

<b>Project Name</b>	SA Article 3: Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund CRR 2021 Funding Determination
<b>Date Proposal Summited</b>	10/5/2021
<b>Date of Requested Decision</b>	11/2/2021 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Requested By</b>	Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
<b>Date of Decision</b>	11/9/2021

**FTC Decision and Justification**

The LCFRB consulted with the FTC regarding potential funding of the “Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project”, a Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) proposal sponsored by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe (CIT). The following FTC members were present at the meeting: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Bryce Glaser), Ecology (Carol Serdar), NOAA Fisheries (Scott Anderson, and Tacoma Power (Travis Nelson). Carol Serdar moved to approve funding the proposal, Bryce Glaser seconded, and both NOAA Fisheries and Tacoma Power voiced support.

The Decision document will be circulated to members not present and become final on November 9, 2021 if no objections are received from other FTC members.

**Proposed Decision for Consideration**

The LCFRB proposes that the Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee (FTC) approve \$194,200 from the Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery (CRR) Fund to support the “Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project”, sponsored by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe (CIT). This is a design-only project. The CIT, in partnership with the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, will develop preliminary design to relocate Forest Road 2801 near Randle, WA, and address flood conveyance under Forest Road 28 to reduce river valley constriction and increase floodplain interaction. Design alternatives will include in-stream structures to enhance floodplain connection after road removal. The resulting project will support natural habitat forming processes and increase floodplain rearing habitat for Lower Columbia coho, steelhead, and Chinook while preserving emergency egress for the local community. This proposal helps fulfill the CRR purpose of “Protecting and promoting restoration and recovery of upper Cowlitz River basin salmonid populations listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)”, as well as, “achieving recovery viability targets set forth in the Washington Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery and Fish & Wildlife Subbasin Plan (Recovery Plan).”

The proposed grant award is the full amount design cost. It does not include \$5,370 of indirect cost that was not eligible for funding at the time of proposal. The LCFRB confirmed that the CIT is amenable to receiving an award that does not include indirect costs.

**Background**

<sup>1</sup> Decision will be approved if FTC members who were not present at this meeting do not oppose proposed decision within the 7 day waiting period

*Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery (CRR) Background:* The CRR fund is intended to support activities that will protect and promote recovery of listed species in lieu of construction and operation of volitional upstream passage facilities on the Upper Cowlitz River. The goal of the CRR Fund is to assist in the protection and recovery of listed populations consistent with the recommendations of the Washington Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery and Fish & Wildlife Upper Cowlitz Subbasin Plan (LCFRB 2010, Vol. II.F). The FTC has developed a partnership with the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB) to assist in implementing the CRR funding program for habitat projects beginning in 2022 (DD 2021-03). The LCFRB will utilize their Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Board to provide an initial review of projects, using their standard scoring, ranking, and review process during the SRFB grant round and also to evaluate alignment with CRR priorities. Although the 2021 SRFB grant round did not specifically solicit for CRR proposals, the FTC discussed the possibility that the LCFRB could bring proposals for FTC consideration that met CRR criteria and priorities. This project meets CRR geographic and population criteria, and is high for both geographic (Cispus watershed) and population (spring Chinook, steelhead, and coho) priorities.

The Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project was scored and ranked by the LCFRB TAC and LCFRB Board as the third alternate in the 2021 grant round. The LCFRB introduced the project and reviewed the scoring and ranking process at the October 5, 2021 FTC meeting. As described in that presentation, this project generally scored well. For context, the project's total score was 347.3, and the funding line was 358.00, meaning that this project was 9.7 points below the funding line (See ranked list). For more background on relative project scoring, the LCFRB recommends reviewing the three scoring categories (benefits to fish [BTF], certainty of Success [COS], and cost) that combine for the total score (See scoring graphs). The total score meant that the project ranked as the third alternate, which is largely a function of both total available funding, as well as the number of projects exceeding \$500,000 that were funded during the 2021 SRFB Grant Round (see attached "Projects Funding Graph"). LCFRB staff compiled information to better inform BTF scoring that takes an "All-H" approach (habitat, hydro, hatcheries, harvest, as well as ecological interactions) See "BTF Supporting Information". Following the October meeting, the FTC was sent additional supporting information including:

- Cispus TAC Scoring Spread (graphs);
- TAC- Recommended Ranked List;
- Funding Projects Graphs (number of funded projects, total LCFRB funding allocation and number of projects funded greater than \$500,000)
- BTF Supporting Information 21-1108;
- Application Materials PRISM website:  
<https://secure.rc.wa.gov/PRISM/Sponsor/Application2/Wizard/21-1108#Parties>.

