



REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING FINAL APRIL MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Wednesday, 10 April 2024

Time: 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Location: Webinar

Members Present: Steve Fortney (Gray & Osborne, Inc.), Amanda Barg (WDFW), Tracy Bowerman (USFWS), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Catherine Williard (Chelan PUD), Shelby Fowler (USFWS), John Arterburn (CCT), Joe Lange (NRCS), Tom Kahler (Douglas PUD), and Tracy Hillman (BioAnalysts, Inc.; Chair).

Others Present: Ariel Edwards (UCSRB), Ryan Niemeyer (UCSRB), Chevelle Yeckel (Okanogan CD), Christina Barrineau (CCNRD), Eric Doyle (Confluence Environmental), Steve Kolk (Bureau of Reclamation), Mark Ingman (Cascadia Conservation District), Jason Lundgren (Cascade Fisheries), Aaron Rosenblum (Cascade Fisheries), Jeff Jorgensen (NOAA), Steve Rodriguez (Wolf Water Resources), Glen Leverich (Wolf Water Resources), and Brooke Bennett (Wolf Water Resources).

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

RTT & UCSRB Updates

2024 SRFB Grant Round

Ariel provided an update on the grant round timeline. She is pulling together the schedule and timeline for the tours on 6-9 May. Monday, 6 May will include presentations, Entiat tours, and lower Wenatchee tours. There will be 4 or 5 presentations. Tuesday, 7 May will be Wenatchee tours and Wednesday, 8 May will be Methow tours.

UCRTT Operating Procedures

Tracy Hillman noted that during the evaluation of pre-proposals, there were some questions regarding conflicts of interest. Tracy H showed the policy statement about conflicts of interest in the UCRTT Operating Procedures. The statement describes who should recuse themselves from scoring and discussing projects. During pre-proposal scoring, there was a question as to whether members from an agency or entity that provided funding for a proposed project should recuse themselves from scoring and discussing the project. Tracy H noted that the HCP Tributary Committees have a more fleshed out statement on conflicts of interest. Their statement includes definitions for abstain and recuse, which could be added to the UCRTT Operating Procedures. A member who abstains can still participate in discussion. A voting member who recuses themselves will not vote on or participate in discussion on a

decision item. In fact, a recused member must leave the room or conference call. Tracy H proposed adopting similar language in the UCRTT Operating Procedures. One member supported this approach. Another member suggested the need to better define “conflict of interest” and that it usually refers to a voting member, a friend, a colleague, or family member who has something to gain. One member indicated the need to define what “personal gain” means. Tracy H mentioned that three members recused themselves from evaluating a few pre-proposals because their agency provided a cost share on those projects. He added that depending on how many members are available to score applications, the refusal of three members can be significant. This would be especially burdensome if Tributary Committees members who also serve on the RTT must recuse themselves from evaluating applications. A sponsor shared that from the federal perspective, a conflict of interest is not based only on personal gain but also includes a “perception” of conflict of interest. This person also stated that the difference between refusal and abstain could be challenging because someone who abstains could still provide a benefit by being a “champion” for a project. An RTT member noted that adding more language could make it more confusing. Another RTT member mentioned that because the restoration community is small and RTT members are encouraged to provide input on projects, it will be challenging to fully remove RTT member involvement and still allow the members to score projects. One sponsor highlighted that RTT participation in project development is helpful. This sponsor suggested that the RTT review examples of conflict-of-interest statements. An RTT member indicated that because the CAC makes the final decision on funding, RTT members may not need to have as strict of criteria for conflict of interest. Tracy H asked all members to review the Operating Procedures and to send him their edits/suggestions before the next meeting.

Large Wood Workgroup Meeting

Tracy Hillman reviewed results from the Large Wood Workgroup meeting. The group met and began to develop protocols for measuring and counting large wood and log jams. The goal is to have approved protocols before crews begin fieldwork this summer. He added that evaluating and establishing wood targets can be conducted at a later date.

