

Methow Restoration Council

August 18th, 2020

Participants: Chris Johnson (MSRF), Pete Teigen (UCSRB), Nicole Jordan (UCSRB), Maddie Eckmann (Yakama Nation), Robes Parrish (USFWS), Hannah Coe (Okanogan Conservation District), John Crandall (MSRF/RTT), Kristen Kirkby (Cascade Fisheries), Gene Shull (USFS), Matt Young (Colville Tribes), Crystal Elliott (Trout Unlimited), Lee Bernheisel (Okanogan Wilderness League), Greer Maier (UCSRB), Jamie Cleveland (BPA), Jessica Goldberg (MSRF)

Notes

Pete Teigen – UCSRB Updates: I submitted UCSRB regional list to RCO/SRFB for funding last week. We had 9 projects that we submitted for funding consideration. We had 10 that went through the process but the State Review Panel labeled the lower Methow predation assessment as a Project Of Concern (POC) so we didn't submit that one. We had two alternates, and the Alder Creek project only received a portion of their funding due to where the funding line ended up. If additional funds are available those funds will go to fill additional requests as available. We had projects in Wenatchee, Methow, and Okanogan, none in Entiat. Also the Monitoring project was scored and funded. For final review we had the presentations to the CAC; thanks to project sponsors and others that helped with that. For the Okanogan projects the CAC met at the Twisp Grange with 5 of 7 members in the room. They thought sponsors did a great job. We did similar meeting in Wenatchee. We had two separate calls with the two CACs where they did their rankings. A subset of each group met in Wenatchee where they created the list; the collation worked well this year. Craig Nelson recused himself from reviewing the Loup Loup project as he is the director of OCD (the applicant).

Pete – we'll be sending out a survey in early September probably to solicit feedback on the grant process. We will look to have a debrief later, likely in October. We made some changes this year, and then the pandemic forced some additional changes. We may keep some of the changes, such as going to more remote/virtual site visits. Would like to get feedback from people on that. We had presentations earlier in the grant round, I'm curious to see how partners felt that went, what was useful.

Discussion – site tours, timing, videos are helpful for a lot of sites, some overlap with the presentations, people did a good job

Pete – We submitted a planned project forecast to RCO, projects for 2021 and for 2022, with estimated costs per year

SRFB last week discussed what they wanted their legislative request to be, the total number far exceeded their expectation of what could be done. One thing that came out was that there some big, expensive projects and there is not a currently good way to fund those projects. RCO is going to put together an \$80 million dollar budget request, and based our percentage we would get almost \$9 million. Uncertain budget future at the state currently, so stay tuned. We would have to work with RTT and CAC on how to review a lot of extra proposals if we get a lot more money.

Chris Johnson – it isn't a fixed list, correct?

Pete – no, you can apply for other projects or not apply for the ones on the list. If you change the name of the project, please let me know so we can update the pages in Salmon Recovery Portal so we avoid redundancy.

Pete – last update is we are in the process of solicitation for Okanogan LE outreach Funds; it closed the other week. We received 5 proposals – they all looked strong, and we will be evaluating those and discussing contracting with project sponsors in the coming weeks.

Nicole Jordan— for the outreach grants, it was very inspiring to see such positive work coming out with those proposals.

UCSRB is contracting with Ruckelshaus Center and partnering with BEF to conduct an evaluation of effectiveness of salmon recovery process in our region. We will have about 50 interviewees, and they will start contacting people in the next few weeks. Interviews are confidential and information will be compiled but not attributed to any particular interviewee.

We just refreshed our newsletter, which will be quarterly. Let me know if there are people that you know should be added to our list

We are also launching a new Podcast, John Crandall is first interviewee

River's Reach – Conversations from the Upper Columbia

We will do a release with that and share the information

Greer Maier – I sent out some updated prioritization tiers for Step 1; we reduced the number of tiers. Sent the maps and table out to the Methow Prioritization workgroup, if you want to see it, send Greer an email, it is also under the products tab on prioritization page on our web site. Review and send feedback. There will also be a giant habitat analysis. If you are really interested in digging in and helping the group identifying limiting factors, etc., get in touch with Greer. Otherwise there will be a finalized list in October. The habitat evaluation is huge and complicated, may be hard to catch up and understand, the review process is tricky, but the product should be easy to understand. It will also be on the web site. For now we are focused on Tier 1 watersheds for spring chinook and steelhead, after October we will dig into bull trout and other things.

