Columbia Basin Collaborative
Structured Decision Making Sub-group
Meeting Summary

Wednesday, March 6, 2024, from 11:00am – 1:00pm PT/ 12:00pm – 2:00pm MT

Attendees

Sub-group Members in Attendance: Art Martin (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), B.J. Kieffer (Spokane Tribe of Indians), Brent H. Hall (Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs), Charlene Hurst (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Donella Miller (Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission), Gary Marston (Trout Unlimited), Humaira Falkenberg (Pacific County Public Utility District), Jeremiah Bonifer (Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission), Jim McKenna (State of Oregon), Jody Lando (Bonneville Power Administration), Kevin Scribner (Salmon-Safe), Leslie Druffel (The McGregor Company), Michael Garrity (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Robert Lessard (Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission), Scott Hoefer (Bureau of Reclamation), and Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries).

Facilitation Team: Colin Johnson (Kearns & West), Liz Mack (Kearns & West), and Samantha Meysohn (Kearns & West).

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Context

Liz Mack, Kearns & West (K&W), welcomed members to the first Structured Decision Making (SDM) sub-group meeting. Liz led introductions, reviewed meeting guidelines, and provided an overview of the agenda. The topics included: 1) Science and Integration Work Group (SIWG) SDM information, 2) SDM in the CBC context, and 3) confirm next steps and action items.

SIWG Structured Decision Making Information

Liz provided an overview of prior discussions on SDM by the SIWG and the history of the SDM recommendation concept. The SDM concept was first discussed by the SIWG in December 2022. The SIWG had previously developed the recommended actions form to help capture key components of recommendations, and report cards for each recommendation to show which stocks would benefit from proposed actions. SDM was identified as a way to understand compounding impacts, integrate actions across categories, and achieve goals as laid out by the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF). SIWG members discussed whether the SDM would be created for use by other entities or as an internal tool for the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC), in addition to discussing how the salmon slider could be used in a SDM framework.

A recommendation concept to develop a SDM framework was drafted and shared with the Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) in April 2023. The framework would provide a science-based, transparent, approach and tools to identify actions across limiting factors that could be sequenced and bundled to achieve major gains throughout the basin. I/RG members shared mixed feedback on whether the concept should be developed into a recommendation. Support was expressed for the potential in SDM to support the integration and alignment of decisions and strategies and the

potential gains in political support that could come from a greater understanding of how science informs actions. Those in support also highlight that the SDM could link to existing assessments, models, and analytical forums. Broadening the SDM to account for other elements that influence implementation and shape decisions around recovery was also suggested. Concerns about the recommendation centered around a lack of clarity in desired outcomes from developing an SDM. I/RG Members expressed that efforts should be focused on high-priority on-the-ground recovery efforts, rather than the development of additional frameworks and tools. Members also highlighted that scientific uncertainty should not prevent the CBC from making decisions on actions that can benefit salmon.

Structured Decision Making in the CBC Context

Liz recapped that members of the CBC have shared SDM models that could provide a starting place for the CBC, including SDM frameworks in the Frasier Valley and San Joaquin Central Valley. At the January I/RG meeting, members noted that for a framework to be used by the CBC it would need to consider the complexity of the Columbia River Basin. A SDM framework must not degrade or interfere with Tribal rights and authorities and should align with CBPTF goals and be inclusive of all regions. Members also proposed trying SDM as a case study within one of the work groups.

Liz invited sub-group members to consider the following questions:

- Are there other SDM models the CBC should explore?
- What tools or information could be leveraged for SDM?
- At what scale should a SDM framework be used?

Sub-group members discussed the potential cost and benefit of developing and implementing SDM, whether an SDM is truly necessary and appropriate for the CBC as it is not a decision-making body, and if existing tools could be expanded to reach desired outcomes of SDM. Members also discussed the challenge of scale presented by the Columbia Basin and proposed that recommendations at a scenario scale could be a place to use SDM. Members shared the following comments, concerns, and questions:

Support for SDM

- As a communications tool, the SDM framework could help stakeholders without expertise in fisheries management understand the context and reasoning for decisions, which may contribute to more material and political support for recovery efforts.
- One member shared that the value-add of the SDM framework is integration across limiting factors, and that it will allow the CBC to look at alternative actions and weigh consequences more thoroughly.
    - The SDM framework can provide real value when deciding on actions that may require sacrifices in other areas.
    - One member shared that progress on near-term actions should not stall the development of a SDM framework, but that the framework would lay a foundation for addressing challenging issues in the future.

