

ROLE OF USACE IN THE COLUMBIA ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

2023 AFEP Annual Review
January 2024

Mark Bierman
Chanda Littles, Ph.D.

"The views, opinions and findings contained in this report are those of the authors(s) and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation."



U.S. ARMY



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



Steamboat Slough at Julia Butler NWR, Photo courtesy of Light Hawk Conservation Flying



U.S. ARMY

CEERP



COLUMBIA ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

CEERP was established to aid in the recovery of ESA-listed salmonids. The program is managed by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). These agencies guide the program and facilitate the program's growth, sustainability, and adaptive management. Program stakeholders include restoration sponsors, monitoring practitioners, research entities, advisory groups, and affiliate organizations.

Primary CEERP actions include restoring hydrologic connections between the mainstem and floodplain, enhancing shallow-water habitat, and reestablishing native vegetation communities.



Some of our key partners:



US Army Corps of Engineers®
Portland District

Est. 1802

Bonneville
POWER ADMINISTRATION



Est. 1937



Est. 1970

CORPS' ROLE - BALANCING NEEDS



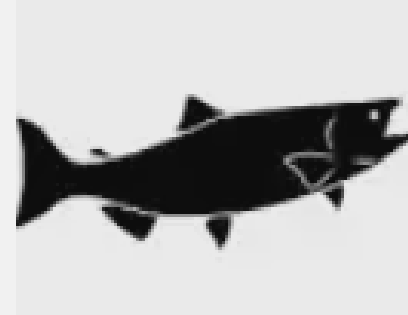
Navigation



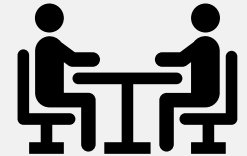
Flood Risk Management



CRS Operations



Restoration



Partners



U.S. ARMY

CORPS' ROLE - RESTORATION-RELATED AUTHORITIES



4

The USACE Portland District primarily relies on several authorities to support and implement the objectives of the program. Three of the most important are included below. The Corps also supports the CEERP in our regulatory role in **408 permitting**, a process through which project proponents can request to modify a federally-authorized project. Levee modifications have been one of the primary methods to achieve floodplain reconnection, which is a primary restoration strategy in the estuary.

WRDA 2000, Sec. 536

- Specific to Columbia Estuary and Tillamook Bay
- Primary authority relied on to meet CRS BiOp requirements for **projects** to improve fish habitat
- Examples: Steamboat Slough, Woodland Island

WRDA 1999, Sec. 204

- National authority for the **Beneficial Use of Dredged Material (BUDM)**
- Authority not limited to restoration activities (e.g., flood risk management, coastal storm damage risk reduction)
- Recently streamlined feasibility process

WRDA 1999, Sec. 582

Specific to Columbia River Estuary

Focused on **understanding and improving the effectiveness** of restoration actions in the estuary

Historically funded through the CRFM Program

Examples: AEMR Reports, Sampling, Cumulative Effects Reports, Synthesis Memoranda, etc.



U.S. ARMY

2024 RESEARCH SUMMARIES - UPDATE

5



1. CEERP Informational Website – EST-P-24-01

Objectives:

Highlight Accomplishments

- Restoration
- Publication
- Successful Adaptive Management

Encourage Engagement

- State Programs
- Federal Programs
- Local Initiatives
- Private/Non-profit Entities

