

# Columbia Basin Collaborative Structured Decision Making Steelhead Pilot Sub-group

## Meeting Summary

Friday, October 18, 2024, from 9:00am – 11:00am PT/ 10:00am – 12:00pm MT

### Attendees

**Sub-group Members in Attendance:** Art Martin (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), B.J. Kieffer (Spokane Tribe of Indians), Gary Marston (Trout Unlimited), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries), Jeremiah Bonifer (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation), Jim McKenna (State of Oregon), Jody Lando (Bonneville Power Administration), Kevin Scribner (Salmon-Safe), Laura Brown (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Scott Hoefer (Bureau of Reclamation), Toby Harbison (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Trevor Hutton (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)

**Guest Panelists:** Amelia Johnson (Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board), Alex Conley (Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board), John Foltz (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office), Steve Martin (Snake River Salmon Recovery Board), Zachary Penney (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

**Facilitation Team:** Colin Johnson (Kearns & West) and Samantha Meysohn (Kearns & West).

### Welcome, Agenda Review, and Context

Samantha Meysohn, Kearns & West, welcomed members to the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Steelhead Pilot Project meeting as part of the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC). Members and guest panelists introduced themselves. Samantha reviewed meeting guidelines and provided an overview of the agenda. The topics included: 1) Review of Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF) Process Conversations, 2) Columbia Basin Partnership Report Panel, and 3) Sub-group Work Plan.

A member shared that through the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement (RCBA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries is developing a Mid-Columbia strategy. The strategy is looking at a list of priority projects for the basin to understand funding needs across the basin and develop federal funding levels. The strategy is not outlining a list of projects to be funded, rather the goal is to gauge the size and need of federal programs. The strategy will likely be discussed next month and could be a useful tool for this group once actions are being reviewed.

### Review of CBPTF Process Conversations

Samantha revisited the topic of the Salmon Analyzer tool. During the September meeting, newer members raised questions and concerns about the development and use of the tool. Members also shared a lack of interest in rehashing old conversations. Samantha reminded work group members that it will be important to build a shared understanding of the Salmon Analyzer tool when considering its use in an SDM framework. She invited members to propose questions for Robert Lessard, Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), to respond to at a future meeting.

Members shared the following comments, questions, and concerns:

- A member shared interest in Robert’s perspective on how the salmon analyzer could incorporate the Social, Cultural, Economic, and Ecological (SCEE) values.
- A member questioned whether the Salmon Analyzer would be needed as it was developed as a tool to look at the entirety of the basin. The member proposed using life-cycle models for Mid-Columbia Steelhead as they would allow for more focus on that specific species. A guest panelist shared that the Salmon Analyzer is a useful tool and questioned whether it would be used to implement an SDM for the Mid-Columbia.
  - Future conversation will focus on whether it is the right tool to use for the SDM.
- A member asked how the Salmon Analyzer has been updated, or has incorporated the latest science, since it was used during the CBPTF. A guest panelist asked about the current state of the Salmon Analyzer, and whether it could be accessed now to run scenarios through.
- A member shared an interest in discussing the incorporation of a temporal aspect into the Salmon Slider.
  - This will likely be discussed when the group reaches Step 4 of the SDM proposal process.
- Members asked for guidelines and instructions for using the Salmon Analyzer.
  - Samantha reminded the group that the Sub-group had previously expressed an interest in using tools from the CBPTF Phase 2 report to provide a first look before bringing in additional analysis relevant to Mid-Columbia Steelhead.

Samantha will share a full list of questions from members with Robert Lessard for review and discussion at a future meeting.

### [Columbia Basin Partnership Report Panel](#)

Samantha introduced the Columbia Basin Partnership Report panelists and panel topics. The goal of the panel was to build an understanding of SCEE values and the process by which the scenarios in the report were developed.

### **Kevin Scribner – CBPTF Scenario Development Timeline and Conversations**

Kevin Scribner, Salmon Safe, provided an overview of the SCEE value identification and scenario development processes, and conversations, as part of the CBPTF. Kevin shared that prior to finalizing the Quantitative Goals, the CBPTF requested that the NOAA Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) extend the CBPTF term for the purpose of exploring ways to achieve provisional Quantitative Goals. At this time, CBPTF members wanted to address SCEE considerations associated with biological strategies. In Phase 1, the CBPTF established a goal for future decision-makers to consider broad context that reflects and considers effects to the full range of diverse social, cultural, economic, and ecosystem values in the Columbia Basin, including providing sustainable fisheries and honoring tribal treaty and trust responsibilities.

Kevin shared that the CBPTF engaged in a large brainstorming activity to identify strategies and actions to achieve restoration goals, and to consider the SCEE impacts from those actions. Members discussed if, and how, the SCEE values could be linked with the Salmon Analyzer, and members were asked to consider how SCEE values would be impacted by turning different dials on the Salmon Analyzer.

