

Regional Coordination Forum Meeting Notes

March 19th, 2015 - Portland

Attendees: Jen Bayer (USGS), Joe Conner (BPA), Katie Pierson (USGS/PNAMP), Aja DeCoteau (CRITFC), Bob Austin (USRT), Heather Ray (USRT), Chris Wheaton, (PSMFC), Keith Kutchins (UCUT), Ray Entz, (Kalispel Tribe), Cecilia Brown (BPA), Brad Houselt (CTWSRO), Amy Windrope (WDFW), Tom Iverson (YN), Billy Barquin (KTOT), Sue Ireland (KTOT), Les Evorts (CSKT), Lynn DuCharme (CSKT), Derek VanMarter (UCSRB), Joy Juelson (UCSRB), Paul Kline (IDFG), Tom Rien (ODFW), Rudy Salakory (Cowlitz Tribe), Erica Maltz (Burns Paiute), Dave Statler (Nez Perce), Brent Hall (CTUIR), Bruce Suzumoto (NOAA), Bill Maslen (BPA), Bryan Mercier (BPA), Marcy Foster (BPA), Lawrence Schwabe (Grand Ronde Tribe),

Council: Bill Bradbury, Tony Grover, Lynn Palensky, Patty O'Toole, Jim Ruff, Mark Fritsch, Nancy Leonard, Laura Robinson, Erik Merrill (ISAB/RP coordinator), Karl Weist (OR), Stacy Horton (WA), Jeff Allen (ID), Kerry Berg (MT)

Topics are in the order that they appeared on the agenda:

1. Convert program to web platform (Laura Robinson)

Council staff is working on creating dynamic web pages for the program on the Council website. Laura briefed the group on the progress and demonstrated the [table of contents layout](#) and the search and navigation functions now available within the web program. Additionally, an interactive [subbasin map](#) is now available on the subbasin plans webpage as another way for users to access their subbasin plans and dashboards. Staff will continue to make web updates to allow for better usability of the program.

2. Subbasin plan updates (Tony Grover)

Paul Kline asked about subbasin plan updates for the two subbasins in Oregon that no longer have dams – Sandy and Hood. The Sandy does not have a plan, preferring to go the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Bull Run watershed for City of Portland drinking water, thus no update or subbasin plan in the future. The Hood plan anticipated the removal of Powerdale Dam and there is no need to consider updates. However, Tom Rien of ODFW noted that the Willamette had some specific recommendations for updates to that plan and ODFW and the Grand Ronde are considering whether to update the plan for some of those program recommendations.

- Consider the timing, sequencing, and value of SBP updates
- Consider modeling abilities like that in the Upper Columbia

- Relationship between SBP objectives and the program objectives

3. Ocean Forum (Patty O'Toole)

Ocean and Plume Science and Management Forum Called for in the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program; Charter was approved in August of 2013 and needs to be renewed in August 2015. Held four forum meetings with several more subgroup meetings. Council was busy with the F&W Program in 2014 so the pace of work slowed that year.

Forum Objectives (outcomes)

- ID common management questions for ocean and plume research
 - ID critical uncertainties and needs, ID priority if possible
 - ID management application of the information
 - ID and provide opportunities for information sharing between ocean research scientists and fisheries managers
- This forum is both decision-based and coordination-based per objectives above.
 - Outcome is tied to Council decisions: to help the Council identify the most critical uncertainties to support for implementation.
 - Forum hopes to have a few of these objectives met by the end of the year in order to integrate with the revised research plan and the next opportunity to review and support research projects.
 - All forum related information, upcoming meetings, etc. can be found on the Council's Ocean Forum webpage: <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/ocean/>
 - Meetings are generally held quarterly.

4. Regional Coordination Forum (Lynn Palensky)

Next RCF meeting date set for: Thursday, October 15th in Portland, OR. This is the day after the Vancouver WA council meeting. Come with 2016-2017 priorities for the next meeting.

Comment: It would be helpful to maintain a F&W Directory and Calendar, like CBFWA did. Responses:

- Cbfish.org has a person and org search function that likely has all and more than CBFWA directory did. You must be logged in to do the person search.
<http://www.cbfish.org/>
- The Council's website is now posting all Council-convened and hosted meetings. See <http://www.nwcouncil.org/news/meetings/> Other non-Council, F&W related meetings are may be found on the PNAMP website:
<http://www.pnamp.org/calendar>

5. Science/Policy Forum - Eulachon (smelt) - (Lynn Palensky)

The Program calls for several measures related to Eulachon that include developing a better understanding of status, population and biological requirements affecting survival. This includes working with the federal agencies to “organize and facilitate a science policy forum in 2015 to address the biological requirements of eulachon” and to better understand the relationship between current dam ops and flow and survival of eulachon, sturgeon and lamprey.

