

Regional Coordination Forum Meeting Notes

October 15, 2015 - Portland

Attendees: Jen Bayer (USGS), Bob Austin (USRT), Heather Ray (USRT), Chris Wheaton, (PSMFC), Keith Kutchins (UCUT), Ray Entz, (Kalispel Tribe), Tom Iverson (YN), Sue Ireland (KTOT), Greer Maier (UCSRB), Paul Kline (IDFG), Tom Rien (ODFW), Tucker Jones, (ODFW), Jason Kesling (Burns Paiute), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce), Bruce Suzumoto (NOAA), Bryan Mercier (BPA), Marcy Foster (BPA), Dan Rawding (WDFW), Shaun Seaman (Chelan PUD), Scott Soultz (KTOT), Makary Hutson (BPA), D.R. Michel (UCUT), John Sirois (UCUT), Dave Ward (HDR), Laura Gephart (CRITFC)

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), Kendall Farley (WA)

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

Regional Coordination Forum (Lynn Palensky)

The next RCF meeting date set for: Thursday, May 12, 2016 in Boise, ID. This is the day after the Boise Council meeting.

RCF communications:

- How can the Council coordinate with the primary coordinators in a way that is recognized by the coordinators?
- Include the distribution list at the bottom of the email as a cc list.
- Continue to work with PNAMP to distribute meeting notices.
- 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>

1. Ocean Forum Update: (Patty O'Toole)

Staff reported that the forum, chaired by Council chair Phil Rockefeller, is discussing reducing the scope of the charter. Currently there are several objectives for the forum including: a) creating opportunities for ocean research scientists and freshwater managers to share information; and b) developing management questions and prioritizing critical ocean and plume related critical uncertainties. The forum is considering continuing with the first objective (a). There are advantages to having a charter but it may not be necessary. The Chair's office is working with forum members to find a date for a one hour meeting in

the next couple weeks. Tom Iverson (YIN) noted that he never heard about the last meeting and wondered if we could notify the regional coordinating group about meetings. Council staff noted that the forum has primarily been focused on established forum members but meetings are open to all. Interested people will be added to the mailing list.

All forum related information, upcoming meetings, etc. can be found on the Council's Ocean Forum webpage: <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/ocean/>

2. Subbasin plan updates (Patty O'Toole)

There are 59 subbasin plans (management plans) adopted into the Fish and Wildlife Program. The plans fulfill several purposes, including use by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) when they review project proposals. Staff asked meeting participants to consider some questions: Do any plans need to be updated? How should they be updated? How important is updating the plans?

Dan Rawding (WDFW) noted that in Washington, there is interest in updating the White Salmon plan because of the removal of Condit Dam. YIN and CRITFC noted that is some interest in this as well, but they do not have capacity to do the updates, so funding is needed.

Greer Maier (UCSRB) noted that the upper Columbia plans are out of date. Assumptions made with best professional judgement have changed with increased data availability, and new modeling is available, so some restoration priorities have changed. Paul Kline (IDFG) noted that work being done for Coordinated Assessments for anadromous fish is being stored in a NOAA database so now information is in different places.

Bruce Suzumoto (NOAA) commented that whatever the Council decides to do should be consistent with the most recent information. Recovery Plans, Subbasin Plans and the BiOp should all use the same data, although they may be at different scales.

Dan Rawding (WDFW) suggested that indicators from the Coordinated Assessment effort should be linked to the dashboards. Greer noted that NOAA's has a recovery actions mapping tool, and PNAMP is working to display monitoring sites. These should be linked to the dashboards.

Tom Rien (ODFW) stated that there was no enthusiasm at ODFW for another round of subbasin planning. They prefer to use existing information. He suggests keep working to make sure the dashboards stay relevant over time.

Keith Kutchins (UCUT) noted that the NOAA assessment/Council objectives process may inform what we should do. Need to add resident fish and wildlife to the Coordinated Assessment process. Ray Entz (KTOI) stated that if and when SBPs are updated, they need to have the same standards for public process. Don't do that behind closed doors.

