

Meeting Notes 9 December 2009

Location: Douglas Co Land and Trans. Services, 140 19th, East Wenatchee

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RTT members present: Casey Baldwin, Kate Terrell, Chuck Peven, Joe Kelly, Joe Lange, Karl Polivka, Steve Hays, Cameron Thomas, Tracy Hillman, Keely Murdoch, John Arterburn; Michelle McClure and Dale Bambrick (via phone and Web-ex).

Others present: Pamela Nelle, Julie Morgan, James White, Derek Van Marter, Steve Kolk, Gina McCoy, Roy Beaty, Joe Conner, Joy Juelson, Heather Java

1. Updates: A) UCSRB: Julie Morgan gave an update from the Board, starting with the status of the PCSRF funding (a key component of the SRFB funds). The future level and disposition of this funding is uncertain and the House and Senate versions of the budget differ by ~ \$30 million. Julie then showed the latest table for the 2009 SRFB projects that would be going to the SRFB on December 10th for a final funding decision. The Driscoll Island project did not make it off the Project of Concern list and was pulled from consideration. Due to several other projects being pulled from the list earlier in the process there was enough money to fund the SRFB requests for the remaining projects, 13 in total. Kate asked about projects that had conditional funding and Derek said that they were Upper White Pine, Entiat River Foreman Floodplain Connection, and the Entiat Hatchery projects. James gave a brief overview of the project implementation tracking database/software workshop that he attended in Portland last week. He said that there had been at least 18 different attempts to design the project implementation tracking database/software and some progress was made. Kate asked about the Habitat Work Schedule, which is being used in the Upper Columbia. James said that the Upper Columbia committed to using the system, and the region is continuing with the process of rolling out implementation of the system. It has already been used to evaluate information for the RTT analysis workshop.

B) Casey gave an update on the BPA/CBFWA/NOAA process to identify and fund M&E projects that fill data gaps and help BPA meet their RPA requirements. The subregional workshops that occurred in the UC (and around the entire interior Columbia) identified priorities and led to a five day policy/technical meeting in Skamania where final table recommendations, and budgets were developed. Subsequently, several projects in the Upper Columbia were put on a “fasttrack” for funding, meaning that their ISRP narratives were due at the end of January and that BPA intends to get them funded during 2010. Those included an expansion of VSP monitoring in all four basins, a relative reproductive success study for Methow steelhead, and studies related to the new 2 year smolt program at the Winthrop Hatchery. Several other projects related to habitat implementation, effectiveness, and status and trend monitoring were accepted and would be part of the Categorical review process starting in March. The products developed as part of this process are available at <http://www.cbfgwa.org/ams/BasinWideDocs.cfm> or by contacting Ken MacDonald (503-229-0191).

C) Tracy Hillman gave an update on a meeting held by CBFWA to coordinate habitat status and trend monitoring in the Columbia Basin. Two meetings had been held with the objectives of describing the major regional habitat status and trend monitoring programs, describing opportunities to coordinate and align programs, identifying metrics that are common to all or most programs, describing how remote sensing and GIS applications are being used to evaluate watershed conditions, and exploring opportunities for establishing a network of reference sites. The major monitoring programs included PIBO, AREMP, EMAP, Washington State High-Level Indicator monitoring, Upper Columbia Monitoring (ISEMP), NPCC High-Level Indicator monitoring, CRITFC Accord Monitoring, and FCRPS/Recovery monitoring. These programs will continue to communicate and coordinate. Washington is working to develop a list of common metrics and report criteria. These programs will help inform monitoring needs for the FCRPS BiOp.

D) Keely Murdoch gave an update from the MaDMC. She said they had gone through the previous data gaps analysis and updated it and added a couple of data gaps that needed to be scored. They would be doing that relatively soon for inclusion into the broader monitoring gaps document that she and Chuck Peven had prepared.

E) Casey asked for other updates, announcements or agenda modifications and none were offered.

2) UC Project and Funding and Coordination, BPA Programmatic Habitat Restoration and Protection Funds. Casey introduced the topic and said that the primary objective of this agenda item was for the RTT to determine their role in the process. He asked Julie to give an overview of the UCSRB staff and Implementation Team process and progress to date. A workgroup of the Implementation Team has met twice and developed a white paper outlining a potential process for administering and distributing the \$3 million that BPA has allotted to “non-Accord” fish and wildlife funds for habitat restoration and protection. The UCSRB has a contract with BPA to develop a process and the ISRP Narrative for the programmatic project. Roy Beaty is working closely with the UCSRB staff and others on the development of the ISRP narrative and to ensure that the process and products will meet BPAs needs. Roy emphasized that the technical process for selecting restoration and protection projects described in the ISRP Narrative would be critical to its success and acceptance. BPA has been very impressed with the project review process in the Upper Columbia and would like to be a part of it for selecting habitat projects for their funding.