- Council staff is working with NOAA and a broad stakeholder group to organize a possible “state of the science” forum and companion science-policy forum in the summer of 2015 -- June and August timeframe, respectively.
- The potential date for the August meeting is Aug 21 - the day after the national Amer. Fisheries Society meeting in Portland.
- At least 15 smelt (including Delta smelt) and eulachon abstracts were submitted for this conference. We may be able to entice some of those folks to stay another day. The pool of knowledge on Eulachon is relatively small.
- What is the role of Eulachon in the greater Columbia River food web?

6. Flood Plain Habitat Strategies (Tony Grover)

There is a lot of work going on in this area now; especially in the Estuary, Tucannon, Kootenai and Upper Columbia.

- This type of work includes issues in terms of policy, wetland (included or not), social barriers, liability, landowners, climate change, permitting, and other fed regulations.
- Consider forming a workgroup to address how we define flood plain habitat strategies.

7. Research Plan revision (Patty O’Toole)

The Council’s 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program calls for the revision of the Council’s research plan. Steps include review by the ISAB/RP to develop a set of critical uncertainties, a determination of whether ongoing research is making progress in answering critical uncertainties in the current research plan, a list of research themes or categories that encompass past, current and future research, scientific input on priorities among the critical uncertainties. The Council will provide an opportunity for public review, and then the Council will prepare a revised research plan and seek public comment on that. We anticipate a Council decision on the revised plan early 2016.

Questions received and responses:

- Is there a list of pure research projects and projects with embedded research elements? There are lists, but we don’t have *one single* agreed upon list yet. We can share what we have now. [Lynn provided a hard copy of the “pure research projects from the RM&E review at the meeting ~ 27 projects]

- Are you working with Bonneville to coordinate? Yes.
- Overall seems like we could be more strategic with program research. Try to better synch with managers and decision-making. We agree, can be a hard task, however.
- Can we distribute the Council letter to the ISAB/RP to meeting participants? Yes, we will do that.
- COE and NOAA research should be considered so we don't duplicate.

8. Project reviews (wildlife and research) (Lynn Palensky)

Research: Possible start of a review in early 2016 after Council approves the revised research plan. Understanding where we have gaps in addressing critical uncertainties will be important.

Wildlife: The Wildlife review can begin once the WAC finishes its work on operational loss assessments and future HEP needs and the Council has approved it. The WAC is scheduled to make recommendations in Oct to the Committee then to Council in November. A review of wildlife project could then begin in early 2016.

Comments:

- Please don't burden every long-term wildlife project with an intense review.
- BPA: please share the stewardship template with folks.
- Please streamline the proposal form and eliminate BiOp related info fields.

9. Wildlife Advisory Committee (Mark Fritsch)

- The objectives for the WAC – is to make recommendations on Operational Losses and future HEP needs
- Charter was approved in June 11, 2013
- Called for in the 2009 and 2014 (page 75) Fish and Wildlife Program
- The WAC meets monthly the day after the monthly Council meetings.

The Council has directed its Wildlife Advisory Committee to examine the existing options and alternatives for providing mitigation for wildlife operational losses and to provide a recommendation to the Council for resolving the issue by October 1, 2015. In addition, the committee has been charged to make recommendations on the following issues:

1. The need for additional HEP reports and future HEP Team funding
2. The diminishing need for HEP on new acquisitions as Bonneville completes construction and inundation mitigation
3. Current regional need for follow-up HEP capacity to track project agreement compliance on many properties. That need may be influenced by (1) long term settlements for operation and maintenance, (2) technology advances that may

allow the region to more cost effectively track changes in habitat conditions using remote sensing or other techniques, and (3) species responses.

4. The need for new methods to assess operational losses that incorporate the results of ongoing pilot projects. This could include technical testing and evaluation of operational loss models and methodologies, or other alternative habitat evaluation methods.

All WAC related information, upcoming meetings, etc. can be found on the Council's web site. <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/wac/>

10. Sturgeon and Lamprey Measures (Lynn Palensky and Mark Fritsch)

The Council's 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program calls for implementing actions that result in increased abundance and survival for sturgeon and lamprey, including habitat actions, dam operations and passage, hatchery considerations, monitoring populations, and research to improve understanding of how the development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System affect migration, survival and growth of sturgeon and lamprey.

Comments (Lamprey):

- Lamprey are underfunded in the program.
- The Nez Perce Tribe has safety net program in the Snake River; they are nearly extinct in the Snake.
- We need to do more work in the tribes and at the dams for lamprey.
- The lamprey synthesis report needs to be finalized before Council to consider additional funding for more lamprey work.
- The Lamprey Technical Work Group may be a group that can help with identifying actions and conservation measures but we need additional funding

Comments (Sturgeon):

- As with the sturgeon projects the RM&E review called for the "*development of a comprehensive management plan for white sturgeon through a collaborative effort involving currently funded projects*". This framework was completed in early 2014 and is a principle guide for activities associated with Columbia White sturgeon.
- How do we fund additional sturgeon work - forums and restoration?