Jay Hesse (NPT) reiterated concern about the amount of effort to update subbasin plans. He advised everyone to not underestimate how much work is involved. The effort last time had value. Not sure an update would add much more value at this point. Coordinating on goals and objectives would have value. Whatever happens, keep it efficient.

Keith Kutchins (UCUT) voiced concern that habitat degradation continues to happen. How can we understand it and document it?

The option that is most favorable is continuing to use the dashboards to keep important information, continue upgrading the resources available on the dashboards.

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

A quick summary of the August 2015 science policy forum and next steps for the Recovery Plan was provided. WDFW, Cowlitz Tribe and NOAA presented on the Recovery Plan, cultural importance and life histories to the Council in October 2015. See the Council's website at <http://www.nwcouncil.org/media/7149604/1.pdf>.

- Comments: stay connected with the RCF when the recovery plan comes out in the Federal Register Notice for review:
 - Fed Register Notice /Public Comment Period (February 2016)
 - Final Recovery Plan (December 2016)

4. Flood Plain Habitat Strategies (Tony Grover)

- Discuss possible strategies for a science-policy forum on the topic.
- Look at flood plain strategies for a forum discussion. There is a lot of work going on in this area now; especially in the Estuary, Tucannon, Kootenai and Upper Columbia.
- The Nez Perce Tribe is super supportive of that. Newsome creek is a good example of a valley-wide approach.
- CRITFC: the 2016 Future of our Salmon (FOOS) conference is specifically on the importance of floods and floodplain connectivity. Staff will recommend that the Council work with CRITFC to organize a technical meeting ahead of the FOOS to

help organize and focus the topics. There is a December 10th meeting at CRITFC on floodplain resiliency (it's a CLE).

5. Research Plan revision (Patty O'Toole & Erik Merrill)

The 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program calls for updating the Council's Research Plan. Council staff presented an update on the process. The ISAB/RP is working on a report that will take a look at the 2006 research plan and how the uncertainties in that plan have been addressed. It will also identify important research questions, derived from 130 sources, for the Council to consider when the Council drafts its Research Plan. The ISAB/RP report is due out in December. There will be opportunity for review and comment. The Council is interested in hearing from the Fish and Wildlife managers about what questions they think are important.

Jay Hesse (NPT) asked if the comment period will be used to update the report or just provide comments.

Dan Rawding (WDFW) noted that in the past the ISAB/ISRP has reached out to experts/managers during the development of their reports. This process has not done so. He believes the managers are coming in too late in the process. If there is better exchange early, the managers will likely have fewer comments and concerns.

ISAB/RP staff noted that instead of briefings on subject areas from researchers and managers, the ISAB and ISRP used a database that includes program amendment recommendations from managers, products of regional RME planning efforts (2006 Research Plan, ASMS, etc), and uncertainties from the ISAB and ISRP reports, many of which were developed based on briefings and literature from managers and researchers. The ISAB/ISRP also reviewed annual reports to evaluate the extent that ongoing projects addressed 2006 Research Plan uncertainties. Thus, this was a summary effort making use of past work. However, the ISAB and ISRP acknowledge that their evaluations are based on their expert opinion rather than a quantitative analysis, and the public comment period will be extremely important for manager input and refinement and prioritization of the uncertainties. The ISAB/ISRP welcome any role that the Council may request following public comment and/or development of a revised research plan. But as with ISAB/ISRP reports in general, the Council decides how to incorporate ISAB/ISRP evaluations and public comment including those from fish and wildlife managers and project proponents. The Council also decides whether further ISAB/ISRP is needed once an ISAB/ISRP report is complete. Requests to the ISAB are approved by the ISAB Administrative Oversight Panel, with representatives from the Council, Tribes (CRITFC), and NOAA Fisheries.

