

**Program Evaluation and Reporting Committee (PERC)
Spokane, WA
Meeting Notes
August 22, 2012**

Background

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council convened the Program Evaluation and Reporting Committee (PERC) to engage in a regional discussion of existing data management systems, tools, and processes. The mission of the PERC is to identify areas of improvement for communicating summary level information above high level indicators (HLI) that support the Council's evaluation and reporting of their F&W Program performance. The PERC is a committee of Council staff led by Council member Bill Booth.

As part of a trial assignment supported by the Council (see June 4, 2012 recommendations at <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2013/staff.pdf>), the PERC will review the Status of the Resource (SOTR), Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP), StreamNet, and Northwest Habitat Institute (NHI) to confirm how these Bonneville funded projects support the Council's information needs. The PERC held a regional meeting on August 22, 2012 to receive input from fish and wildlife managers, involved entities, and interested parties on the SOTR and NHI. A list of attendees, the meeting agenda, and materials presented during the meeting are available on the PERC website at <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/program/perc/>.

Discussion Summary

Introductions were made and opening remarks provided an opportunity to discuss the purpose of the meeting as well as concerns of the group. The PERC staff introduced the role of this meeting as a session to learn about the uses of SOTR and NHI in the larger process of data management improvement. SOTR and NHI were instructed to present on their contribution to data management activities that support the synthesis of high level summary information on (1) habitat improvement and protection for mainstem and tributaries, (2) species status, (3) harvest opportunities and contributing actions, and (4) recent accomplishments and emerging science and tools. The meeting was designed to allow significant time for all attendees to discuss opportunities to streamline the management, synthesis and accessibility of information. The members were reminded of the F&W Program's review process next spring. Recommendations engendered from this review process exceeding the scope of the PERC project may be offered during this Amendment process. Key discussion points not covered explicitly in the presentations are summarized below.

Status of the Resource (SOTR)

Tom Iverson of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation presented on SOTR. The group covered the following topics during discussion.

- Inefficient communication among some existing data pathways was identified as an area for improvement. Current pathways for sharing data among databases, state agencies, project managers, and tribal organizations are not consistent. Members of the group provided the example that data report templates are different for submission to state agencies, StreamNet, and BPA. In some cases, the data utilized to produce the SOTR requires manual synthesis from static reports as well as personal communication with as many as 10 separate entities. The group agreed that the structure of data reporting could be improved through PERC recommendations. The Coordinated Assessments Project was offered as an example of a current effort to improve regional collaboration and develop more efficient data pathways.
- About 80% of data required for producing the SOTR is received from StreamNet. Monthly updates by StreamNet and the SOTR are not automatically linked. The desired information on StreamNet can be located by CBFWA. However, the transfer of information between the two entities is not automatic. It was recognized that the last few years have contributed immensely to improved data sharing using web tools. However, the group recognized that technology can be further improved to establish automatic links between data providers and data synthesizers.
- Missing pathways for data communication identified during the discussion relate to accessing information generated by non-BPA funded projects. An example of this is regional accessibility to resident bull trout data. StreamNet representatives shared that they had challenges in accessing bull trout data because the bull trout project was not funded by BPA. The group acknowledged that databases could be made more robust by integrating non-BPA funded projects.
- The group acknowledged that information must be available on the project, sub-basin, and regional level. Members of PERC reiterated the need for visual or brief summaries that can rapidly convey regional trends of fish and wildlife success, decline, or stagnation. The broad scale of reporting for HLIs and high level summary information was recognized as important, but the group identified that the data sharing infrastructure must also support lower level data needs. The group expressed a desire that recommendations for improving the data reporting system operate on multiple scales.

Members of CBFWF suggested that SOTR is a project that, with direction from the Council and PERC, could further develop a structure to collect and synthesize data to meet specific reporting needs.

Northwest Habitat Institute (NHI)

Tom O'Neill presented on the NHI. The following topics and concerns arose during the discussion.

- Current habitat evaluations are dispersed among regional tribes, agencies, individuals, and other parties. Paul Ashley is one individual that holds an estimated several terabytes of HEP data among archives, CDs, floppy disks, and personal computers. His evaluations are standardized; however, they are not necessarily in a format accessible to the region. The group recognized that the data stored in these surveys can contribute to reporting Habitat Units (HUs). The group determined that it is important to archive existing habitat data and make it regionally accessible.
- The discussion also concerned the development of a central database for organizing regional habitat data. The group acknowledged that a centralized database for vegetation data could potentially serve as a foundation for HU reporting, spatial analysis, and adaptive management strategies for wildlife and habitat. However, the group also acknowledged that HUs are the currency for reporting habitat status to BPA, congressional staff, and the general public. The habitat assessment and mapping of land-use, land-cover, vegetation, and wildlife distribution of the Pacific Northwest proposed by NHI were viewed as important scientific endeavors but may not be a currently recognized basis for reporting success and progress.
- The group discussed at length the evaluation of wildlife using HUs. Many members of the group felt that HUs are not an accurate representation of habitat and wildlife status. Other measurement methods include CHAP as well as simply cataloguing number of acres that have been procured and protected. It was acknowledged that recommendations to redefine HUs as the measurement for habitat status may benefit the region's F&W Program and could be a beneficial topic for the upcoming Amendment process. Members suggested that a future benefit of redefining habitat metrics could allow for the development of the tools proposed by NHI. The group recognized that the GIS spatial library and geographical habitat summaries proposed by NHI may have a role in the future for adaptive management if the evaluation of habitat and wildlife is expanded beyond HUs.
- NHI posed questions related to project funding decisions (basis and timing). Council staff stated they would communicate with NHI outside of the PERC meetings.

Path Forward

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 13th, 2012 in Portland, Oregon.

Members of the group expressed interest in clarifying the scale of data reporting. The group expressed a desire for the PERC to clarify the audience of recommendations and reports. A key interest for discussion at the September 13th meeting was finding out

what is important to fish and wildlife managers, as well as resident fish information and data accessibility to the region.

An additional concern voiced during the meeting was the overlap between existing coordinated efforts to improve data management in the region and the mission of PERC. These projects include Coordinated Assessments Project and BPA's Data Management Framework. It was decided that the September 13th meeting will include a presentation on the Coordinated Assessments Project. BPA may also be able to speak to the objectives and current status of the Data Management Framework at the next meeting.