

Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG)

Meeting Summary

October 19th, 2022, 12:30pm – 5:00pm PT/ 1:30pm – 6:00pm MT
Zoom Webinar

Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Proposed Agenda

Liz Mack, Kearns & West, opened the meeting and invited Michael Langley, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, to lead an opening prayer.

Debra Smith, Utilities, provided opening remarks. She reviewed what was discussed at the June 29th I/RG meeting and the work of the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC) including convening five work groups. She shared her hopes for what the I/RG could accomplish at the 10/19 meeting. She then told a story to highlight the importance of collaboration when everyone brings their unique perspectives and skills to a situation, the outcome is greater than the sum of parts.

Liz outlined the meeting agenda and reviewed the ground rules.

Updates from Around the Region

Liz invited the I/RG members to introduce their teams and to share any updates relevant to the process.

The I/RG members shared the following updates:

- Several members noted personnel changes within their organization.
- Many members detailed their organization's recent involvement with salmon restoration efforts and climate change mitigation projects across the basin.
- Members noted that salmon stock are doing better than previous years but are still under harvest goals.
- Members noted other processes in the basin which pertain to CBC work such as the recent Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Tribal Energy Vision Report, the current stay of litigation, and the Inslee/Murray report.

Coordination on External Forums

Guests and I/RG members gave updates on external forums that relate to the efforts of the CBC.

Lower Snake River Dams Replacement Report

Guy Norman, State of Washington, delivered an update on the Lower Snake River Dams Replacement Report. He noted that the final report was released in August and was developed with conciliation and interviews with a variety of stakeholders. Tribal obligations and energy were at the forefront of this report. Guy noted two major conclusions from the report. First, the benefits associated with the dams must be replaced before the dams are removed. Congress would have to authorize breaching. There must be agreement on short- and long-term investments in the region especially relating to transportation, replacement energy, the power grid, irrigation, and habitat. The estimated cost is \$10-31 billion over the next 51 years. Extinction of salmon is totally unacceptable. Moving forward in a way that acknowledges the harms of salmon extinction and works to rebuild populations is critical. Secondly,

hatchery backlogs need to be addressed. Governor Inslee wants to build on the 2022 legislation and expand renewable energy in the basin, soliciting more funding from the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: The possibility of fish management transitioning from Bonneville Power Administration to a new entity has been raised in recent times. Is that addressed in this report? Answer: That has been one of the pieces of input by some entities to the report. The Governor and Senator have taken that point seriously but it is unclear if it is moving forward.
- Question: What are the states doing on replacement of energy on the lower snake river dams? What is the timeline for breaching? Answer: The states are encouraging work for replacement. The Governor and Senator have been very clear that Washington is well on its way to replacement and is looking for ways to accelerate the timeline.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) Process

Jim McKenna, State of Oregon, gave an overview of the FMCS process. He noted that there was an agreement on the stay of litigation through July 2022; after that, there was an interim agreement, and another stay was put in place until August 2023. During this process, the Biden Administration has put forward a set of commitments. The first was to put together a comprehensive plan for the basin. Second, the administration committed to working with all stakeholders and sovereigns in the region. Jim pointed out that the FMCS and CBC processes have many of the same groups represented but there are differences: the CBC is striving for consensus while the FMCS process is collaborating but is not a consensus process. The CBC doesn't have a sunset date while the FMCS process is expected to dissolve at the completion of the stay in August 2023. The CBC Charter states that the group should keep updated on other forums and the FMCS is one of those forums. Matt Philibeck, FMCS, provided answers to questions.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: Did the letter that the governor signed for the CBC have a terminus date? Answer: The letter did not have a sunset date and the states are committed to the effort as long as it is productive.
- Question: Is there concern about those who are not directly involved in the litigation having influence on that process? Answer: There are concerns about the Federal Advisory Committee Act and the federal government taking directives from those who are not directly involved in the litigation. The state understands there are stakeholders that have vested interest in the process even if they are not directly involved in it and is dealing with sovereigns and litigants as it sees fit.
- Question: Has FMCS thought through integration of other processes with the CBC? Answer: The FMCS has no formalized structure with any other processes in the region.
- Question: Can you comment on the role that the Columbia River System Operation Environmental Impact Statement will have on the FMCS process? Answer: That question has not been considered in this process yet.

Treaty Negotiations

Jill Smail, Columbia River Treaty Negotiator for the U.S. Department of State, updated the group on the treaty negotiation process. She stated that negotiations resumed in 2021. An October 4 and 5 meeting occurred in Spokane. Over the last 10 months, discussions have evolved from meeting about the issues

to exploring concepts on how both the US and Canada can meet mutual goals. The State Department's view is that the two countries have shared goals including a sustainable hydropower system, a healthy Columbia River ecosystem, and managing water resources to support the people.

