing satisfaction with the SOTR website relative to user accessibility, ease of use, up-to-date data, data presentation, and the website’s overall comprehensiveness, several critical responses were provided. These responses often illustrated the respondent’s lack of familiarity with the project’s goal of developing a general website that is useful to decision- and policy-makers as well as fish and wildlife managers (i.e., requesting more scientific data to support specific analyses).

Through this survey, the following comment was received: “How is this site different than any other Columbia Basin fish site?” While developing the SOTR website in 2005 and 2006, Foundation staff coordinated with potential users as well as data providers to ensure the website would not be redundant with other public accessible websites (i.e., DART, Fish Passage Center, PTAGIS, and StreamNet) that were funded through the Program. Since the SOTR website became publicly accessible in 2005, several other websites (e.g., Taurus, PISCES, MonitoringMethods, etc.) have also come on line. Although some of these websites provide Program-specific information (e.g., data associated with habitat improvement metrics and monitoring methodology) none provide up-to-date, comprehensive fish and wildlife population data in the context of biological and management objectives and limiting factors contained in the Program’s subbasin plans, as well recovery plans.

During the developmental stages of the website, significant time was spent with Columbia River Basin decision- and policy-makers ensuring the website’s format and content was useful to that particular user

group. The result of this input did not go unnoticed as one reviewer recommended: “More focus on scientific audiences, less on political audience.” For the more science-oriented respondents, a common theme was that: “the information on the website is not useful as it is too general.” During the development of the website, the decision- and policy-makers expressed an interest in seeing the data presented in a generalized format. The website was designed to function as a portal that provides summarized information and links to the sources from which the information was mined for those that want a more detailed picture including the metadata. The website identifies where the scientific data resides, but directs users to the source of the data for access. One user has compared the SOTR website to a card catalog of the most current publicly accessible biological information in the Basin.

With the suggestions that were received through the survey, the SOTR Project is positioned to continue to evolve so that the types of data the user groups are seeking are readily available. Respondents indicated that they would like to see the website include the following: 1) resident fish high-level indicators at the basin-wide scale, 2) data from other programs, 3) additional interactive maps, and 4) more VSP data. Also, participants suggested using focus work groups, or local groups, to routinely review the quality/accuracy of the data presented on the website. Because of budget and staffing reductions, the Foundation, working with the user groups, will need to prioritize the proposed additions to the website and address them in order of importance.

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DRAFT



Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation

851 SW Sixth Avenue, Suite 300

Portland, Oregon 97204

503-220-0191

www.cbfwa.org

An online version of this is available at: <http://www.cbfwa.org>