John Crandall – Methow Outreach: The Methow River Cleanup was last Saturday; we had a registration set up through volunteermethow.org, which went well. This would be a good platform, a good way to communicate with a group. I approached it as a way to do something when we can't really get together. Nobody from MRC signed up through the web site, but overall we got about 20 signups. I also got a lot of phone calls and emails. I organized it pretty loosely. Part of my hope for the day was getting people out on the river, and I think that overall it worked. The response was very supportive and appreciative. Some people really got after it, and were very enthusiastic. From what I know, we had people from Weeman all the way to Gold Creek Loup, we also did work at the mouth and two river access points. We had drop locations for trash at four locations, they were somewhat utilized. We pulled out a lot of trash. One person pulled out over 200 pounds alone. It was great, a lot of lessons to be learned.

Pete – that sounds awesome, I know the rivers are seeing a lot of use. I would love to hear more about that at a regional forum, a way to clean up rivers and to connect with other river users. Would love to hear the lessons learned for other regional forums. Our rivers are seeing high use too, and there is a lot of waste

John – the title of the day was Methow River Cleanup and Appreciation day, we have a lot of use, especially between Winthrop and Twisp.

As a tangent, the river is so low right now, and there is so much disturbance from tubers in the thalweg, I don't think spring chinook would have an opportunity to spawn, so it is possible that river use is affecting fish behavior. I heard about one weekend where one provider had over 400 tubers.

One thing that came out of the cleanup was the identification of some bigger items that could be targeted for removal. The only negative hit I got was a call was a woman from below Twisp where someone "cleaned up" her soaker hose that she had put out for some plantings right by the river
Chris J – do we still need to coordinate pickups?

John – I think it is all up, need to check in with Brian at Carlton Hole. Also Casey at WasteWise is going to cover the costs of the trash. A lot of people I think also took the trash home and took care of it on their own

Chris J – we have to go through a permit process for larger items, but it is not difficult

John – we have a lot of outreach tied to environmental education that we run, which are all in person types of events, and those are largely off the table this year. The thinking is how we can replace that, certainly there is the potential for a virtual component. We've actually done virtual snorkeling with people onshore watching a video feed of us out in the river snorkeling, so we are looking into options. New school schedule is also somewhat uncertain, but it is not too early to begin planning. Could be a great year to offer internships for students, and the school district is exploring that, mentorship or internship opportunities. Would be open to talking to folks about what we offer the school, a lot of potential ideas out there

Kristen Kirkby – a coworker in Wenatchee initiated some virtual in-home options, she is working on a self-guided watershed tour, will be sending a packet that guides that exploration, including gift cards for gas to help address equity issues, they will also be setting up a livestreaming of a tank so kids can see the development over time, also looking at virtual tours at habitat restoration sites. She's working on a bunch of things, will I likely try to bring some of those efforts up here, reaching out to teachers as we figure out what we will be able to offer

Robes Parrish – John, do you ever see any literature on fish harassment by recreation users?

John – not specifically, I just thought about it when I saw the numbers of users and then I got an email about how there were no redds in the Twisp to Winthrop area, and I thought that since the river so low, that there would be little opportunity for them to spawn with people floating over them every 15-20 minutes

Robes – CCNRD looked at different types of impacts, which they are trying to quantify, so if you come across any information pass it along

John – in the deep pools I think there is little impact on the salmon, but in the tail outs where they would spawn in the shallow areas. Spawning requires them to spend time in a spot, and they might not have time it takes. I think it would be hard to quantify

Robes – down here we also have a ton of stand up paddleboards, they expand the period of use because people are out of the water

Gene Shull – USFS Projects Update: The Twisp Project is a Forest, hazard fuels, wildlife, trails project, focused on restoring forest health. It has a large project area boundary, includes McClure Mountain, wraps around and includes Alder Creek, the top of the Twisp River, but excludes Buttermilk because that was in the Mission, excludes wilderness, wraps around Chicadee/Thompson Ridge and Wolf Creek. Looking at commercial thinning and noncommercial thinning, hazard fuels reduction, also looking at the one mile radius of private/forest interface. Looking at developing contingency fire lines in key areas where we could hold a fire, reducing ladder fuels. Looking at protecting habitats, road closures, storm proofing, upsizing culverts, and adding large wood in Twisp River, upgrading barrier fish culverts. Also looking at removing Road's end campground to reduce stress on bull trout. We have a few trail projects associated with Chicadee.

