

Meeting Notes

14 April 2010

Location: A.M. Fire station in **WENATCHEE** (206 Easy Street).

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RTT Members Present: Casey Baldwin, Kate Terrell, Steve Hays, Karl Polivka, Keely Murdoch, Joe Lange, Russell Langshaw (via phone), Tracy Hillman (via phone), and Michelle McClure (via phone).

Others present: James White, Steve Kolk, Roy Beaty, Julie Morgan, Brandon Rogers, Derek Van Marter, Pamela Nelle, Brian Fisher, Stuart Woolley, John Soden, and Mike Kane.

Casey opened the meeting and asked for additions or modifications to the agenda, there were none.

1) Updates:

Julie Morgan gave an update of recent UCSRB activities.

- The ISRP Narrative for the BPA Programmatic Habitat Project is under review and should be available within a few weeks.
- Derek has been working with WATs on Multi-Year Action Plans MYAP. These are shorter term, more detailed versions of the implementation schedule that include budget estimates to aid in project and funding coordination.
- The Board is updating the process guide and it appears that the 11th round (2010) will be pretty much the same as previous years. Next year's Process Guide will take into account the new Targeted Solicitation process.
- The Board is preparing to take on some implementation monitoring and other monitoring gaps identified through the Collaborative M&E process in 2009. The Board will look to MaDMC for guidance.
- The Board has agreed to take on a facilitation role for the White River spring Chinook supplementation activities with Grant County PUD and Co-managers.
- The Board had a very successful trip to Washington D.C.

Roy Beaty mentions that Joe Conner would be the BPA contract officer for the Programmatic habitat restoration project and asked if Joe could be included in all aspects of the local technical review. Casey mentioned that most of the steps were open to everyone and Joe is already on the distribution list so he should be getting notification of upcoming events. The process schedule circulated by Derek is another good source of activities. The group talked about the project review meeting, which is generally closed to all but RTT members. Casey pointed out that we often invited SRFB Tech Panel members to that meeting and Joe seemed to fit within that same category as a potential observer. Everyone agreed, but a quorum was not present so Casey offered to work with Joe and the RTT at a later date to get approval for attendance, if it appears to be

something that Joe wants to attend. The project review meeting will be on 4 August 2010 and it is currently uncertain if any of the projects will be asking for BPA funds.

2) Operating Procedures (decision item): Casey provided a handout of edits to the RTT Operating Procedures and gave some background as to why we were revisiting these sections. In March, the RTT had approved a motion to allow the Chairperson to vote to break ties and score projects during project review. Casey had modified the language and hoped to get approval today. After some discussion, the group agreed that they preferred a simpler approach that the Chairperson would be a “regular voting member”, rather than only voting during special circumstances. Without a quorum present, Casey offered to follow up with the RTT members not present and get a decision before the next meeting. He also took suggestions on simpler language and agreed to include those edits in the next version. If the e-mail approval was successful the group would not need to re-visit this issue again at the next meeting¹.

3) Climate Change modeling Pilot Project in the Methow: Alec Maule (USGS) gave a presentation on the climate change modeling effort that is ongoing in the Yakima Basin. They are using existing hydrologic and climate models, and adding other elements such as biology (bioenergetics and cohort survival models) and socioeconomic information. There is a strong element of involving stakeholders, understanding their concerns, and trying to provide information for agriculture, recreation, economics, ecology, habitat conditions and biology for various fish species.

Their work is linked to several other climate change studies throughout the Columbia Basin and they have begun a similar pilot project and approach in the Methow. They had a decision analysis workshop with stakeholders in March and are currently working on the conceptual model for the Methow. More public meetings will occur and by October they should have some completed modeling.

Roy Beaty asked if they would be collecting any new data in the Methow as part of this effort. Alec thought that the socioeconomic information would be the only new information and that they would rely on ongoing monitoring efforts to populate their models.

Casey asked if this effort was linked to the Climate Impacts Group (CIG) from the University of Washington. Alec said they were and that the climate change modeling was coming from CIG and then applied to the local levels for more specific modeling on expected reaction to the climate changes.

Casey mentioned that the output from these climate change modeling efforts might be important for future adaptive management analyses. Casey will follow up with Alec and the local Methow team when results are available so that a future presentation could be arranged when they have some model output.

¹ After the meeting the combined e-mail and in-meeting support was unanimous for the 12 members who responded.

4) Review Nason Creek railroad reconnection alternatives: Casey explained that the CCNRD was here to give a presentation to the RTT to update us on the current alternatives that have been considered and for us to provide feedback on the merits of the alternatives. This is the first step in the new targeted solicitation process for the BPA programmatic habitat funding. Casey then asked Derek to facilitate the remainder of the agenda item so that he could participate more effectively as an RTT member.

Mike Kane and John Soden presented some background followed by a series of alternatives that have been developed by a design team. Some of the landowner constraints have a major influence on what can be done in terms of feasibility and cost. BNSF major requirements include:

- No culverts
- Cannot interfere with rail traffic
- Bridges cannot have piers that would rack LWD.
- If building a bridge or crossing, they want two of them at each site to accommodate future line expansion.
- Need separate ground-based access to each new structure for long term maintenance (a road along the track).
- Structures cannot be placed under or within 50' of BPA transmission lines

Other landowner constraints or concerns include:

- Must maintain flows in Nason Creek for creekside properties –
- Maintain water rights and existing groundwater
- Chelan County will not buy property to facilitate the project.

Casey mentioned that one aspect of the project could be to convert surface water rights to wells thereby reducing any conflict between flows in the current channel and people's ability to acquire their water.

