

September 28, 2023

Draft UCSRB Board of Directors Mtg. Summary

Douglas County Transportation & Land Services Building – East Wenatchee, WA

9:00 am to 3:30 pm



Formal Approvals

Item	Action-Decision
Agenda for September 28, 2023 Board of Directors Meeting	Approved and posted online at: UCSRB Agenda
Summary for June 22, 2023 Board of Directors Meeting	Approved and posted online at: UCSRB Summary
UCSRB Draft FY23-24 Budget	Approved

PRESENT:

Board Members - Vice-Chair, Chuck Brushwood - Colville Confederated Tribes; Shannon Adams - Yakama Nation; Marc Straub - Douglas County; Shon Smith - Chelan County.

UCSRB Staff - Amanda Ward, Ryan Niemeyer, Elaine Sivey, Sarah Walker, Gabby Vermeire

Others - Char Schumacher (on behalf of Chair Hover) - Okanogan County; Brock Hoenes - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

ABSENT:

Board Chair, Andy Hover - Okanogan County

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened by Vice Chair Chuck Brushwood, acting as Chair, at 9.00 am.

Everyone was welcomed and participants introduced themselves. Amanda Ward introduced the new UCSRB Program Assistant, Gabby Vermeire.

2. Regular Business

The meeting agenda was reviewed. No corrections or additional items were noted.

Marc Straub made a motion to approve the September 28, 2023 agenda as presented. Shon Smith seconded, and all approved.

The meeting summary from the June 22, 2023 Board of Directors meeting was reviewed. No corrections or updates were noted.

Marc Straub made a motion to approve the June 22nd, 2023 Board of Directors meeting summary as presented. Shon Smith seconded the motion, and all approved.

3. Finance and Operations

Budget vs. Actual – July 2023 – June 2024

Elaine gave an overview of the Budget to Actuals report through August 31, 2023. No revenue has been recognized for this time period. Elaine noted the equipment costs were high due to purchasing a meeting Owl and three years of firewall through Firefly, a package that included free updated hardware. No money was spent on BPA Maintenance or Board Engagement for this period.

Current Grant Activity

Elaine reviewed activity for current grants for July 2022 through August 2023.

Elaine did not expect that we would fully expend the BPA grant. The Board discussed if any unused BPA admin funds would carry over. Sarah Walker advised that our contract was constrained by the fiscal year, so they would not carry over. Sarah also noted that next year's contract would decrease as UCSRB would not be providing BPA the level of biological guidance as in previous years.

The CCT grant is expected to be fully expended by the end of October. Elaine said she expected to receive the RCO Admin contract soon.

Operating Reserve Activity

Elaine provided an update on operating reserve activity for the period of July 1, 2023 through August 31, 2023.

Statement of Financial Position

Elaine reviewed the UCSRB Statement of Financial Position as of August 31, 2023.

The Board noted that it would be helpful to compare current year against the figures from last year. Elaine said she would do this for the next board meeting.

Budget Adjustments

Elaine identified the following revenue adjustments:

- RCO Admin contract Delay in timing– The RCO Admin contract has not been received. It was originally budgeted it to be fully expended for the year. The resulting decrease in revenue can be accommodated by allowing the contract to carry forward to next fiscal year.
- Carry forward adjustments for YN, BPA, CCT
- BEF Contract Delay
- Proposed budget adjustments are a decrease in revenue of \$62,297

Elaine identified the following expenditure adjustments:

- A 3rd party contractor may be hired for the North Central West Forest Health Collaborative. The budget will be adjusted as necessary.
- The unexpected increase in price for firewall protection is reflected in the known discrepancies.
- Consulting fees to former employees have been added to the budget.
- Higher than expected audit costs.
- Known expenditure changes due to staff changes.
- Proposed expenditure adjustments are a decrease in expenditures of \$125,583.

Overall, the budget adjustment adds a net gain of \$63,286

The Board discussed the issue of \$65K of revenue that would likely not be expended. Amanda advised that the deliverables of all contracts would be met, however money is left over due to less being spent on staff.

Shon Smith made a motion to approve the changes to the FY23-24 Budget. Chuck Brushwood seconded the motion, and all approved.;

State Auditor's Office Update

Elaine Sivey updated the Board on the 2022 audit, which is still in process.

Contract Updates

Amanda updated the Board on the status of current contracts. She noted the \$179,903 BPA contract had been discussed earlier by Elaine. Amanda advised the \$435K GSRO Admin contract was delayed but is expected by the end of the month. The current BEF grant was extended from June to December 2023; the BEF Grant Manager and Amanda will negotiate the next round of funding towards the end of the year. Amanda advised that a draft two-year, \$50,000 DNR grant contract has been received, but is still under negotiation. Amanda is working with the NCWFHC on a contract amendment and will work with both the DNR and NCWFHC to get the contract approved before following up with the Board for final approval.