Decisions:

- **None**

Action Items:

- **RTT members will review the UCRTT Operating Procedures and provide edits to Tracy Hillman before the next RTT meeting.**
- **Ariel Edwards and Ryan Niemeyer will revisit the CAC conflict of interest policy statement.**
- **Tracy Hillman will schedule the next Large Wood Workgroup meeting.**

Goodwin Side Channel Restoration Project 30% Design

Aaron Rosenblum and Wolf Waters Resources staff discussed the Goodwin Side Channel Restoration Project 30% designs. Aaron noted that Bonneville Power Administration needs the RTT to score the project before they (sponsor) can advance the designs. He said the Goodwin Side Channel project is located in a high-priority AU for winter and summer steelhead rearing. He added that the lower Wenatchee River lacks off-channel habitat and that the existing side channel at this site is connected on average 36 days a year. Importantly, the side-channel is connected to groundwater. Riparian vegetation is in good shape in some areas but needs improvement in other areas. Aaron said the design goals are to 1) improve rearing habitat in the side channel by increasing habitat connectivity, 2) enhance floodplain

and side channel habitat functions through improved connections with the river, 3) promote native woody vegetation cover, and 4) increase large woody cover. Relative elevation models show a man-made pond with a berm on the floodplain. WSDOT has no record of why it exists, but it was likely constructed between 1949 and 1963 as part of highway construction. During field surveys in 2023, this constructed low area was identified as a wetland.

Aaron then described the three restoration alternatives, noting that alternative 3 provides the most biological benefit. Three different flows were analyzed to identify when the side-channel could be activated. The preferred design includes lowering the floodplain between the main channel and the side channel, which will be at near bankfull elevation. Originally, the fill was going to go into the depression but is now planned to be deposited at another location on site because the depression has been identified as a wetland. Currently, no fill or material will be hauled off-site. In addition, there is no plan to cut into the road embankment. There will be road access off of the highway, which will include traffic control through coordination with WSDOT.

There was a question about lowering the floodplain area, and whether sediment would just re-deposit in this area. Wolf Water Resources (WWR) said 1) they do not think deposition would be as great because the material is removed and 2) it allows them to ensure no-net rise occurs, given that LWD will be added and cause some rise. Another question was directed at the bedrock pool in the main channel and whether the side channel would cut down to bedrock. WWR responded that the energy of the river is moving to the right, not to the inside where the side channel is located. Also, that section of the river has been very stable and static for the last 80 years. An RTT member asked about sediment dynamics in the reach and whether deposition will fill in the side-channel. WWR responded that the inlets will be widened to ensure filling does not occur. Another RTT member asked about the balance between having high enough flows to prevent sediment deposition within the side channels but keeping flows low enough to not dilute the cold-water benefits in the side channels. WWR said they are designing the side channels to strike a balance between those high and low flows. Regarding a question about hazards to recreationists, Aaron said they have regional experts who will evaluate risks to recreationists. He said the feedback they have received so far indicates little to no concern.

Aaron concluded by stating that they are hoping to get regulatory folks out to the site as soon as possible. He added that cultural resources work will happen this summer. They will then begin work on the 60% designs.

One RTT member asked about the wetland and whether it will be connected to the side channels. Aaron responded that the wetland pond would be extended to provide access for fish. An RTT member commented that the connection should not strand fish. Another RTT member recommended that the sponsor provide more details on the location and shape of the spoils pile in future designs.

Decisions:

- **None**

Action Items:

- **RTT members will send their scores and comments on the Goodwin Side Channel 30% designs to Tracy Hillman by Friday, 19 April.**
- **Tracy Hillman will share RTT scores and comments with Aaron Rosenblum by the end of the month.**

Lower Loup Loup Reach Assessment

Chevelle Yeckel with OCD introduced Eric Doyle, who was hired to provide support for the Lower Loup Loup Reach Assessment project. Eric gave a presentation on the reach assessment (RA) and noted how it links with OBMEP, Okanogan EDT work, and the UCRTT guidance requirements. He noted that EDT highlights the “what and where” but not the “why and how.” Eric noted that RAs focus on prioritizing reaches and action types. EDT does not provide input on geomorphic potential nor does it identify site and/or project constraints, including landowner constraints, land-use constraints, etc. Eric said the approach of the Loup Loup RA was to build upon existing information in EDT and to provide additional information on the “why and how.” This resulted in a hybrid RA approach that leverages existing OBMEP long-term monitoring data, EDT limiting factor prioritization results, and the project prioritization framework. The hope is this approach could also be implemented in other streams in the Okanogan River basin. Importantly, this analysis was conducted in the lower 3.5 Rkm of Loup Loup Creek, downstream of the previous barrier that was recently addressed by CTCR. RA data sources are listed in the document.