Advance Scientific Discourse

- Data Sharing
- Document Sharing
- Synthesis

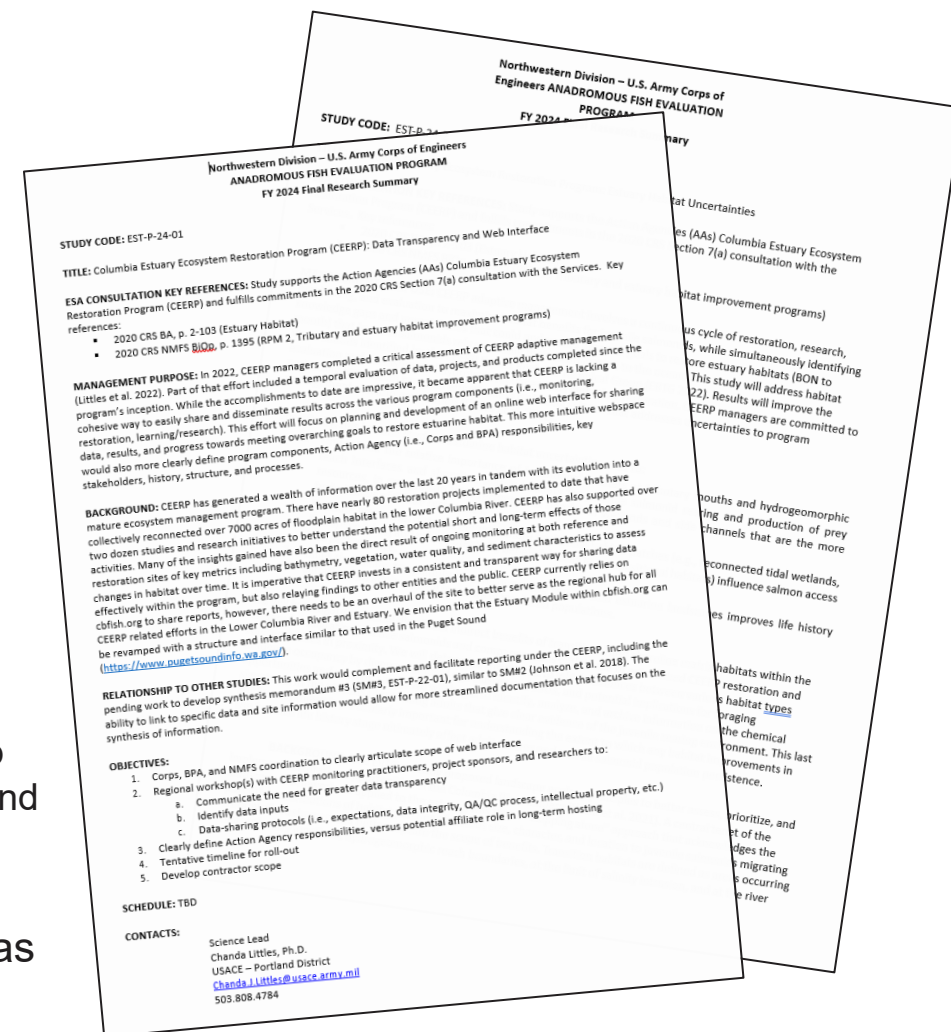
Status: SOW developed, contract award on hold due to CRFM program budget uncertainty.

2. Estuary Habitat Uncertainties – EST-P-24-2

Objectives:

Address habitat uncertainties identified by the CEERP Expert Regional Technical Group (ERTG 2022) *and other experts and stakeholders*. Results will improve the evaluation and assessment of hydrologic reconnections and other restoration.

Status: Identification of the most critical remaining uncertainties will happen as part of the FY24 work on Synthesis Memorandum #3 (underway).



CORPS' ROLE - PATH AHEAD

Some of the Key Near-Term **Goals** for the Program :

(Corps-led efforts, subject to the availability of funding)

