



Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

October 2, 2020

Final Minutes

Board Meeting
Conference Call/Webinar

Present: Taylor Aalvik, Paul Greenlee, Lee Grose, Richard Mahar, Gary Medvigy, Todd Olson, Gary Stamper, Dean Takko, Jade Unger, Dennis Weber, Del Wilson, and Rudy Salakory, TAC Chairman

Absent: Mike Backman, Hal Mahnke, Don Swanson, and Olaf Thomason. Chairman Olson excused the absent members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Director Manlow stated the Columbia River Pinniped Predation presentation scheduled for today has been moved to the November meeting, since unfortunately, Robert Anderson of NOAA was not available for today's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No public comments.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- Monitoring 101, Amelia Johnson
- EF Lewis River Habitat Assessment, PC Trask & Associates, Inc.

Monitoring 101:

Ms. Johnson stated this presentation is a follow up to the Recovery 101 presentation from the September Board meeting. She noted that the presentation addresses the monitoring and adaptive management of Recovery Plan implementation in our region.

Ms. Johnson explained that there are two primary aspects when we talk about achieving salmon recovery in the lower Columbia. One is the decrease of all-H impacts to salmon and what they experience across their life cycle. At the same time, we are looking at maintaining, and in many cases increasing, the viability of our salmon and steelhead at the population, stratum and species scales.

Ms. Johnson stated that the Recovery Plan lays out a suite of actions across 80+ partner programs as a collaborative effort to implement recovery actions through their different programs, and described that in addition to Recovery Plan action implementation, there is also the long term Status and Trends Monitoring of habitat conditions and fish viability. The All-H threat categories include a framework to determine if action implementation is having an effect and if fish and habitat are responding.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- Board member Weber noted that clear cut harvest can be an appropriate forest management tool. How do we take into account that there are certain forest management practices that help us prevent forest fires, but might have an impact on salmon streams? Ms. Johnson stated in terms of the 30 meter scale data, it is really coarse and shows tree, shrub, and grass coverage together, making it more blanket vegetative cover and not specific to the types of harvest activities or fire management.
 - Board member Weber added that there are a vast number of partners involved and some actions block recovery progress. He asked whether we are keeping track of the roadblocks that are out of our
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control. Director Manlow indicated that the next presentation on the agenda will help identify some of the roadblocks and disconnects in salmon recovery efforts.

- Director Manlow added that what is historically lacking in the landscape management piece is the diversity of landscape. Board member Weber asked if there was anyone on the webinar from DNR. There was not. Ms. Johnson added that the U.S. Forest Service is starting to look at how they manage the landscape for fish and wildlife with prescribed burns.
- Board member Aalvik stated he has been involved with the Pinchot Partners for well over a decade and they work directly with the Forest Service. He added that they focus on improving our watersheds and managing the forest, but they are constrained by budget, do not have enough line officers, staff and partners to get it where it needs to be. He noted that we need to build the capacity at the local level to get the needed work done.
- Chairman Olson asked what the biggest shortfall with monitoring was. Ms. Johnson stated the two key parameters are productivity and fish distribution information to help us understand what is happening with fish viability, and what we can do to better support recovery.
- Board member Grose stated that the Cowlitz River, before there were dams, was full of salmon, and noted that we sometimes fail to see that some of the past practices were beneficial. He explained that he has a 40 acre tree farm and due to current regulations, he is unable to do anything with 15 of his acres, which is unfair to the landowner. He added that he should be compensated for stream buffers.
- Board member Greenlee stated in the City of Washougal they tried to deal with the stream buffers along steep banks in their land code, but received push back from Olympia. The Department of Commerce, and to some degree Department of Ecology, are stuck with legislation that doesn't allow them to do what they know they should be doing. This is a legislative problem and should be addressed in Olympia.
- Board member Aalvik stated he understands what Board members Grose and Greenlee are saying. He added that we are in a situation where stream buffers are "no touch buffer zones" which is a problem in itself because you don't know the conditions of the buffer zone to begin with. In many cases, those buffer zones need to be further looked at and opened up to determine the optimal buffers for salmon recovery and salmon health.

East Fork Lewis River (EFLR) Habitat Assessment:

Director Manlow introduced Phil Trask and Katie Blauvelt from PC Trask and Associates. Mr. Trask offered his congratulations to the Board for being around 20 years and feels fortunate to have been involved most of that time.

Mr. Trask referenced June 30, 2004, the date that all of our (LCFRB) recovery plan products were due in their first draft form. He explained that on that day, we delivered to the Northwest Power Conservation Council eleven subbasin chapters, to Ecology two Watershed Plans, and to NOAA a Recovery Plan that wrapped it all together. He added it was a big day for LCFRB staff and all those who worked so hard on the documents. He added that about two weeks before the June 30th deadline, staff realized that the recovery "program" summaries were missing from the Recovery Plan. He stated he sequestered himself and worked diligently to complete it.

Mr. Trask stated the purpose of the analysis he conducted was to assess how well programs are addressing the expectations of the Recovery Plan regarding threats to salmon and steelhead habitat in the EFLR and to provide a template that identifies data and potential metrics to guide future evaluations and adaptive management of the Recovery Plan.

