

# Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration/Recommendations Group

## Meeting Summary

January 24th, 2024, 9:00am –4:00pm PT/ 10:00am –5:00pm MT  
DoubleTree City Center, Spokane, WA

### Welcome and Agenda Review

Liz introduced the meeting and went over the agenda.

### San Joaquin Central Valley Process

Liz started by introducing the speakers, Rene Henery, Trout Unlimited, and Rafi Silberblatt, Kearns & West. Rene Henery discussed how the San Joaquin Valley process drew inspiration from the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBP) model, highlighting the importance of storytelling and relationship-building. The San Joaquin Central Valley (SJCVC) process aimed for inclusive consensus, emphasizing shared values among stakeholders and utilized a Structured Decision Making (SDM) process to emphasize transparency, agreement, and a common understanding of why portfolios of actions were selected for salmon recovery. Rafi also outlined how the SJCVC process converted qualitative data into quantitative metrics for modeling.

The group had the following input:

- Question: Why did this effort use this specific scenario planning process? Why choose this methodology?
  - Answer: *SDM is not particularly complicated. In California, groups disagree on actions, so this process started by deemphasizing actions to focus on a common agreement of what the group's objectives were. Once those objectives were defined, the SDM allowed the group to compare those pathways in a non-contentious way.*
- Question: Can these models simulate scenarios for each species and each performance metric? Are there any gaps?
  - Answer: *One model is specific to winter Chinook salmon, developed by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with high confidence statistical relationships. The other model encompasses all Chinook runs and steelhead, allowing layered results. Initially, that model incorporated landscape and non-hatchery production fish outmigrating and spawning dynamics but was expanded with input from a science advisory team. Dynamics like water flow and salmon growth were added, enhancing functionality for comparing actions and building consensus. The team can introduce hypotheses into the model for testing when lacking scientific data. In those scenarios, the advisory team's input is crucial for ensuring the policy team's comfort with the process.*
- Question: Regarding the biological values in this process, this process does not have native species as biological values, something the Columbia Basin Collaborative has. Those biological values add a different suite of habitat/hydro requirements. Green sturgeon is an example of a

species that is not currently considered but could be. Does this model accommodate those biological values or other ESA listed fish?

- *Answer: Performance values are included in the model. The thing about the process is that the SJCW only has to think about the extent to which an action could impact those other things and what the mechanism of that impact would be. Much of this model will work by showing how salmon will relate to other factors, which can be an item such as green sturgeon (if not enough salmon are in the run, there's not even food for green sturgeon, etc.)*
- Question: What about the Biological Opinion for green sturgeon? Were those built in?
  - *Answer: The process does not include existing regulatory paradigms that are required for Endangered Species Act recovery. Federal representatives can comment at every point with a given species.*
- Question: Does this modeling consider temporal impacts of suites of actions and the synergies among the different actions? How quickly would the impacts of actions accrue?
  - *Answer: For temporal impacts, the model can run scenarios. One of the big things from the scenarios was it revealed that any multiple dry year stretches would crush recovery. Additionally, it is possible to look at a one-year scale. One of the biggest opportunities in the model is the possibility to toggle a number of factors.*
- Question: How long did it take to adapt the two models for the 34 reaches? What would adapting the lifecycle models look like for the 27 stocks in the Columbia Basin?
  - *Answer: The two models for the 34 reaches have not been completed yet. The estimated completion time is around two and a half years, but progress occurs in pulses of three to five months at each stage, often involving feedback from workshops. Regarding the 27 stocks in the Basin, it would probably start by focusing on a specific species and location to explain the conceptual model and potential expansion. Building understanding of geography is key. While specifics on how it would be built are unclear, breaking it down step by step is a good procedural approach.*
- Question: How did this group get funding? Did it come from state agencies?
  - *Answer: Initially, the SJCW received pilot funding from the state water office and later secured a significant grant from an NGO delta conservation group, along with funds from a water foundation and a private foundation. The SJCW funding pool was diverse from the start. While the SJCW has not focused on future funds yet, it's on the horizon. The coalition operates voluntarily and non-regulatorily, serving as an experimental model. The SJCW emphasized that participation in the process is non-binding to ensure comfort for all involved.*

## Work Group Updates

Liz then introduced Sam Meysohn, Kearns & West to go over the Work Group Updates.

