

ROLE OF USACE IN THE COLUMBIA ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

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



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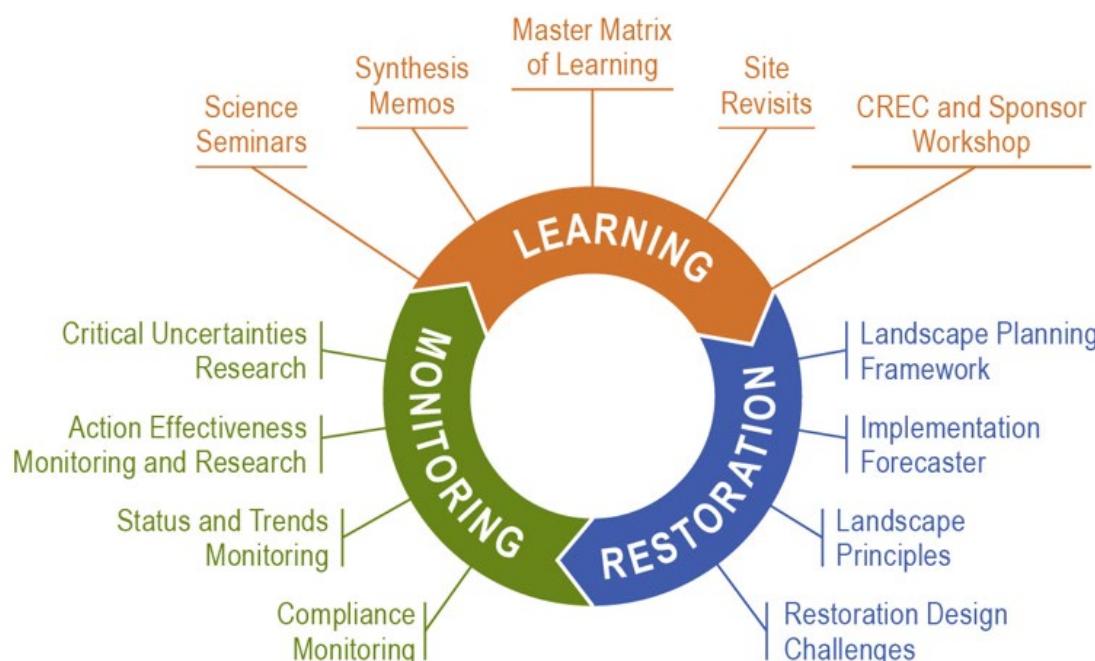


CEERP

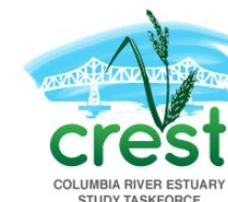
COLUMBIA ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

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:



COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY STUDY TASKFORCE



CORPS' ROLE - BALANCING NEEDS



Navigation



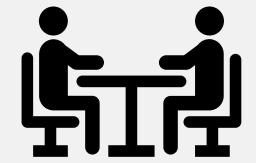
Flood Risk Management



CRS Operations



Restoration



Partners

CORPS' ROLE - RESTORATION-RELATED AUTHORITIES

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.