As an aside, the ISAB/ISRP received contextual briefings from Council staff, Council member Karier, NOAA ex officio Mike Ford and Paul Lumley for CRITFC. And for climate change and toxics, topics not historically covered comprehensively by Program projects, the ISAB/ISRP were briefed by CRITFC (climate) and USGS (toxics).

Paul Kline asked what the scope of “research” is and stressed the importance of status and trend monitoring. ISAB/RP staff stated that the report will take a broad look at research. This will include but not be exclusive to hypothesis driven research. The ISAB/ISRP also emphasize the importance of status and trend monitoring and will acknowledge this in the report.

6. Project reviews - wildlife review update (Lynn Palensky)

Reported: The Council is initiating a phased approach for the next wildlife projects review process. Beginning with a focus on how program measures are being implemented and how issues identified in the previous wildlife reviews are being addressed. To begin, Bonneville and Council staff would work together on the following areas:

Initial Phase

1) Inventory project portfolio for:

- a. settlement agreements (complete and planned); and
- b. outstanding/outdated management plans and link to O&M strategic Plan

2) Complete Management plans

- Finalize standardized template. Work with Bonneville and ISRP to finalize by end of 2016.
- Ask sponsors to complete or update management plans where needed

3) Standardize Annual Report Format

Finalize template. Work with Bonneville and ISRP to finalize by end of 2016. (Links to management plan for adaptive management, accomplishments to date, and unforeseen circumstances).

4) Inventory Operational loss assessments: Where do they exist, where are they in progress, where are they still to be developed? Identify issues that prevent us from completing loss assessments. How would operational loss mitigation factor into construction and inundation loss settlements? Potential ties to fish mitigation?

5) *Complete loss mitigation agreements for remaining construction and inundation losses by end of 2016* (program language). If these cannot be complete by end of 2016, identify road blocks to progress and necessary steps/schedule for completion.

6) Describe the current approach(s) to implement monitoring on wildlife projects. Summarize in an issue paper and develop available/logical options for moving forward.

Phase 2

7) Begin a focused review in winter 2017 (presentations, management plans, and results reporting) based on the work accomplished over the course of the project, especially between FY 2010-FY 2016. Establish a 5 to 10 year cycle for a results/adaptive management review by the Council and ISRP to ensure accountability and promote information sharing.

Question:

Dan Rawding (WDFW) asked if there is a budget for the work to update management plans? Response: that should already be included in individual project budgets; it's a requirement of the projects.

7. Wildlife Advisory Committee (Mark Fritsch)

The objectives for the WAC – is to make recommendations on Operational Losses and future HEP needs

- Bob Austin: Maybe there is value in keeping the WAC meeting to talk about these topics.
- Please don't refer to wildlife agreements as "settlement agreements"; please call them "long term agreements".
- WAC charter expires at the end of October. Working on definitions for operational and construction losses and HEP. Will go to the full Council in November.
- Why do aquatic species keep creeping into the conversation with WAC? Related comment: Why doesn't it?

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

8. Sturgeon

Update: The Council and staff are very interested in understanding sturgeon populations' trends and threats and have asked the sturgeon managers to provide regular updates to the Council on this. The managers and the COE (Bonneville Dam) rep presented an update at the October Council meeting. Keeping sturgeon on everyone's radar screen will be important as we move toward additional actions in this area under the Program's emerging priorities implementation.

There is shared concern over the mortalities of adult sturgeon during this summer's water conditions. In addition, there are mortalities occurring through predation and poaching that are of concern and the Council is interested in understanding the impacts of those threats. There is general consensus that we (as a region) need to be better prepared to verify and estimate mortalities if we encounter such extreme conditions again. Personnel, equipment, modeling are just a few of the considerations for preparedness. An early warning system would be beneficial (discussed under climate change).