I won't have more detail until draft EA goes out, it is due out for public review in September, and the plan is to have decision signed in June 2021. Once EA goes out for public review, I will give a presentation on the project

Chris – when do you expect the EA to be out?

Gene – draft EA is due sometime in September, we're hoping in the first couple of weeks in September it will be available for public review

Pete – will it be a 30 day comment period?

Gene – I think so

Pete – when are you thinking final EA?

Gene – late winter /early spring 2021, but it depends on the comments and the process. A new tool that we are using is condition based management, where we treat areas that are identified out on the ground in the future, a new kind of process for the public to look at

John – any indication of any thinning or treatments for the forest in the riparian reserve?

Gene – some areas that are overstocked proposed for commercial thinning, other areas for hand thinning. My approach to this was to not disrupt the processes that are working well, a lot of areas are not broken; we were very careful in balancing short term disturbance with long-term benefit

Pete – I understand there is some possible litigation with the Mission, have you been able to do aquatic projects?

Gene – yes, aquatic stuff is not specifically called out in notice of intent to sue, so we have been able to do that work

Gene – I will plan to come in and give a presentation after the EA comes out, probably September or October

John Crandall – Science Paper of the Month: *Envisioning, Quantifying, and Managing Thermal Regimes on River Networks* by Steel et. al. This is a pretty interesting paper, which isn't necessarily like a research paper, it is more of an overview of where we are in the world of water temperature, how we think about water temperature, and looks at it in ways that we don't usually. This paper brings up some thoughts on the tools we use to monitor water temperature. Hand held thermometers give a spot measurement, thermal loggers, continuous recording from a single location gives a thermal profile, regime at a specific site. When you have a network of these loggers, you can develop a thermal landscape. The paper works on giving terminology. Also drones can give a 2D view with thermal imagery, cables at the bottom of the riverbed can give long longitudinal profiles. It shows how important water temperature is, how variable it is over space and time, and how important it is to get terminology right. Temperature is not static – it changes throughout the day, largely as a result of the sun, and there are also seasonal changes and differences in magnitude of change during the day. There are lots of facets of temperature that make up the thermal landscape, a lot of variation within that. As warming is occurring, if we don't dive further into temperature we might miss some detail. It's important to understand components of temperature when we think of degree days related to salmon redds/eggs/emergence. The paper has some summaries of different studies that have happened. There is a lot going on with water temperature, a lot of our activities are making changes. We also divert a lot of the water out of our streams, Twisp, Chewuch, Methow, other streams, which has a pretty profound effect on water temperature. A good paper, and I encourage everyone to read it. Jessica will distribute.

Roundtable

Chris Johnson – MSRF: after many years of development, we did on the ground work at Barkley Bear this summer during the fish window. We did work at the apex of the island, through the island, and in the side channel. One of the things we learned was that every spot is different on the Methow in terms of pile driving. In some locations we had to dig an 8-10 ft. hole first to get through the pavement and then pile drive them another 8-10 ft. I'm happy the project went well. It is also one of the first projects we have done where we didn't have any landowner interest in the property.

Next year's plan is to address the headgate structure and connect to the lower part of the project; we hope to have right of way issues resolved for next year. We had a COVID compliant construction, Brian

Fisher was PM, Palm Construction was our contractor, Mike Gieschen from Anchor QEA was onsite, Colin from Reclamation also. The COVID-related cost increase was about 20% higher than the engineer's estimate. We had a very small bidding pool, and there was risk/insecurity of getting the project done, a lot of it is speculation.

Pete – I would be interested if other sponsors have similar experiences

Chris – anecdotally, just trying to get any contractor to give bids on any kind of residential work, there is a shortage on the ground, and they are taking advantage of the shortage

Robes – when you look back from when you went through the process, what is the biggest ecological concession in the current iteration?

