

Methow Restoration Council

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UCSRB Updates:

Prioritization

Greer Maier – UCSRB: The Prioritization Workgroup met in December; the RTT is trying to finish up a few remaining items. Restoration results for spring Chinook and steelhead are done, more due in February. If you have any questions on the results, please call.

Talked about bull trout and Okanogan steelhead, and protection; we have a lot of data gaps for protection because there are not a lot of reach assessments in intact areas. Will be bringing in some more data sources, for now if you are looking at protection, any reaches in Tier 1 are high priorities and then make the case for other areas

Old Biological strategy can still apply for projects in process, if it is a new project you need to use the new prioritization. Call Tracy if you have any questions.

RTT did update the scoring criteria a little to refer to the new language, EC vs limiting factors. This will be covered in the kickoff meeting in more detail.

Chris Johnson – if you are going to put in a protection project to the Tributary and not SRFB, do we have to go to RTT?

Discussion – ask Tracy

Greer – we have Tier 1 areas for bull trout for restoration and protection and we have key life stages, now we are hung up on reach layers, John Crandall has been working on developing some rule sets for life stages

John Crandall – We are trying to get it wrapped up in the next week or two, part of the issue with bull trout is beyond the adult life stage we know very little about juvenile and sub-adult habitat use. We are moving forward with assumptions. We developed a rule set, which we needed, assumptions, wanted to have consistency across subbasins. Jose Vasquez of USFWS working with John for Entiat and Wenatchee, John working on Methow, trying to be clear on how they came up with what they did in the absence of data. It does bring up and highlight the lack of understanding and data gaps around bull trout.

Greer – expect we will be able to get through the next step; we will have a lot of data gaps, may have to plug in some GIS data, once we have reaches defined as best we can we will have our areas for bull trout. For now, scores will be based on Tier 1 areas and if you have questions ask John Crandall.

For Okanogan Steelhead, we are waiting for EDT priority action results, expected in February.

These are the last tasks, and then we start over again. As RAs are completed, we will re-run results, so we can have the information for prioritization.

Data Gaps

Greer – MDMaC met after the RTT meeting last week, spent four hours on data gaps but are not done. We got through all the VSP-related data gaps and about half of the habitat ones. We will be finishing up in the next few weeks. If you are planning on doing a monitoring or assessment SRFB project application reach out to Pete or Greer and they can help you make sure your project addresses a Tier 1 data gap, there are also caps on amounts available for those project types. Expect a final approved data gaps list out in the next few weeks, it will be about addressing habitat and fish distribution. We will have some recommendations for this year's SRFB round.

SRFB

Pete Teigen – there is a \$50k max that each region can submit for monitoring proposals, although there is a possibility to borrow from other regions, so potentially there could be more money available, but we would need to know so that we can coordinate with other regions. Wouldn't change our overall allocation, but there could be more for monitoring.

Monitoring projects have to target data gaps for spring Chinook or steelhead, can sometimes sell those projects as an assessment, but there is a \$200k cap on that project type for the region. This is all outlined in Manual 18, changes focused on monitoring

Greer – what they really want to see are monitoring proposals on habitat status and trend, either updating information or creating a baseline for monitoring. Also new this year is that you can do effectiveness monitoring, would fall under that category as well. Future project identification is related to assessments

John – the key is addressing Tier 1 data gaps, \$50k is not very much, especially for any kind of effectiveness monitoring, really is data gaps, having support, other stuff is manual 18

Greer – plugging it in to the prioritization process will lead to future projects in my mind

Pete – we will have a SRFB kickoff meeting on February 10th, afternoon after the next RTT meeting, Tracy will be on the call and be able to answer any questions about the scoring criteria. We will walk through the grant round, pretty similar to last year, monitoring is a bit different, more aligned with the schedule for other projects. Pre-applications will be due March 1st at noon. RTT presentations will be March 10th and 11th. The amount of time each sponsor has for presentations will depend on the number of projects received. Final applications will be due in April.

RCO is hosting an application workshop tomorrow from 10-noon. They will talk about the process and any changes, PRISM portal, etc. The workshop will be recorded and then made available if you miss it.

Not sure what the funding amount available will be this year, revenue forecasts not quite as dire as last spring, but it's still not clear what the allocation will be. Governor's budget had requested more for salmon recovery. Will send out the schedule for Jessica to distribute.

If you have monitoring or assessment proposals let Greer or Pete know

Paper of the month

John Crandall – this month we have **Behavioral thermoregulation and homing by spring chinook salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* (Walbaum), in the Yakima River**, by Berman and Quinn. This is a 30-year old paper, but wanted to bring it up because we had a slugfest during the data gaps rehashing the other day, and we spent a lot of time talking about different data gaps. One issue has been stream temperatures, which we are good at monitoring, but the data gap is acknowledging our lack of understanding of the experience of the fish within that thermal landscape. It seems like they aren't always swimming around in the temperature of the stream that we are measuring. This paper explored that issue down in the Yakima River. They had about 20 spring Chinook adults as they were moving upstream to spawn. They move in a couple of months ahead of when they are going to spawn, and need holding habitat prior to spawning. The researchers put radio tags into the fish and they had temperature associated with them, so they could ping the fish and the tags would tell them what temperature these fish were experiencing. They found the fish were experiencing temperatures a few degrees less than what was being measured. They never measured any fish temperature that was more than the ambient, and always less, up to 7 degrees difference. This was done in summer when temperature would be limiting. Interesting information about how fish were using the river, looking at habitat that creates these kinds of thermal refuges. For spring Chinook (and to some extent steelhead and bull trout but less

so because they're not spawning when it is warmer), have we changed these types of habitats for holding spring Chinook. There may be things that are affecting these holding habitats. They looked at different types of habitat features where you find thermal refuge. This gets to metabolism and energy expenditures for these adult fish - they don't feed, so an environment that helps them save energy allows them to put that energy towards reproduction. The paper did calculations on metabolic savings, and a few degrees can really make a difference. We also think about pre-spawn mortality, which is real, and important.

