



REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM PROJECT WORKING GROUP MEETING MEETING SUMMARY

Date: September 15, 2020

Time: 9: 00 AM – 2:00 PM

Location: Remote

RTT Members Present: Justin Yeager, Jeremy Cram, Brandon Rodgers, John Arterburn, John Crandall, Tracy Hillman, Steve Forney, Catherine Willard

Others Present: Tabatha Rood/BPA, Hans Smith/Yakama Nation, Nicole Jordan/UCSRB, Greer Maier/UCSRB, Ryan Niemeyer/UCSRB, Sarah Walker/UCSRB, Russell Scranton/BPA, Joe Conner/BPA, Jaimie Cleveland/BPA, Eric Doyle/Confluence Aquatics

Greer Maier/UCSRB convened the meeting at 9am. After introduction she reviewed the agenda and goals for the day. She presented a list of questions that were slated for discussion.

Step 2 Overview and Results (Discuss and modify tool as needed)

Greer opened the discussion with an overview of the current approach for Step 2- including the “Habitat Function – Habitat Quality” pathway, “Limiting Factor” pathway, and “Barrier” pathway. She also made note that the UCSRB is currently discussing if and how to implement what was called “Step 3” in the origin Prioritization Strategy which evaluates feasibility. Although the RTT will not be undertaking this step directly, the UCSRB will be working on an approach with the Implementation Team (in collaboration with the WATs and RTT). The meeting today was focused entirely on decisions related to Step 2 in an effort to update the tool and produce results for the upcoming watershed workshops.

The first part of the discussion focused on how the tool integrated habitat quality and limiting factors. There was debate about whether the limiting factor pathway should be used if limiting life stages are not known through a focused study. There are only a few such studies in the region and therefore the pathway would not be used very often if that was a requirement. The PWG has developed (with the help of the watershed workgroups) a list of priority life stages that are likely limited and limiting to some extent. In the end the PWG decided to use both pathways and evaluate the results.

Greer noted that the limiting factor pathway has a much more complete dataset, just given its methodology using multiple sources of data (reach assessments, level 2 surveys, and CHaMP data). Therefore it could pick up important actions for habitat quality that aren’t addressed through that pathway specifically because it is tied to Reach Assessments with a complete suite of REI output. There will be overlap between the two pathways and actions that address both habitat function for all life stages and specific habitat attributes for a high priority life stage could be ranked above others that just fall within one pathway. No decision was made whether to rank with the prioritization list of actions but that topic will be discussed at the next PWG meeting.

Limiting Factors- AU Scale

The group discussed how to score limiting factors of Habitat Quality (HQ) at the Assessment Unit (AU) scale. Input included:

- Spatially there is a lot of deviation in much smaller habitat units. Winter habitat items do not seem to be adequately accounted for and was suggested for additional attention (specifically on icing and groundwater influence). The lack of data will be a challenge in evaluating these.
- Having summaries as the AU scale is helpful for sponsors which is the intent of the tool. Having summaries available at this scale will be helpful for sponsors.
- The tool may fall short on some items such as winter temperature due to lack of data. It is important to pay attention to the movement of fish through the regions and the timing of when/how they are affected by LF. Moving forward the group should acknowledge that there are gaps in the tool.
- This tool gives project sponsors enough information to make broader decisions but has a gap in reaches gained vs. lost.

The group discussed HQ from the lenses of bottom up vs. top down approaches. The PWG decided to summarize limiting factors at the Assessment unit scale but will not use the result to filter reach results. Limiting factors will be evaluated at the reach scale and all potential limiting factors will be assigned an action category regardless of whether they occur across multiple reaches.

Limiting Factors- Analysis

The PWG discussed whether to use the filter of geomorphic potential in the limiting factor analysis. They walked through the list of habitat attributes that were being evaluated and identified which might produce action that would only be appropriate in unconfined reaches. They decided to apply the filter only to the Floodplain action category. There was some discussion about how the RTT will define “confinement” and the need to be clear about what that term means and how the filter is used and why. In the current scoring criteria “unconfined” reaches are mostly unconfined (>60% unconfined) but not totally unconfined. The group agreed to make sure the term is defined in the Habitat Prioritization Strategy when it is updated.

Another topic of discussion was the need for refinement around some of the actions. For example, an action related to pools or deep pools could be refinement based on the needs of that life stage. The suggestion was made to change the language to “quality pools” to capture the specific needs of each life stage. The two pool categories- “all pools” and “deep pools” could also be combined into the “quality pool” action. This topic will be discussed at the watershed workshops and the next PWG meeting. If it makes sense in those discussions to combine or rename that action or habitat attribute the PWG will entertain that change. No decision was made on the topic at this meeting.

