



REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING FINAL FEBRUARY MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Wednesday, 11 February 2026

Time: 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Location: Webinar

Members Present: Ryan Klett (CTCR), John Crandall (Confluence Aquatics), John Arterburn (CTCR), Hans Smith (YN), Carlos Polivka (USFS), Steve Fortney (Gray & Osborne Inc.), Tom Kahler (Douglas PUD), Tracy Bowerman (USFWS), and Tracy Hillman (BioAnalysts Inc., Chair).

Others Present: Ariel Edwards (UCSRB), Meghan Camp (UCSRB), Mike Kane (CCNRD), Tim Hanrahan (River Sciences Center), Brant Smith (Okanogan CD), Jesse Wilson (BPA), Steve Kolk (BOR), Mark Ingman (CCD), Jeff Jorgensen (NOAA), Sara Windoloski (Inter-Fluve), Zach Sudman (Rio ASE), Morgan Bond (NOAA), Philip Klenke (CF), and Reid Camp (SRSRB).

Tracy Hillman reviewed the February RTT meeting agenda, and the agenda was approved by all RTT members present. Tracy Hillman reviewed the draft December 2025 meeting notes and RTT members present approved the notes. Action items were reviewed from the December 2025 meeting. All action items have been completed.

Tracy Hillman informed the group that Kate Terrell has retired from the RTT. Tracy has removed her from the distribution list.

RTT & UCSRB Updates

SRFB Grant Round Overview and Schedule Review

Ariel Edwards shared the 2026 SRFB schedule and highlighted upcoming deadlines and meeting dates, particularly the ones related to RTT participation. Calendar holds will be sent out to RTT members this week. There were no questions or discussions.

Decisions:

- None

Action Items:

- Ariel Edwards will send calendar holds for relevant SRFB grant round meetings and deadlines to RTT members

Science Summit Recap

Tracy Hillman asked whether there were any key takeaways from the recent Science Summit to discuss. John Crandall noted that Scott Hinch's research on latent mortality was very interesting and had him thinking about all the adult handling that we do in the Upper Columbia (UC) and the potential effects

from all this handling. Given the high rates of pre-spawn mortality we see in the UC, more research is needed on this. Tracy Hillman noted that WDFW is conducting a pre-spawn mortality study on spring Chinook Salmon in the Wenatchee River basin. It will be interesting to see whether mortality rates differ significantly between males and females and between hatchery-origin and natural-origin spring Chinook Salmon.

Tracy Hillman noted a couple of things that stood out to him from the presentations. One was the decline in Bull Trout numbers in the UC (Tracy Bowerman's talk). Another was Katie Barnas' update on UC ESA-listed species, noting that we are largely maintaining current levels rather than seeing meaningful increases. Overall, our stocks remain in a fragile state, which is a sobering takeaway. John Crandall added to the discussion on Bull Trout, noting that areas once considered population strongholds are now experiencing very low numbers. While Bull Trout have the capacity to rebound quickly, he suggested that the cumulative pressures they face may be limiting them.

Tracy Hillman also highlighted Rene Henry's presentation. He noted that they are navigating significant political/social issues in the Central Valley of California, including ongoing litigation, but they are starting to see successes. Given the number of resource users and interest groups in that region, it was impressive and encouraging to see the advancements they have achieved.

Decisions:

- None

Action Items:

- None

Wildfire Hazard Analysis – Chiwawa River

Zach Sudman (Rio ASE) and Sarah Windoloski (Inter-Fluve) presented a newly developed GIS-based methodology to evaluate wildfire impacts on project areas. Steve Kolk (BOR) introduced the speakers, and shared that they got involved in this project because there was interest in protecting projects/investments in areas with high fire potential, such as the Upper Columbia.

The presenters noted the main impacts that wildfires can have on restoration projects including direct burning of project elements, debris flows, wood loading, sediment loading, and peak flows. The presentation provided examples of these impacts in the Chewuch River (Cub Creek Fire 2021), Wolf Creek (Cedar Creek Fire 2021), and Beaver Creek (Carlton Complex Fire 2014).