As the ISAB/RP continues to work on revising the Council's research plan, the list of critical uncertainties gets refined. There is a subset of those uncertainties that are specific to sturgeon for all Columbia populations. Most of those came from the Sturgeon framework and the program language. Those will be available for review when the ISAB/RP report is released. Hopefully we can draw from that list to help identify implementation actions – research or restoration – under the emerging priorities processes.

ODFW/WDFW: We need an implementation team to identify what the research and restoration actions we need to put forward for sturgeon.

9. Lamprey Measures (Mark Fritsch)

The lamprey synthesis report needs to be finalized for Council to consider additional funding for additional lamprey work.

10. Threats to program investments (non-natives, toxics, predators, climate) (Jim Ruff)

Non natives: zebra/quagga update

Predator Management: Pursuant to the fish and wildlife program, Council staff are thinking about establishing a technical workgroup to address predator management effectiveness, questions and issues

What do people think about the value of establishing such a focused technical work group? Do people have an appetite for it? What would be the product coming out of such a work group? The 2014 Program language calls for determining: 1) the effectiveness of ongoing predator management actions in the basin; 2) the level of marine mammal predation from the dam to the mouth; and 3) the feasibility of developing a common metric to measure the effects of predation on salmonids, such as adult equivalents.

- It's likely a multi-day process; probably just to figure out an adult equivalent.
- Need to be very clear about how we deal with introduced non-native spp.
- A number of parties indicated an interest in participating.
- Council staff could develop a scoping document to float by the region.
- After the meeting, one party indicated a concern with adequate resources to staff this work group, as well as the amount of time and effort that may be involved.

Climate:

This year might be an analogue for future climate change conditions. What are the effects of Climate Change on F&W resources, particularly warmer temperatures?

The region needs to complete temperature modeling in the remaining reaches of the mainstem Columbia River – the Rock Island Reservoir and the Hanford Reach. Then, you have to link all the individual temperature models together.

What will be the effects of sea level rise inundation to critical habitat, particularly in the estuary? What do we do to plan for that?

Lessons learned from extreme 2015 summer conditions: discuss regional interest and possibilities to mobilize mainstem data collectors during extreme conditions, such in this year.

This could be a rapid response monitoring system, limnological assessments to help determine causes and effects – fish deaths, equipment, and a rapid response team. USGS' tributary low flow and temperature data and NOAA's post mortem report ties into this concept. Who has the necessary monitoring equipment, who has resources?

- Jay: balance the amount of RM&E
- DR: Look for changes in the Treaty that would allow cold water to come down the system. Look at the big picture.
- Bruce: we have a good juvenile monitoring program going out of the system. We look at adults between the dams, but we don't fully understand how the fish travel from estuary to headwaters. There is straying, and where are they being caught? Need a single integrated PIT-tag system for adult fish passage monitoring.
- A Klamath River monitoring team was established during extreme conditions; can we use this as an analog for the Columbia Basin?

- NOAA has a National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), which serves as the U.S. Drought Portal. NOAA-NIDIS is also developing a Drought Early Warning System (DEWS) for the Pacific Northwest region, which should be available in 2016. It will cover such things as drought effects on fish, vineyards, energy and agriculture.

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

See: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/om-subcommittee/>

12. IEAB Report (Tony Grover)

The report has 5 recommendations: hard costs for tangible property – the big stuff. A “sleeper report” that could change the look of the program. See the report on the web at: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/ieab/ieab2015-1/>

13. Program Cost Savings (Tony Grover/Kerry Berg)

See: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/cost-savings-group/>

14. Update on emerging priority solicitations: Habitat Assessment (Laura Robinson and Tony Grover)

At the October Council meeting, the Council and Bonneville approved a Request for Proposals to specifically address one of the emerging program priorities: As one element of blocked-area mitigation, the Council seeks proposals to “investigate the availability, suitability and salmon survival potential in habitats above Grand Coulee Dam” (that is, between river mile 545.1 and river mile 745 at the Canadian Border), including in any tributaries in this area that have the potential to support anadromous fish. See: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/reviews/2016habitat/>. Proposals are due December 15, 2015.

