

Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration/Recommendations Group

Meeting Summary

June 29th, 2022, 8:00am – 12:30pm PT/ 9:00am – 1:30pm 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.

Joel Kawahara provided opening remarks. He thanked everyone for their participation in the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC) and noted that at the March Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) Meeting, the group reviewed the charter and established a sub-group to understand the foundational biological information that will be used in the Topic Specific Work Groups. Since the meeting, the Biological Sub-group has worked on the process for the Topic Specific Work Groups and agreed on the foundational science. The I/RG members have also reviewed the latest iteration of a CBC Charter. He outlined that such items would be reviewed during this meeting and spoke to the need for collaboration.

Liz outlined the meeting agenda and reviewed the ground rules. She urged participants to focus on their interests rather than their positions, invent options for mutual gain, separate people from the problem, and practice a balance of speaking time for a productive discussion.

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 they were seeking funding for salmon recovery and restoration projects. Others noted they recently successfully secured funding.
- Several members spoke about recent collaborations with other stakeholders in the Columbia Basin and many noted that collaboration was essential to success moving forward.
- Many members noted staffing changes within their organization.
- Several members noted the moderate fishing season and how it is a positive reversal of the trend of previous years even though there is still a long way to go in terms of fish sustainability.
- State officials from Idaho, Washington, and Oregon announced that they successfully each applied for \$400,000 in funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) to support the

CBC moving forward. One official noted that this funding was additive to pre-existing funding and new PCSRF projects and does not take away from other funding.

Coordination on External Forums

Guests and CBC members gave updates on external forums that relate to the efforts of the CBC:

Lower Snake River Dams Report

Geoff Potter, Office of Jay Inslee, discussed Governor Jay Inslee's current activities to examine the Lower Snake River dams and noted how he felt his office's work will help the region move forward with salmon recovery. Kramer Consulting drafted an independent consultant report released to the public that is open for public comment through July. The report examines whether it is possible to mitigate dam removal on the Lower Snake River.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) Process

Deirdre Donahue, Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ), explained that CEQ has convened a path forward for the Columbia Rivers Systems Operation Environmental Impact Statement after hearing from stakeholders and participating in government-to-government conversations. CEQ has asked FMCS to engage in the process.

Brad Lane, FMCS, elaborated on FMCS's involvement and noted that FMCS's integration into the process was going well. Brad laid out two steps, as he saw, for the process to proceed:

- Step 1 – Host private caucuses with all the parties so there is face-to-face interaction and develop next steps for the process.
- Step 2 – Continue with the current meetings and work with parties to get an extension on the stay of litigation. After that, the next step would be to discuss a comprehensive/basin-wide agreement.

Upper Columbia River Blocked Areas Anadromous Fish Working Group (UC BAAF)

Roland Springer, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), noted the first hybrid meeting of the UC BAAF group occurred, and it was nice to meet some of the group in person. Roland stated that the group is looking at reintroduction as part of a basin-wide approach to salmon recovery. He also said the group has helped to foster coordination around the outmigration study and other Phase 2 Implementation Plan studies.

The I/RG members had the following discussions:

- Question: Will there be a meeting for the FMCS process this Fall? Answer: There will likely be a meeting in person later this year in the Portland area.
- Question: Regarding reintroduction, is there any update on predator suppression (e.g., northern pike)? Answer: Members shared an overview of efforts happening with partners (Washington State, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Spokane Tribe of Indians) and a more thorough update can be provided at a future meeting.

- Question: Does the Governor's office intend to consider the Kramer report's analysis of the Snake River Dams as front and center for the CBC effort? Answer: The CBC will consider many sources of information to achieve the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF) goals, and it is still to be determined how the CBC will coordinate with the Inslee Murray Process.
- Members noted that the Federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022 may directly affect the CBC's efforts. Liz suggested adding this as a topic for further discussion at the end of the meeting.

CBC Charter Update

Liz shared an update on the status of the Charter. She noted that the latest version of the document has been circulated and the Project Team is meeting with a few groups to address concerns. At present, 20 of the I/RG representatives have signed onto the Charter.

Biological Sub-Group Updates and Topic Specific and Science Integration Work Groups

Liz reviewed the process behind forming the Biological Sub-Group and the purpose. Liz then invited representatives from this group to report out.

Tom Iverson, Yakama Nation Fisheries, stated that the CBC was building on the CBPTF Phase II Report. Tom also noted that many of the documents in these groups, such as the matrices, are high-level summaries and do not show local issues that may impact fish populations. Tom noted that this reflects the purpose of the CBC as a high-level policy group.

Gary James, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Nation, reviewed the Sequential Steps Table and reviewed the flow of decision making. Gary shared sample results from the Salmon Slider Model and noted the need for urgent action to meaningfully address threats. He noted that the group disagreed about the exact use of the slider. He shared an example list of entities with responsibilities pertaining to fish survival in the basin and stressed that notifying these entities as soon as possible of CBC's intentions was necessary for a successful implementation.

Rob Masonis, Stakeholder Representative, reported on the work groups. Rob stated that many in the groups agreed that the CBC should focus on actions that are non-controversial and would have large positive impacts. Rob noted the constraints with the Salmon Slider Model and noted that a Science Integration Work Group could look into the synergistic effects of actions across the threat categories. He encouraged the group to take actions that could have positive impacts across the threat categories to achieve significant biological improvements in the region.

Guy Norman, State of Washington, reported on the Biological Sub-group and noted that this was an evolving process, and these materials were a starting point. He went over the process for standing up the Topic Specific and Science Integration Work Groups and stressed the need to be efficient since there is a strong sense of urgency.