- Question: Are there any proceedings from the October 4 and 5 workshop available for the public? Answer: No, there were no proceedings.
- One member stated that information about this process should be shared more easily and that they would like to see more transparency from the US State Department.

Share Updates from the Work Groups

Liz opened the section by reviewing the work group process and noted that every work group has met once.

Science Integration

Liz went over the kickoff meeting of the Science Integration Work Group (SIWG). She stated that the group identified science and infrastructure gaps that were not specific to any topic. The group also discussed the need for a standard proposal format for actions developed by the Topic Specific Work Groups (TSWG) as well as the Salmon Slider Model and its use for facilitating discussions on actions. Liz shared the draft CBC Action Recommendation Form document.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: Was geography considered? Answer: Yes, the form considers that.
- Question: The form asks about existing programs an action may be a part of. How can that information be funneled back into the other questions which focus on the specifics of the action? Answer: That item was put there to clarify how the recommendation relates to existing efforts and avoid redundancy in the recommendations.
- One member remarked that the recommended action form may be too information intensive for every work group.
- I/RG members discussed how benefits are characterized in the form. For example, should the work groups measure how many miles were restored of the river or should it measure the number of fish returning to a stream? Additionally, it is hard to define benefits because there can be gaps in available data. I/RG members stressed they did not want the SIWG to get stuck on the science before moving forward with recommendations. I/RG members asked that the work groups use the matrices developed by the Biological Sub-group to demonstrate the benefit of their recommendations. This was clarified on the Action Recommendation Form. The I/RG also expressed the desire to recommend shovel ready projects or "low hanging fruit."
- Members discussed the scope of the recommendations from the work groups. Some expressed a desire that the work groups' recommendations be made at a programmatic level and recommended that the groups avoid evaluating existing projects. The group agreed that, moving forward, priority should be on new projects that are ready for implementation and programmatic changes.
- Several I/RG members posed questions about the assignments given to the work groups. Liz reminded the group that a recommendation does not necessarily have to come out of the work groups. The work groups exist to provide technical expertise on relevant topics. I/RG members can propose recommendations for discussion amongst the group. I/RG members can also request that work groups analyze specific topics directly.

Liz showcased the draft SIWG work plan. The group discussed work plan review logistics.

Estuary/Tributary Habitat

Amira Streeter, Kearns & West, reviewed the takeaways from the Estuary/Tributary Habitat Work Group kickoff meeting. She stated that many recovery plans exist at the local, state, and federal level and thus there is funding for planning and pieces of implementation. However, there is insufficient funding to achieve the goals in addition to a lack of information on monitoring and habitat status. The group also noted that climate impacts have not been adequately factored into restoration work and thus the best ways to mitigate these impacts was a discussion point in the kickoff meeting. Additionally, the group noted their desire to collaborate with other work groups. Amira then went over the draft work plan.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: Did the group discuss estuaries and tributaries separately or as one unit? Answer: Even though the two are lumped together here, the group split up the two subjects initially. As conversation went on at this meeting, the two were discussed in tandem.
- One member noted that the recent NOAA report outlines actions that can be taken in the next five years related to habitat.
- One member stated that identifying priority habitat projects can be a large and overwhelming task. They recommended the work group strive to understand which actions can be expanded.
- One member stated that they believe this group should be addressing the programmatic level and not the project specific level.
- Members asked how mainstem habitat was incorporated into this work group. The group agreed that it makes sense to look at habitat throughout the Columbia River Basin as a part of this work group.

Hydropower /Blocked Areas Work Group

Samantha Meysohn, Kearns & West, delivered a recap of the Hydropower/Blocked Areas Work Group kickoff meeting. She stated that the group noted that there were many entities and forums working on blocked areas and mainstem hydropower impacts. The group also looked at the funding and information gaps that exist on this topic. Additionally, the group emphasized the need to coordinate with other work groups and forums. Samantha then shared the group's draft work plan and asked for input.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: When the CBC was convened, some were under the impression that dam breaching was not a topic that was on the table. Is dam breaching going to be a recommendation from the Hydropower/ Blocked Areas Work group? Answer: That was not explicitly discussed in the work group. Dam breaching is a potential recommendation that the group could discuss, but not likely to be one of the first "low-hanging fruit" recommendations. In addition, the work group will not replace other existing forums. There are lots of flow issues, passage issues, and maintenance recommendations that can be discussed in relation to hydropower.
- Question: If the I/RG makes recommendations on items such as areas blocked by culverts, would that go to the Hydropower/Blocked Areas work group? Answer: There is overlap between hydropower, habitat, and predation so it's possible that such recommendations could go to multiple groups. The facilitation team is tracking items that are closely related to other work groups to make sure they do not duplicate work.
- Members expressed interest in using the work group to identify hydropower operation needs and move beyond simply understanding an issue.
- There was a conversation about what consensus looks like for this work group. Liz reminded everyone that consensus does not mean that a vote will be taken. Consensus means that even

though it may not be the work group members' first choice, that everyone can live with the outcome.

