Columbia Basin Collaborative
Assessment & Trends Sub-group

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, September 24, 2024, from 10:00am – 12:00pm PT/ 11:00am – 1:00pm MT

Attendees

Sub-group Members in Attendance: Eli Asher (Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office), Mike Ford (Northwest Fisheries Science Center), Liz Hamilton (Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe), Kris Homel (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Stacy Horton (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Tucker Jones (Oregon Department Fish & Wildlife), Nancy Leonard (Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission), and Mari Williams (Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission).

Facilitation Team: Sarah Davidson (Kearns & West), Liz Mack (Kearns & West), and Samantha Meysohn (Kearns & West)

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Context

Sam Meysohn, Kearns & West (K&W), welcomed members to the second Assessment & Trends sub-group meeting as part of the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC). Sam reviewed the meeting guidelines and provided an overview of the agenda. The topics included: 1) Recap of information needs, 2) Existing information and 3) Review next steps and action items, including the development of a proposal for tracking progress towards Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP) goals. Sam then introduced new faces to the group, including Stacy Horton, Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPCC) and Mike Ford, Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC).

Recap of Information Needs

Sam reviewed the discussion about information needs from the August 20 meeting. She highlighted that adult abundance across the Columbia Basin at stock-level was a priority interest, as was relying on existing information. Additional interests that were discussed at the previous meeting included: status in comparison to goals/quasi-extinction, trends overtime, confidence intervals, natural productivity metrics and hatchery production, and actions that are being taken to support salmon. Sam invited work group members to discuss and confirm priorities.

The following points were discussed:

- A group member asked if hatchery goals being met would be included in the hatchery production aspect that was already discussed, and group members agreed that they would be.
- Another group member added that whenever there is reporting on something, like abundance, it is important to include the goal. Several group members agreed that whenever reporting on a metric, goals should be included for context.

Sam suggested that attendees use priority interests and additional interests as a lens when listening to the existing information presentations.

Existing Information

Sam reminded the work group that at the first meeting the group identified several existing information sources to consider. Since the August meeting, the KW team worked with various point people for these information sources to compile a summary spreadsheet. The Existing Information spreadsheet was provided before the meeting and noted that the presentations in the meeting would allow the work group to learn about these information sources and ask questions, as needed.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council Program Tracker & Indicators, Kris Homel (NWPCC)

Kris Homel (NWPCC) presented the NWPCC website and explained the Program Tracker and related performance indicators. She illustrated how the available data sets and performance indicators can be accessed and invited everyone to explore the website. She also reviewed a spreadsheet of data generated by a collaborative fish monitoring group from three years ago, with abundance, population, and stock data available from StreamNet. The spreadsheet shows the status of the stocks and available data for assessing abundance.

The work group members had the following questions:

- Group members asked about the zeroes shown for some populations in the spreadsheet, and if the spreadsheet contained the same values as the CBPTF effort. Kris explained that the zeroes mean that there was no data available for that population and that it is unclear if this spreadsheet was used for the final CBPTF effort, though it was developed for the fish monitoring working group.
- Kris clarified that the spreadsheet is available on StreamNet and clarified that additional reporting on the NWPCC Fish and Wildlife Program will be available soon.

Snake River Basin Assessment, Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe)

Jay Hesse, Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) reported on the Snake River Basin Assessment Anadromous Fish Status Report Card, which reports at an aggregate rather than population level. The report card covers 7 natural-origin stocks, with a status description and "grade" given to each stock based on abundance. The data comes from lower Snake River dams and tributary populations. Jay noted the benefits of data simplicity, with high-level status updates like the report card / State of Salmon report perhaps being suited to the CBC effort. Jay also reviewed some of the figures and datasets shown on the report card and explained why the figures were crafted to show the data as well as the goal metrics (ESA-listed and healthy/harvestable metrics), emphasizing the importance of displaying data in relation to targets/goals.

The work group members had the following questions and comments:

- A group member asked if the report could put fish/dam counts into context. Jay clarified that wild versus hatchery-origin fish are distinguished from one another in the Report Card, though dam counts do not split the two and thus there is a 6-month lag time in updating the Report Card following the completion of a run. However, in-season estimates can be flagged to provide a more real-time estimate and pre-season forecasts also help shape the real-time estimates.

- Another group member asked about discerning the difference between hatchery- and wild-origin fish, asking if there is a way of incorporating this information so that it is readily available (beyond StreamNet). Jay noted that this is a current goal since most easily accessible data do not separate out wild- vs hatchery-origin fish from real-time dam fish counts.
- The importance of showing different levels of goals (like the ESA-listed and healthy/harvestable goals shown on Figure 4 in the Report Card) whenever displaying data was echoed by group members, since it puts information into historical context. Some group members wondered about the public's ability to understand the generational growth index figure that is like the NOAA Rebuilding Report figure.
- One challenge is that high numbers of returning fish one year does not necessarily indicate that population status is increasing due to the length of the salmon life cycle, which managers need to consider when reporting on status. Jay clarified that the report card does try to respond to this challenge and the rationale for the simplistic approach of the report card was again explained. Jay also clarified that mitigation goals are also included in the Report Card analysis.

State of Salmon in Watersheds Report, Eli Asher (Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office)

Eli Asher, Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (WA GSRO) presented the biennial State of Salmon report that provides a snapshot of Washington's fish populations. Fish are placed in four categories that are benchmarked against NOAA recovery goals, based on abundance of ESA-listed stocks. The data/figures of the report were reviewed, including a figure which examines abundance trends since ESA listing (% change per year), status (5-year geomean of recovery goal) and future status (% of recovery goal). Eli acknowledged data gaps that impact the analyses stemming from lack of data availability for some stocks.

