

## MEMORANDUM

**March 13, 2024**

**TO:** Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research (CMER) Committee  
**FROM:** Instream Scientific Advisory Group (ISAG)  
**SUBJECT:** AFF Validation Study Recommendations

A Proposal Initiation for an Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF) Validation Study was delivered to TFW Policy on July 5, 2023. On August 3, 2023, TFW Policy passed a motion to “approve the Anadromous Fish Floor Proposal Initiation with a recommendation to the FPB to approve adding the AFF Validation study into the CMER work plan and into the Master Project Schedule.” On August 22, 2023, CMER passed a motion assigning this AFF work to ISAG. On December 19, 2023, CMER passed a motion to have ISAG: “work on the technical summary for TFW Policy consideration that clarifies how the AFF validation study would best fit as a companion or add-on study to the existing Potential Habitat Breaks (PHB) study, including the recommended timeline for scoping and implementation to inform effective and efficient sequencing.” The following observations and recommendations are made in response to that request.

We recommend that the AFF validation study be implemented separately as a companion study that will be integrated in the AMP Water Typing Strategy. While the AFF is intended to be used in conjunction with the Fish Habitat Assessment Methodology (FHAM), AFF points would play a different role in the water typing process than PHB and DPC points. Conceptually, the AFF and DPC function as bookends, between which implementation of FHAM begins, and the AFF:

- Would likely require a separate sampling framework to capture data representative of anadromous fish use. The presence of substantial anadromous barriers, spatial coverage, and specific data needs for PHBs and DPC taken together suggest little overlap between AFF and other water typing studies.
- Must account for the variability in abundance of anadromous species as it relates to extent/distribution.
- Should reflect recoverable habitat historically occupied by anadromous species.

We recommend that this study, along with PHBs and DPC, would best fit early in the Water Typing Strategy project sequence, ahead of the modeling and mapping.

The AFF project team will convene to discuss the broad conceptual aspects and business needs of the project. Subsequent steps for the AFF project will begin in spring 2024 and will likely include:

- An after-action review of the previous AFF effort to identify what worked well and what did not, what data and analytical gaps remain, and other lessons learned.
- Development and approval of a project charter.
- Development and approval of a scoping document, including a literature review and an assessment of existing data.
- Development and approval of a study design, including CMER and ISPR review.

Specific timelines beyond the initiation of the scoping phase are unknown and will depend on completion of the early steps in the AFF development. The AFF work does not hinge on results from the PHBs and DPC studies, and it does not have to wait until after the other two studies are completed to commence. Limited availability of contractors and consultants might present logistical challenges if all three studies (PHB, DPC, AFF) need to be implemented in the field simultaneously. The subsequent steps in the AFF validation study will likely include:

- A thorough review of existing data conducted as part of the early implementation phase.
- Following that review, a determination whether field work may be necessary to calibrate or validate existing data.
- More extensive fieldwork to fill geographic, species, and life history stage knowledge and data gaps, if determined to be needed after further assessment and discussion.