Kevin shared that at this point in the process the Project Team determined that it was possible to meet high-range natural production goals for several stocks including the Mid-Columbia Steelhead, albeit with aggressive actions. The CBPTF began outlining a process for the development of scenarios and identified

key questions to address when building each scenario. The Project Team developed a list of potential scenario themes and a template for evaluating scenarios. In November 2019 the CBPTF participated in a SCEE relationship flow mapping exercise that looked at systems relationships across the basin in the service of building out scenarios. The scenarios were expected to be responsive to the strengths and weaknesses of each system. Each scenario was developed to achieve the high-range goals, albeit within different timeframes. In January 2020 a team of Mid-Columbia experts reviewed the Project Team scenario concepts. Kevin shared that the Salmon First Scenario was the first scenario to be developed and presented and that its development prompted other sovereigns and stakeholders to develop scenarios.

### **Zachary Penney – Salmon First Scenario Development**

Zachary Penney, NOAA, reflected on the development of the first scenario for the CBPTF report, the Salmon First Scenario. Zachary clarified that at the time of the scenario development he worked for CRITFC. Zachary added that his experience is not reflective of the views of CRITFC or NOAA. Zachary shared that, in the scenario development process, there was an understanding that compromise was necessary to achieve better outcomes for fish. Tribes collaborated to establish a baseline for recovery across the basin. A Tribal perspective document was developed during Phase 1, and included in the Phase 2 report, which outlined the baseline for recovery. The incorporation of SCEE values stemmed from a need for Tribes to have their needs and interests met.

The Salmon First Scenario came out of efforts to frame scenarios in a way that first established a foundational philosophy rooted in the SCEE values. The group felt that there was substantial data available to demonstrate what actions needed to be taken for fish. The goal was to go beyond developing biological actions to consider the social changes that need to happen to support fish. As the first scenario, the Salmon First Scenario provided a template for other groups to reference and improve upon. Zachary shared that the quantitative goals of the CBPTF provided a destination, and the scenarios were an opportunity to outline different routes to reach that destination.

The Salmon Analyzer was discussed often in the scenario development process. Questions were asked about the assumptions that informed the tool, and members considered how much weight to give the tool. There were concerns about use of the tool by individuals without the needed scientific background to completely understand the results, and the potential for results to be extrapolated inaccurately.

Zachary emphasized the importance of having diverse perspectives in the room when developing and analyzing scenarios. Zachary encouraged members to consider gaps in existing agreements and initiatives such as the RCBA and the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative.

### **Paul Arrington – How Scenarios Reflect SCEE Values**

Paul Arrington, Idaho Water Users Association, echoed what was shared by Kevin and Zachary. He added that Phase 2 was an opportunity to explore and understand how different scenarios would impact different Tribes and communities, and to what extent those impacts would be felt. Paul shared that the scenario development meetings provided an opportunity to think deeply about these SCEE impacts. To better understand these impacts, scenarios were developed that considered outcomes from taking different actions to support restoration efforts.

### **Amelia Johnson, Alex Conley, Steve Martin, John Foltz – How Scenarios Incorporate Local Recovery Work**

Partners representing local recovery boards in Washington spoke about the ways that scenarios incorporated local recovery work. Amelia Johnson, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, spoke about

the Full Recovery Implementation Scenario which drew from regional recovery plans. The goals of these recovery plans are to support Endangered Species Act (ESA) delisting and reaching broad-sense healthy and harvestable goals. Amelia noticed that many of these plans were developed almost 20 years ago and had used the best available information at the time. Developers at the time were looking at all-H factors. The recovery plans were developed with significant Tribal and local stakeholder involvement to reflect Treaty Rights and SCEE values. Steve Martin, Snake River Recovery Board, in speaking about the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan, echoed that the plan is reflective of the SCEE values shared by Tribes, stakeholders, and other community members. Steve added that the plan adopted recovery goals from the Nez Perce Tribe. Amelia added that none of the recovery plans have been fully implemented, but that all include a suite of actions and goals for species. Amelia emphasized the importance of having frank and open discussions about the reasons why implementation is limited.

Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board, noted that the Mid-Columbia Recovery Plan was the first plan where NOAA set a goal beyond the ESA delisting threshold. These have since become long-term goals for the CBC. John Foltz, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, added that the NOAA five-year status reviews represent the most updated ends of the recovery plans. The plans do still have buy-in from Tribes and stakeholders, and with an update to the information in the recovery plans, new actions could be proposed to inform scenario development for the Mid-Columbia.

Amelia highlighted that the goals and actions in the recovery plans are focused on delisting, recovery, and reintroduction of stocks but are built at the population scale. Looking at stocks at a population scale allows for variable priorities and differences in watershed conditions. Some populations may serve as core populations to support species scale recovery due to their productivity and resilience to impacts.

Alex shared that the commitment made by NOAA and State Governments, in the process of developing recovery plans, represented a unique opportunity to partner with Tribes and stakeholders to collaboratively build recovery plans that would be codified in a plan for NOAA. The long-term recovery goals were able to be rolled right into Phase 1 of the CBP. The scenarios in Phase 2 make high-level statements to support restoration, with an understanding that the actions to achieve restoration are captured in the recovery plans. The CBC can focus on the high-level efforts to bring resources to programs that can put those actions into practice. Alex noted that the Mid-Columbia conditions have changed significantly over the last five years and levels have returned to where they were at the time of ESA listing, and even lower, in some places. It will be important to have discussions that explore the reasons why those levels have been so reduced. Alex added that a top priority for the Mid-Columbia should be getting resources to priority areas that will promote recovery.

