

UPPER COLUMBIA SALMON RECOVERY BOARD
DRAFT MEETING/FIELD TRIP SUMMARY
Okanogan County Commissioners Hearing Room
April 20, 2022

Board Members Present:

Chair, Yakama Nation: Shannon Adams; **Vice-Chair, Douglas County:** Marc Straub (ABSENT); **Okanogan County:** Andy Hover; **Chelan County:** Bob Bugert; **Colville Confederated Tribes:** Chuck Brushwood

Staff Present: Melody Kreimes, Tracy Bowerman, Ryan Niemeyer, Nicole Jordan, Dave Hecker, Sarah Walker, Alicia Meier

Others Present:

Bonneville Power Administration: Joe Connor; **BOR:** Marc Maynard, Sarah Fesenmyer, Candace McKinley;

City of Okanogan: Shawn Davisson; **Colville Tribes:** Chris Fisher; **DNR:** Ken McNamee, Andrew Townsend,

Terra Rentz; **GSRO:** Erik Neatherlin; **Governor's Office:** David Ellis; **MSRF:** Chris Johnson; **NOAA:** Michael

Tehan; **Okanogan Irrigation District:** Brad Armstrong, Wayne Wells; **Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest:**

Chris Furr; **Representative Newhouse Staff:** Rachel McClure; **WDFW:** Justin Haug, Brandon Troyer, Matt Eberlein

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Chair Shannon Adams.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Adams welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for today's meeting and field trip.

1. Salmon Creek Project Discussion with Legislators and Agencies

Chuck Brushwood gave an overview and history of projects on the Salmon Creek with an eye on past successes, challenges and concerns. Salmon Creek has been diverted for irrigation since the early 1900's. The lower 4.3 miles in most years is typically dry and inaccessible by salmon and Steelhead. The Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) and Okanogan Irrigation District (OID) formed a partnership in 1998 to:

- restore sufficient stream flows to the lower Salmon Creek to support migrating anadromous fish
- continue full delivery of water to OID clients

This partnership between CCT and OID created water lease programs and an evaluation of habitat in a 2003 EIS. The ultimate question was how much water was available and how much was needed for irrigation and fish reestablishment in Salmon Creek. Partners have been working to reestablish perennial flows in Salmon Creek and supplying OID with necessary flows. There is work to do in terms of perennial flow which include evaluating existing channel conditions, address rotary drum screens, and pursue additional water sources.

CCT has also documented entrainment of juvenile fish and lamprey in the OID diversion. Okanogan County Commissioners believe Salmon Creek is important to the county for water for Okanogan County and for fish. This project is an example of the work that can be done together with CCT, OID, and BOR for a win-win solution for fish and farms. BOR expressed its commitment to addressing the entrainment issue and working with partners to find these win-win solutions.

2. Watercress Springs Project Discussion with Legislators & Agencies

Chris Johnson with the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation reviewed the status and goals of the Watercress Springs Project in the City of Okanogan. The City is working with 1908 water rights that are limiting growth in the city. The key is to get a municipal component in the conversation with farm and fish. The Watercress Springs project is looking at better places to withdraw water and abandon surface water. The biggest challenges are how to get the municipal well with water system upgrades and transfers of water rights. Water rights are allowed to be transferred on Salmon Creek but looking to transfer Watercress Springs to underground water right for Okanogan County. This would allow more water in Salmon Creek for fish and an underground well for the city. The City of Okanogan has dedicated a site for the well on the north side of town and Okanogan County has set aside 25% of phase 1 costs.

This project provides a two-fold benefit with a gain in Upper Columbia listed fish habitat and additional municipal ground water. The legwork has been done for this project. Just need to secure the funding.

Question & Answer: Discussion:

- Salmon Creek matches well with the Governors climate strategic plan. Can we get a budget line item for this?
- Phase 3 of the Watercress Springs project would compete well in the SRFB process.
- Did you apply for Community Project Funding (CPF)? FY2023 initiative that will allow members of Congress to request direct funding for projects that benefit the communities they represent. Deadline for submissions was April 18, 2022.
- Community based restoration funding got an increase to their budget. Could this be a fit?

3. Forest Health Discussion with Legislators and Agencies

Commissioner Hover gave an overview of forest health issues in Okanogan County and how we can better communicate with legislators. The OWNF manages 70-80% of the land in Okanogan County which has seen complex forest health issues post wildfires in aquatic issues. There is continued concern with agency capacity in terms of pace and scale and what can be done to build capacity and messaging to legislators. Key concerns are:

- How do we get added funds allocated to the Forest Service? Utilize local partners.
- Is there enough Section 7, NEPA, consultation staff to maintain or increase pace and scale? Infrastructure Bill funds will go to NOAA for 3 new consultation staff in Ellensburg office.
- Better understand how to expedite upper head water projects
- Effects of wildfires on upper lands and the complex landscape, native species, and aquatic issues make work difficult.

DNR, DFW, and FS discussed these key issues and concerns:

- Concerns with Agencies (DNR, DFW, and FS) in position turn over and filling positions, availability/cost of housing.
- Cost overruns with some projects taking more time to get approved
- What do shrub steppe restoration, prescribed burns, look like and which agency has the experience with this landscape which is more challenging than forest lands.
- Timber sale, restoration, harvesting challenges for DFW as only a certain number of contractors can operate within the methodology.

Utilizing:

- DNR's Forest Health 20-Year Strategic Plan, an all-hands all-land approach
- Shared Stewardship Program, Good Neighbors
- Washington's wildfire bill, HB 1168 but worried about staffing issues
- Success of cooperative burns between agencies

Question & Answer: Discussion:

- Be specific where money can be channeled into your agency? Not just capacity issues
 - ✓ Housing
 - ✓ Milling capacity mechanical support for active management,
 - ✓ Can the FS put out a long-term contract to support this region?
- Private and public funds that are ready to go.
- Small private landowners increasing their ability for fire wise landscape. Need to educate public right after a wildfire.
- NOAA to work on filling staffing vacancies with Infrastructure Bill
 - ✓ Have programmatic agreements in place try to expand them out.
 - ✓ Keep land managers on the ground.
- Focus on all hands approach with a solid vision on Forest Steward Plans (number of acres treated on public lands).
 - ✓ Use data from our region projects to update the calculations on funding that comes to the state.
 - ✓ Need to meet the federal/state metrics.
 - ✓ How do we encourage private land owners to find a way to come together to fulfill and report metrics to the State so there is scientific data to back up the work happening in the region.
 - ✓ How do you make it long term- based need? Metrics. Can we as a community leverage it effectively?
 - ✓ The next 5 years of funding is the seed money with metrics as the proof to leverage the need and continued funding.
- Chris Furr invited to attend Okanogan County Commissioners meeting to talk about housing issue limitations/cost for filling Agency positions.

4. Wrap-Up and Adjourn Meeting

Chair Adams thanked everyone for attending the UCSRB meeting and field trip and adjourned meeting at 3:00 pm. Next Board meeting will be Thursday April 21, 2022 at Confluence Technology Center in Wenatchee.