



## REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING DRAFT FEBRUARY MEETING SUMMARY

**Date:** Wednesday, 14 February 2024

**Time:** 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

**Location:** Webinar

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**Members Present:** Tracy Hillman (BioAnalysts Inc.; Chairperson), Catherine Willard (Chelan PUD), Shelby Fowler (USFWS), Tracy Bowerman (USFWS), Joe Lange (NRCS), John Crandall (MSRF), Amanda Barg (WDFW), Tom Kahler (Douglas PUD), Brandon Rogers (YN)

**Others Present:**

Ariel Edwards (UCSRB), Mark Ingman (Cascadia CD), Amee Bahr (RCO), Jeff Caisman (Yakama Nation), Jeff Jorgensen (NOAA), Jason Lundgren (Cascade Fisheries), Alex Harwell, Phillip Klenke, Christina Barrineau (CCNRD), Michael Dello Russo (TU), Kristen Kirkby (Cascade Fisheries), Danielle Grundy (YN), Lisa Foster (TU), Aaron Rosenblum (Cascade Fisheries).

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Tracy Hillman reviewed the February RTT meeting agenda, and the agenda was approved by all RTT members present. Tracy Hillman reviewed the January DRAFT meeting notes and all RTT members approved the notes.

### RTT & UCSRB Updates

#### 2024 SRFB Grant Round

Ariel Edwards (UCSRB) provided a review of the 2024 grant schedule, highlighting important dates for the RTT. Pre-applications are due March 11. Sponsor presentations to the RTT are on March 27 & 28. We will also find out the total SRFB (regular grant round) allocation and Targeted Investment allocation in March – once those numbers are decided Ariel will share.

**Decisions:**

- None

**Action Items:**

- None

### Coho Reintroduction Program

Jeff Caisman from YN shared updates on the coho reintroduction program in the Methow and Wenatchee basins. Historically, coho abundances were between 23-31,000 in the Methow and 6-7,000 in the Wenatchee. YN is currently pursuing a tiered approach to reintroduction that involved

establishing a broodstock (which is complete in both subbasins), encouraging local adaptation (complete in Methow), and encouraging natural production in both basins (ongoing).

Challenges to reintroduction:

- 1) Adapting lower-Columbia coho stock to longer upstream travel.
- 2) Expanding in-basin distribution of coho spawning.
- 3) Increasing annual returns to the point of establishing a fishery.

So far, YN has made progress on all challenges. Their studies have found that local adaptation in broodstock seemed to occur in 4 or 5 generations – with coho from Wenatchee broodstock having a higher SAR as compared to lower-Columbia stock. They have also been working to collect broodstock above the velocity barrier in the Wenatchee (Exit drop), in hopes that will lead to more fish successfully passing that barrier and accessing more upstream spawning habitat. Finally, YN is looking to increase upstream expansion of acclimation sites to continue to expand coho distribution.

Overall, escapement numbers have been trending positively over the past 5 years.

#### **Questions:**

An RTT member asked if the presenter knew why the historical numbers for the Methow were so much higher than the other subbasins? Also asked if the velocity barrier restricted access to the upper Wenatchee historically?

A: While the velocity barrier was certainly present 100+ years go, it's hard to say how or if that restricted access to upstream spawning sites. There is plenty of good spawning habitat above that barrier, but the historical extent of use is unknown. The drivers for such high Methow numbers is also unknown.

In response to a sponsor's question, it was noted that there are currently no discussions about expanding coho reintroduction to the Entiat.

Another sponsor asked about the issues that fish may have finding the ladder at Tumwater Dam in high flows, and if coho are tagged to help track fallback rates. It was noted that coho adults are PIT tagged at Priest Rapids Dam.

An RTT member brought up the issue of juvenile competition between coho, Chinook, and steelhead, and asked how we as a region should be considering these types of interactions? Discussion on this topic noted that there have been studies on competition between salmonid juveniles, but they have not been a big part of the current coho reintroduction project. It was added that, with the increases in coho, coho juveniles are often seen benefiting from the habitat restoration projects being done in the region. Some restoration projects (ex. off-channel habitat) may even benefit coho more than target species like Chinook. Another member stated that coho are now within the reality of our region – especially in the Methow. In the past, there have been decisions to not use committee funds to benefit hatchery fish (coho) in the region, which may be important to consider moving forward.

An RTT member also asked where additional coho acclimation ponds are currently being planned in the Wenatchee, and if there are conversations with sponsors working in these reaches about the reintroduction of coho?