4. USRB Program Updates

BPA update

Sarah Walker updated the Board on UCSRB's BPA contract for FY23 and looking ahead to FY24. Sarah noted that while the organizational administrative contract operates on the state fiscal year, BPA operates on the federal fiscal year. Sarah has worked with BPA to secure funding for fisheries, Trout Unlimited, and MSRF, which will have to be expended in 3-5 years, as well as successfully showing the need to fund the Wenatchee Floodplain Reconnection Effort. USRB will also receive \$2.6 million in additional funding in FY24, and the \$1.3 million leftover funding from FY23 will carry-over to FY24. Sarah also noted that communication with BPA has been impacted by the fact that BPA has been undergoing a turnover in programmatic staff.

Science Program

Ryan Neimeyer provided an update on the status of the science program. Ryan is currently combining duties of the Science Program with the Watershed Program, so capacity is somewhat stretched.

Current priorities include:

- Okanogan Listening Sessions
- Habitat Prioritization Tool Updates
- Barrier Prioritization Tool Updates
- MaDMC Updates (Ryan said we should identify gaps in the data and give to our partners to fill in)
- RTT Facilitation
- SRFB grant round/Sponsor Support
- Annual Report
- SRP database

For the time being the following activities are considered lower priority:

- Aquatic Landscape Evaluation (the Forest Service may take some of this over [?])
- MaDMC simplification update
- RME matrix and regional approach to RME
- UC Science Conference (Contract with Triangle, with Amanda and Gabby taking on tasks)
- Columbia RS Tributary Habitat TT/SC
- Tracking legislation, NPCC activity, ISAB/ISRP findings (Sarah said she is tracking legislation)
- Columbia Basin Collaborative work groups (Amanda is tracking some meetings)
- Enloe Dam removal
- BPA project evaluation (Sarah said she is taking on these duties)

- Bull Trout Strategy (Ryan noted that this is not a core deliverable for the organization)

Mark Straub said that the Board could reassess the Science Program priorities according to staff resources.

Ryan also identified two potential new projects for the Science Program:

- Cold Water Refuge Mapping (a funding proposal has been submitted to CCT)
- Update Reach Layer (Ryan would like to include additional creeks and sub-basins)

Deliverables for the following grants were on track:

- BPA – including Prioritization Tool management, QA/QC, new data, PWG meetings, Supporting sponsors and summarizing data.
- CCT - Integrate Okanogan data (this includes switching to using raw data), Floodplain Metrics (Aspect is on track to analyze these).
- YN - Regional / WAT coordination, Annual Report, Implementation Schedule, Compiling data and tool integration.
- BEF - Listening Sessions
- RCO – PPFL, SRP Database, Regional Monitoring

Shannon Adams asked if there were plans to backfill Tracy Bowerman’s role. Amanda said that this was still under discussion. Ryan added that he had prioritized certain parts of Tracy’s role to take over in the meantime.

Lead Entity Program Summary

Amanda Ward updated the Board on the status of the Lead Entity Program after Dave Hecker’s exit as Lead Entity Program Coordinator. Programs received a total of \$3.9 million in funding in 2023, which combined \$2.6 million in new funding and \$1.3 million in carry over funding from 2022 supplemental. Of the 21 project proposals submitted, 12 projects were approved, with \$3.9 million in funding secured from SRFB out of the \$9.5 million requested. Including match and leveraged funding, a total of \$11 million was secured out of \$30 million proposed.

SRFB funding for FY24 will include \$2.4 million from the Upper Columbia’s share of RCO Riparian funding and an anticipated \$2 million from the annual SRFB Grant Round for a total of \$4.4 million. Riparian funding can be used for acquisition, restoration, planning, assessment, and inventory.

DNR/NCWFHC Update

Amanda Ward summarized UCSRB’s changing role for the NCWFHC. UCSRB will no longer be facilitating meetings, however, the co-chairs do want to keep working with UCSRB in some capacity, yet to be determined. Sarah Walker stated she had been the staff member facilitating meetings in the past, with Alicia Meier taking notes.

Sarah Walker added that UCSRB did not have decision-making power in the group and that its role was purely facilitative. All fiscal support went towards meeting administration. Mark Straub believed that the organization could consider re-evaluating the role it played in NCWFHC in the future, and potentially reallocate resources to utilize Sarah’s skill set.