Hatcheries/Harvest

Liz delivered a recap of the Hatcheries/Harvest Work Group kickoff meeting. She stated that the group identified existing forums, gaps, and funding sources and needs. The group also discussed escapement goals and adult returns, differing views on the identified knowledge gaps, the need to further discuss the degree of impacts of fisheries and the hatchery/harvest interrelationship, and the process of taking a stock-by-stock approach to this topic. Liz then went over the group's draft work plan and asked for input.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: Are hatchery and harvest infrastructure needs considered with regard to specific stocks? Answer: Yes, infrastructure plans are stock specific.
- One member expressed support for addressing hatcheries and harvest topics together.
- Members shared an interest in ensuring data is current and a lack of data does not prevent progress. Members also expressed that quantitative and measurable goals are important but also that the group should consider outcomes beyond abundance.

Predation

Amira delivered a recap of the Predation Work Group kickoff meeting. The group went over existing programs that have not yielded long-term desired outcomes. The group reviewed regulatory and policy changes that are necessary to address specific predators. Additionally, they emphasized thinking about predation issues holistically and pointed out that data gaps hinder successful implementation of predator management programs. Lack of funding also prohibits successful programs from continuing or expanding. Amira then shared the draft work plan.

The I/RG members had the following discussion:

- Question: Is this group considering the role of orcas under the predation umbrella? Answer: Yes, this group is. There is one member who is a subject matter expert on orcas so they will be a part of relevant discussions moving forward. However, the group will not discuss or recommend orca management.
- Question: Is this group addressing the effect that infrastructure failure has on mainstem passage / survival impacts? Answer: These issues would constitute as boundary edges, ones that are not solidly in one group or another. The facilitation team is flagging and tracking these.
- One member noted the increasing threat of Northern Pike in the Upper Columbia and stated they would like the group to address the future threat of Northern Pike to reintroduced fish and not just current threats.

Water Resource Development Act Sub-group

Liz shared a summary of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Sub-group meeting. At the June 29 I/RG meeting, the I/RG identified a need to review the draft WRDA bill to ensure that no language would prevent the CBC from achieving its charter. The group met and did not find any language in the WRDA bill that would present a conflict. Individual entities were able to advocate through the federal process and no unified message from the I/RG was necessary.

Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report

Michael Tehan, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), presented on the Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report. He outlined several key takeaways from the report:

- The report was prepared by NMFS, with input from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and considered the written comments of tribal and state fishery managers.
- The report was developed to inform the Biden Administration's commitment to explore a long-term strategy for restoring salmon and native fish populations.
- One of the goals is to exceed Endangered Species Act recovery thresholds for salmon abundance.
- The report summarizes the latest science and describes a rebuilding scenario by identifying a comprehensive suite of actions to achieve the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force's (CBPTF's) mid-range goals by 2050.
- Ten key questions came out of the report to guide salmon recovery process.

The group asked the following questions:

- Question: 2050 was selected as a mid-range goal year in this report because the court recommended it, but in the report, there were qualitative and quantitative goals that the CBPTF came up with. The CBPTF specifically did not tag dates for those so why did NMFS do so? Additionally, was there political direction on this? Answer: No, there was no political direction on this. As far as dates, this report is separate from the CBPTF and it was NMFS's recommendation to use 2050 for this scenario.
- A work group member noted that for some people 2050 is too long. For tribes, this is deeply important, and the basin needs to get to healthy and harvestable numbers as soon as possible. The current situation is not acceptable.

Liz asked that any additional questions for Michael be sent to the facilitation team to consolidate and share with NMFS.

Approach Going Forward, Confirm Upcoming Topics, Next Steps, and Summary

Liz reviewed the next steps for the I/RG. She noted that a survey would be circulated to gather feedback on the hybrid meeting experience and solicit topics for the next I/RG meeting, likely in early 2023.

Closing Remarks

Donella Miller, Yakama Nation, provided closing remarks. Donella thanked the group for their participation and remarked that it was beneficial that the group recognized the status quo was not acceptable. Donella remarked that restoring salmon populations is deeply important to healing tribal nations in the Columbia Basin.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm PT