2024 RESEARCH SUMMARIES - UPDATE

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

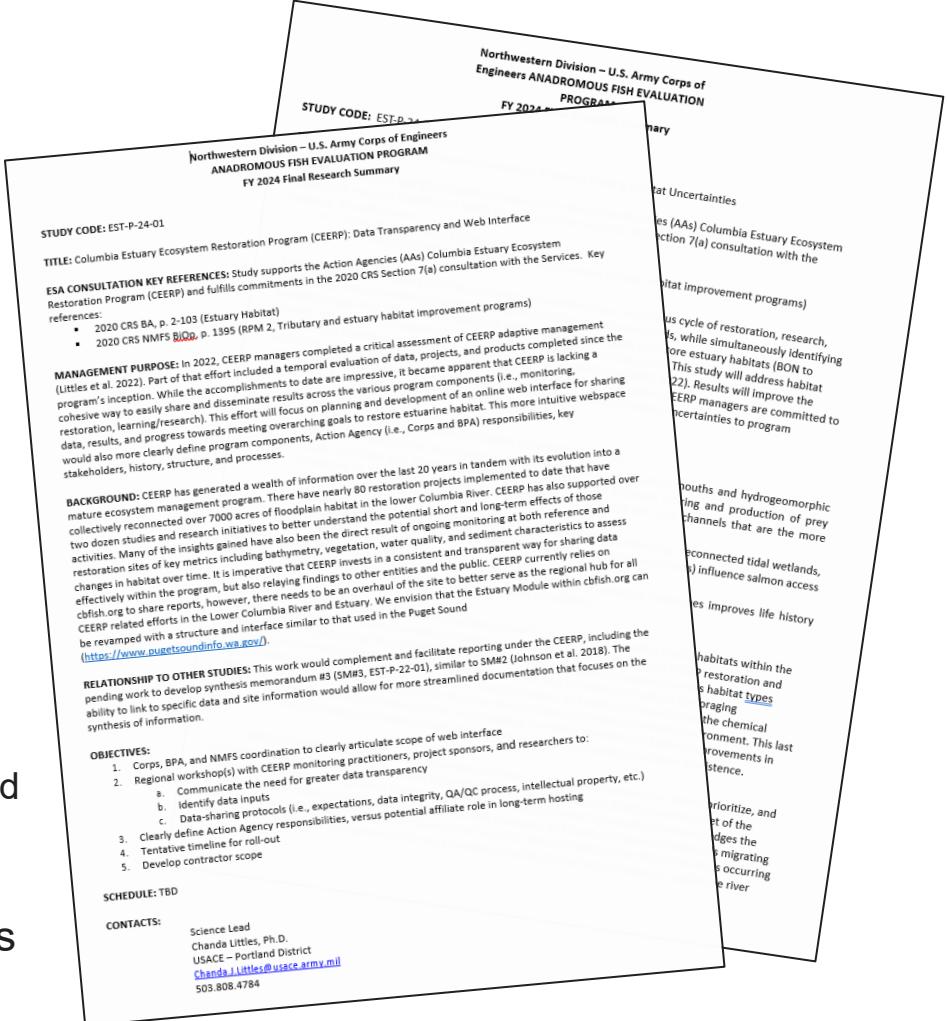
Status: SOW developed, contract award on hold due to CRFM program budget uncertainty.

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).



STUDY CODE: EST-P-24-01

TITLE: Columbia Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Program (CEERP): Data Transparency and Web Interface

ESA CONSULTATION KEY REFERENCES: Study supports the Action Agencies (AAs) Columbia Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Program (CEERP) and fulfills commitments in the 2020 CRS Section 7(a) consultation with the Services. Key references:

- 2020 CRS BA, p. 2-103 (Estuary Habitat)
- 2020 CRS NMFS IDp, p. 1395 (RPM 2, Tributary and estuary habitat improvement programs)

MANAGEMENT PURPOSE: In 2022, CEERP managers completed a critical assessment of CEERP adaptive management (Littles et al. 2022). Part of that effort included a temporal evaluation of data, projects, and products completed since the program's inception. While the accomplishments to date are impressive, it became apparent that CEERP is lacking a cohesive way to easily share and disseminate results across the various program components (i.e., monitoring, restoration, learning/research). This effort will focus on planning and development of an online web interface for sharing data, results, and progress towards meeting overarching goals to restore estuarine habitat. This more intuitive web space would also more clearly define program components, Action Agency (i.e., Corps and BPA) responsibilities, key stakeholders, history, structure, and processes.

BACKGROUND: CEERP has generated a wealth of information over the last 20 years in tandem with its evolution into a mature ecosystem management program. There are nearly 80 restoration projects implemented to date that have collectively reconnected over 7000 acres of floodplain habitat in the Lower Columbia River. CEERP has also supported over two dozen studies and research initiatives to better understand the potential short and long-term effects of those activities. Many of the insights gained have also been the direct result of ongoing monitoring at both reference and restoration sites of key metrics including bathymetry, vegetation, water quality, and sediment characteristics to assess changes in habitat over time. It is imperative that CEERP invests in a consistent and transparent way for sharing data effectively within the program, but also relaying findings to other entities and the public. CEERP currently relies on cbfish.org to share reports; however, there needs to be an overhaul of the site to better serve as the regional hub for all CEERP related efforts in the Lower Columbia River and Estuary. We envision that the Estuary Module within cbfish.org can be revamped with a structure and interface similar to that used in the Puget Sound (<https://www.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov>).