Steve Hays asked if there were any studies underway to evaluate the potential groundwater changes. Mike Kane said there was not.

John Soden started with the alternative that the design team had ended with. Originally, there were 2 separate project areas, each a large section (30-80 acres; 4000-5000 linear feet) of former main channel, channel migration zone, and floodplain. However, several aspects of the BNSF constraints limited the feasibility of doing two separate projects. Instead, the alternative that has gained the most momentum from design team is 20% of flows going through a concrete box girder bridges on steel piles with a 25' opening.

This alternative would reconnect through the railroad at the upper end of the upper sight, the lower end of the lower sight, and then cut a channel in the middle to connect the upper and lower sites. This alternative would eliminate the need for 4 bridge structures and a lot of access road which would reduce cost and environmental impact. The preliminary construction cost estimate is \$6-8Million.

John then backed up to explain how the design team started and what the other options were that they considered. They evaluated an option of 100% of flow back into the historic channel just to know what that would look like and to set the upper bar of cost, feasibility, etc. Then they assumed that 80% of low flow would need to remain in the current channel to meet landowner constraints and sediment transport for all other options. They looked at what kind of structures it would take to put 20,40,60, and 80 percent of high flows into the cutoff areas. Costs for the 40-100% options ranged from \$18-22 million due to the size of the bridges and the need to build a shoe-fly track. Additionally, due to the BPA powerlines and engineering considerations

regarding approach angles, the upper site would need reconnected at 2 spots in the middle, rather than at the upper and lower extent.

There was considerable discussion regarding the alternatives, the major questions or comments from the RTT were:

- There is no biological benefit to a second bridge at each site. Funding agencies may not support spending millions of dollars of fish habitat money to set up the railroad for future expansion. Have you talked through this issue with prospective funders? Have you considered non-fish funding sources for cost sharing the second bridges?
- The greatest biological benefit would come from putting most of the flow back into the old channel due to increased length and sinuosity creating more total habitat, more complex habitat that includes wood recruitment and channel migration.
- The next best option is flow year round with at least some semblance of a creek. The problem is that if don't put enough flow into the sidechannel it will be choked by beavers. Stranding could be an issue. Beaver activity will change anything that is engineered behind the bridges.
- Beavers are a natural part of the historic salmonid landscape and do create beneficial habitat types for certain life stages and floodplain function.
- If you go from 20% to 40% of flow, do you double your biological benefit? The answer was uncertain, but juvenile rearing benefits will occur with the 20% option.
- Be clear about the what the percent of flow means. Does 20% of high flow mean 20% of a 1 yr, 10 yr, or 100 yr flow event? Does it change with flood frequency interval.
- Sediment transport studies are needed to quantify changes in the mainstem based on new flows. If sediment transport studies support it then more flow in the sidechannels would probably be preferred.
- Consideration of benefit and cost given likely climate change scenarios? Perhaps a simple qualitative approach such as "temperatures are expected to increase and flows expected to change, this project may increase thermal refugia and will become more important in the future.
- Have considered the cost benefits of restoring part of the floodplain, all of it, or none? You could look at acres or linear feet per cost under the various scenarios.
- The backwater option had the least potential benefits and might just drain the wetland. Perhaps could be done as a phase 1, but might need to add an element that would put water in the upstream end so that the lower connection point does not drain it.

Casey asked if the RTT thought there was an increase in biological benefit with more connection points. Specifically, is there more benefit to 2 separate projects than one mega-project? Casey suggested that the project could be done in 3 phases, starting with the lower project area in 2011, followed by a reconnection channel (connecting the 2 sites behind the tracks) in a subsequent year, then reconnecting the top of the upper site during the next railroad work window (2015-16?). The RTT did not think that additional connection points (in the middle) added biological

benefit because the railroad prism would still be there impeding channel migration. If that is the case then this option would not add biological benefit but would increase the cost when compared to the “mega-project”. Reconnecting the upper end of the lower site also requires more environmental damage due to more access road, assuming that constraint remains.

Derek asked the RTT if there were any objections for pursuing sub alternatives under the mega project? None were offered.

Next steps and process: There is no need to see more from the design team until after field work in June, some modeling results, and perhaps a report in July. Casey asked the group if they thought a site visit would be beneficial in the meantime, perhaps May or June? Casey suggested that going to the overlook would not be very helpful at this time as most people had been there. Movement throughout the project area would be extremely difficult due to the extensive wetlands. Mike Kane said they needed to scout it out and see about access and timing. It was unclear if that would be helpful before more modeling information was available. Casey and Derek will work with CCNRD on the timeline and content of the next interaction.

5) Tyee Ranch site visit: Casey explained the reasons for the postponement of the Entiat tour to the Tyee Ranch. He will work with Mike Rickel and Cascadia to determine if the site visit can/should occur in May or June.

6) Other business: In May or June the RTT will need to make significant progress on the RTTAW synthesis paper. Casey and Julie will be working with Mike Ward to set that up.

Casey went over the upcoming RTT meeting schedule. The doodle poll showed that August 4th would be the best day for the RTT meeting to rate projects. That means that 2 upcoming RTT meetings will be on the 1st Wed of the month instead of the 2nd Wed.

Upcoming

RTT Meetings: May 12
 June 9
 June 21-24 (project tours)
 July 7 (pre-proposal presentations)
 Aug 4 (RTT scoring of SRFB/TRIB projects)
 Sept 8
 Oct 13
 Oct ?? Adaptive management workshop—present RTTAW synthesis
 Nov 10
 Dec 8

Casey thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:15.