

# Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

Columbia & Clatsop Counties, Oregon



The Columbia County Soil & Water Conservation District (the “District”) is partnered with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and other entities, to develop a plan for implementation of watershed/habitat enhancements backed by the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) under the NRCS Watershed Protection

and Flood Prevention Program (PL 566). Biohabitats worked with the District and the NRCS to produce a Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (WP-EA) that satisfies NEPA requirements.

Located in the northwest corner of Oregon, the Project Area includes 147,000 acres bounded by the Columbia River to the north

*A Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment that sets a new precedent for supporting ecologically based restoration activities within the NEPA framework.*

and extends south into the steep hills of the Coast Range geomorphic province. Over the past approximately 150 years, the area within the Project Area has experienced the effects of land cover changes associated with development, agriculture, and timber harvest.

The Project Area is home to salmonids and the Columbia white-tailed deer that are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The purpose of the WP-EA is to propose actions to improve 1) water quality and 2) habitat for fish and wildlife through restoration and enhancement of aquatic, wetland, and riparian conditions within the RCPP Project Area. The WP-EA provides guidance to restore ecological processes critical to the regulation of water quality

and availability and quality of habitat that sustains fish and wildlife populations.

This WP-EA is the first of its kind, developing a watershed-scale framework that will support the implementation of smaller-scale projects emphasizing fish passage restoration; stream, floodplain, and wetland restoration; vegetation management; and road maintenance, erosion control, and decommissioning. Biohabitats collaborated with the District to develop the document structure, technical content, and GIS mapping within this WP-EA, which is expected to set a national example for innovative and restoration-focused planning efforts.

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