Chris – this one actually came in pretty close, we had some initial discussion of putting some log structures on the opposite side of the river, but it was not an option. We reduced the size of the apex to address recreation issues. During construction we had constant tubers, paddle boarders, etc. coming through.

Robes Parrish – USFWS: At Hancock, starting this year we are trying to do some long overdue upland restoration, looking to create a wildlife corridor across that part of the valley bottom, looking to connect the restored areas, making it bigger than just for fish, beginning work on that, should be a cool component

Kristen Kirkby – Cascade Fisheries: we could give a virtual tour of Hancock at the next MRC, we had some adaptive riparian work there this year, and everything is looking good. We had a couple of steelhead up there for the first time this year in a while. We had a partnership with the Methow Conservancy by the Mazama bridge, kind of in the vein of Homestream Park, they are working with an architect, will do some riparian plantings, a public/boater access point as well. We are trying to figure out what we are doing with outreach up here.

We are pretty much done with the Methow Barrier Assessment; we did an EDT analysis in addition to the WDFW analysis, EDT looks at passability by life stage and species by month, all basin results are up on WDFW web page, and the prioritization model will be up on the UCSRB web site

Greer – I think it is close, when it is up we will send out the link, same link but it will have all the new priorities for all of the new barriers

Hannah Coe – Okanogan Conservation District: we are starting to help producers with Salmon Safe registration, working with a farm up Twisp River, will be doing assessments remotely, which helps reduce costs. We have an upcoming grant to work with specialty producers.

We are working on an Ecology grant for work on Benson Creek for riparian plantings in the Wenner Lakes drainage

Matt Young – Colville Tribes: Chris has been helping us get a land acquisition done on Beaver Creek just upstream of the Old Schoolhouse property, finally getting wrapped up.

Maddie Eckmann – Yakama Nation: we had no construction projects slated for the Methow this summer; in hindsight it was good luck. We are gearing up for a potentially busy construction season in 21-22. Golden Doe Large wood project next year, as well as Alder Creek. In 2022, working with FS on large wood actions in the Upper Twisp, and 2021 Chewuch RM 4.2 funded by SRFB. A lot of planning and getting ducks in a row for upcoming busy seasons.

Jamie Cleveland – BPA: we appreciate the hard work of the individual project sponsors for the Targeted solicitations, we worked hard with those groups. MSRF was able to get two contracts in place as well as others. We had a very quick turnaround to get those things out the door.

Gene Shull – USFS: with the drone use, a reminder that we have rules about using drones on National Forest land, give me or someone from the office a heads up, we can make it happen. During fire season it is even more critical. Volstead Road will soon be gone – the decommissioning will happen next month. That whole section will all go away. Unfortunately it has bled a lot of sediment through the years. Right now Volstead is dry before it gets to Beaver Creek, and we hope to not have a pulse a sediment until spring.

Mission Project – we still have a bunch of actions that we are waiting to get funded, fish pipes, felling into fish habitat, we may get some funding but if not, we may look for funding. May be looking at restoring passage in Eightmile creek, looking at the Twentymile fan, a good candidate for Stage zero restoration. Next big project will be focusing on fire contingency lines in the upper Methow. We need to look at the Region 6 aquatic restoration EA for future work, maybe small diameter wood projects.

Pete – can you get before and after photos of the Volstead work?

Gene – We have a lot of before pictures, but agree that a good snapshot to make the story is a good idea

Robes – question: what is the status of bull trout spawning surveys?

John – we are moving forward with our project under SRFB funding with partners for year three. The Wenatchee USFWS is unable to participate, but Michael Humling is doing the Eightmile surveys, FS, Gene is doing Wolf Creek, we do have some gaps and I'm working to fill those. We're gearing up, MSRF and WDFW cover the majority of the work

Robes – let's talk offline, I may be able to help

John – we will do what we can project will wrap up, trying to get work completed under SRFB, this is an assessment, will be sitting down with Gene to discuss something that could happen to benefit bull trout on the national forest, stay tuned.

Pete Teigen – the IT meeting is Tuesday September 1st; Sarah will be sending out agenda soon

Chris – I connected with Amy Martin at OCD; we are having cattle issues at a restoration site on the Twisp River. I'm curious if others have cattle issues, going to try something at Twisp, will be curious to coordinate with others

Next MRC Meeting September 15, 2020