Volstead Road Decommissioning

Lance George – USFS: we got ERFO (Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Lands) funding for the work, had flood events in 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017, with severe damage in 2017.

In July 2017 had regional office IDT visit to the site, and they determined we couldn't reroute the road because of state land and costs. In 2018, suggested letter for Betterment based on ESA concerns, costs, and multiple ERFO events at the site.

To get the amount of money needed for the decommission, we first had to figure out how much it would cost to fix it, and then use the funding for Betterment instead

Decommissioning – August 2020 – we only did work up to the last pipe

In July 2018, sent a letter to Federal Highways, : replacing in kind would not meet standards for riparian reserves, clean water act, aquatic conservation strategy objectives, and would likely have negative impacts to ESA listed fish, with no long-term benefit. Because of this we were able to get money in kind to decommission the road. Couldn't go very far from the road prism, so we could only get trees that were nearby, but we had enough for the decom work

As we put the stream back in, it was rewetting the channel behind us even though we were working in the dry, a cool bit of hydrology to witness

This spring we will see a lot of aggrade and degrade; we put in a lot of boulders. It will take some time to come into equilibrium. Didn't fully re-contour roads, because pulling the large trees would be more damaging than de-compacting and allowing trees to grow. We put in roughness to discourage ATV use. Used straw and other erosion control. We had some hiccups because the contractors were not experienced decom folks, but got it to a system that I am mostly happy with. No stream simulation done, with ERFO we did our best to let it go with what we could to help the situation. Removed culverts, re-contoured roads.

Q: Contractor selection?

A: We used the ERFO process, so contractor selection was done through the regional office, local office had no say; they were out of Wenatchee.

Q: Sediment expected this spring?

A: some fines will get to Beaver Creek, so much degradation that it can fill in with the sediment moving; it will be interesting. Don't think a lot of sediment will flow out of there this spring, but we will see.

Q: Any pushback from user groups?

A: there were some people very unhappy while we were doing it, ATV, UTV folks, but as far as comments, didn't get a lot of pushback. Contractors felt some anger from the public

Q: Any thoughts of punching in a section of road at upper blue buck ?

A: The final plan is to reconnect the road system up there, but when that will happen it isn't clear, because most of the timber is burned, there is not a lot of reason to do it and it would be expensive.

Q: any funding available left if there are challenges in the spring?

A: no existing funding left; it would be a new process, no adaptive management as far as I know for ERFO, and it isn't a road now

Twisp Project Update

Lance – we have two meetings this week to work on comments, discussing potential changes, no list yet. As of right now, we still have a goal to answer comments and have final draft out this summer/fall, and finalize this year. We received around 700 comments or more, meetings on the comments haven't started yet.

Outreach Update

John Crandall – I sent out a request for outreach activities completed by the outreach folks, got a limited response; it was a very atypical year, have a dearth of in-person activities, a lot on hold or being reformatted.

State of the Salmon Report – gives a dire picture. John and Kristen have been working on local State of the Salmon, State of the Riparian, now working on State of the Hatcheries, put them in different locations, funded by UCSRB outreach grant. We were able to get hundreds of them out, but not as much as we wanted, so looking at direct mail, we're going to send out 1000 of the State of the Salmon report and our habitat restoration guide. More costly, but will follow up this one with another one in six weeks with State of the Riparian, and then State of the Hatcheries in June. Does get at population declines. It will be interesting to see the response we get. There are a lot of different ways you can look at the declines of fish, some folks really looking at hatcheries, and hatchery influence. A complicated world, ocean conditions, etc. but it's not the whole story. Our watershed is in pretty good shape, just restoring our watershed to pristine condition will not necessarily bring the fish back on its own. A very complicated situation

Pete – can you and Kristen present at our April board meeting to make sure people understand the work that you are doing there

John – yes, it is good to think about how we as a region are addressing all of these things.

Lee Bernheisel – I heard about some spawning at the mouth of the Chewuch, would that have been coho?

John – yes, would have been coho, if it was in November, it was likely coho, a bit late for summer chinook

Roundtable

Steve Kolk – Jeff Peterson is now officially retired from the Bureau, the new habitat program manager is Jeff McLaughlin. Hopefully Jeff will get his workload sorted out, and can come more than he has been able to recently

Kristen Kirkby – we are doing some limited education outreach where we can, looking to hire for the last season in the Okanogan barrier assessment in the month

Chris Johnson – we're moving forward on Sugar review, Barkley bear, Twisp ponds, also will likely be doing some work on beaver creek. Beaver Project is contracting with Ecology.

Water rights in the Methow – commissioners will be meeting today, some discussion on the water rights, may be some opportunities for coordination on environmental benefit projects as a mitigation tool for water supply. New case going on now will raise some opportunities.