



REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING AUGUST MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Wednesday, 12 August 2020

Time: 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: Webinar

Members Present: John Crandall, Justin Yeager, Kate Terrell, Keely Murdoch, Tom Kahler, Brandon Rogers, Catherine Willard, and Tracy Hillman (Chair)

Others Present: Greer Maier/UCSRB, Ryan Niemeyer/UCSRB, Pete Teigen/UCSRB, Sarah Walker/UCSRB, Jason Lundgren/CF, Kodi Jo Jaspers, Kristen-Marie Kirkby/CF, Marc Duboiski/RCO, Mary Sutton Carruthers/CCD, Tabatha Rood/BPA, Jaimie Cleveland/BPA, and Amy Martin/OCD

Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the meeting and participants introduced themselves.

Members present reviewed and approved the draft agenda. June meeting notes were reviewed and approved. June action items were reviewed and discussed. Tracy reviewed the list of future agenda topics.

UCSRB Updates

SRFB

Pete Teigen/UCSRB thanked RTT members for reviewing the proposals that were submitted in this year's grant round. He would welcome any feedback on the process and any needed improvements. Pete showed the final ranked list of projects and discussed the process this year. With \$1.8M available, seven projects will be funded. There were several projects that were withdrawn from the SRFB list because of other funding. The Lower Methow Habitat Enhancement Feasibility project, Big Meadow Fish Passage Restoration project, and the Lower Clear Creek Restoration Design project were funded in part by BPA. The Beaver Creek fish passage project is ranked high in the Brian Abbott Fish Passage Barrier Removal Board process and will likely be funded through that process. Several other projects were pulled, at least in part due to low scores in the original rankings. RTT members can provide feedback to Pete on the process via email: pete.teigen@ucsrb.org.

RCO Contract Language - SRFB

The UCSRB is working with RCO to develop contract language for the upcoming SRFB contracts. The idea is to provide a way to learn from funded projects and to ensure that any information or data generated is available to the region. Marc Duboiski/RCO mentioned that is a common addition to contracts in other regions. Contract milestones will likely be tied to a presentation and final report to the UCSRB and RTT and to any data and information uploaded to the UCSRB data portal and/or website so that it is available to the regional partners. The Tributary Committees already have similar expectations from sponsors. One important component of the report will be lessons learned from project implementation.

Action Items:

- Greer Maier/UCSRB and Tracy Hillman/RTT will work with Marc Duboiski/RCO to develop milestones in future SRFB contracts.

Certification of Monitoring Projects

Pete Teigen/UCSB gave a brief summary on how the region certifies monitoring projects, per the state requirements for these requirements. He will be working with the RTT in the future to certify projects. Tracy Hillman mentioned that he would like to see RCO give more direction on the difference between monitoring and assessment project types. There is a need for Manual 18 to clarify the difference between monitoring and assessments. Marc Duboiski/RCO suggested that he could add that to the list of changes that are needed to the manual next year.

UCSRB Harvest Background Summary

The UCSRB Harvest Background Summary is now completed and available at <https://www.ucsrb.org/mdocs-posts/harvest-summary-final/>. Greer Maier/UCSRB will provide a presentation at the September IT and RTT meetings and the UCSRB Board of Directors will be discussing follow-up topics at their next meeting.

Lower Peshastin Design - Cascade Fisheries

Jason Lundgren/CF gave a presentation on the Lower Peshastin restoration project design. The project will likely be submitted for funding next year. He gave some background on the project, including the history of the site and of the project design. The site has been highly degraded by the development of the highway and straightening of the channel. Design started in 2008 with development of concepts. The property is currently owned by WDFW. The Dryden Gun Club also owns property in the area. The project received funding from SRFB in 2013/2014 and 30% designs were completed in 2016. BPA contributed to the design in 2017 and provided some additional input. Concepts that looked at multiple flow paths have been developed but are not moving forward at this point because it may not be appropriate to split flows with such a small amount of water in the stream.

Cascade Fisheries is now moving forward with the 2018 concept with a new constructed mainstem channel in the historic channel. The RTT asked a question about how the Peshastin pumpback project would change the design approach, if successful. Jason did not believe that the approach would change if flow was improved. The group also discussed how there could be improvements in the mainstem that would enhance this project. CF is not looking at improvements in the mainstem. There are some elements in the design that are meant to improve the function of the alluvial fan. The RTT also asked about how the project would address issues with icing. The design is meant to balance cost, benefit, and the goal of improving function. There are strict constraints that are limiting design. CF is working to provide as much function as possible in the footprint in which they have to work. RTT members reiterated that addressing flow in Peshastin Creek should be a priority in that area.

John Soden/NSD gave more information on the draft design. The goal is to provide as much function and habitat as possible at the lowest possible cost. Some elements like the addition of wood have had to be pulled back in the interest of reducing cost. In general, the RTT voiced support for the project and reiterated the importance of addressing flows and improving function in the area at the lowest possible cost. CF said the cost should be less than \$1M and they hope there will be multiple funders.

Beavers and Restoration Discussion

Tracy Hillman gave a brief introduction on this topic. Beavers have recently moved into the Silver Side Channel restoration project and have elicited the topic how to address beavers when they colonize restoration sites. It may or may not be appropriate to intervene in these situations. Beavers can improve or impeded the benefits of restoration depending on the situation. The RTT discussed the topic and discussion points are summarized below. A couple examples of projects where beavers have altered restoration projects were discussed (e.g., Silver Side Channel and Dryden Fish Restoration projects). The similarities and differences were discussed in regard to the benefits and risks of beavers. The RTT agreed that beavers can pose a risk to some projects and the risk is site-specific. In some cases, there may be a need to manage beavers to ensure the benefits of the restoration project continue. In other cases, projects should not be funded if the risk of damage from beavers is great. The RTT agreed to keep discussing this topic and share information and research as appropriate.