Their GIS-based model attempts to combine specific factors (Wildfire Characteristics + Landscape Characteristics) to estimate Landscape Responses to wildfire. The presenters explained the various inputs and outputs used in the GIS model and then walked through an example of results from the Chiwawa River basin.

A risk matrix was also developed to be used with the GIS model as an analysis and communication tool. In the matrix, each factor is ranked low to high by two components: the GIS tool's wildfire response rating (y-axis) and project area characteristics and tolerance for wildfire response (x-axis). Each factor is then plotted based on the scores, giving a visual representation of potential risks. It was noted that the x-axis scoring is subjective.

The presenters then explored some of the design considerations that can be evaluated based on model outputs and past lessons learned, such as the size and depth of key member pieces and increases to floodplain connectivity.

Key takeaways include that wildfire impacts can be challenging in the short term, but can provide long-term benefits, particularly when projects are planned with these impacts in mind. It is hoped that this model can be used to evaluate and plan for these risks and impacts early in the planning process. Finally, it is important to consider impacts at both the watershed and individual project scales when planning for wildfire.

Questions:

Q: Tracy Hillman asked whether they have looked at the potential effect of climate change on any of their input variables?

A: This would be a great addition to the model, but currently no climate change parameters have been included.

Q: (Reid Camp) Could this model be used to predict areas to monitor and then inform where to place low-tech structures to capture sediment flows from wildfire disturbances? In essence, could this be used to help build a triage plan to take advantage of things like sediment recruitment?

A: This would be an interesting use of the tool. They are hoping this tool can be used early in the planning process, and perhaps these maps could contribute to a wildfire response plan for certain areas.

Steve Fortney added that there have been some tools developed by USGS for burned area responses, and those could inform where to implement restoration actions.

Q: (Steve Fortney) Are all the parameters scored equally in the risk matrix, or are some weighted?

A: They noted that the risk matrix is a bit more subjective than they would like. Particularly, the x-axis is very subjective, so this subjectivity has some weighting on the results.

Q: (John Crandall) Is there a way to use the model and the risk matrix to evaluate the long-term responses to wildfire? There is often an acute phase directly after the fire, but then over time the effects from wildfire can be beneficial to a project area. Did you look at the prior condition of the habitat? The risk matrix is set up as red = no go and green = go. Is there any way to use the model to evaluate the long-term change or response to the disturbance?

A: They agreed that the risks and impacts do change with time. It was noted that they do not want the risk matrix to be used to simply decide “go” or “no go,” but instead as a tool to evaluate risks and responses early. Currently, the tool does not account for this temporal response, but they would be interested in investigating how to incorporate that into the model.

Q: (Mike Kane) Do you have any examples where risks decline as you move downstream? This question is related to the Middle Entiat projects implemented a few years ago, where the USFS was concerned about potential debris flows from upper sections of the basin. The implementers had to do a lot of work

to show how those debris flows would not impact projects far downstream, and Mike was wondering whether this model could help with these kinds of questions?

A: This was seen in the Phipps Meadow watershed, where there was high debris flow risk higher in the watershed, but risk decreased in a downstream direction. The model's maps could be used to explain and illustrate the potential impacts to land managers, stakeholders, etc.

Q: Steve Fortney asked whether the raster layers used were attached in a network of data lines, or if they were aggregating the information?

A: This model does not connect the data to the flow lines or account for any summation of upstream impacts to downstream (transport or accumulation). The model was left as a watershed scale visual interpretation. The predictions are done at every pixel.

Q: Steve Fortney and Ryan Klett asked whether wood loading potential accounted for direct proximity to the stream?

A: Direct proximity is not included in the current model.

The RTT thanked Zach and Sarah for presenting to the RTT. The RTT found the presentation and discussion useful and informative.

Presentation slides will be shared with these notes. The final report on this work will be publicly available by early March.

Decisions:

- None

Action Items:

- None

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.