

Lower Columbia Solutions Group  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Columbia River Estuarine Coastal Fund Proposal

**Request Amount: \$170,000**

**Project Summary**

**Location:** Lower Columbia Littoral Cell

**Species/Habitat:** Dungeness Crab, Razor Clams, bottom fish, and salmonids

**Conservation Methods:** Nearshore Demonstration Project using a collaborative process

**Project Description**

**Objectives**

The Near Shore Beneficial Use project will determine how to best protect habitat and restore historic sediment patterns in the littoral cell in conjunction with stabilizing the South Jetty over time.

Chronic erosion to the Columbia River north spit and along Clatsop Plains has increased, along with the potential for a breach at the south jetty. A recent white paper by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) summarizes a body of research documenting the erosion resulting from the reduction in sediment in the littoral system from the Columbia River. Studies indicate that there is a significant loss of offshore sediment to the mid-continental shelf and near shore region offshore from the Clatsop Plains.

The objective of the proposed supplementation of dredged sediments would be for these sediments to rebuild the offshore sands to restore habitat and in the long term to better protect the jetty from the impacts of waves coming from the southwest.

The Near Shore Beneficial Use Demonstration project is responding to two urgent issues: (a) Protection of the South Jetty which is critical to the economic and environmental health of lower Columbia River communities; (b) Protection of critical habitat for crabs, a variety of fish and other species. The demonstration project will test the potential for replenishing sands in the Columbia near-shore area off the south jetty, using dredged material in a method, quantity, and schedule which minimizes negative biological and other environmental impacts. The purpose of the demonstration project is to evaluate the technical feasibility, effectiveness and environmental impacts of potential dispersal methods.

The Near Shore Beneficial Use demonstration project is an applied ecological study and biological assessment to advance knowledge and improve management of dredged material in the littoral cell of the Pacific Ocean. The requested funds will be used to provide scientific and technical support for the demonstration project to ensure that critical data is collected and that the impacts of the demonstration can be properly documented and evaluated.

## **Methodology**

Data will be collected to evaluate the biological impacts from the proposed demonstration project. In the first year scientists will characterize the biological community within and beyond the demonstration project area for species composition, abundance and distribution. In the second year sampling will be conducted immediately before test dispersal of sand on both control and treatment plots. The sampling will be repeated in these areas following the test dump.

The data collected will be reviewed by the Nearshore Project Team, a collaborative working group convened by the Lower Columbia Solutions Group to assist the implementation of the demonstration project. The Nearshore Project team includes representatives of key stakeholders.

The project team will report its progress to quarterly meetings of the Lower Columbia Solutions Group that serves as the oversight body and is available to resolve conflicts and any policy or funding issues that may arise.

Timeline: 2 years, beginning in the Fall of 2004.

**Qualifications:** The scientific and technical work will be conducted by scientists working under the guidance of the Institute for Natural Resources (INR) at Oregon State University, in cooperation with a number of partnering agencies such as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Columbia River Crab Fishing Association.

The Lower Columbia Solutions Group (LCSG) was convened by the Governors of Washington and Oregon in July 2002 as a diverse, group of local, state and federal governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to coordinate policy, projects and research on sustainable dredge material disposal and sediment management on the Lower Columbia River. The LCSG has received formal recognition as a collaboration partner with the federal government through an agreement with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

The Lower Columbia Solutions Group is a project of the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC), a national non-profit to assist in establishing and strengthening the use of collaborative governing tools to address difficult public policy issues. Greg Wolf is the Director of NPCC and the facilitator of the Lower Columbia Solutions Group.

Member agencies and parties serving on the Columbia Near-Shore Project Team:

Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries  
Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development  
Institute for Natural Resources  
Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
NOAA Fisheries  
Port of Astoria  
Port of Portland  
Columbia River Crab Fishing Association  
Clatsop County  
Columbia River Channel Coalition  
Pacific County Planning Department  
Columbia Riverkeeper

### **Final Product**

The direct products of this grant will include white papers that document the biological resources of the demonstration project area that will lead to a NEPA evaluation of the impacts of the dumping of sand. The eventual product of the Demonstration Project will be a Declaration of Cooperation signed by members of the project team that specifies how the demonstration project results can be utilized in the design of future nearshore sediment disposal.

### **Evaluation:**

The short term success of the data collection will be measured by how well the gaps in biological data in this near-shore area are filled. As the CRCFA representative has stated, “there is no recent scientific data on crab populations in this area”, a sentiment echoed by ODFW relating to other species as well.

In the longer term, the data will be used in the next 2-3 years to measure the impact of tested dispersal methods, both in terms of effectiveness in re-building the near-shore sands, and biological protection.

### **Context:**

From a larger policy perspective, this project will serve as a model for developing a comprehensive approach to sediment management policy that considers economic, social and environmental issues. If successful, it will lead to additional collaborative projects that engage Lower River stakeholders; and increased capacity for addressing local issues. The Lower Columbia Solutions Group continues to provide an innovative governing model that can create sustainable solutions and overcome barriers to cooperative problem solving. Its work has been acknowledged nationally and can provide an example for other communities throughout the country.

In collaboration with Portland State University, the Policy Consensus Initiative developed the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC). The National Policy Consensus Center provides assistance and consultation to governors, state government agencies, and state conflict resolution programs in carrying out consensus processes. The National Policy Consensus Center/Policy Consensus Initiative Board of Directors includes representatives from state legislatures and governors associations.