



REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING FINAL DECEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Wednesday, 13 December 2023

Time: 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: Webinar

Members Present: Catherine Willard (Chelan PUD), Tom Kahler (Douglass PUD), John Arterburn (Colville Tribe), Amanda Barg (WDFW), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Steve Fortney (Gray & Osborne Inc.), Tracy Bowerman (USFWS), Carlos Polivka (USFS), Shelby Fowler (USFWS), Kate Terrell (USFWS), and Tracy Hillman (BioAnalysts Inc.; Chairperson).

Others Present: Ryan Niemeyer (UCSRB), Mark Ingman (Cascadia CD), Christina Barrineau (CCNRD), Aaron Rosenblum (Cascade Fisheries), Allison Pardis (Trout Unlimited), Brant Smith, Chris Butler (Yakama Nation), Jessica Goldberg (Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation), Keith Truscott (Chelan CAC), Lindsay Henning, Lisa Foster (Trout Unlimited), Lucas Lachica (Cascadia Conservation District), Mary Davisson, Michael Dello Russo (Trout Unlimited), Michelle Martin, Nate Fuchs, Phillip Klenke (Cascade Fisheries), Taylor George, and Ariel Edwards (UCSRB).

Tracy Hillman reviewed the agenda and the agenda was approved by all RTT members present. Tracy Hillman reviewed the November draft meeting notes and all RTT members present approved the notes.

Review Action Items from the November Meeting

Floodplain metrics and reaches with 0% of Template EDT rating. Ryan will address this item during the January meeting.

Five-year grandfather clause ranking recommendation. During the November meeting, the RTT proposed: (1) updating reach ranks as soon as the best available scientific information is available and incorporating the information into the prioritization tool no more than once per year; (2) projects that have received or been approved for design funding will be grandfathered in for a 5-year period; and (3) any project that cannot be implemented within the 5-year period will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The RTT approved these recommendations.

Decision:

- All RTT members present approved the 5-year grandfather clause for reach rankings.

Action:

- Update the Habitat Prioritization Strategy to reflect this update in project scoring.

RTT and UCSRB Updates

UCSRB Science Conference Timeline and Abstracts

UCSRB staff shared that the abstract deadline for the science conference had passed, but the conference was still accepting registrations. Early bird registration ends on 10 January. The science conference is looking for raffle items or financial sponsorships for the conference. If individuals know of any organizations who would be interested in donating financially or raffle items for the conference, please contact Amanda Ward (amanda.ward@ucsrb.org). If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Gabby Vermeire, program assistant at UCSRB (gabby.vermeire@ucsrb.org).

LE Coordinator

Ariel Edwards introduced herself as the new LE Coordinator with the UCSRB.

2023 SRFB Debrief Planning

The tentative date for the debrief meeting is 8 January (4:30-6 pm PT). An official invite will be sent out as soon as possible. A draft agenda was shared during the meeting. Discussion was opened for possible additional agenda items. No additional items were offered.

Decisions:

- None

Action Item:

- Official invite for SRFB debrief planning meeting will be sent out by UCSRB staff later this week.

RCO Riparian Funding and RTT Project Scoring/Prioritization

Overview LE Grant-Round Process with Riparian and Large-Cap Funding

Ryan presented the draft plan for the LE grant-round process with the riparian and large-cap funding pools. The LE is proposing to run the grant round as close to normal as possible. Upon project application submission, the projects will be sorted into the corresponding funding pools (some may overlap across multiple pools). The RTT will score each project in the corresponding pools. RTT scoring criteria for riparian projects will remain the same as during the regular rounds. Once scored, projects will be ordered within each pool. Finally, the CAC will score each project in the pools and draw funding lines.

Discussion:

Steve Fortney asked whether a particular project that only has riparian aspects associated with it would link with riparian funding or with the general SRFB fund. Ryan responded that riparian projects can link to both riparian and regular SRFB funds. If certain components of a proposed action do not qualify for riparian funds, sponsors can identify which components link with riparian funds and which components link with general SRFB funds.

Ryan brought up that riparian projects generally get dinged on some of the scoring criteria, because riparian benefits to salmon often take longer to occur than in-stream restoration work. The LE is hoping to alleviate that issue as much as possible by separating projects into different funding pools.

Ryan asked whether there are things to highlight for the WATs to help sponsors identify benefits from riparian enhancement actions. Tracy H mentioned riparian actions can address a host of impairments including instream and overhead cover, summer base flow conditions, temperature (both summer and winter), water quality, nutrients, and food subsidies. Although the prioritization tool does not explicitly identify these as benefits from “riparian” actions, they are linked directly and indirectly to riparian habitat condition. It is important to keep in mind that restoring riparian areas helps restore natural processes and these processes can affect factors limiting fish.

It was asked whether a project requesting funding from multiple pools will be scored three times or once? Tracy H said that the scoring criteria for evaluating proposed restoration actions are the same regardless of the funding request; therefore, projects will be scored once. To a large degree, the RTT is not concerned about which funding pool is used. That is an issue for the LE and CACs.