Adaptive Management – Beavers and beaver dam management could be viewed as a tool for adaptive management. In working with an imperiled species there is a need to address short-term habitat needs and in some cases this may warrant interventions to address the needs of the listed species. It is important to look at how long you need an adaptive management plan in place. It may need to go on for several years.

Project Selection – If a proposed project is likely to attract beavers that could affect fish passage or otherwise degrade enhanced fish habitat, sponsors may want to rethink the design or consider not proposing the project. If a project is funded and the actions of beavers prevent the benefits of the project from being realized, then the project fails to fulfill its enhancement goals. The Silver Side Channel project only has a downstream connection and is spring fed (i.e., cannot be flushed), whereas a project like the Alder Creek project has both a downstream and upstream connection and has flushing flows. Thus, the Alder Creek project may be more resilient to beaver colonization than the Silver Side Channel project. Project designs need to consider the possibility that beavers will colonize floodplain/side channel enhancement site.

Ecosystem Management – Beavers are part of the natural ecosystem and they should be considered as a possible natural risk to some restoration actions. This risk should be incorporated into the project scoring process. Ongoing interventions can add cost and may be prohibitive. In some cases, channels have been deeply incised and are not functioning the way they should. In this case, beavers can help with floodplain activation. Salmon have adapted to beavers and beaver infrastructure, but with extensive anthropogenic changes to the environment, beaver interactions with salmon habitat may be strained.

Prioritization

Step 2

Greer Maier and Tracy Hillman gave a brief update to the RTT on the prioritization process. The region is currently in Step 2 of the process and have completed the prioritization of life stages and development of the reach network, which forms the basis for the Step 2 evaluation. The watershed workgroups met in July and early August and the RTT's Prioritization Workgroup (PWG) met earlier this month. Meeting summaries and draft products are available on the new Prioritization webpage:

<https://www.ucsr.org/prioritization/>. UCSRB staff have been compiling Reach Assessment, Level II survey data, and CHaMP monitoring program data in a large spreadsheet with composite habitat information by reach.

Greer and Tracy described the updated strategy for Step 2. After compiling the information, a series of hurdles (or filters) will be set up that will lead to priority projects. There could be one set of hurdles or several different pathways with independent hurdles. The PWG will be finalizing the approach for using information at their upcoming meeting. Tracy described several approaches being considered. Next, Greer described the information that will be used in Step 2.

Potential limiting factors are being evaluated at the reach scale using a rating system for each habitat attribute. The rating system is taken from the Reach Assessments: unacceptable, at risk, and adequate. Habitat attributes with a rating of “unacceptable” are considered potential limiting factors. These limiting factors are tied to specific habitat requirements by life stage and species.

Habitat quality is also being evaluated to identify reaches that are impaired across a suite of habitat attributes. When combined with geomorphic potential, this analysis provides information about reaches that can be restored to benefit the full suite of life stages. At this point, the PWG is considering only looking at reaches that are unconfined due to the potential to restore and create habitat. There are substantial data gaps in this analysis and the PWG is looking at ways to inform this part of the analysis.

Fish passage barriers are already being prioritized through the regional fish passage prioritization process (completed in the Wenatchee and draft in the Entiat and Methow). The PWG is currently proposing to adopt those priority ratings when considering fish passage projects.

UCSRB has developed a spreadsheet tool for Step 2 with data and scoring associated with evaluating habitat. The resulting scores will be sent out for review in the next week. RTT members are encouraged to review the scores for reaches that they are familiar with and override the outputs as needed. Other materials used in Step 2 will be sent out for review including a list of life stages per reach. There will be watershed prioritization workshops and another RTT PWG meeting in September to review comments that come back from the review. If you would like to participate, please contact Greer for the link to the Doodle. (greer.maier@ucsrb.org).

Lastly the group discussed whether hatchery impacts should be included as potential limiting factors. There were mixed opinions within the group as to whether there are limiting factors that result from hatchery program in the region and what those are. Some member felt that those issues should not be addressed through this process but rather just noted as within the prevue of existing regional groups like the hatchery committees. Others felt that hatchery do affect listed fish through competition and that isn't currently included. Other potential impacts are included such as predation and superimposition. The PWG will address this issue during their next meeting.

Step 1

Greer Maier also presented an updated tiering system for the Step 1 outputs. The old tiering used seven tiers to align with the RTT's scoring criteria for AUs. The updated tiers are based on three levels- Tier 1 (high priority), Tier 2 (medium priority), and Tier 3 (low priority). AUs can also be classified as “Not a Priority.” The updated system is easier to understand and opens up more opportunities for projects in watersheds, given that only high priority AUs move through to Step 2. Greer showed the map of the updated tiering system and will send it out for review, after which the full RTT will approve the new Tiers.

Next Meeting

The next RTT meeting will be on 9 September.

Agenda Items for Future Meetings:

- Columbia River Treaty - Shane Bickford
- River Health - Joe Wheaton
- UW GIS Class Presentation - September
- Bull Trout Status Review – September
- Harvest Presentation - September
- Wolf Creek Reach Assessment - October