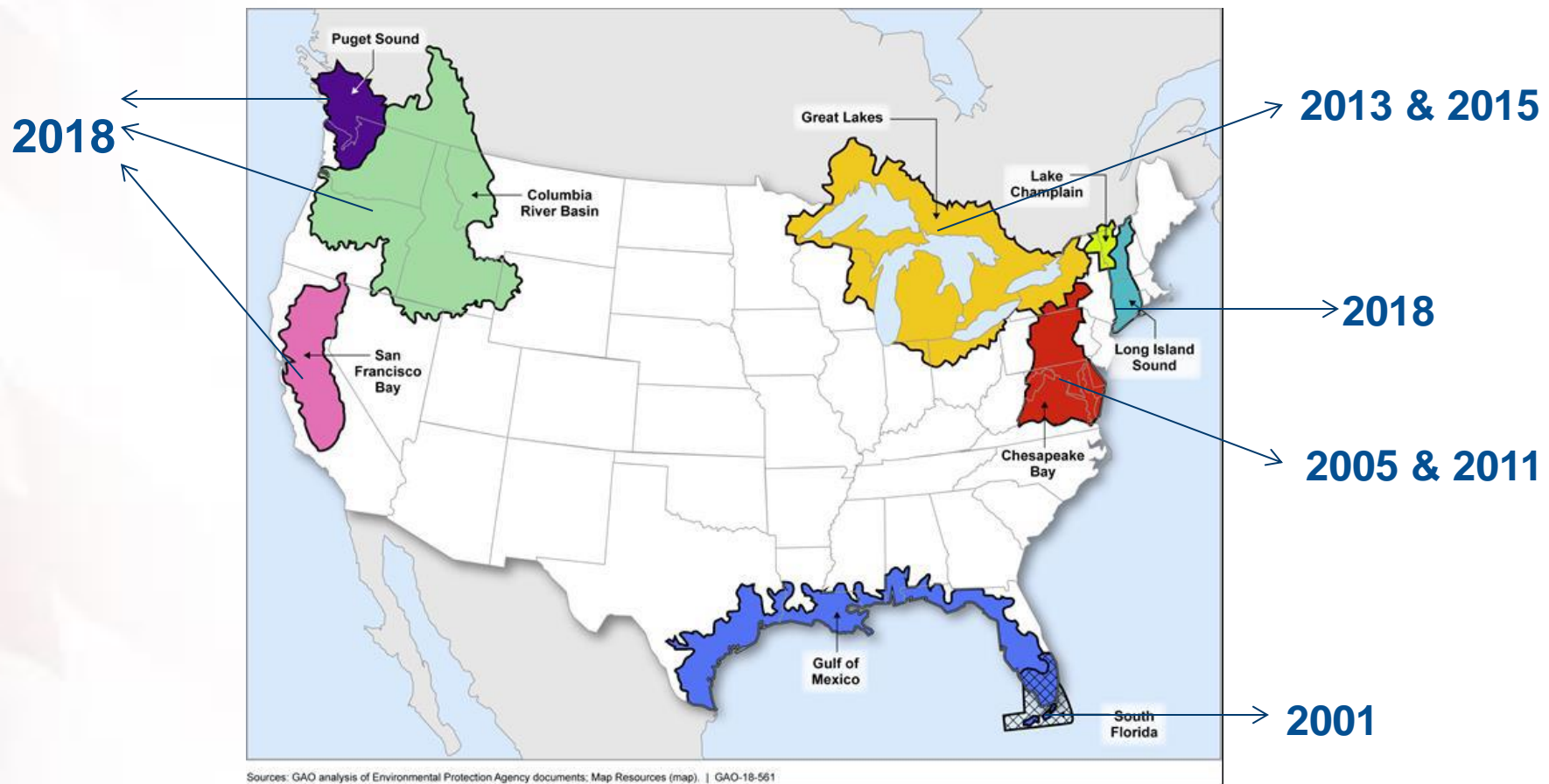


GAO Review of Columbia River Basin Restoration Efforts



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GAO's Work on Large Aquatic Ecosystems



Congressional Source of Work



Requests from
U.S. House of
Representatives'
Committee on
Transportation
and Infrastructure
(in 2016)

Four Research Objectives

1. What restoration efforts were implemented to improve water quality in the Columbia River Basin from fiscal years 2010 through 2016?
 2. What collaboration approaches were used for selected restoration efforts?
 3. What were the sources of funding and federal funding expenditures for selected water quality restoration efforts?
 4. To what extent have the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) implemented Clean Water Act Section 123?
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Scope

- The Columbia River Basin is very large
- Multiple entities—federal, state, tribal, and nongovernmental organizations—are involved in restoration activities



Sources: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Map Resources (state borders). | GAO-18-561

Clean Water Act, Section 123

Clean Water Act Section 123 33 U.S.C. § 1275

Responsible entity: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Columbia River Basin (Basin) Restoration Program
33 U.S.C. § 1275(b)

Responsible entity: EPA and others

Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group
33 U.S.C. § 1275(c)

Responsible entity: President (Office of Management and Budget)

Annual budget plan
Interagency crosscut budget
33 U.S.C. § 1275(e)

Methodology

- Surveyed 41 entities about restoration efforts they implemented in the Basin from fiscal years 2010 to 2016
 - Examined collaborative approaches to implementing restoration efforts using five case studies
 - Collected expenditure data for 5 restoration efforts implemented by federal agencies in the Basin
 - Reviewed the Clean Water Act and legislative history of the Section 123 amendment
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Finding #1: A range of restoration efforts implemented from fiscal years 2010 through 2016



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. | GAO-18-561

Pre- and post-construction photos of fish barrier removal and pedestrian trail bridge project in Buckmire Slough, Washington funded by Bonneville Power Administration

Finding #2: Entities used various collaborative approaches

- Entities approaches to collaborating for restoration efforts varied
- No overall coordinating body to guide these efforts in the Basin





Finding #3: Could not determine total amounts of federal expenditures for restoration efforts

- Entities responding to GAO's survey reported that most of the restoration efforts they implemented were supported through a mix of federal and nonfederal funding sources.
 - However, we could not determine the total federal expenditures for several reasons.
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Finding #4: EPA and OMB had not yet implemented Section 123



Recommendations

- #1: EPA should develop a program management plan as outlined in the Section 123.

 - #2: OMB should develop and provide guidance related to the type of projects agencies need to report, as well as what processes to follow in compiling the data.

 - #3: OMB should direct each federal agency to collect the budget information to be included in the President's budget request for fiscal year 2020.
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Where are we now?





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