- Members proposed creating SDM processes that operate on a region (sub-basin) scale, and that focus on all limiting factors within that region. One member recommended the Walla Walla basin, where Chinook salmon are being reintroduced, as a potential case study to test a SDM on.
- One member recommended consulting with groups that are also overseeing SDM processes such as the United States Geological Survey where SDM processes are used in efforts to reintroduce bull trout in the Pend Oreille Basin and Klamath Basin, and as part of the Skagit Dam relicensing process. The SDM process utilized by Compass Environmental in the Central Valley was also highlighted.
    - One member shared that the Central Valley process deals with a different set of circumstances in terms of complexity, sovereigns, stakeholders, and legal environment and thus may not be relevant to the Columbia Basin.
- Social cultural and economic factors can potentially be woven into SDM.

Concerns about SDM

- Members raised concerns about the resources required to produce a SDM framework that reflects the complexity of the Columbia Basin system.
    - The SDM framework for the San Joaquin Valley, a less complex system, has required substantial financial resources thus far and is still not complete.
    - Time is a limiting factor, and resources may be better spent moving other actions forward.
- Members questioned the underlying assumptions for recommending a SDM framework, highlighting that fish, wildlife, and watershed managers already engage in an iterative process that considers all factors that are affecting fish.
    - Members shared concern that SDM would be more of an academic exercise to formalize a process that already exists and that resources such as the heat map serve the same function as SDM to focus or prioritize actions.
        - One member shared that many sovereigns have had restoration programs in existence for generations and that SIWG members may not be familiar with these processes and the expertise that goes into designing them.
    - A manager may only be able to address certain factors due to funding and legal limitations. Working to address mortality impacts that are typically inaccessible due to these limitations may be a better use of time.
- One member noted that there is an abundance of scientific data to support recovery efforts, and SDM frameworks exist in the basin at watershed levels and species levels, in addition to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) life cycle models for stocks and populations.
- One member noted that there are potential actions backed by good science where the desired outcomes align with CBPTF goals, and where consensus may be more easily reached, that may be a better area to focus resources on.

Existing Tools

- Members discussed the value of adding a temporal scale to the salmon slider tool to support the evaluation of long- and short-term actions.
    - One member questioned whether it made sense to try and make tools like the heat maps more accurate given that doing so would require a lot of time and resource, and the result would be a small amount of additional accuracy.
        - Other members noted that the current recommendation form includes a question that addresses the temporal component for seeing outcomes from the actions.
    - One member cautioned against making a tool complicated as this can present challenges to the longevity of a tool since staff turnover may mean that new managers do not understand its use or have buy-in to the underlying assumptions.
- Members suggested identifying a compromise that would incorporate the objectives of the SDM into the SIWG process for reviewing recommendations. This could include reviewing for temporal components, integrations, uncertainties, and benefits.
    - Members suggested having more technical expertise speaking about recommendations within work groups, and that the SIWG could monitor what is being discussed in the work groups more closely. Other members highlighted current capacity limitations on work groups and were hesitant to add additional responsibilities to their existing charge.

Recommendation Approach and Scenario Planning

- One member stated that the SIWG would benefit from having additional context around recommendations in order to evaluate each recommendation effectively.
    - Work groups could be asked to develop alternatives for each recommendation as a means of providing that additional context.
        - Members noted the current strains on work group capacity making it challenging for the work group members to produce more alternatives for the SIWG.
- Members suggested that the SIWG should operate at a scenario scale and look at a suite of actions that make up a scenario. The scenarios that appear in the second CBPTF report cover all threat categories and provide a general approach for a more comprehensive strategy than any one individual action.
    - Several members shared support for adopting a scenario scale and some noted that the recommendations that have been produced as part of the CBC to date may be so specific that they are not implementable by the time they are approved.
- If the CBC does focus on scenario-scale recommendations, members noted that SDM could be an effective way to evaluate alternative approaches.
    - One member expressed an interest in learning more about the integration of scenario planning currently utilized by the managers of the San Joaquin Valley SDM process.

Confirm Next Steps and Action Items

The sub-group agreed to have further discussions about the scale of recommendations at the next sub-group meeting and explore the idea of scenario-scale recommendations that could be evaluated with a

SDM framework. Liz thanked the sub-group members for their time and efforts before reviewing action items from the meeting.

Action Items

- **All**: Complete the Doodle poll to schedule the next SDM meeting.
- **All**: Review CBPTF scenarios in advance of the next meeting and consider if recommendations at a scenario scale are an appropriate place to use SDM. Note: Scenarios begin on page 127.
- **K&W**: Draft a meeting summary and circulate to the sub-group for review by the end of day.