Joy walked the group through the white paper and emphasized the areas where RTT input was needed, particularly regarding our role and tasks related to Objective 1. Regarding Objective 2 and 3, several RTT members supported the concept of the majority (if not all) of the funding being available for the large complex projects. Casey pointed out that the potential dollar amounts in each subbasin on an annual basis were “up to” \$500k, ensuring that the majority of funds from this source would be available to pulse towards large projects. John Arterburn stressed that even \$3 million was not that much when

considering really big and important projects that need done. Cameron agreed that most should go towards the big expensive projects that really make a difference in restoring the rivers ability to maintain natural processes, but implementers do need to maintain capacity and develop the projects and alternatives. Steve Kolk offered several helpful suggestions, including that the USBR plans to continue funding project development, which would contribute to maintaining capacity in the subbasins.

Casey presented a list of alternatives that he and Derek had developed, with input at the UCSRB staff meeting. He explained that the alternatives could serve as a starting point for the RTT discussion regarding our role in technical review of the BPA projects. After walking through the alternatives most of the discussion centered on alternative D, and potential nuances and variations of alternative D. The group was strongly in support of a system that included a feedback loop so that the final proposal could be evaluated for its consistency with the RTT biological priorities, the Recovery Plan, and the recommended alternative from a previously reviewed Alternative Evaluation Report (see below). Heather Java suggested that more input early in the process is better, even before the AER is complete. After much discussion, the RTT voted unanimously to be the technical review body for the BPA programmatic projects and that a slightly modified version of Alternative D was preferred.

Alternative D (modified based on input from the RTT on 9 December 2009)

The RTT's role in facilitating the \$3M annually from BPA non-Accord funds in the region is one of input during project development, followed by formal review. More specifically, for large complex projects in reaches which had been adequately assessed (i.e. USBR reach assessment), the RTT would review the Alternatives Evaluation Reports (AER) and select the one or two top priority alternatives that best address limiting factors, restore natural processes, and have the highest biological benefit. The AERs will have enough detail to have a rough estimate of cost and preliminary designs. Additional recommendations may be rendered regarding the risks and shortcomings of the other alternatives. If appropriate, this review may include a "pre AER" presentation by the ID team for initial feedback from the RTT before the development of the AER. Additional presentations and feedback sessions during regular RTT meetings may occur before the formal assessment of the AER by the RTT. Before the application is submitted to the funding source there will be, at a minimum, a feedback loop with the RTT and/or a formal scoring of the project using the RTT project scoring criteria. This project review and scoring may occur outside the normal time period of the ongoing 6-step process (currently used for SRFB and Tributary Committee funds). Alternatively, the "pulse fund" AER review process could be infused into the ranked list from the ongoing 6 step process, depending on the project, project sponsor(s), intended funding sources, and timing. The BPA will need to make sure there is consistency with their obligations.

One advantage of this alternative is that it offers the option of moving a large portion of the workload for large complex projects outside the regular 6-step review window (May-

August). Although advantageous as far as spreading the workload, Dale suggested that there would be efficiencies in having as much of it as possible in concert with ongoing processes and review procedures. Casey raised the question of capacity and asked the group if we thought we could do this without direct funding. He suggested that one way would be to make the reviews of the large complex projects a standing agenda item. Chuck thought the workload would be manageable.

Casey confirmed that the next steps would be for him to work with Roy and the UCSRB staff on the ISRP Narrative. Due to the timing, there would not be a regular RTT meeting before the ISRP Narrative was due, so Casey will circulate material via e-mail and probably host a conference call in mid-January.

3) RTT Analysis Workshop: Casey asked if there were any comments on the current draft agenda for the RTT Analysis workshop or the associated abstracts. A few minor edits were offered.

Tracy asked about his session on habitat status and trend and was concerned that the presentations might be more focused on methods than answering the key management questions. James pointed out that it is OK if the management questions cannot be answered at this time, then the path forward to getting those answers for next time involves the refinement of methods or analyses. Casey offered to follow up with a couple of presenters.

Julie discussed the additional role of the moderators (with help from their assigned “second”) was to capture the essence of their session and bring that perspective/overview to the final synthesis and path forward session (session 6) and discussion. This model of moderators (and seconds) representing their session would be carried forward into the next steps of the adaptive management cycle including presentations at future adaptive management workshops.

Casey projected a set of ground rules that Derek had prepared and Derek walked the group through the list, incorporating edits along the way. Derek said he intended to have this list included in the program and to go over it at the beginning of each day. A big part of his role as the overall facilitator would be to help moderators enforce these ground rules. Additionally, he would serve as moderator when a moderator was presenting. Derek offered insight and tips to moderators to help the group understand roles and responsibilities for effective facilitation and to establish a consistent approach.

Derek suggested that many folks would be watching our process for adaptive management, as it is the first of its kind in the Pacific Northwest.

Casey thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 12:30.