Sam went over updates from the Predation Work Group. She shared that the Non-Lethal Pinniped Recommendation requires final edits, while the lethal Pinniped recommendation necessitates further discussion, along with both the Avian and Piscine subgroup recommendations. The group had the following questions:

- Question: Is there a mainstem focus or tributaries as well?
  - *Answer: The predation work group focuses on both.*
- Question: Has there been continued work on the pinniped recommendation that was approved at the April I/RG meeting?
  - *Answer: No significant additional work has been done since the group last checked in at the June 2023 Predation Work Group Meeting.*

Sam went over updates from the Habitat Work Group. She noted the group developed the recommendation pertaining to local land managers for net habitat gain and that the group has discussed NOAA five-year recommendations. The group had the following questions:

- Question: Beyond looking at limiting factors, does the Habitat Work Group ever look at habitat that is currently blocked by dams?
  - *Answer: Those conversations have been covered mostly to the Blocked Areas group.*
- Question: Is the Habitat Work Group going to refine this list of NOAA 5-year recommendations to focus on? It is a long list.
  - *Answer: Once the work group thoroughly understands the policy obstacles, the group will develop specific recommendations to address these obstacles.*
- Question: Did the habitat work group discuss approaching government entities to ask for their support of the ecological gain projects or protecting intact habitat over investments in other projects?
  - *Answer: Yes, and it is likely there will be more discussion on this topic when the I/RG reviews the habitat recommendation later today.*

Liz went over updates from the Hatchery and Harvest Work Group updates. She stated the group has been on pause since June. The group had the following questions:

- Question: Is the future of this group going to be discussed today?
  - *Answer: It can be a part of the I/RG discussion later during the meeting if they would like it to.*

Sam went over Hydropower and the Blocked Areas Work Groups updates. She noted that the Hydropower Work Group has been paused since May 2023 but had several recommendation concepts in progress at the time of pause. For Blocked Areas, Sam noted there was a recommendation centered on increasing salmon production in the Upper Snake River that would be under review in the afternoon.

Liz then went over the Science Integration Work Group (SIWG) updates and noted that the work group reviewed current recommendations that would be under review at the I/RG Meeting. The group had the following questions:

- Question: Are the SIWG meetings recorded or is there a transcript available of those conversations? It would be valuable to share the conversations.
  - *Answer: Currently, the protocol is to not record meetings, so people do not feel they are put on the spot when speaking. However, robust notes are taken and are later turned into meeting summaries which are available online. Also, SIWG feedback on recommendations is included in the recommendation packet.*

## Review Recommendations

Liz went over the process for consensus. She then went over the three recommendations that were up for discussion.

### Blocked Areas Recommendation

Sam introduced Dennis Daw, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation, to review the recommendation. He mentioned that the recommendation originated from a subgroup that included Idaho Power Company, Idaho Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries, the Burns Paiute Tribe, and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes. He outlined the area's historical significance, emphasizing various tribes' ties to the Upper Snake Region. Additionally, he highlighted the challenges Idaho rivers face in meeting salmon production targets and emphasized that tribes have been denied access to salmon for over a century. Therefore, increasing salmon production is seen as a key solution to addressing many issues in the Upper Snake Region.

The group had the following input:

- Question: The *United States v. Oregon* (US v. Oregon) process poses challenges for this recommendation. Are there plans to communicate with the *US v. Oregon* parties?
  - Answer: Yes, some conversations have already happened with the *US v. Oregon* parties and more will be needed in the future.
- Question: Why is this a challenge with the *US v. Oregon* parties?
  - Answer: This specific recommendation will not meet mitigation goals so it will be hard to convince parties in *US v. Oregon* to support this.
- Question: How would fish be tracked? Would they be marked?
  - Answer: The fish would be tracked at Hells Canyon. Beyond that, the details are still under discussion. Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT) tags or physical markings have been brought up as possibilities.
- Question: Does supporting this recommendation mean one specifically supports spring/summer Chinook runs or does it mean one supports cultural purposes?
  - Answer: This recommendation is primarily following the Hells Canyon Resource Plan. The goal is based on both restoring the runs as well as cultural purposes.
- Question: How do tribes know they have legitimate support when they leave the room today? Being in favor of this recommendation seems to indicate general support but many of the details of how this recommendation will be carried out seem to be unclear.
  - Answer: The recommendation has details that need to be worked out. The I/RG needs to start by seeing if they have consensus on the recommendation.
- Multiple members stated that they believed in the importance of pursuing this initiative.
- Members discussed concerns about carrying capacity and the focus on the goal of fish rather than methods of recovery. They acknowledged that this issue was brought up in the SIWG, with differing views expressed.
- Members discussed the specific language of the recommendation. One suggestion was to state “pursuit” of increased salmon. Members agreed that this was a better choice of words and that this wording made the recommendation more consistent with the CBP goals. Additionally, another member mentioned the use of the “guaranteed” to describe the source of fish in the

recommendation; after discussion, the group agreed to change the phrase to “stable and dedicated.”