Eric stated that streamflow analyses included a limited USGS gauge record (12 years). There were winters with no snowmelt peak and other years with large peaks likely due to wildfire. The model predicted increases in peak flows due to wildfires. OBEMP surveys showed bed scouring due to these increases in peak flows. Thalweg depth increased after the 2017 flows; they have not taken thalweg depths after the larger 2018 flow events. Additionally, substantial sediment delivery has been observed. At several sites, gravel was scoured away and replaced with sand. Many of the cobble riffles have been scoured away and replaced with sand. As a result, several spawning areas have disappeared.

Eric noted that EDT has an “Implementation” module that links EDT habitat attributes to suitable categories of restoration actions. This connects the actions with the highest strengths of effects scores. The goal being to provide this information to restoration practitioners. However, practitioners find it challenging to compete with other projects for SRFB funds.

Eric indicated that the feasibility assessment was modified from the BPA Feasibility Atlas Matrix. OCD reached out to landowners in the lower reaches of Loup Loup Creek to identify potential projects. There was only one landowner who was interested in a project, but that landowner decided to discontinue the relationship. One RTT member asked about categorical scoring. Eric walked through the table, which was similar to the BPA Atlas project. The RTT member asked whether the criteria explicitly considered private or public land ownership. Eric said this could do both.

An RTT member commented that they liked how this came together. Unfortunately it is a small reach where anadromy historically occurred but highlighted that the fish passage project will provide additional habitat for salmonids. Another RTT member commented on the importance of describing the dam and its failure and how it affects the current geomorphic organization of the study area. Understanding streamflow and sediment regimes is very important. The trick is understanding how the watershed scale processes affect reach-scale behavior over time. The cross-sections and thalweg profiles were useful. This member asked how the cross-sections were monumented. The member also noted that having more information on how some of the field data were collected would be helpful. John Arterburn responded that cross sections were monumented by installing in-ground rebar and above ground references.

One member, referring back to the comment about streambed scour, asked whether the gravels were actually removed and replaced with fine sediments, or were the gravels simply buried with fine sediments? John A said the gravels were removed and replaced with fine sediment. Another member noted that the USGS stream stats have a very high error of prediction, especially when you also account for the changes due to the fire. He suggested developing better hydrologic methods/modeling that could demonstrate estimated flows pre- and post-fire and predict what flows may be as the watershed recovers. This RTT member noted that a reach assessment can identify data gaps and could include a hydrologic report. Eric agreed that the confidence intervals are wide with the USGS stream data. He noted that their goal with this report was to provide an analysis and a review to help inform future project proposals. They have included a wide range of elements from limiting factors as to the why and how of implementing restoration. It is important to note that engineering components of each project will be more complicated and may be project specific. He reiterated that this RA is trying to complete a cost-effective approach to allow Okanogan projects to compete better in project reviews.

John Arterburn added that they conduct stream surveys in this reach every spring, and they see a lot of seasonal changes. For example, there are some locations where beaver dams were blown out by high flows and gravel was able to settle in those locations and create spawning beds for salmonids. The issue with the lower section of the system is that it is like a chute, so it is difficult for gravel to settle and remain there.

Eric Doyle indicated that the report could provide a list of identified data gaps or “weaknesses” that could be examined further, which would provide a useful basis for future projects to build upon.

Decisions:

- **None**

Action Items:

- **RTT members will send their comments on the Lower Loup Loup Reach Assessment to Tracy Hillman by 19 April.**
- **Tracy Hillman will share RTT comments with Chevelle Yeckel by the end of the month.**

Announcements

Joe Lange announced he is retiring from the NRCS on 26 April. One week later, he will join Jacobs Engineering Group as a stream restoration engineer. He is not sure whether he can continue with the RTT. It will depend on his new employer.

The RTT meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm.