



Meeting Notes

22 August 2007

Meeting Location: BLM Office, 915 Walla Walla Ave., Wenatchee

For more information contact: Casey Baldwin
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RTT members present: Casey Baldwin, Kate Terrell, Joe Lange, Joe Kelly, Chuck Peven, Tom Kahler, Cameron Thomas, Tracy Hillman, Steve Hays, John Arterburn, Dennis Carlson, and Keely Murdoch.

Others Present: Derek Van Marter, Becky Gallaher, Scott Nicolai, and Mark Cookson

The primary intent of this meeting was to complete a technical rating of the 2007 SRFB and Tributary Fund projects for the Upper Columbia Regional Lead Entity process. These scores and comments will be available for the respective citizens committees, SRFB technical panel, the HCP Tributary Fund Committee, and the SRFB. Likewise, Casey Baldwin or another RTT representative will be available to present these results or answer questions regarding the RTT review.

The RTT followed the project rating criteria as outlined in Appendix D of the Biological Strategy (UCRTT 2007; <http://www.ucsr.com/resources.asp>). A single score was generated for each project by averaging the scores of all the RTT members present (see table 1). After a discussion of the merits and problems with a particular project/proposal, RTT members were allowed to adjust their score within either or both of the two main scoring categories. The order in which the projects were reviewed was randomly selected, then minor adjustments were made to the agenda for projects that obviously should be reviewed together (i.e. the two Loup Loup projects, the two Methow protection projects).

Table 1. Summary of the RTT score for the 2007 SRFB and Tributary Fund projects. Each score represents an average of the individual RTT members who rated that project and were present at the meeting.

PROJECT	TITLE	Biological Benefit Subtotal (out of 100 pts)	Certainty of Success Subtotal (out of 50 pts)	Total Score (out of 150 pts)
Chelan 5	Entiat PUD Canal	80.3	43.3	123.5
Chelan 6	Roaring Ck. Flow & Barriers	71.0	44.5	115.5
Chelan 1	Harrison Side Channel	79.5	35.5	115.1
Okanogan 4	Twisp Riparian Protection	76.7	33.8	110.5
Okanogan 5	Upper Methow Protection	76.8	33.7	110.4
Chelan 2	Peshastin Pipeline	69.1	28.9	98.0
Chelan 7	Keystone Canyon Structures	64.7	32.7	97.4
Okanogan 3	Loup Loup Ck Barriers	51.9	30.8	82.7
Chelan 8	Stillwater Engineering	43.4	31.8	75.2
Okanogan 2	Loup Loup Ck Flow	42.8	29.1	71.9
Okanogan 1	Wildhorse Spring Easement	32.4	36.0	68.4
Chelan 4	Lower Wen Site12&13	26.0	20.0	46.0
Chelan 3	Burlington N. RR	NS	NS	NS

Wildhorse Spring Creek Protection

The lack of flow in the creek during the site visit lead to concerns regarding stranding. The habitat was in need of restoration, which reduces its protection benefits. Options for restoration were not in the proposal, which would have increased the benefit of this project. No management plan was offered so the extent of the land use and development restrictions is uncertain.

Re-establish Steelhead in Loup Loup Creek (flow)

Having water and unimpeded access in Loup Loup Creek is very important for steelhead in the Okanogan. Given the degraded mainstem conditions with very difficult limiting factors (temperature, sediment, and predation), it's critical that the perennial tributaries of the Okanogan are accessible and functional. Loup Loup Creek is probably the third most important tributary for steelhead in the U.S. portion of the Okanogan.

This project is proposed for only for 1 year, (although that was difficult to determine in the proposal) so the benefit is relatively low for the project as it's proposed and it may be appropriate as a pilot project. As a one-year test, they could estimate the quantity of water that will stay in the creek, which will help determine the long-term benefits of this project. A long-term agreement to ensure that the water stays in the creek would be needed for the full benefit of this project to be realized.

The proposal did not address several requests that were made during the pre-project review and the site visit to show the accounting of the pumping costs and only charge the salmon recovery dollars for the portion of the pumping that is making up for the change in point of diversion.

Remove Impediments on Loup Loup Creek

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Without the flow enhancement project, the benefit of this project is reduced. However, there is still some benefit of providing access for juvenile steelhead that can rear in Loup Loup Creek for certain portions of the year.

The proposal offered no explanation for why the 2nd culvert, at RM 0.2, was removed from the proposal. Based on RTT observations at the site visit, the second culvert was a velocity barrier, particularly for juveniles. If there is a phased approach, the project sponsor should still discuss the plans and the benefits / tradeoffs of not replacing the culverts simultaneously. The RTT did apply a reduction in benefit because there is still a partial barrier in the system.

The design in the proposal does not address the change in stream grade through the road crossing that is apparent from the perch height of the culvert outlet. It's not clear from the proposal whether the budget accounts for the work that might be needed to adjust the

grade (i.e., grade-control structures). The footings for a bottomless arch could be at risk of being undermined if installed without measures for controlling the grade. The bridge structure appears to be larger than necessary for the traffic needs.

Twisp River Riparian Protection

This proposal did not take into account specific requests for information posed by the RTT at the pre-proposal workshop and the site tour. The proposal was in an odd format (PRISM?) and seemed incomplete since the landowner agreements and maps were missing (landowner agreements were subsequently provided and the RTT relied on maps from the pre-proposal). Specifically, the following questions were not answered and the lack of information did affect the projects score and ranking.

Verbatim from the June RTT meeting notes regarding this proposal....

“What proportion of the property is in the 100 yr floodplain? Is that altered by current dikes? What would be the benefit to salmon of protecting the upland habitat on each of the properties? Be specific, we have to assume that the upland areas offer no benefit to fish unless you make a case for why conserving them does benefit fish.

Final application needs to have a summary of the terms and conditions of the easement.

- On the bottom of page 1 [of pre-proposal], you describe some of the things that would be restricted, but it would be helpful to understand the magnitude of the restrictions.
- What does conservation easement afford in terms of protection above and beyond county, state, and federal regulations?

It should also describe who would be responsible for the maintenance of the conservation easement.

Include signed landowner agreements.

How is the fair market value determined? Provide some detail so reviewers know that the cost is appropriate.”

Despite the deficiencies in the proposal, protecting these areas is critical to the long-term persistence of salmonids in the Twisp watershed and the Methow subbasin.

Upper Methow Riparian Protection:

This proposal did not take into account specific requests for information posed by the RTT at the pre-proposal workshop and the site tour. The proposal was in an odd format (PRISM?) and seemed incomplete since the landowner agreements and maps were missing (landowner agreements were subsequently provided and the RTT relied on maps from the pre-proposal). Specifically, the following questions were not answered and the lack of information did affect the projects score and ranking.

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Include signed landowner agreements.

How is the fair market value determined? Provide some detail so reviewers know that the cost is appropriate.”

Despite the deficiencies in the proposal, protecting these areas is critical to the long-term persistence of salmonids in the Methow basin.

Entiat PUD Canal

This was a good proposal with adequate information that allowed the RTT to effectively evaluate the biological-benefits and certainty-of-success criteria in our scoring system. The project seeks to enhance flow and a sidechannel, two very important limiting factors in the lower Entiat. Icing might be a problem in the winter, which would reduce the effectiveness of the sidechannel.

Roaring Creek Flow Enhancement and Barrier Removal

This was a good proposal with adequate information that allowed the RTT to effectively evaluate the biological-benefits and certainty-of-success criteria in our scoring system. Concern was expressed about whether the wells that are in the gaining reach could reduce flow in the Entiat River during critical times. There was some uncertainty regarding the trade-offs between wells versus surface-water diversions. Although the quantity of water was not large (0.5 cfs), the importance of a functional Roaring Creek is elevated because it's the only perennial stream in the lower Entiat.

Keystone Canyon

The dike removal is the most appropriate treatment for this site and it's important that this project, if it is implemented, does not preclude future access to the offchannel habitat behind the dike. The project design score was reduced because it's not possible to tell if it's scaled correctly and the uncertainty of longevity that is inherent with this type of project. Results are not available from the Milne project so it's not clear if this project will be successful physically or biologically. However, the reference to similar types of structures in Montana was helpful, and the RTT appreciated the effort to include information from a similar situation. The RTT recommends that, if this project is implemented, additional similar instream structure projects in the lower Entiat should be delayed until monitoring results are available from this and previous projects in the Entiat. Due to the presence of the ISEMP project in the Entiat, adequate monitoring and evaluation should occur, thereby defining the efficacy of these and similar projects.

Stillwater

The RTT recognized that this site is contributing a large amount of sediment to the downstream spawning areas that is possibly contributing to reduced egg incubation success. However, it is a C4 (Rosgen) reach that is supposed to migrate. The geomorphic assessment has not been completed, so the proposal seems premature. This project appears to be an assessment to develop a partial design (30%) that is focused on bank protection. It is difficult to acquire the necessary permits without a 90% design. The site is impacted by an upstream dike that is not addressed in the proposal.

Harrison Side Channel

This project seeks to connect one of the few opportunities to re-connect sidechannel habitat in the Lower Entiat, which is a well-known limiting factor. The proposal does not acknowledge many of the uncertainties regarding this type of treatment to accomplish the sidechannel connection. Specifically, the barb in the main channel may not be effective and could have unintended downstream effects. Effectiveness is reduced because they are not including the high flow channel. The reference to Elbow Coulee seems inappropriate because that project has not been implemented and monitored.

Given the experimental nature of this project it would be helpful to understand the projects effectiveness and applicability to other areas. Perhaps ISEMP will cover it, but if not, additional Level 1 effectiveness monitoring would be ideal, though beyond the purview of this project proposal.

There were some "certainty-of-success" score reductions due to the vagueness of the riparian-planting portion of the project.

Additional survey information should accompany the LIDAR analysis.

The Entiat drops below 100 cfs in August and September during most years, so year round surface flow will not be likely.

Peshastin Pipeline

This project is one aspect of a very important effort to increase flows in lower Peshastin Creek. The RTT appreciated the project sponsor including the flow information requested during the pre-proposal workshop.

There would be very high biological benefit to restoring natural flow levels in lower Peshastin Creek. The proposal acknowledges that the 1.2 cfs in this project may not be adequate to provide full passage by all species and life stages. Therefore, efforts should continue, above and beyond this piping project, to keep more water in lower Peshastin Creek. Steps should be taken, in concert with this project, to accomplish natural flow levels by implementing other options. The option of pumping the water from the Wenatchee River (as characterized in the proposal) would have more biological benefit, may be more cost effective per cfs, and would allow for natural flow levels in Peshastin Creek.

NRCS has documented that the gaskets for the Hancor pipe identified in the proposal can leak and some of the water savings would be lost if that happened. The pipe is rated at 10 psi but has been known to leak at lower pressures. NRCS Washington is in the process of designating the pipe an unapproved material. The RTT also suggests that the pipe needs to be compatible with the potential pumping project that might happen in the future. The size of the pipe could be reduced if on-farm efficiencies were implemented first. The water savings should be placed in trust for perpetuity, instead of only 25 years.

Burlington Northern Railroad Coordination Plan

The RTT appreciated the project sponsors responsiveness to our concerns regarding the need to engage the railroad in order to be successful in Nason Creek. Making progress in working with the railroad is very important throughout the Wenatchee and other areas of the Upper Columbia, such as the Okanogan.

This project describes an effort to accomplish a planning and coordination process. The RTT could not rate this project for its technical merit based on the criteria the RTT established for rating SRFB projects. This project has policy implications that cannot be rated based on their biological benefit or certainty of success. However, the intent of the project is critical to the success of offchannel and sidechannel connection projects in Nason Creek and in other locations throughout the Upper Columbia Region.

The RTT recommends that the UCSRB, fish co-managers, land and resource management agencies, and all other interested parties work together at a policy level to get the railroad engaged and to understand the issues regarding salmon recovery. Once the railroad is engaged at the policy level, it may be more appropriate to move forward with an effort such as this one to work out the details of how to accomplish salmon recovery projects with the cooperation of the railroad.

Lower Wenatchee Sites 12 and 13

These sites appear to already be functioning as sidechannel and offchannel habitat during high flows. The RTT saw little additional biological benefit from implementing this project. Concern was expressed regarding the sustainability of the potential projects given that they are on the inside of a bend where deposition typically occurs, and specifically questioned whether addition of woody debris at Site 12 would exacerbate deposition rather than provide functional habitat. This project was not part of the pre-proposal and site tours, which would have given the RTT a better opportunity to understand the potential benefits described in the proposal.

There is uncertainty regarding the biological benefits of backwater ponds such as Site 13. The RTT understood that lower Wenatchee CMZ projects for backwater ponds were not going to move forward without effectiveness-monitoring results from the Gagnon project.

As proposed, the project only aspires to get 50% engineering design plans; however, it's difficult to acquire a permit without a 90% design.

The budget score was reduced because the lump sum for contractors was not laid out by task, so it was not possible to tell if the cost estimate reflected all expected tasks.