

Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Regional Coordination Forum
Boise, Idaho
May 12, 2016

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES:

Jennifer Anders Council-MT
Tony Grover Council
Lynn Palensky Council
Mark Fritsch Council
Patty O'Toole Council
Nancy Leonard Council
Laura Robinson Council
Kerry Berg Council-MT
Kendall Farley Council-WA
Karl Weist Council-OR
Dan Rawding WDFW
Michael Garrity WDFW
Paul Kline IDFG
Matt Boyer MDFWP
Tucker Jones ODFW
Tom Rien ODFW
Tom Iverson YNF, CRITFC
Dave Statler NPT
Jason Kesling BPT

Brent Nichols Spokane Tribe
Bob Austin USRT
Scott Donahue BPA
Marcy Foster BPA
Bruce Suzumoto NOAAF
Jen Bayer PNAMP
Chris Wheaton StreamNet
Greer Mayer UCSRB
Joy Juelson UCSRB
Steve Martin LCSRB
Katharine Carter (CA Water Boards)

PHONE:

Aja DeCoteau CRITFC
Jay Hesse NPT
Sue Ireland Kootenai Tribe
Joe Maroney Kalispel Tribe
Lawrence Schwabe Grand Ronde Tribe
Keith Kutchins UCUT
Sara Borok CDFG

Next Regional Coordination Forum meeting: Thursday, December 15, 2016 in Portland.

Introduction:

Welcome by Jennifer Anders (Chair), and Lynn Palensky, Council staff.

1: Klamath Fish Health Assessment Team (KFHAT)

Sara Borok (CDFG) and Katharine Carter (CA Water Boards)

Sara and Katharine presented from the Klamath Fish Health Assessment Team (KFHAT) regarding their work in the Klamath Basin to provide early warning and a coordinated response effort to avoid, or at least address, fish kill events (non-hazardous materials) in the anadromous portion of the Klamath River basin. KFHAT is an interdisciplinary team of scientists who monitor river conditions and other factors to evaluate fish health and the potential for fish kill. They use a color coded system (green, yellow, orange, red) to assess risk. As risk increases, they step up their level of engagement to include frequent phone calls, more exchange of information,

recommendations for resource management actions, and finally, implementation of a Response Plan. The Response Plan's main focus is adding water to the system and curtailing agricultural withdrawals. See <http://www.kbmp.net/collaboration/kfhat> for more information.

KFHAT is a technical workgroup formed during the summer of 2003 with the purpose of providing early warning and a coordinated response to avoid, or at least minimize, a non-hazardous materials related fish kill event in the anadromous portion of the Klamath River Basin. No dedicated funding, all volunteer by participating entities.

2000 Drought, in fighting over water, large collaborative monitoring effort

2001 Upper Basin water shut off to agriculture

2002 Low flows, high fish runs, huge fish kill

2003 KFHA Team formed (>20 entities), technical workgroup, Assess water conditions and provide "early warning", Data and information sharing (hydrologic, fishery, disease, water quality, blue-green algae)

Fish Kill Response Plan – communication and notification protocol, identifies lead entity within zones of river, posters for public outreach, readiness levels (green, yellow, orange, red)

Klamath River Basin Fish Kill Response Training Manual – Water quality sampling, adult enumeration, juvenile enumeration, disease assessment

Response to early warning is primarily release of water from dams based on KFHA science.

www.kbmp.net/collaboration/kfhat

We agreed there is a need for early indicators and a defined process for responding to early warning signals for fish kills in the CRB. There was interest in exploring a similar coordinated effort for the Columbia Basin. Council staff agreed to convene a two-hour conference call to explore how this might work, and to gage commitments from fish and wildlife managers.

2: NOAA Columbia River Partnership (outcome from Regional Assessment)
Bruce Suzumoto

NOAA has ESA, Trust, and sustainable fisheries responsibilities. NOAA is convening sovereigns and stakeholders to help balance those obligations in an open collaborative process. NOAA held a workshop on May 4 to discuss species status, tributary habitat, ocean, plume, and predation impacts. The next workshop is on June 7 in Portland to discuss harvest, hydro and hatcheries. The framework of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MFAC) to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council will be used to develop recommendations to NOAA based on the outcomes from these workshops.

NOAA will be requesting nominations again from the sovereigns to participate on this newly created group based on Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) requirements. Bruce indicated that they are looking at a two year timeline for recommendations and decisions from this effort.

Discussion about the May 11 meeting to identify common biological objectives for salmon and steelhead. The Minimum Abundance Threshold is the only consistently expressed objective (natural origin spawners) but represents only the floor for each population. The recovery and sustainable harvest objectives are not expressed consistently (escapement to mouth, spawning escapement, includes hatchery fish or not, etc.). Bruce explained his vision for characterizing current habitat capacity, potential habitat capacity, potential hatchery contribution, and establishing goals for each of the species – then getting sovereign and stakeholder buy-in to these goals.

Comments: It's not easy to talk about "broad sense" goals.
Need objectives from lamprey

3: Floodplain Habitat Strategies

Aja DeCoteau provided a brief description that CRITFC will be hosting a floodplain restoration workshop and conference: Healthy Floodplains Living Rivers. The dates are Oct 18-20 and more information is on-line. Steve Martin promoted some new and interesting information that the SNSRB is working on in the Tucannon. He will be presenting that at the conference.