A: There is currently one new pond planned near the Trinity site – plans with the landowner are currently in place, but the pond has not been built yet.

Jeff Caisman also noted that he and others with the YN coho reintroduction project are very interested in collaboration with sponsors and others working in these reaches to benefit coho and provide more information.

#### **Decisions:**

- **None**

**Action Items:**

- **None**

## **Approve Updated MaDMC Data Gaps List**

The chair opened discussion on the updated MaDMC data gap list.

It was clarified that monitoring and assessment projects differ in that assessment projects look at gaps in data but must also lead to site specific projects. Monitoring is more looking at effectiveness, which is not an eligible SRFB expense. Details about monitoring versus assessment eligibility is provided in Manual 18.

In discussion, RTT members decided to update the language in data gap 1.1 slightly for clarity. In addition, data gap 2.2 was removed, since the new data gap 2.21 was added to cover the mainstem tributaries.

Finally, there was discussion on the columns that denoted Yes vs No for monitoring/assessment SRFB eligibility. Members agreed that hiding those columns and advising sponsors to consult Manual 18 for eligibility questions may reduce confusion.

Before the vote, another member added that this list would benefit from being sent out for input from more experts/sources around the region in the future.

**Decisions:**

- **All members on the call approved the data gaps list as edited during the meeting.**

**Action Items:**

- **Tracy will share the approved list with Ariel to post on UCSRB website.**

## **Science Conference Debrief**

The chair asked for discussion on any major themes from the science conference, and if any talks or topics made folks reconsider how we should be approaching restoration in the region.

The chair brought up that, currently, the RTT favors protection projects that are connected to other protected areas. However, this principle is often not used for restoration projects. The talk on creating habitat corridors and “stepping-stones” for restoration gave some reason to reconsider how the RTT looks at projects/adjacent projects.

A sponsor added on the idea of creating “stepping-stone” habitats, that it is important to consider fish movement/range in determining how far apart these stepping stone projects should be. The sponsor also mentioned interest in how the RTT will weigh the merits of potential stepping-stone projects in the future, and if that could change how some projects are scored or areas are prioritized. It was noted that prioritization can steer folks away from pursuing projects in certain reaches - thinking about how reaches may be important links to habitat will be important moving forward. Another sponsor noted that having a map tracking current stepping-stone projects in our region would be helpful. An RTT member noted that the Salmon Recovery Portal (SRP) has all the projects completed since around 1994

– and the more recent projects include spatial extent. This tool may help sponsors find reaches that may contribute to connectivity, etc.

Another sponsor also noted that incorporating factors that we have overlooked such as nutrients and temperature may be important moving forward. It was also brought up that the region could be more innovative when designing wood projects to be more dynamic and more naturally fit into stream ecosystems.

An RTT member proposed bringing Janine Castro back for further conversation on the “stepping-stone” concept and how it may be useful in our region. It was also noted that this concept is geomorphically based – stepping-stones are not generally in geomorphically confined reaches.

**Decisions:**

- **None**

**Action Items:**

- **None**

## **Discussion about Releasing RTT Project Scores**

At the end of last year’s grant round, the RTT moved to only share ranks and comments to sponsors (no scores). Since this decision, many sponsors have reached out with concerns. The chair stated that he would be find with moving back to sharing scores, but opened the topic to discussion.

No comments were shared against sharing scores. The chair moved to approve sharing scores with sponsors again.

**Decisions:**

- **Members present approved sharing scores with sponsors as in previous years.**

**Action Items:**

- **Notify project sponsors of this update (Ariel Edwards/UCSRB).**

## **Large Wood Counting Revisit**

The chair brought up that counting what wood is actually doing in streams to benefit fish, rather than the total count of wood, may be a better tracking metric. Another RTT member noted that wood count should not be removed as a metric until there are replacement metrics in place to capture all important aspects that “wood count” tries to account for (pools, cover, etc). It was also proposed that looking at the number of jams per mile, while defining what constitutes a jam and what a jam should be accomplishing, could be a useful metric as well. Another member noted that discharge and stage are important to consider with these metrics (ex. wood structures provide great habitat during high flow, but are dry during low flow).

The HARP model was referenced, as this model is not looking at pieces of wood, but rather the effect that the wood has. This model could be a good reference for creating new metrics and improving wood metrics in the region.

**Decisions:**

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**Action Items:**

- Tracy H will put together a small subgroup to begin discussion on this.

**Meeting adjourned at 11:20**