Decisions:

- *The PWG decided to summarize limiting factors at the Assessment unit scale but will not use the result to filter reach results.*
- *A filter for confinement will be applied to floodplain actions that are identified through the limiting factor pathway.*

Habitat Quality

The PWG discussed how the habitat quality pathway is being used in the tool and made several decisions about the strategy. First, the group discussed the current scoring criteria for habitat quality. These scores are used as filter with only reaches with a score of “5” moving forward as priority reaches. Currently high quality (HQ score >80%) and low quality habitat (HQ score <30%) are prioritized. Greer reviewed how this habitat quality (%) score is developed based on scores for individual habitat attributes (e.g. wood, pools, riparian, etc.). Reach assessments are the source of information with REI indicators used for scoring (unacceptable=1, at-risk=3, and adequate=5). Scores across all habitat attributes are summed and then total HQ is scored based on a total out of 40 (the maximum possible score if all attributes are “adequate”). After looking at specific reaches and restoration opportunities the PWG decided to modify the scoring rules to assign a total score of “5” to reaches with habitat quality <80%. These reaches would be identified as priority reaches, move through the HQ filter, and assigned actions (see discussion below on how actions are assigned). The group decided that reaches with low quality habitat (<30%) are still priorities for restoration and should not be filtered out. Reaches with HQ between 80-90% were given a score of “3” and reaches with HQ >90% were given the lowest possible score of “1” and were not prioritized for restoration. It was noted that those reaches will be given a high score for protection.

The last decision was related to how actions would be developed for priority reaches (those that score a “5” or have HQ score <80%). Any habitat attributes that are “unacceptable” are assigned habitat actions. There was discussion about whether habitat attributes that are “at-risk” should also be assigned actions. The decision was made to assign actions for both categories for now and focus on the “unacceptable” attributes as the highest priority.

Follow-Up Discussion: The PWG did not get the chance to discuss the topic of how to use the number of life stages in each reach. The goal is to prioritize reaches with multiple life stages. Tracy Hillman and Greer Maier had a follow-up discussion of how many life stages to use and after looking at the data they decided to look at both >4 life stages and >5 life stages as the filter for the HQ approach in preparation for the upcoming workshops. This allows reaches with most life stages to move forward while filtering out reaches with just a few life stages (e.g. non-natal rearing) from the top priorities. The watershed workgroups can look into what approach seems to work in prioritizing the appropriate reaches and whether it excludes important reaches. That feedback will go back to the PWG in October for a final decision.

Decisions:

- *The PWG decided to modify the Habitat Quality scoring rules to assign a score of “5” to all reaches with HQ <80%. Reaches with a score of “5” will move forward in the process and actions will be assigned to those reaches.*
- *All habitat attributes that are rated as “unacceptable/score=1” will be assigned an action. Habitat attributes that are rated as “at-risk/score=3” will also be identified but may not move forward as the top priority (decision on these actions is deferred).*

Fish Passage Barriers

Greer presented the PWG with a draft approach for incorporating the barrier prioritization results into the full prioritization process. The proposed approach was to adopt all “High Priority/Tier 1” barriers as priority actions and only “Moderate Priority/Tier 2” barriers that fall within Step 1 Priority Areas (Tier 1 areas). The group discussed whether to use step 1 priorities for all barriers vs. barriers that were not the

highest priority. The PWG reviewed the updated results from the Cascade Fisheries barrier prioritization and approved the draft approach.

Decisions:

- *The PWG decided to adopt all “High Priority/Tier 1” barriers as priority projects and “Moderate Priority/Tier 2” barriers that fall within Step 1 Priority Areas (Tier 1 areas) as priority projects.*
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Okanogan Steelhead- Use of EDT results

John Arterburn and Eric Doyle are working to complete the “Implementation Tab” on the Okanogan EDT Subbasin Report Card dashboard as part of the Colville Tribes Okanogan Monitoring and Evaluation Program. Eric presented the prototype of the dashboard and highlighted the survival factors which focus on the current biological concern. The implementation tab is under development but focus on habitat attributes as oppose to survival factors. The factor weight and % of template tie into the limiting factors being considered by the Prioritization Workgroup. EDT results can inform suitable restoration actions.

Given the timing of the EDT analysis Greer proposed that the PWG postpone prioritization for Okanogan steelhead. The information that will be generated will provide a suite of priority actions for the PWG to consider. The decision has already been made to base the Okanogan steelhead prioritization on EDT so it makes sense to wait for those results. Results should be available in the next few months. The PWG agreed with the revised timeline.

Decisions:

- *The PWG decided to defer Okanogan steelhead prioritization until the EDT “Implementation Tab” results are completed.*
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Greer wrapped up with a discussion of next steps. UCSRB is currently working with the IT and WATs on what was previously called Step 3 of prioritization. There will be more discussion about if an how to assess feasibility of priority actions. She will be using the Prioritization Workgroup (PWG) to further examine ideas and seek input. There will likely be a need to include the PWG in a workshop at the end of October on this step.

Next Steps

The PWG will need to meet again before the October 14 meeting—Greer will send out a Doodle Poll for the first week of October. Watershed Workshops are also scheduled over the next month and any additional input resulting will be considered by the PWG.