Steve closed the discussion of recovery plans by highlighting the Mid-Columbia Forum and calling attention to the value of multi-state collaborative processes in pushing to meet the needs of the entire basin.

## **Questions**

Samantha thanked the panelists for providing important perspectives on the scenarios, SCEE values, and the relationship between the scenarios and local recovery plans. Samantha introduced a set of discussion questions developed by the work group members in advance of the panel. The panelists were invited to respond:

### **What analytical models were used in developing and/or assessing the scenarios?**

- Zachary discussed drawing from the different pre-existing management plans in use by the Four Treaty Tribes when creating the Salmon First Scenario. The management plans used different analytical models and tools depending on perspectives and available resources.

- Kevin shared about work done in collaboration with other I/REG members to understand a way to quantify and portray the SCEE value of salmonid reaching certain stages.

#### **How were the SCEE values reflected and/or incorporated in your scenario?**

- Zachary shared that the SCEE values reflected in each scenario can be discerned by looking at which impacts were prioritized to be addressed. Zachary added that cultural values may change in response to changes in salmon vitality, such as when sport fisherman began fishing for coho during a time when Snake River steelhead were depleted.

#### **How would you know your scenario met your SCEE values? What metric would reflect your SCEE value being accomplished in the scenario and how could that value be measured or mapped?**

- Zachary urged using fish population numbers as a metric for determining whether the SCEE values were accomplished in the scenario.
- Kevin encouraged looking at salmon responses to changing conditions and the rate of responses. Kevin added that there is a need to understand if human beings can learn to adjust at quicker time scales than salmon can evolve to adapt to changing conditions.
- A work group member highlighted the challenge of “buy-in portability” that comes with developing responses for problems as part of a collaborative process. The SDM group will need buy-in on approaches and tools for developing scenarios like the previous groups had. SDM has been pitched to meet goals and needs, but also to build buy-in.

Samantha invited SDM group members to ask additional questions of the panelists. Members shared the following questions and comments:

- Members thanked the panelists and shared that the added context and perspectives clarify the CBPTF scenario development process.
- A member shared that it is important to consider that SCEE values change over time and that the SCEE values reflected in the CBPTF Phase 2 Report may have changed.
- A member asked the group to reflect on ways that the SDM process can be useful for bringing resources to the table to practically implement identified actions.
  - A member shared the view that there is value in bringing multiple perspectives to the table for long-term restoration planning alongside people planning for land use, energy, agriculture, and other sectors. In doing so, it is possible to imagine a future for all economic sectors that includes salmon. Once there is buy-in and a basin-wide plan for restoration is developed, a stronger case for funding to implement actions can be made.
  - A member added that SDM can address the need for plans to be flexible around when funding and capacity are available and allows for feedback to be provided through adaptive management to adjust plans as needed.

Samantha thanked the panelists for sharing their experience and perspectives on the CBPTF process, the SCEE values, and the scenario development process. Kevin invited work group members to review a packet of meeting documents from the CBPTF scenario development process and identify any questions for the CBPTF NOAA project team to respond to.

## Sub-group Work Plan

Samantha shared the work plan and invited the work group members to reflect on their status on the workplan. The work group members confirmed that they feel they've completed Step 1 of the SDM process, "Ensure that all participants in the SDM pilot clearly understand both the quantitative and qualitative goals of the CBP and the Social, Cultural, Economic, and Ecological (SCEE) values identified in the CBPTF Phase 2 Report." The group discussed focusing on Step 2: "Look at the scenarios that were developed as part of the CBPTF Phase 2 Report and identify all the actions (e.g., habitat restoration, predator control action, hydro action, etc.) that collectively make up the scenarios," during the SDM meeting on November 22, 2024.

## Confirm Next Steps and Action Items

The Integration/Recommendation Group (I/RG) meeting will occur on November 14-15, 2024. The work group will provide an update on the Steelhead Pilot Project process. Members suggested discussing the following items with the I/RG:

- The group would like to recommend adding members to the SDM Sub-group roster, specifically members from local recovery boards, the CBPTF process, and the Mid-Columbia forum.

Samantha offered to develop summary slides to recap the progress over the past three meetings and send the slides to the work group for their review.

She thanked group members for their time and efforts before reviewing action items from the meeting.

## Action Items

- **All:** Complete a brief feedback survey to share your thoughts/feedback on the meeting.
- **All:** Prepare to review the scenario actions at the 11/22 Steelhead Pilot Project Meeting.
- **K&W:** Send Salmon Analyzer Questions to Bob Lessard for a future meeting.
- **K&W:** Draft summary slides of the CBC SDM Steelhead Pilot Project efforts from August – October and future work plans to share at the 11/14 I/RG meeting.
- **K&W:** Draft a summary of the CBC SDM Steelhead Pilot Project October 18 Meeting and share with the Sub-group by end of day 11/15.

*Meeting adjourned at 11:00am PT/12:00pm MT*