Another question was who decides which funding pool is to be used for a given project? Is that decided by the sponsor, LE, or CAC? Ryan indicated the sponsor will identify the funding pool in their applications.

Riparian Ecology Background and RTT Evaluation Criteria

Tracy H. presented on riparian ecology and restoration and how the RTT evaluates riparian projects. He defined riparian zones simply as transitional zones between the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (ecotones) and explained why riparian zones must be viewed as three-dimensional zones. He presented the diagram from Gregory et al. (1991) to show the interconnectedness of riparia, aquatic biota, processes, structure, and function. He described general principles associated with riparia, including their inherent complexity and dynamics, the importance of hydrologic regimes, and plant communities. He then described the interaction of riparia with aquatic biota, especially salmonids. The RTT looks at key riparian interactions with aquatic biota including solar radiation (shading), nutrients (dissolved and particulate organic matter), primary production, retention and filtration of sediment and pollutants, bank stability, large wood recruitment, invertebrate production, and stream flows. He then described the zone of riparian influence on aquatic ecosystems, noting that the greatest benefits occur within one tree height potential but cautioned that other important benefits occur from riparia extending beyond one tree height potential. Tracy then outlined the necessary steps to enhance riparian habitat, pointing out the importance of a restoration plan, a reasonably natural hydrologic regime, and use of appropriate techniques. He concluded by describing how the RTT evaluates riparian restoration proposals.

Tracy noted that in the past, some proposed riparian restoration projects did not score well because of inappropriate restoration techniques, long time to achieve desired benefits, lack of adaptive management, and size and location of the proposed project. In contrast, depending on size and location, projects proposed to protect existing high-quality riparian areas have generally scored high as well as restoration projects that elevate the stream bed and water table (e.g., beavers and BDAs).

Open Discussion with Sponsors/RTT:

Sponsors expressed a desire for the LE to clarify how projects can qualify for riparian funding and how instream work can be included in these projects.

Proposed Update to Reach Ranking Language

Riparian Delineation Definition

Ryan Niemeyer presented on **riparian delineation** and asked RTT members to decide on how the UC should define “riparian” for this process. Definition options included:

1. RCO riparian definition in Appendix K manual 18: 200-year site potential tree height (often defaults to 100 feet in UC due to data gaps). Amanda B. noted that 100 feet is the minimum distance required for infiltration of the majority of N, P, etc.
2. Use RTT Riparian definition for Riparian-Disturbance metric. This is based on Steve Fortney’s geomorphic valley bottom and NOAA floodplain layer. Currently we do not have Steve Fortney’s floodplain definition for the Okanogan (we would need to use NOAA).
3. Use RTT riparian definition for riparian-canopy cover metric = 30 m buffer.

John A. noted that we have quite a bit of information about riparian zones/floodplains in the UC. The floodplain sizes are very rarely consistent, so choosing the most data driven option seems the best. He recommended option #2. Tracy H. agreed that #2 seemed the most appropriate. The group discussed the WDFW SPTH (Site Potential Tree Height) mapping tool and whether we could use that in our region. Amanda noted that in the WDFW manual, riparian zone is defined as SPTH or 100 feet, whichever is greater. Much of UC is arid, so the width defaults to 100 feet.

Tom Kahler brought up channel migration zones and asked whether these zones are being incorporated into the definitions. The WDFW tool recommends delineating the riparian management zone from CMZs, but only where they are documented. Steve Fortney noted the importance of channel migration zones (CMZs) when delineating floodplains and the geomorphology of streams. He stated that option #2 includes the CMZs plus additional extent beyond those zones.

It was noted that using WDFW’s definition would be good considering RCO adopted the WDFW definition. It was noted that option #2 covers the definition of option #1 but incorporates more regional data. The group agreed to use #2 and where the layers are not currently available, riparian delineation would use the NOAA floodplain layer.

Decisions:

- **RTT members present agreed on Option #2 for the RTT definition of riparian area for the Upper Columbia and to be used in the riparian funding process.**

Action Item:

- **Ryan will upload the approved tool to the UCSRB website.**

Barrier Prioritization Tool

Ryan provided a brief update on the barrier prioritization strategy. During the November meeting, the RTT asked for additional time to review the most recent report and spreadsheets. Following discussion, the RTT approved the Barrier Prioritization Tool as a living document (i.e., it can be update at any time).

Decisions:

- **RTT members present approved the updated Barrier Prioritization Tool.**

Action Item:

- **Ryan will post the document and tool to the UCSRB website.**

Discussion on Nominating a New Chair to the RTT

Tracy H. opened a discussion on the possibility of the RTT nominating a new RTT chair. Tracy said he will remain as chair through at least January 2024. This will be discussed during the January RTT meeting.

Decisions:

- **None**

Action Items:

- **None**

The RTT meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.