Snake River Salmon Recovery

Date: April 24, 2018
Place: Best Western Hotel Conference Room, Dayton, WA
Format: Executive Session from 5:00pm to 5:53pm; Regular Meeting started at 6:00 p.m.
Board Members Present for Regular Business Meeting: Mike Talbott (CC), Roland Schirman (CC), Don Jackson (CC), Justin Dixon (GC), Billy Bowles (GC), Brian Shinn (AC), Brad Johnson (AC), Michael Largent (WC), Jon Jones (WC), Todd Kimball (WWC), and Larry Hooker (WWC).
Board Members on Phone: Yancey Reser (WWC).
Others Present: Terry Bruegman (CCD), Kris Fischer (CTUIR), Joanna Cowles (WWCCD), Jim Peterson, Kraig Horlacher, and John Foltz (SRSRB).
Others on Phone: Chris Hyland (WWWMP), Duane Bartels (PCD), and Kris Buelow (SRSRB).

SRSRB Chair, Roland Schirman called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and verified a quorum (11 present, 1 on the phone for a total of 12). Roland declared that the Board would go into Executive Session to review the performance of an employee and that the session was to end at 5:45pm. The Executive Session ended at 5:53pm with no action taken. Roland called the regular meeting to order at 6:00pm, welcomed everyone to the board meeting and asked for introductions from those present. Following introductions, Roland asked if there were any members of the public that would like to address the Board – no public comment was received.

Verify Quorum and approve Agenda

Action 1: A motion was made by Brian Shinn to approve the meeting agenda, it was seconded by Bill Bowles. John asked to include an update on the operational budget, a discussion and potential action on staff salary review, and discussion and potential action on a letter regarding Columbia harvest on upriver spring Chinook. The Board approved the amended agenda by consensus.

Consent Agenda:

1. March 2018 Expenses as follows:
   (HCSR) RCO: $11,872.10
   (HCFW) LE: $3,630.37
   (HCB9) BPA: $13,695.56
2. March 27, 2018 Meeting notes

Action 2: A motion was made by Bill Bowles to approve the March 27, 2018 meeting notes and approve the March 2018 expenses, it was seconded by Michael Largent and the Board approved the motion.

Update: Announcements and Items of Interest

Executive Call Actions – Roland noted that no action was taken during the Executive Committee conference call.

Spring Chinook Season Update (note Action was taken, added agenda item scheduled for later in the meeting) – Brad provided an update following the North of Falcon meeting on March 28th in Clarkston. At this particular meeting, WDFW staff reported on the upcoming fisheries, including assurances that they would not be re-opening the lower river after the April 7th closure because other areas didn't get many fish. WDFW ended up opening the lower river fishery for one day after that cutoff. Brad shared a letter for the Board (letter attached at the end) to consider sending in response, along with a draft letter that Asotin County planned to send that other counties could modify.

Snake River Salmon Recovery

Action 3: Following Board discussion of the letter, Mike Talbott moved to approve and send the letter, Larry Hooker seconded the motion and the Board approved by consensus.

RTT Updates – None at this time, the April RTT meeting was canceled in favor of the all-day Lead Entity committee meeting on April 17th.

SRSRB Staffing Updates – John briefed the Board on two staffing updates. Firstly, the part-time Data Steward and Monitoring Coordinator position has been filled by Reid Camp and we are excited to welcome him to the team. His first day will be May 1st. The second staffing update was that our part time Office Manager, Darci Hays, has accepted a full time position with Ag-Link in Dayton and will be resigning from her position with the Board. Accepting her resignation is an action item later on the agenda.

Budget Update (added agenda item) – John briefed the Board on some unexpected news regarding our base operations funding. With the lack of a state capital budget being passed for FY17/18, the Board proceeded with a tight and frugal budget, including holding off on hiring vacant staff positions. Upon passage of the capital budget in January and subsequent base funding amendments, we were assured that remaining funding would be rolled over to our FY18/19 contract to effectively and efficiently utilize that funding. Recently, John was notified that this funding might be swept, and that the Salmon Recovery Funding Board would make that decision at their June meeting. With this knowledge, the Board might need to take some sort of action at the May meeting as we learn more. The Board asked John to draft a letter for the Board to review prior to the next meeting to request that funding be carried over.

Action 4: Staff Salary Review (added agenda item)

Based on the Board's Executive Session at the start of the meeting, Justin Dixon moved to create a subcommittee to review and evaluate salary of staff and to bring a recommendation to the May Board meeting, Mike Talbott seconded the motion.

Discussion: The Board requested that John conduct a performance review for Kris prior to the subcommittee meeting; John conducts staff performance reviews and makes staff salary recommendations to the Board for them to approve. The Board also requested a copy of budgeted staff salaries. Todd Kimball, Bill Bowles, Mike Talbott, and Justin Dixon volunteered to serve on the subcommittee; John sill send out an email to identify a meeting date prior to the May Board meeting. Following discussion, the motion passed by consensus.

Discussion: SRFB Draft Applications

John provided an update on the SRFB projects being considered for funding this year. From 15 draft proposals, we are down to 13 – two have been withdrawn from consideration based upon feedback during the pre-application phase and the Lead Entity Committee meeting on April 17th. The two projects are the Tucannon Salmonid Survival phase 2 project and the Walla Walla Conceptual Plan.

