
INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD (ISAB)

FOR THE NORTHWEST POWER AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL, COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN INDIAN TRIBES, AND NOAA FISHERIES

FACTS

Date Started: 1996

Legislation: Created in response to section 4(h)(10)(D) of the NW Power Act as amended in 1996.

Products/Deliverables:

- Fully researched, documented formal reports for technical/peer and administrative audiences-high detail & long timelines
- Focused reviews for administrative or technical /peer audiences-moderate detail & timelines
- Less fully documented memos or opinion letters for administrative audiences-low detail & short timelines
- Formal consultations for administrative or technical/peer audiences-detail & timelines as needed.

MISSION

The Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) serves NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Fisheries Science Center; Columbia River Indian Tribes (via the Columbia River InterTribal Fish Commission); and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) by providing independent scientific advice and recommendations regarding scientific issues that relate to the respective agencies' fish and wildlife programs. The ISAB operates in conjunction with the National Marine Fisheries Service and reviews programmatic and scientific issues in the Columbia River basin.

BENEFITS AND USES OF FINDINGS

The Fish & Wildlife Program of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) is one of the costliest long-term ecological restoration programs in the US. The ISAB helps ensure that restoration dollars are spent wisely.

Foster a scientific approach to fish and wildlife recovery and the use of sound scientific methods in research related to the programs of the NMFS, the NPCC, and the Tribes.

Help decision-makers separate scientific issues from political, economic, and cultural considerations.

Help ensure that environmental decisions reflect the best available scientific knowledge.

Given the magnitude of research and uncertainties in the Columbia River Basin, ISAB can help identify areas of scientific consensus or disagreement and help focus implementation and research on those areas most relevant to management and policy decisions.

SUBJECT AREAS

Focuses on Columbia River Basin: mainstem passage issues for anadromous salmonids; other key science issues including harvest review, potential effects of hatchery supplementation practices on salmon recovery, tributary habitat recovery strategies, flow augmentation, salmon recovery strategies/plans, and mathematical modeling and analytical tools.

COMMITTEE

ISAB members are experienced scientists with demonstrated achievement and high standing in their field, chosen to fill specific areas of needed expertise. ISAB members includes scientists with expertise in Columbia River anadromous and resident fish ecology, statistics, wildlife ecology, and ocean and estuary ecology, fish husbandry, genetics, geomorphology, social and economic sciences, and other relevant disciplines, with a balance between scientists with specific knowledge of the Columbia River Basin and those with more broad and diverse experience.

The Council, NOAA Fisheries, and the Columbia River Indian Tribes appoint ISAB members based on National Research Council-National Academy of Sciences recommendations in 2014, 2011, 2008 and 2005. Sometimes expertise is needed that is not represented on the ISAB. Then, outside experts may be contracted to serve as ad hoc members.

OVERSIGHT

Requests for review products are usually assigned to specialized ISAB subcommittees. In depth progress reports are expected from subcommittees working on active reviews at each ISAB meeting. ISAB members have at least 7 days to review written drafts, prior to discussion at the meeting. ISAB members are obligated to respond, with a minimum number of internal reviews predetermined.

A major subcommittee task is to identify areas of initial consensus and to define areas of non-consensus. A final step in all reviews is discussion by the full ISAB where consensus is reached on the issues, or the debate is sufficiently characterized so that remaining steps in the review are primarily editorial. Final report compiling is done by the ISAB Executive Committee, in close coordination with lead authors. The final report is then transmitted to the NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and the Tribes who are responsible for distributing it as appropriate.

All comments on completed ISAB reports are directed to the NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and/or the Tribes. The NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and/or the Tribes may ask the ISAB to respond to technical and scientific comments. Such requests are made by formal letter. The ISAB responds to the NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and/or the Tribes. Further ISAB dialog with commenters is at the discretion of the NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and/or the Tribes.

FUNDING SOURCES

NPCC and its partners NOAA Fisheries and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Q: How does the ISAB differ from the NPCC Independent Science Review Panel (ISRP)?

A: Unlike the ISRP that is solely under the Council's purview, the ISAB is jointly sponsored by the NPCC, NOAA Fisheries, and Columbia River Indian Tribes. In contrast to ISRP reviews of specific BPA projects, the ISAB provides more general science advice on recovery efforts and issues related to participating agencies' fish and wildlife programs.

Q: What "triggers" a review?

A: Topics/questions are posed to the ISAB by the Council, NOAA Fisheries and Tribes by a letter signed by any or all of those entities. Circumstances prompting a review may include special concerns and routine evaluation of longstanding projects.

Q: How long does it take a product to be completed?

A: Timelines vary according to the product and agreement with review product requestor.

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<https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/isab/>