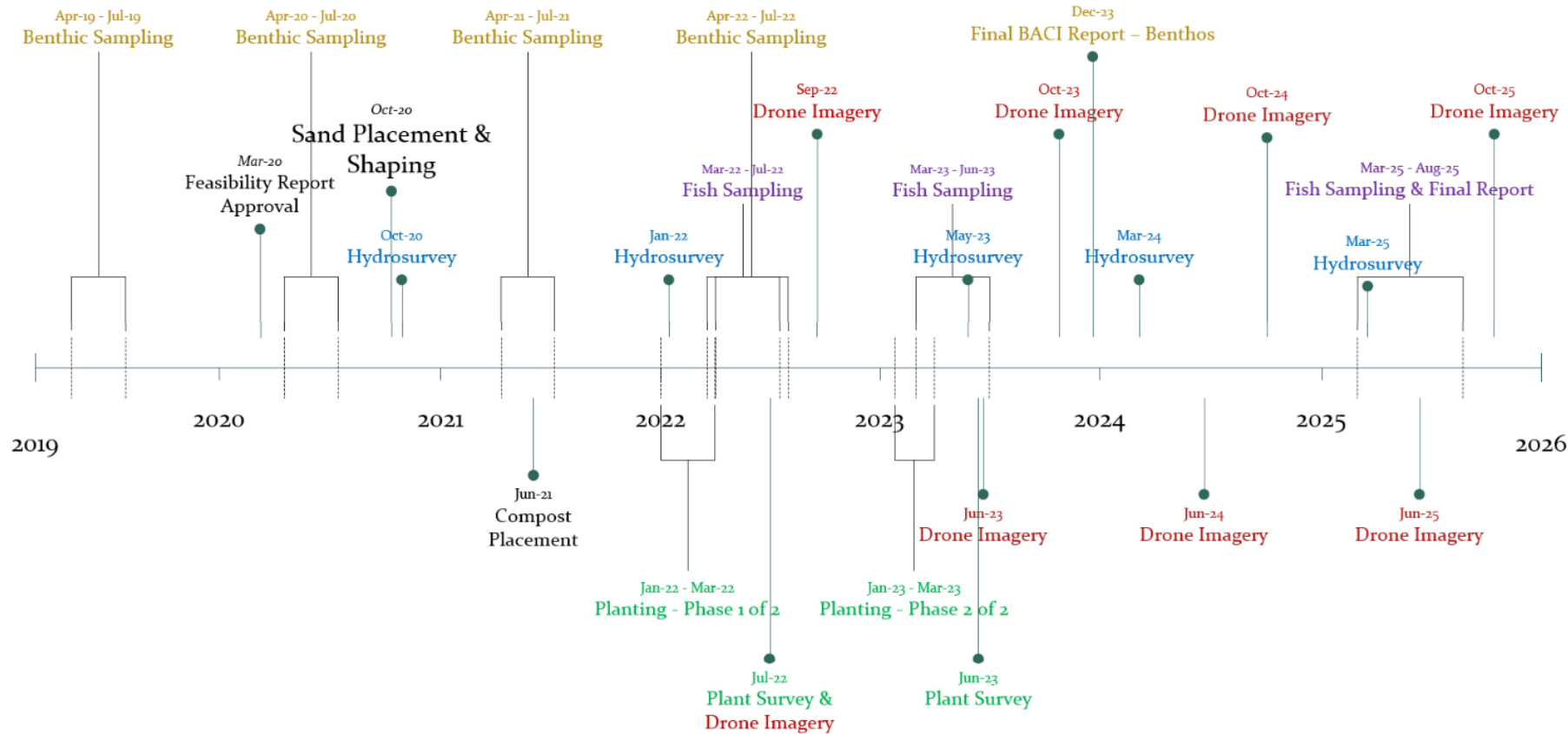
- Complete Synthesis Memorandum 3 (underway)
- Go LIVE with the CEERP Informational Website
- Propose, fund, and complete research to answer key remaining uncertainties
 - informed by conclusions of SM3
- Coordinate with project partners interested in cost-shared restoration projects
 - sec 536, sec 204, etc.



U.S. ARMY

WOODLAND ISLAND – BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL (CREST NON-FEDERAL PROJECT PARTNER)

7



WOODLAND ISLAND – BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL (CREST NON-FEDERAL PROJECT PARTNER)



July 2023 Site Visit



An aerial photograph of a vast, flooded landscape. A winding river flows through a field of green and yellow vegetation. Numerous dead, skeletal trees stand in the water, their trunks partially submerged. The water is a murky, greyish-blue color. In the background, a dense forest of green trees covers a hillside. The overall scene suggests a natural disaster or a significant environmental change.

QUESTIONS