

## Fact Sheet – CSS SLOPES Handbook

The nomination for this Context Sensitive Solution is for a program that supports project delivery that provides a programmatic approach for transportation projects ***that promotes natural resource protection, engages stakeholders, and promotes an interdisciplinary approach within the Oregon Department of Transportation.*** ODOT, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Portland Office, and the Oregon State Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) partnered on an agency-wide training program to provide guidance on the application of a programmatic approach for compliance with the Endangered Species Act for transportation actions with stream impacts.

The ***Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species*** (SLOPES IV) contains a programmatic biological opinion (BiOp) and incidental take statement for transportation actions that are permitted through the Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit. The SLOPES BiOp between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and NMFS, when used appropriately, allows projects to be permitted without going through individual ESA Section 7 consultation. Although the terms and conditions of the SLOPES IV BiOp provides a focus for permit decisions between NMFS and the Corps, ODOT was invited to provide extensive feedback to NMFS on ways to reduce or remove the adverse effects of regulated actions while facilitating transportation project development, design and construction.

Many bridge and culvert replacements and bank stabilization projects are suited to utilize the SLOPES IV programmatic providing efficiencies to ODOT and other local transportation agencies that require ESA consultation. The ESA Section 7 consultation process can take six months putting it on the critical path for project development timeline as it must be completed in order for federal funding to be released. Cost savings are realized with the SLOPES programmatic as agency costs of producing and processing a Section 7 consultation ranges from \$10,000 to \$50,000 per project. In addition, when culverts and bridges are designed to maintain the functional floodplain and avoid interference with channel-forming fluvial processes, the agency can realize improved life cycle costs of the structure from reduced maintenance.

In order for ODOT to fully utilize the benefits afforded by the SLOPES IV programmatic, a handbook that translated the terms and conditions of the programmatic into language that could be used to scope, design and permit projects was created for ODOT environmental and engineering staff. The ODOT SLOPES IV Handbook was developed by Paul Wirfs, the ODOT Geo-Hydro Manager who oversees the Hydraulic Program and the Geology and Geo-Tech program for ODOT. A cross-discipline, cross-agency team provided input that helped to craft the Handbook and provided the training. The ODOT SLOPES IV Handbook provides guidance to engineers about how to maintain or restore the floodplain function when designing stream crossings. The Handbook does not replace or supersede any engineering requirements of the ODOT Hydraulic Design Manual.

For more information on the Slopes IV programmatic or the Handbook, please contact:  
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Documents may be found on th ODOT Geo-Environmental Website:  
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/GEOENVIRONMENTAL/Biology/manuals>