He described that between August 1, 2018 and December 31, 2019, PC Trask conducted 65 interviews representing 29 partner programs in the EFLR watershed. Additional phone calls and email inquiries were made

to investigate further and to clarify program information. He explained that multiple field trips were conducted to gather images and add perspective to the scope and intensity of threats that the Recovery Plan identified as primary underlying causes of habitat factors that limit salmon and steelhead viability in the EFLR.

Mr. Trask explained that interviews and available data suggest that both contemporary threats (timber harvest/rural development) and legacy threats (Ridgefield Pits avulsions) will continue to negatively impact salmon and steelhead habitat into the future. In balance, programs responsible for managing these threats continue to emphasize best management practices and implement mitigation and restoration activities. While acquisition and restoration program accomplishments are notable, especially in the EFLR, he explained that the degree to which their positive effects will counteract the intensity of on-going threats in the watershed remains unclear.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- Board member Weber thanked Mr. Trask for his work to evaluate existing programs. He added that it's always helpful to know what we don't know, and yet we are charged with making decisions on projects. He stated we need to do a better job of coordinating within a watershed in order to measure progress and evaluate strategies in terms of effectiveness.
 - Board member Weber asked Mr. Trask, based on his experience, we should focus on specific watersheds rather than the shotgun approach. Mr. Trask responded that one of the hardest things to do in salmon recovery is prioritize. He explained there is a political process and programs do well when you spread restoration funds across several partners and watersheds, which creates challenges.
 - Mr. Trask stated the EF Lewis River was the best river to examine for this pilot project because it doesn't have any hatcheries or dams and has great recovery potential. He added that part of the reason we embarked on this project was for adaptive management. Director Manlow added this is an important stream because it has five primary populations that have to get to high viability.
 - Board member Weber stated it poses some political dilemmas for folks in charge of land use planning and rules and regulations for zoning, and how strictly you slow down development.
 - Mr. Trask stated the disconnect is between the Recovery Plan and regulatory agencies. He used DNR as an example, and explained that the forest practices that have occurred in key watershed areas over the last several years have been more than any other county in the State of Washington. Director Manlow added that part of the reason we embarked on this effort to evaluate the programs, was for adaptive management, and noted that the Board needs to do some thinking and will have some decisions to make on where we place our efforts to protect what we have, in light of the report.
 - Chairman Olson stated he has had the opportunity to read through the full report and it led to some conversations between himself and Director Manlow on what to focus on in the work plan, and what Board members can do in their respective roles to help the purpose of the Board.
 - Board member Aalvik stated he felt the presentation was sobering when we look at what we are facing. He added that when he was in college, he was involved with Clark County Growth Management Act update process, and the model he used in college is very similar to what we are finding out today. He noted that he advocated for mitigation for every new residence that moves into the county. In addition, he recommended that the Board and staff could collaborate on efforts by working together to get the message out to people that are coming into the areas, and to the people already here, and have periodic check-ins with the counties on salmon and development concerns.
 - Board member Medvigy stated Clark County is currently at 500,000 people and there will be another 100,000 children that will want a house of their own adding that we are several thousand homes short in our current inventory. He added that GMA is a great framework and feels we are smarter than we were in the 1980's prior to GMA. He added, if you are working with Clark County staff and you feel they are missing something or if your concerns are not getting translated well, he encouraged the Board to contact him.
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In closing, Mr. Trask stated that in the course of the last two years, they work with a lot of Clark County staff and they were fantastic to work with. In addition, Ms. Blauvelt added that the Clark County GIS database was one of better databases they have come across as far as having building footprints and polygons on the ground and gave more detail than any other county.

BUSINESS MEETING

Item #1 Consent Agenda

Board member Greenlee moved and Board member Weber seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. No discussion. Motion carried.

Item #2 Update on Policies and Procedures

Ms. Smee presented the item. She stated that over the last couple of years we have been reviewing our Policies and Procedures and they have not been updated since about the year 2000. The recommended updates do not change our procedures, or the intent of the policies. All policies will still comply with state and federal laws for a public agency.

Ms. Smee reviewed the recommended changes:

- Update to the Board's physical address. The Board's office and staff moved from Longview to Vancouver in January 2019.
- Board meetings may be held by webinar, conference call or in person. In person meetings will be held in each county in the region on a rotating basis.
- TAC meetings may be held by webinar, conference call or in person. In person meetings will be held at the LCFRB office building.
- The most substantial change was to remove the detailed step by step procedures for reviewing the State Environmental Policy Procedures which took up 11 pages in the current policy. The updated policy recommends that LCFRB will adopt the WAC 197-11 rules and procedures under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) by reference, as may be amended. In addition, RCW 43.21c.110 specifies that content of these rules and grants authority for endorsement.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- Board member Weber suggested adding the hyperlink into the policy of where the SEPA rules can be found. Ms. Smee agreed.

Board member Aalvik moved and Board member Greenlee seconded to approve the proposed updates to the LCFRB Policies and Procedures. No discussion. Motion carried.

At 3:07 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

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Approved in open session on _____

Signed: _____

Todd Olson, Chairman