*Upper Cowlitz Cispus (UCC) Strategy:* The LCFRB and Tacoma Power worked with community stakeholders to develop a habitat restoration and conservation strategy for the upper Cowlitz and Cispus watersheds in 2018 and 2019. This strategy supports near and long-term ESA-listed salmon and steelhead recovery needs, and is intended to facilitate implementation of the CRR program. This project is specifically described in Appendix E Action 98, which states "Reduce floodplain and CMZ disconnection, and channel incision caused by Cispus Road fill and bridge over Cispus River. Consider perforations through road fill or larger-scale bridge removal and removal/relocation of Cispus Road and FS 2801 Road where they cross the floodplain." It further states, "Enhancing floodplain and CMZ processes would improve habitats including wood cover, margin complexity, and off-channel refugia. These improvements would primarily benefit juvenile rearing for Chinook, steelhead, and coho; and could also enhance spawning habitat over the long-term."

*SalmonPORT and EDT:* This reach (“Cispus 2”) is identified as a tier 1 reach (highest ranked tier), supporting spring Chinook (SpCh), Coho, and winter steelhead. All three of these populations are considered primary populations, which are targeted for restoration to high or very high viability, and are considered the foundation to salmon recovery. Cispus 2 has a “high” (H) species reach potential (SRP) for both Coho and winter steelhead, and a “medium” (M) for SpCh. Additionally, SalmonPORT identifies Cispus 2 “floodplain function and channel migration processes”, “off-channel and side channel habitat”, and “riparian conditions and functions” as important restoration needs and being High (H) multi-species priorities.

*Cowlitz Indian Tribe (CIT) work in the Cispus:* The CIT has successfully secured funding for three projects (17-1113, 18-1399, and 19-1221) in this general reach, totaling over \$4.1 million. Project 19-1221 is the Cispus-Yellowjacket Creek Phase III Project for which the FTC awarded \$593,677 in match funding in 2019. To date, the majority of this work has been completed per approved plans. This project intends to build on the previous work, and focuses directly on focal reintroduction species.

### **Coordination Need**

Given the structure of the CRR agreement with the LCFRB, there is a high need for coordination and discussion between the LCFRB, Tacoma Power, and the FTC. If this funding proposal is approved, the LCFRB would enter into contract with the CIT, who would implement the “Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project” design project. This would be contingent upon finalization of the pending agreement between Tacoma and the LCFRB. The LCFRB would update the FTC during regular FTC meetings regarding contracting and eventual project implementation status. Tacoma Power and the LCFRB would update the FTC on the status of fund payments. Tacoma Power would work with the LCFRB to ensure that 2021 grant round and ongoing project implementation are addressed in the 2021 and future annual reports to FERC. Annual reports are distributed to the FTC for 30-day review prior to FERC filing.

### **Summary**

The LCFRB did not solicit for CRR proposals in the 2021 SFRB grant round, but identified one project meeting CRR Program criteria and priorities: the Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project. The project generally scored well but was listed at the third alternate for SFRB funding based on total available funding, and is therefore unlikely to be funded in the current grant round. The project meets high geographic and population priorities for the CRR Program. This proposal requires \$194,200 from the CRR Fund to implement, which does not include the indirect cost portion of the proposal.

Approval and subsequent project completion will develop specific project alternatives and inform feasibility for a strategic action identified in the UCC Habitat Strategy. This could set the stage for timely implementation of any feasible alternatives.

Disapproval of this request would result in this project not being funded in 2021. While disapproval does not mean that this project can never move forward, it does mean that it would be delayed at least nine to ten months (and likely longer), based on the proposed 2022 CRR/ LCFRB Grant Round Calendar. There is also no guarantee that the project would be funded in the future.