Bob Austin provided a brief discussion on efforts under the Columbia River Treaty to revisit flood plain risk studies to address the ecological function strategy.

4: Habitat Assessment for Reintroduction above Grand Coulee

Laura Robinson reported that the Council approved a Spokane Tribe project to perform a salmon habitat assessment above GCD for up to \$200k for 18 months. The project has three objectives: 1) identify the potential geographic range for salmon and steelhead above Chief Joe and Grand Coulee, 2) identify key streams and reaches that could support salmon and steelhead, and 3) compile existing data that can be used for modeling habitat potential and identify data gaps. The results are due by December 31, 2017.

Council staff is also performing a literature review (white paper) of fish passage projects that are consistent with establishing passage at Chief Joe and Grand Coulee. The list currently includes at least 20 dams. The project will also focus on emerging technologies for passage at high head dams. The paper should be complete by the end of 2016.

Agenda Item 5: Sturgeon Update

Tom Rien

Lynn Palensky

The Council approved the CRITFC sturgeon master plan Step 1.

The sturgeon managers also met yesterday to coordinate on current issues.

- They would like to see some of the cost savings in the Program be applied to emerging priorities for sturgeon.
- The North American Sturgeon and Paddlefish Society will meet in Hood River in September.
- The sturgeon managers have been meeting in workshops to focus on specific topics to support the master plan and the sturgeon synthesis report. Now that those are complete, they will not be meeting again this year, and will use the NASPS conference to connect on Columbia River issues.
- Sturgeon in the lower Snake River are in peril. Need more frequent and more precise monitoring (sequential mark and recapture)
- Need to think about better monitoring of environmental conditions (temp and DO) in the mainstem (thinking about 2015 mortalities)
- The Spokane Tribe will be also submitting a Step 1 master plan for sturgeon by the end of the year.

Agenda Item 6:

Cost Savings Work Group

Jennifer Anders

The 2014 F&W Program included an investment strategy and identified priorities for future work. The Program also provided language that cost savings would be explored to fund the new priorities before Council would ask BPA for additional funds. The work group created a methodology and has identified \$651k in savings from five projects, mostly from planned close outs of existing projects. Based on discussion with the fish and wildlife committee, the workgroup will explore a process to examine a programmatic group of Relative Reproductive Success projects for potential savings. The Council is asking BPA to redirect savings to fund emerging priorities. \$200k has been obligated to the habitat assessment above Grand Coulee. The group had a good discussion of the work and next steps. Folks are generally supportive of the effort with some comments and questions including:

Comments:

- Keep the process transparent
- Keep the focus on cost savings rather than cost *cutting*
- Review of RRS projects should include a science review as well
- How will regular project reviews work with any programmatic reviews of the workgroup?

- Don't buy into the BPA notion that the budget is fixed, and not follow the language of the Program to ask for additional funds after scrutinizing project budgets.
- The wildlife projects are the next up for a categorical review.
- BPA is opening up a rate case and that may be the place to request additional funding for the Program.
- Funds redirected may be to new or existing (expanded work)
- How do folks submit ideas for new work?

7: Research Plan

Patty O'Toole

Tom Karier is leading a work group to update the Council's Research Plan. Staff has developed a work plan with explicit tasks including 1) ISAB/ISRP Report (completed), 2) Public Comment (completed), 3) Historical look at past investment for research (under way), 4) Identify list of Critical Uncertainties (completed), 5) Develop a framework for prioritization (July/August), 6) Consider and describe any needed process elements (August), 7) Committee approval (Sept/Oct), 8) Public Comment (Oct/Nov), 9) Revise per comments (Nov), 10) Final review and approval (Dec/Jan).

Comments:

- Research needs to answer a questions or management action or be informed by something specific.
- Distinguish between Research and M&E
- Don't throw out big basin wide M&E because it might work well in one place and not another.

8: Non-native and invasives

The next meeting of the 100th Meridian Initiative's Columbia River Basin Team is scheduled for May 24-25, 2016 in Spokane, WA. If you are interested in attending the meeting please contact Susan Anderson @ sanderson@psmfc.org.

The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (SNSRB) is writing a letter to the region requesting urgency in addressing non-natives and invasive in the lower Snake River. The contact for this is Steve Martin, Executive Director. Questions - (509) 382-4115 or debseney@snakeriverboard.org

9: O&M update [Need Mark Fritsch's notes]

Development of strategy IEAB and transmission template

FSOC – Phase 1 inventory

Screens – ownership obligations

Mitchell act \$\$

Comments:

Regional Coordinators should see copies of broader-reaching letters that go out to people (e.g. Ltr sent to hatcheries)

Next Steps:

- 1) A follow up conference call will be held on May 26th to discuss if/how to collaborate on development of an early warning for drought conditions in the Columbia River.

At the Regional Coordination Forum meeting on May 12, there was a presentation from the Klamath Fish Health Assessment Team (KFHAT) regarding their work to provide early warning and a coordinated response effort to avoid, minimize or deal with, a fish kill event (non-hazardous materials) in the Klamath basin. At the RCF, there was interest in exploring a similar effort for the Columbia Basin. NWPCC staff agreed to convene a two-hour conference call to explore how this might work, and to gage commitments.

A bit of background from the May 12th meeting:

<https://nwCouncil.box.com/s/tjbdv5u0t57euvbr3ve5lmtwr5v7c58k>

- 2) Next Regional Coordination meeting in Portland, Oregon on December 15, 2016