There were no objections – the recommendation reached consensus. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and The Confederated Tribes of Umatilla did not participate in the consensus discussion since they are currently re-evaluating their participation in the CBC forum.

### Habitat Work Group Recommendation

Sam introduced Tom Iverson, Yakama Nation Fisheries, who went over the recommendation which prompts the I/RG should draft a letter that targets decision makers at the state, county, and local levels with a focus on water and land management with a request to revise appropriate policies to support net habitat gain. Tom also noted that this recommendation pertains to the authority that many of the entities at the table possess, making the recommendation different than other I/RG recommendations. The I/RG shared the following questions and comments:

- Question: On page five of the packet, the recommendation states that there is accurate data on habitat for the first time. The next recommendation the I/RG is reviewing addresses a critical lack of data on fish in the basin. How can one reconcile that?
  - *Answer: The language in this recommendation that references data was based on the CBP goals. That said, this language can be refined further.*
- Comment: This recommendation serves to engage others and ask for their support to protect the habitat in the basin. This letter could benefit from adding language about resiliency and funding.
- Question: Is the expectation that this letter would go out with the tribes’ signature?
  - *Answer: That aspect of the letter is not decided yet. One idea is for it to go out from the four states but that has not specifically been agreed to yet. A CBC letterhead that highlights all parties involved might be more beneficial.*
- Question: To clarify, this letter would encourage local managers to adopt a policy of net ecological gain when that is not a policy goal of their county, state, etc.? And if so, is it fair to ask officials who are the lowest of the decision makers to propagate policy that they do not have higher support to do?
  - *Answer: This letter would ask State, County, and Local government officials to consider salmon in their day-to-day operations. The intention of this letter is more about awareness that there is a large effort going on and that officials should be a part of it.*
- Members expressed concerns about duplicating efforts, suggesting evaluation of overlap.
- Members discussed CBC Communications. Multiple members noted this would be the first time the CBC put out large scale communications and there was no precedent for doing so. One member put forward a proposal to include a page of the letter to provide context about the CBC. There were suggestions for forming an external communications work group to develop CBC materials and communication strategies. Several members said a communication strategy should be in place before a letter of this scale was sent out.
- Some members pointed out CBC's non-decision-making role and discussed ideas for how the CBC could theoretically assist counties.

Liz recapped the discussion by stating there was interest in this recommendation, but it would not move forward until the CBC can further develop an external communications strategy. The group shared interest in further defining the role and scope of the CBC before focusing on external communications.

### Hydropower Recommendation

Sam introduced Ritchie Graves, NOAA, to review the Hydropower recommendation which calls to maintain and improve mainstem reach survival estimates and Smolt to Adult Return (SAR) data by installing PIT tag detection systems at key mainstem hydro-projects. This recommendation considers Upper Columbia dams such as Wanapum Dam. The I/RG shared the following questions and comments:

- Question: Do you know what the cost of PIT tag detection would be in spillways?
  - *Answer: The PIT tag detector at the Lower Granite Dam costs approximately \$16 million. A considerable amount of that cost went towards research and development. That is not necessarily the same sort of system that would need to be put into these other passage routes. It is also worth noting that the Army Corps of Engineers is slated to kick off the alternate phase for PIT detection for McNary Dam soon.*
- Question: If one were to lower the total dissolved gas, couldn't the number of spillways that are open be reduced to make the one with the PIT detector more useful?
  - *Answer: In theory, yes. If there was less spill, the fish could be concentrated for detection. There are potential problems with that. There are currently a lot of people looking at spill rates in the area.*
- Question: Is there an estimate of how much the SAR uncertainty would be reduced if Wanapum had a system?
  - *Answer: For upper Columbia stocks, most of release locations are in tributaries and then there are releases in the mainstem river. The first real place data can be collected is McNary Dam which would act as a site where all juvenile migrants could be concentrated for that passage route.*
- Question: Have there been conversations with Grant County Public Utility District about how this might work in relation to their operations?
  - *Answer: Ritchie shared that he could not speak on behalf of Grant County Public Utility District, but they know this recommendation exists and is being discussed in the CBC.*
- Question: What value does bringing this issue to the CBC provide?
  - *Answer: This emerged from brainstorming sessions with the CBC Hydropower Work Group who ranked this issue as a top priority. It is a topic of discussion across multiple forums. The value from CBC includes enhancing understanding among participants and fostering communication beyond the involved parties. It serves as a team-building exercise and underscores the importance of PIT tagging systems in the estuary. The Wanapum Dam issue extends to broader concerns like McNary and Bonneville. Regionally acknowledging these priorities reinforces their importance and aligns with federal objectives.*
- One member noted an appreciation of estuary detection being included in this recommendation. They stated that there have been new and expanded efforts in that area and that some scientific breakthroughs in estuary detection have recently happened. Additionally, they noted that other forms of detection could be considered beyond PIT tag detection systems.