11. Threats to program investments (non-natives, toxics, predators, climate)

Non natives: (Jim Ruff)

- The Council is tracking and participating in the 100th Meridian Initiative-Columbia Basin Team with BPA and COE

- Working on legislative efforts for funding to increase the number of watercraft inspection stations in the Pacific Northwest
- Regional data sharing efforts
- How do we address non-native fish to minimize adverse effects on native fish?
- Don't forget to consider the *absence* of native fish species in these discussions
- Some areas of the basin are near pristine but lack key biological components (e.g. marine-derived nutrients), while other areas are "novel" hybrid ecosystems

Predators

Predators: Ongoing efforts to manage and control avian, marine mammal and fish predation on salmonids, sturgeon and lamprey. We need a common metric to measure predation (e.g. adult equivalent); it was suggested this issue could be discussed in the HLI work group.

Toxics:

- Use existing Columbia River Toxics Reduction Work Group (CRTRWG - organized by EPA) for advancing and tracking issues of toxic contaminants in the program
- The CR Toxics Reduction Workgroup meetings are posted on EPA's website: <http://www2.epa.gov/columbiariver/toxics-reduction-working-group>
- And on PNAMPs calendar: <http://www.pnamp.org/calendar>. The CRTRWG meets quarterly
- Could use existing state maps to address program language on mapping toxics in the basin
- Council should consider convening a science-policy forum on toxics when we have both science and policy issues to address, so we can maximize support from state and other organizations

Climate:

- The BPA-funded RMJOC II is down-scaling the latest global climate model results for the Pacific Northwest, and will be doing some hydrologic modeling using the downscaled data; now is the time to get the F&W managers involved with the regional climate and hydrologic modelers.
- Council should have more frequent presentations at the Fish Committee on the state of the science on climate change and its effects.

12. Long term O&M Plan Investment strategy (Mark Fritsch)

The Council's 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program calls for, as part of the Program implementation, an investment strategy (Part Six; Section II, and Appendix P). Within this strategy long-term maintenance of past investments was prioritized as the highest Program priorities. Since the adoption of the 2014 F&W Program in October 2014, the Council staff (State and Central) has been working with the O&M Sub-Committee, Independent Economic Analysis Board (IEAB), Bonneville staff, and Fish Screening Oversight Committee (FSOC) to develop a long-term O&M strategic plan to ensure the

longevity and integrity of the Programs past investments. The strategic plan was presented to the Fish and Wildlife Committee at their January 2015 meeting. The activities and progress made to date associated with the development of the O&M Strategic Plan can be found in the packet documents for the Fish and Wildlife Committee meetings for December 2014 and January and February 2015 (please see Council web site, <http://www.nwcouncil.org/news/meetings/>). Categories being addressed include Screens, hatcheries, lands and the BOG (as a tool).

The O&M Sub-Committee is currently working with the FSOC regarding the screens inventory. An initial inventory has been completed (received in January), but requires further definition and standardization. Meetings will be held with FSOC members to continue refining the asset inventory in April. Due to earlier than anticipated irrigation season, it is anticipated that the inventory and condition assessment can be completed this summer.

The inventory for the hatchery category has been initiated by Bonneville. The inventory with existing data will be completed in spring 2015. However, further work on definitions, data standardization, and condition assessment is needed. The Sub-Committee will be working with Bonneville's Project Managers and the hatchery managers to identify long-term O&M needs. It is anticipated that a letter will be distribute by May to the managers of the direct Programs hatcheries.

The subcommittee anticipates a letter to the region this summer requesting review and input on the draft O&M Strategic Plan.

- Council is working with IEAB, BPA (asset management) and managers to size the need for long term O&M funding. Some tools include the cost savings effort; agreements (wildlife, landowner)
- We can't find funding for this by cutting bits and pieces from our other projects
- Bonneville's asset management process will be used in the development of the strategic plan

13. Program Cost Savings (Kerry Berg)

Jennifer Anders is charged with heading the cost savings workgroup.

- Group met for the first time on February 11th. Next meeting is April 6th in Helena. See: http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/fw-cost-savings-2015_04/
- This is a big task and the process has just begun. Just starting to get our arms around/define issues associated with this.
- For example we are just starting to indentify the new initiatives (emerging priorities) in the Program and what they might cost to implement. Next step (finding way to fund that) will be hard part.