2024 Science Conference Update

Amanda advised that planning for the 2024 Science Conference was on track. The conference theme is “A Question of Scale”. The program will include presentations relating to project scale(s), regional support, and the role of climate change in salmon conservation. Amanda expects good attendance after the 2022 Conference was cancelled due to Covid. Conference dates are January 24 and 25; location is the Wenatchee Conference Center, with a social evening to be held at Pybus on January 24.

The venue and hotel lodgings are booked, the final artwork for all promotional materials is almost finished, and a graphic artist has been engaged. The conference steering committee is currently in the process of choosing speakers and poster reviews. Greer Maier (now with GSRO) was engaged to help plan the conference and has passed a lot of the work on to Melanie del Rosario from Triangle. Amanda and Gabby have also taken on aspects of the planning and outreach.

5. Staffing Updates

Lead Program Entity Coordinator – from a slow beginning, more applications had been received after the advertised job title was changed to Salmon Recovery Program Coordinator. Interviews have been scheduled with four promising applicants, some of whom have experience with fish biology.

More broadly, moving forward, Amanda believes that the organization should not fill further positions simply because they previously existed. Once the LE position is filled, Amanda suggests UCSRB wait for a few months to assess the demands/needs on a full-time staff of six before determining if an additional position is required and, if so, what that role might look like. Reaching out to sponsors and partners will also help identify any regional support needs or gaps. At this point, Amanda is not planning to fill the previous communications position, as Gabby Vermeire will pick up some of those activities, and there will also be some outreach cross training for all organization members.

The Board agreed that it was best not to rush to fill positions. Shannon Adams asked if Lead Entity Coordinator responsibilities could be allocated to other staff; Amanda advised that this particular role was more defined than other positions and couldn't be broken up easily among other staff. The Board discussed updating job descriptions for the organization to comply with HR. Amanda suggested that, as some of aspects of staff roles were changing, these changes should be settled into and confirmed before the job descriptions were formerly updated.

6. Strategic Plan – Final draft (part 1)

Amanda advised the Board that the purpose of the Strategic Plan was to be an overall guiding document for UCSRB, and that the current draft had been streamlined and incorporated Board feedback. The Board discussed what approval of this document would entail. This overarching document will allow the organization to create a more detailed and polished public-facing document that would be posted on the website after final approval by the Board, most likely at the December 2023 meeting. The Board questioned if the Strategic Plan needed formal board approval since it was a working internal document. Chuck Brushwood noted that it might be better to solicit board feedback on this big picture document before reviewing a more detailed operations plan, especially since Board Chair Andy Hover was not present.

Board comments on the goals and objectives of the current Strategic Plan included:

Priority: Recovery:

- Even though Habitat is the primary “H” for the UCSRB, the objectives try to incorporate the other H’s of salmon recovery as well
 - Engaging with hydropower, hatcheries, and harvest is still a part of our mandate in the recovery plan
- Is the RTT involved in the objective of increasing the survival rate of salmonoid species and should it be specifically included?
 - RTT is more of an operational than strategic entity.
 - The RTT is captured under the regional descriptor.

Priority: Sustainability:

Questions raised relating to engagement:

- Should we seek out additional funding sources?
- Can we look at our budget to make our work more efficient?
- Is the work we are doing the most effective work?

Mark Straub asked what the language “foster a culture of reasonable risk-taking” meant in practice. Amanda said this essentially meant that we shouldn’t be afraid of change. We can’t assume we’ll have the same funding year after year, so a risk might be to search out new funding sources. The Board noted that almost all decisions as an organization came with risk and opportunity cost, and that changing direction in any way can either pay off or be detrimental. I.e., the organization doesn’t want to pass over opportunities, but also does not want to overextend itself.

Amanda added that it feels like the organization and region is at a crossroads and can’t afford to keep the status quo, in part because salmon numbers are staying much the same. Taking some risks and making changes as an organization must be considered.

7. Lunch

8. Avian Predation

Quinn Payton from Realtime Research, an organization that provides research on avian predation for other entities, presented on the specific and cumulative effects of avian predation on salmon populations in the Columbia River.

Quinn’s research looks at the impact of predation on fish age, health, etc. Capture-recapture-recovery modeling allowed more advanced cumulative measurements of the effects of avian predation than previous research. The following avian species were the subject of the research:

- Caspian terns – target steelhead salmon
- Double-crested cormorants – few nesting sites are monitored, more complex to manage than terns
- Gulls (all in the family Laridae) – consume both live and dead fish, more ragged data sets about predation lead to more limited management efforts
- American White Pelicans – prey on both juvenile and adult salmon

The relationship between predation rates and total mortality rates of salmon along the Columbia River suggest that predation has a significant effect on overall mortality rates, and that birds are not simply just eating sick or otherwise compromised salmon that would die anyway. Data indicates that baseline survival rates would be higher without avian predation.