Liz asked the group if there were objections and there were none. The group reached consensus on this recommendation.

## Implementing Recommendations

Liz reviewed how recommendations move through the CBC process to appropriate implementers. She noted that I/IRG members each had a copy of consensus recommendations from April 2023 with track changes that had been made between that April meeting and the present. The group had the following input:

- Members discussed a proposal to compile recommendations into an ongoing document for promotion by CBC members. Multiple members suggested a public repository or dashboard on the CBC website to track recommendations and where they are at in the consensus process. Additionally, one member suggested a monitoring dashboard on the website to evaluate recommendation effectiveness.
- Members discussed internal evaluation of recommendations. The topic of a report card – an internal document to evaluate the effectiveness of a recommendation – was brought up as one member noted that such a rubric is a part of the SIWG review process. Members noted that recommendations vary in granularity and that there was a need to identify relevant individuals for recommendation implementation and to have specific requests for such individuals.
- Members discussed the need for stable, long-term funding sources for the CBC. The Project Team shared that the CBC has guaranteed funds through fall 2024 and are currently seeking additional funds. One member proposed the idea of creating a subcommittee focused on funding advocacy. Other members took on the responsibility of researching specific funding sources to possibly support the CBC.
- Members discussed the CBC's interaction with other forums. Multiple people expressed a need for caution regarding communication with *US v. Oregon* parties. They also expressed the need for facilitation in the CBC process. Additionally, members discussed presenting the CBC's relevant recommendations directly to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to ensure effective implementation. Members agreed on the need for the CBC to leverage council representatives for interaction with external parties.

Liz turned the discussion towards the future of the CBC. The group had the following input:

- Members considered whether to stick with current CBP goals or expand to address additional issues such as resident fish.
- Members discussed whether to make small adjustments to the current charter or to conduct a larger overhaul of the CBC.
- Concerns were raised about the allocation of resources, both financial and in terms of time commitment from members. Particular attention was drawn to the need to ensure tribal involvement and alignment with existing initiatives.
- Members expressed differing opinions on the pace of progress and the suitability of certain approaches like the SDM framework. Some advocated for a cautious, incremental approach, while others pushed for larger rethinking of the CBC process.



- Members discussed the value of collaborative effort, emphasizing the importance of clear goals and demonstrating tangible progress. Members recognized the need to build trust and ensure all participants feel their concerns are being addressed.
- Concerns were expressed about the challenges of meeting specific salmon recovery goals, with some skepticism about the current approach's ability to achieve the CBCP goals. Suggestions were made for focusing efforts on specific stocks and to acknowledge limitations of the CBC process.
- Members discussed a need to meet in separate subgroups to discuss the SDM process and to review the CBC Charter and propose edits to it. Various participants volunteered to be a part of one or both subgroups.

## Confirm Upcoming Topics, Next Steps, and Summary

Members discussed upcoming topics for the next I/RG meeting including proposal from the Charter Review Sub-Group, report out from the SDM Sub-Group, and update and check-in on CBC funding status. Liz thanked the group for their participation and invited Jody Lando, Bonneville Power Administration, to provide closing remarks.

### Action Items

- **Rob M:** Share Central Valley Meeting information with KW to circulate to the I/RG
- **Scott H/Urban E:** Look into additional potential funding sources for the CBC – EPA EJ Funding, Infrastructure Funding, Presidential Memo, etc.
- **State Reps:** Continue to identify future funding for the CBC.
- **Rec authors:** Identify implementers and funding sources for the recommendations.
- **KW:** Circulate Public Forum update and seek feedback from the I/RG
- **KW:** Circulate ocean conditions information from NOAA
- **KW:** Collect all consensus recommendations and circulate to the I/RG for review of track changes
- **KW:** Convene a sub-group of I/RG members to review the Charter and develop proposals for revisions and bring forward at the second quarter I/RG Meeting.
- **KW:** Convene a sub-group of I/RG members to learn more about Structured Decision Making and report out at the second quarter I/RG Meeting.

*The meeting adjourned at 4:00pm PT.*