- A group member asked about the relationship between ESA-delisting and broader species recovery, and Eli clarified that delisting would come from fish being determined as recovered within the ESA scope, but not necessarily within the broader CBPTF goals. Eli also noted that the report showcases the abundance of both wild and hatchery-origin fish stocks with the delisting/recovery level showcased in comparison.
- The importance of showcasing data in a simple and easily consumable manner for the public to understand was noted, although the perils of oversimplifying data were noted as well. In response, the need to always display data in comparison to goal metrics and to make sure that it is clear if there are differences between ESA delisting and recovery, healthy/harvestable, etc. was reiterated by Eli.
- A group member asked how stocks that cross State lines were characterized in the report. Eli shared that the state agencies process the data to try to accurately reflect the status of the fish as they move through Washington state. However, there are different goals across the state and thus, having all those populations displayed at the same time is a challenge. Eli further noted that the State of the Salmon Report does feature transboundary stocks within certain basins (like snake Fall Chinook) despite boundary challenges. It was also noted that the lack of resources needed to more accurately capture transboundary fish is a challenge and the hope is

that the exclusion of what is happening to fish when they leave Washington state is not misleading.

- Several group members asked why non-ESA listed populations are not included in the report. Eli shared that that the legislation that directs the WA GSRO to develop the State of the Salmon Report specifically pertains to ESA-listed fish, and that data is not reliable for non-listed populations; in addition, non-ESA listed species do not have recovery goals. WA GSRO has been working with WDFW to expand the scope of the analysis, but they have been unsuccessful in getting that research funded.

NOAA 5-year Review, Mike Ford (NWFSC)

Mike Ford (NWFSC) presented the 5-year reviews required by ESA to analyze the status of listed species. For Pacific salmon, there have been three 5-year reviews since 2005. The review is broken into two parts: a viability assessment produced by the fishery science centers (biological report, fish data, climate data) and the formal 5-year review. The data almost always comes from states/tribes, distinguishes between wild- vs hatchery-origin fish, and is reported in relation to ESA goals. The review determines if the species is endangered, threatened, or at-risk, and narrative text is provided in addition to data. Mike noted that these reviews tend to be retrospective, often taking 5-7 years, and thus may function as lagging rather than current indicators of status. He also noted that the generational growth index in NOAA's Rebuilding Report is not related to ESA listings but looks at broader recovery goals and examines natural population growth rate that would be required to meet partnership goals by 2050 which relates more to stock-specific productivity rather than current abundance.

StreamNet, Nancy Leonard (Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission)

Nancy Leonard and Mari Williams, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) presented on the StreamNet program. It has been around since the 1980's and consists of data from fish and wildlife managers across the basin. Types of data include Coordinated Assessment Partnership (CAP) fish High Level Indicators (HLI) (CAX) query, fish monitoring data, fish facilities mapper, GIS data sets, protected areas, and more. The CAP fish HLI includes an interactive map that is public-facing and a CAP fish HLI tabular query. Nancy shared that the different data sources from the CAP participants include fish and wildlife managers in the basin. It was noted that while StreamNet is not interested in conducting data analyses, StreamNet does showcase the comparison between CBPTF adult abundance goals and what is available in the StreamNet system. The data exchange tools (data exchange standards, REST API documentation) available on StreamNet were also reviewed.

Work group members had the following questions and comments:

- A group member asked if spatial goals were used (for display of CBPTF goals) or if an aggregate is what is shown. It was clarified that the information is not overlapped, just shown side-by-side.
- Another group member asked if numbers displayed for the CBPTF (spawner abundance) comparison are just natural origin fish, to which PSMFC staff responded that that this is a clarification that they hope to make soon. It would be helpful to see natural and hatchery origin fish spawner abundance on the same CBPTF / StreamNet comparison screen, as well as returns, once they are able to be distinguished. The PSMFC staff noted that hatchery coordinated

assessments will soon be incorporated into StreamNet and that more hatchery-specific information will continue to be incorporated, as this is an identified gap.
- A couple of work group members shared comments about StreamNet's accessibility for the public. StreamNet exists mostly to serve scientists/managers in the region, and therefore the public may find it challenging to understand the information.

Sam wrapped up the presentation portion of the meeting by thanking everyone for their presentations and the Q&A discussion. She reminded everyone about the goal of using this information to bring a proposal to the CBC Integrations and Recommendations Group (I/RG).

Next Steps & Action Items

Sam suggested the group consider the topics from the presentations in comparison to the identified information needs and schedule another meeting to draft a proposal for the I/RG. Sam then invited the work group members to share their thoughts on how to proceed.

Work group members had the following questions and comments:

- A work group member suggested linking to existing information on a website. However, more discussion is needed to understand timing and level of effort to summarize data.
- For the CBC purposes of reporting against CBPTF goals, the NWPCC website was suggested, and it was reiterated that StreamNet just aims to provide information and not analyze it. However, information currently featured on the NWPCC website directly links to StreamNet data.
- StreamNet is working on dashboards to compare abundance to CBPTF goals.
- The group discussed the accessibility of StreamNet for non-scientists.
- Further discussion is needed to develop a proposal for the I/RG.

Action Items:

- **Work group members:** Please complete Doodle poll to schedule an October meeting **by end of day Tuesday, October 1st.**
- **KW:** Draft a meeting summary and circulate to work group members by **Tuesday, October 1st.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:05pm PT.