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER STUDIES: This work would complement and facilitate reporting under the CEERP, including the pending work to develop synthesis memorandum #3 (SM#3, EST-P-22-01), similar to SM#2 (Johnson et al. 2018). The ability to link to specific data and site information would allow for more streamlined documentation that focuses on the synthesis of information.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Corps, BPA, and NMFS coordination to clearly articulate scope of web interface
2. Regional workshop(s) with CEERP monitoring practitioners, project sponsors, and researchers to:
 - a. Communicate the need for greater data transparency
 - b. Identify data inputs
 - c. Data-sharing protocols (i.e., expectations, data integrity, QA/QC process, intellectual property, etc.)
3. Clearly define Action Agency responsibilities, versus potential affiliate role in long-term hosting
4. Tentative timeline for roll-out
5. Develop contractor scope

SCHEDULE: TBD

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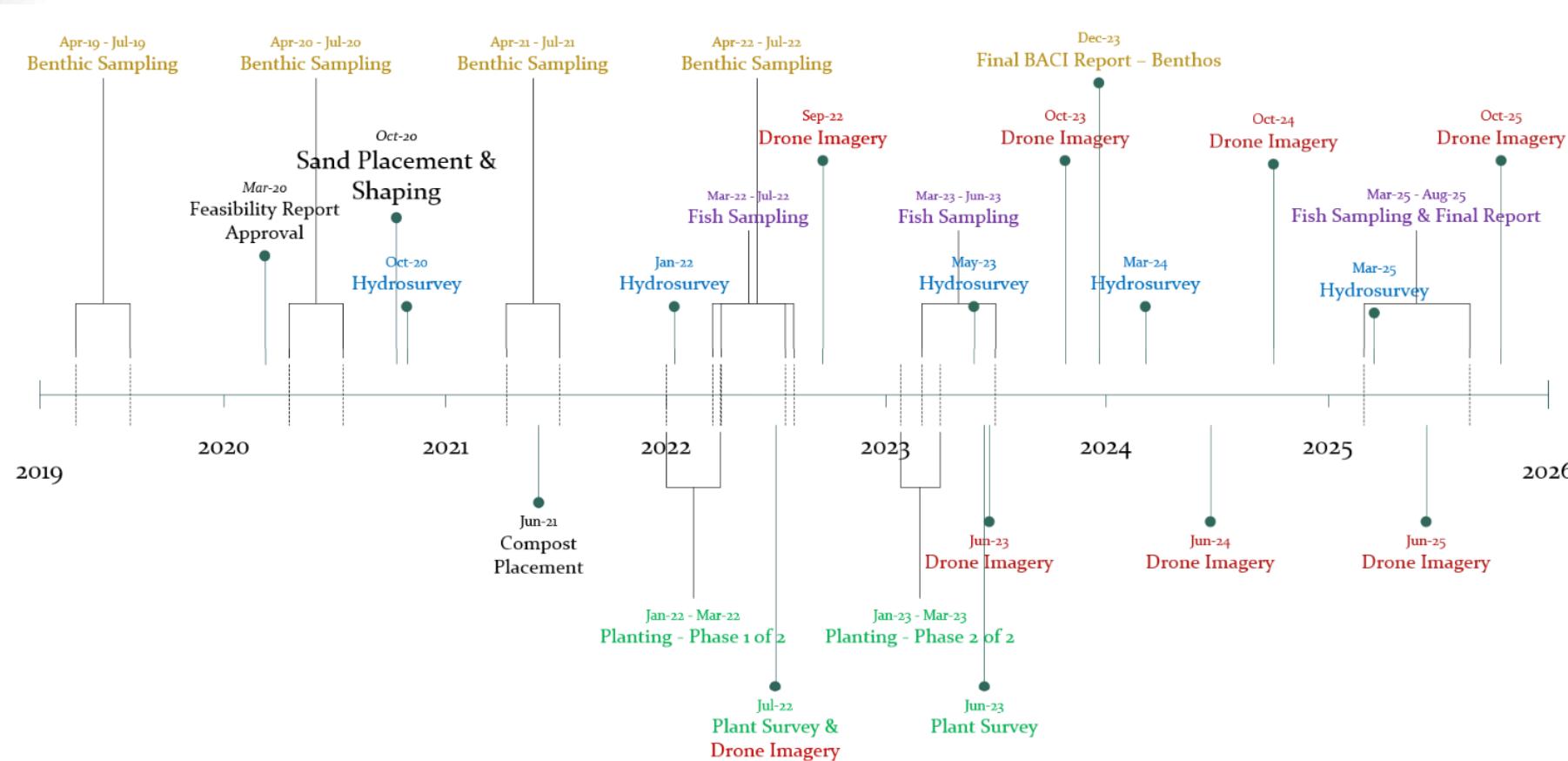
CORPS' ROLE - PATH AHEAD

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.

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



WOODLAND ISLAND -

BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL

(CREST NON-FEDERAL PROJECT PARTNER)



July 2023 Site Visit



An aerial photograph of a wetland area. The landscape is dominated by a large, winding river or stream that cuts through a mix of green wetland vegetation and numerous dead, standing trees (snags). The wetland is surrounded by a dense forest of green coniferous trees. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and the impact of environmental factors.

QUESTIONS