15. Biological objectives (Nancy Leonard)

The 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program describes a stepwise process to revise as need the Program goals and objectives. The first step focuses on natural origin salmon and steelhead. The Council, with the assistance of QW Consulting, compiled a database of existing salmon and steelhead objectives and reviewed these during the June 3, 2015 regional meeting. The Council has revised the content of the natural origin salmon and steelhead biological objectives database per the comments received during and after the June 3, 2015 regional meeting see: <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/am/goals-objective/>

The Council is currently developing a basic mapper tool to facilitate viewing objectives found within a subbasin for a given population, following the guidance received from the July 14, 2015 Fish and Wildlife Committee. Staff plans to discuss and present the basic mapper tool during the December 2015 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting, to get further feedback on whether the basic tool is satisfactory or whether it needs to be improved to meet the needs of the Council, the managers, and NOAA's Columbia Basin Partnership.

The Council, led by Phil Rockefeller and Bill Bradbury, continues to coordinate with NOAA's Columbia Basin Partnership and is making all files related to the natural origin salmon and steelhead objectives available for NOAA's process. Bruce will provide an update on NOAA's Columbia Basin and Partnership next.

Council staff plans to contact managers working on resident fish, lamprey, and sturgeon during 2016 to discuss how best to address the next topic in the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program, *Other anadromous and resident fish objectives*, see the program section on [refining program goals and quantitative objectives](#).

Tom Iverson and Chris Wheaton, pointed out that the Coordinated Assessment process plans to work on sturgeon and lamprey data exchange in the upcoming years and should coordinate the objective work as feasible. Council staff, Nancy, agree would be good to coordinate.

Paul Kline and Jay Hesse asked about the status of the MERR. Council staff, Nancy, stated that the MERR document was a working document developed with manager input to inform the 2014 Program amendment. Components of the MERR that managers recommended were included in the 2014 Program amendment and the MERR document is no longer an active document. As for other documents that some may link to the MERR, such as the Anadromous Salmonid Monitoring Strategy (ASMS), these have not been worked on since the last meeting with managers. The last work done on the ASMS was an attempt to refine the document in 2012, since that time there hasn't been interest voiced to update or change any of these monitoring strategies. The latest files are available <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/am/monitoring/monitoring-strategies/>

16. Update on NOAA's Regional Assessment Partnership – update "Columbia Basin Partnership" (Bruce Suzumoto)

NOAA has changed the name of the process to "Columbia Basin Partnership." Bruce summarized the aim of the Columbia Basin Process, which is to look at the whole system holistically considering existing goals and objectives for natural origin salmon and steelhead, current harvest needs, habitat capacity, hatchery, et cetera. NOAA has been

working with a small group consisting of the representative of the Council, sovereign, and stakeholder groups to develop a draft approach and process to identify participants. NOAA has sent letters to sovereign and stakeholders asking them to identify representatives to engage in the process. NOAA plans to hold the first sovereign-only meeting in December 2015 and the combined stakeholder-sovereign meeting early 2016 (perhaps mid-January).

17. Other issues:

A. Stronghold designations for non-salmonid species. For example: sturgeon spawning sanctuaries below Bonneville; or a Eulachon stronghold in the Cowlitz.

Comments:

- What is a stronghold?
- How would be use them?
- How are the criteria established?
- Most places wouldn't meet the characteristics outlined in the program (i.e. a reasonable chance of eradicating invasive or non-native species)
- WDFW has established a few strongholds. Dan Rawding will inquire as to additional interest in non-salmonid stronghold designations
- Sturgeon spawning areas (sanctuaries) are protected through fisheries management

In general, there was little to no interest in designating strongholds.

B. BPA – integrated management program. Fish and Wildlife managers are interested in updates from Bonneville about how the IPR process may affect fish and wildlife mitigation implementation.

C. Can BPA please keep the coordinators updated on the status of Accords?