Liz asked the group if there were questions about the approach:

- I/RG members discussed if ocean conditions should be added as a threat category since fish spend most of their life in the ocean. Many noted that the relationship between ocean conditions and freshwater conditions is important and a key piece of context to understand the health of the fish stocks. Others noted that, while an important piece of context, it was beyond the scope of the CBC's ability to influence. Several members noted that periodic updates on ocean conditions would be helpful to understand as the CBC works to address threats to salmon in the Columbia Basin.
- Several members voiced concerns over the roles of river flows and asked for them to be considered more within the Topic Specific Work Groups. Group members agreed that this is an important consideration that could be integrated moving forward in the Habitat Work Group(s).

Liz noted that the Project Team is considering different configurations of the Work Groups - either having several small work groups or one large group that rotates through topics.

Yakama Nation Presentation

Tom Iverson, Yakama Nation Fisheries, went over Yakama's involvement in the CBPTF and their long-standing involvement in salmon conservation. Tom emphasized the importance of funding and said that they have only been able to fund 10% of their identified salmon recovery projects. NOAA identified four to six key strategies for each impact area as a menu of potential choices for action. The CBPTF developed and discussed 13 strategies. Tom stressed that he viewed a lack of funding as the main issue and not the lack of plans as the needed plans have been developed. He also noted that he hopes the CBC can develop a short-term as well as a long-term funding strategy and noted that an I/RG work group should be prepared to focus on the management of funds if funding is received.

In this presentation, Tom stated that legislation needs to be passed to address the needs of the basin, He identified several areas relating to salmon recovery where funding has been insufficient within the Columbia Basin:

- Reintroduction
- Hydropower maintenance
- Removing invasive species
- Education and outreach
- Reforming hatcheries
- Monitoring
- Maintenance backlogs at mainstem dams.

After the presentation, Liz asked if there were questions or comments:

- A member shared they are looking for funding for some of the items in Tom's presentation. An I/RG member stated they support collecting a list of projects where everyone agrees and expediting them through the CBC process.
- Multiple members discussed funding. Several members discussed potential funding sources including taxpayers and the Inslee/Murray process. Several members noted that

funding was very important but was not the only consideration necessary; in some cases, feasibility constraints prevent the successful implementation of salmon recovery projects.

- A member requested that a funding recommendation come out of the CBC by the end of summer.
- A member noted that work group members need directions from the I/RG to move forward with efficiency. Liz reviewed the next steps for convening the work groups and starting on the assignments.

Liz concluded this section by noting that one goal is to stand up the Topic Specific and Science Integration Work Groups by next month so that these items can be addressed as soon as possible.

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

Liz reviewed the next steps for the work groups, revisited the WRDA sub-group topic, solicited upcoming I/RG meeting topic ideas, and confirmed action items.

Work Groups

Liz went over next steps for the work groups. She asked everyone to send work group member nominations by July 15th, then the I/RG will review the list of nominees via email to finalize participation, and the facilitation team will kick off work groups. These work groups will be open to observers. The I/RG members had the following discussions regarding work groups:

- Question: What are the work group member criteria? Answer: A member must be committed to consider biological criteria, demonstrated a willingness to work with others, have recognized expertise within the subject area, and together represent the geographic diversity of the Columbia Basin.
- Question: Can I/RG members be work group members? Answer: Yes.
- Question: Once blocked area subgroups are formed, will there be two different groups for the Columbia and Upper Snake Rivers? Answer: There will likely be two different groups but, as we do not want groups to duplicate efforts, these two groups will need to communicate with each other as well as the UC BAAF.

WRDA Bill Sub-group

Liz then returned to the subject of the WRDA bill that was brought up earlier in this meeting and asked the group if the CBC was interested in issuing a statement. I/RG members had the following discussion:

- A member stated that comments should only be made if the WRDA bill language is incompatible with the CBC's goals and charter.
- A member stated that it would be unfortunate if this bill stalled CBC's efforts down the road.

- Several members expressed concern about lobbying and noted that lobbying was not in line with the mission of the CBC.
- Multiple members noted they were not interested in addressing this topic through the CBC but that everybody could comment on the issue through their organizations.
- A member suggested that there should be a small subgroup that should look through the bill to see if the bill contains language that could prevent the CBC from executing its charter.

The I/RG agreed to form a sub-group to review the bill and notify the rest of the group of any language that would prevent the CBC from executing its charter.

Upcoming I/RG Topics

Liz reviewed upcoming topics: report out from Topic Specific and Science Integration Work Groups, report out from WRDA bill sub-group, updates on ocean conditions (as needed), external process coordination, and presentation about life cycle models from Comparative Survival Study and NOAA.

Action Items

Liz confirmed the following action items:

- NMFS: Follow-up with Rick and others to review the data within the CBPTF report and heat map that underly the Biological Matrices
 - All: Let Michael Tehan know if you're interested in learning more about the origins of the CBPTF data
- All: Send KW nominees for the Topic Specific Work Groups by 7/15 via survey
- All: Please share any feedback from the 6/29 I/RG meeting through this survey by end of day 7/7
- Brent Hall, Jim McKenna, Rob Masonis, Liz Hamilton, Scott Hauser, Yakama Staff: Dive into the WRDA bill and investigate if any potential impacts to ability for CBC to address CBPTF goals and notify the I/RG of any issues
- KW: Send out draft agenda for fall I/RG meeting several weeks in advance to provide the I/RG with substantial time to review and add other topics as needed
- KW: Draft a 6/29 I/RG Meeting Summary and circulate to the I/RG for review by 7/27

Closing Remarks

David Doeringsfeld, River Economics, said he looked forward to the next steps of the CBC and spoke to the need to prioritize areas where the group can find consensus. He stated that he hoped by the end of this calendar year that the group can be united behind several of these funding areas they can pursue. He also said he looked forward to seeing everybody in person one day and looked forward to the process moving ahead.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm PT