- Process really will involve most of the issues discussed today (O & M, Future project selection/solicitation, etc.) All of this ties together.
- Process should be transparent and coordination is critical.
- We are not going to go alone and as we move forward we need to hear from the fish and wildlife managers on their thoughts on this process and how they can be of assistance.

Comments/questions:

- What tools will be used to find cost savings? Options for redistribution; pace of implementation (BPA contracting); agreements; making the project review process more efficient; reducing transaction costs in permitting, etc.
- We will not achieve savings by pecking away around the edges of individual projects; we'll need to take a programmatic approach.
- This process is as much about cost *savings* as it is about having conversations with others to *funding* what's in the program (e.g. BPA and COA) and strategizing to have those conversations.
- We have been funding our priorities first and all along the way; that is how we got to where we are today.

14. Reintroduction above blocked areas (Laura Robinson and Tony Grover)

Investigating feasibility and options for reintroduction into blocked areas of the basin is the 2014 Program's fourth priority and part of the Anadromous Fish Mitigation in Blocked Areas Strategy. In January, the Upper Columbia United Tribes presented to the Council on their draft work plan for reintroduction above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, which focuses on the program's first phase of a 3-phased, science-based approach to determine feasibility of reintroduction. Phase 1 of the reintroduction study called for in the Program focuses on evaluation of past passage studies, investigation of habitat suitability and availability, and Council collaboration with the region on this topic. The UCUTs invited public comment on the draft, received over 300 comments, and are currently working on revisions to the work plan. The Council does not know of any other work plans or proposals at this time.

Comments:

- Pacific Lamprey are anadromous and should be considered when examining reintroduction
- Lamprey are included in the joint 15 tribes white paper on reintroduction (written for the CRT)
- ISAB's density dependence report shows 1/3 of the CRD blocked to passage\
 - Not just the Upper Columbia
 - Passage currently being considered in the Snake and other areas in relation to FERC

- The Council's role in this is for support and coordinating body, the Council is helping to communicate the various needs to the various entities. The council is also helping to manage expectations. For example, the Council is working with BPA and the utilities on some of their concerns with this effort, and trying to calm the waters. Council members have taken an active role in this initiative, meeting with their local PUDs, BPA, etc.
- In an effort to engage the public, the UCUTs met with 8 counties in Northern Washington recently, and over the last year have met with the 15 tribes regarding the CRT regional recommendation and in creating a response for the Saven letter, and the CRT power group.
- WDFW is 100% behind the feasibility study and are hoping to partner with UCUTs
- BPA: any reintroduction projects will be covered by the BOR & COE within the BPA reimbursable program. It would be funded under appropriations.

15. Biological objectives (Nancy Leonard)

The 2014 Program, in response to the recommendations received from the region, has reorganized the program qualitative goals and quantitative objectives in Appendix D. The reorganization includes a new structure to clarify which program strategies contribute to making progress towards and goal and objectives, and which indicator will be used to track and report on progress for that goal and objective. Currently Appendix D contains a lot of gap that the Council needs to fill with the managers assistance and other interested parties. In response to this need for further refinement the 2014 Program describes a step-wise process to refine with the region these goals and objectives (page 29-36). This approach divides the program objectives into four categories:

1. Objectives for adult salmon and steelhead
2. Other anadromous and resident fish objectives
3. Ecosystem function, habitat, and hydrosystem objectives
4. Public engagement quantitative objectives

The process that we are getting started this year will focus on the first category, objectives for adult salmon and steelhead. The focus of this work is on natural origin (wild) adults goals and objectives. We have been discussing with NOAA how the Council's process can be aligned/integrated with the NOAA Assessment process that is to begin in 2014 as well. Integrating and aligning will reduce the number of times the same managers are contacted about similar information requests by the similar Council and NOAA processes related to adult salmon and steelhead. Based on these discussions the Council will compile existing goals and objectives between April 1st and June 1st. This compilation will be made accessible through the web for people to review. Between June and August a few meetings will be held to discuss with managers and other interested parties the accuracy of the compilation. Once completed, staff will check in with Council to get guidance as to next steps, e.g. move forward by integrating

with NOAA's Assessment process or other approach. Separate from this effort, the Council will work with the managers, the Coordinated Assessment partners, and other interested parties on refining hatchery indicators for adult salmon and steelhead.

16. Other issues:

- The need for the feds to help streamline environmental compliance process. Drawn-out process and requirements are resulting in high transaction costs and delayed project implementation. Even the state permitting process is getting onerous.
- Salish and Kootenai Tribes would like to talk to other managers about resident fish mitigation -- crediting and long term agreements. Are there examples of where wildlife work can be credited to resident fish?
- How do we establish appropriate fish credits?
- Should the managers form a resident fish again to resident fish loss assessments among other issues?
- The Kalispel Tribe can help with wildlife O&M template (talk to Ray Entz)