Management efforts included the following:

1. Tern management – setting up islands in other areas to disperse their impact and limiting habitat on Rock Island
2. Cormorant management – dispersing colonies on East Sand island

Management results have been mixed. Quinn noted that some of the avian species were protected under the North American Bird Treaty and that management efforts have to avoid harmful impacts on birds. Overall conclusions of the study included the following:

- Avian predation effects are variable, and not all bird colonies pose a threat to salmon
- Predation is the single greatest source of mortality for steelhead smolts
- JMS is useful to model any measurable mortality source
- Some success with tern management for steelhead mortality, however terns tend to eventually return to nests
- Impacts on non-ESA listed salmonid species are less known
- Gull predation has recently increased – at this point, he is not sure why
- Covariates in habitats affect all these processes

9. Public Comment and Questions

No public comment.

10. Strategic Plan – Final draft (part 2)

Board comments continued.

Priority: Engagement

The role of the Implementation Team (IT) was discussed:

- What is UCSRB's role in making the IT functional?
- UCSRB is responsible for convening and facilitating the group - the IT is written into the Recovery Plan and its 24 core members are written into the UCSRB bylaws
- Originally required to oversee implementation of the Recovery Plan, IT members now have a lack of clarity about their current role
- UCSRB cannot tell the IT what to do; they must determine their role and future
- Potentially re-name the IT to reflect that it is more of an upper-level Advisory Body?
 - May be useful to go back to the Recovery Plan and to redefine the role of IT since the context has changed over time
 - Something substantial needs to change as things don't seem to be able to move forward as things stand
- Member feedback includes some members who would like the IT to continue to others who think the forum is no longer needed
 - Is convening the group too much of a challenge at this point?
- Can we amend the IT's inclusion in the Recovery Plan?
 - The Recovery Plan is vague about defining the IT; the 24 core members are identified in the UCSRB bylaws
- Adaptive management should be applied to the Recovery Plan, which does indicate there is a need for some type of upper-level advisory group to identify and develop guidelines
 - Could potentially reach out by phone to the original 24 members.
 - Re-visit original purpose of including IT in the Recovery Plan

Priority: Leadership

What is the role of UCSRB, and how are we seen by outside world?

- Do we do any work that's duplicative?
 - Our work shouldn't be - for instance, we don't reach out to private landowners; that is the job of the conservation districts.
- We can play a stronger supporting role as a passthrough mechanism for on the ground work
- Work on building a stronger regional message about our work
 - people don't know how they can support salmon recovery efforts
 - we need to put effort into a few strong messages to take to upper level policy makers at the state capital and in DC
 - Incorporating input from other regional entities it makes our message stronger
- Who is in the listed advisory board to identify and discuss inefficiencies?
 - Can we pull together our own advisory group?
 - Including the advisory group could be more "how" when we need the "what" – too descriptive – we need to be more focused on the outcome than how we get there
 - This might be an operational plan item
- Several bullet points could be summarized and condensed into "facilitate partners etc."

How is leadership looking at public outreach and how are we publicizing the successes of our entities?

- This goes to building and strengthen relationships with all four H's
 - We're not having enough conversations with hatcheries and hydropower producers
 - It's important to identify who to talk to at an upper level
 - We don't need to use outreach to tell entities what to do; we should ask partners what they need for support to go above and beyond what is government-mandated
- UCSRB is looking at it's communication plan, how to do more public outreach moving forward
- Are we doing public outreach for farmers and agricultural workers?

Is simplification of the permitting process/helping entities with permitting something that UCSRB has the capacity and desire to be more involved in?

- Sponsors give us feedback on how difficult the permitting process can be
- Addressing permitting challenges at a high level could have a huge impact
 - Would allow county commissioners, tribal leaders to have greater access to legislators
- WDFW is trying to simplify permitting process
 - Oregon has simplified process to one application for multiple permits
- Would it be helpful to make a database/list of various types of permits for our partners?
- Partners know more about permits than we do, don't necessarily want us to do the work of applying for permits
 - We can still ask partners how we can alleviate some of their burden

The Board asked what the first step would be to implement the Strategic Plan. One way the organization could start is by holding itself accountable is to ensure all organizational actions fit into the Strategic Plan, and ultimately, the UCSRB mission statement. This would ultimately become operational, including budget line items that are also tied into the Strategic Plan.

11. Wrap-Up and Adjourn Meeting

Acting Chair Brushwood thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting adjourned - 3:30 pm.

The next scheduled Board meeting is December 7, 2023.