John has communicated feedback received at the LE Committee meeting and also comments received by the Board – comments included question about seeing another Mill Creek project so soon, questions on Buford costs. John provided context regarding both Buford and the related Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) allocation of $3.1 million and the Mill Creek Design as it related to the previously funded portion of the project. John suggested that he give the presentation that he has shared with the FBRB which helps provide context to Mill Creek passage – the Board thought this would be a good idea. Discussion of a funding cap arose, something for the Board to discuss in the future. It was also noted that the top projects were leveraging significant funding, something also to consider even though their request was large.

Snake River Salmon Recovery

Several Board members that also serve on the LE Committee provided their general thoughts noting that that there weren't any bad projects.

Action 5: Board Letter to Governor and Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force

The Board agreed to sign onto the Salmon Recovery Network join letter regarding the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force at the March meeting but desired to send a stronger letter with a more local perspective as a follow up. Brad presented the letter that he had worked up. The Board reviewed and discussed the letter, and in general, was in strong support of the content.

Following discussion, Justin Dixon moved to approve the letter, pending approval by Gary James and CTUIR. Brian Shinn seconded the motion which passed by consensus. John and Brad will follow up with Gary.

Discussion/Action: Board Letter on Columbia's harvest on upriver spring Chinook

This item was discussed during the updates and action was previously taken (see Action 3)

Presentation: Salmon and Steelhead life-cycle and relation to tributary habitat

John provided a presentation as a brief introduction to salmon and steelhead life history and the relationship to habitat to convey the importance of tributary habitat conservation and restoration, and what this means for adult returns. Key points from that presentation:

- Poor returns Columbia basin wide for all fish (hatchery/natural origin spawners, etc.), we know this is coming, and it is driven by ocean conditions.
- So the question has been, if the end goal is adult returns (along with productivity), and we are seeing poor numbers, why do habitat and not just more hatchery or other things?
- This presentation is to help explain why we are doing what we are doing, and also note that other things are being done, we as the SRSRB can influence things besides habitat, but that is what we are funded to do.
- We have also been asked if we can use our funding outside of habitat actions, the answer is no, but these other actions (hatchery in particular) are being funded at greater levels than habitat actions, we just aren't the lead on this.
- From Tidal Exchange article March 2018 (https://tidalexchange.com/2018/03/15/fisheries-mgmt-for-dummies-2-recovery-you-try-it/):
    - The first critical difference between salmon and typical Endangered Species is that salmon reproduce only once before dying.
    - Biologists call this behavior semelparity, and it dramatically changes the approach we must take to foster recovery. It's obvious but bears attention that all returning adult salmon die regardless of if they are caught by fishermen, eaten by marine mammals or survive to spawn.
    - This is profoundly different than the birds and mammals we interact with on a regular basis. Saving a salmon from a fisherman's net will impede the salmon from spawning once.
    - In these more commonly publicized ESA recovery cases, protecting the breeding adults from harm is often the most important conservation measure–but in Salmon recovery the key is typically the health and survival of the eggs/fry/smolt.
    - The second and related difference between Salmon and more commonly discussed Endangered Species is the large quantity of fertilized eggs produced by spawning adults.
    - A single pair of spawning salmon may produce 3-4000 fertilized eggs.

  - River Carrying Capacity — that's the maximum population of fish that the environment can sustain indefinitely, given the food, habitat, and other necessities available - river carrying capacity that is the prime driver for the salmon population.

- Smolt/spawner and productivity is the value of habitat; Adult returns are a poor indicator – also the smolt to adult non-tributary survival is constant in a given year (good or bad).
- While we do have adult returns as a goal, we also have productivity goals – we need to focus more on those as they are more closely related to habitat.
- Habitat improvements also aim to improve salmon and steelhead resiliency, the ability to withstand different stressors, whatever they might be (fishing, environmental, etc.).
- Habitat seeks to increase a river's carrying capacity – this is almost by definition an instream hatchery. Natural Origin spring chinook spawners in the Snake and Upper Columbia have a 2X higher SAR than hatchery fish (NOAA).
- Without habitat production and natural origin spawners, we have no hatchery broodstock and hatchery programs would be no more.
- There is a large range of survival from one year to the next at any particular life stage.
- Results of habitat improvements will not be instantaneous, but the work is important overall for the health of the watershed as a whole, and not just focus on one or two species.
- With habitat improvements we want to: Improve resiliency, prevent low numbers, not just peak returns.
- We have set poor expectations for ourselves with our adult return goals Ocean conditions can drive the system, but juvenile production can increase
- There are multi-benefits of habitat restoration and good quality habitat, we are succeeding at improving habitat, but it takes time
- Fish responses have been observed, see IMW's; passage can also be an instant improvement (Dry Creek, Asotin, Mill Creek, etc.)

Several members of the Board reiterated that we can impact habitat, and that is all that we really have control over – we can measure habitat and that is what we are committed to. We plan to follow up this short presentation with one on habitat and what habitat actually means next month.

Update: Partner updates from WRIA 32 and 35

John noted that as part of their partner contract deliverables, WRIA's 32 and 35 would give quarterly updates of work progress to the Board. Brad provided a verbal update for WRIA 35 noting that they had helped develop several letters for the Board, attended LE committee meetings, and helped on the Steptoe Creek SRFB application. Chris Hyland provided a verbal update for WRIA 32 noting that they helped gather data on spring Chinook fishing and have been primarily working with landowners on local water plans in the Dayton area on the Empy orchard, golf course, and Walla Walla treatment plant.

Update: Quarterly updates from Tribal and Conservation District Co-Lead Partners

John noted that the quarterly updates from the Tribal and Conservation Districts were written and submitted to him. In summary, both groups of partners had participated in the Lead Entity project review process, attending the April 17th draft application review meeting, monthly RTT meetings, and several had attended monthly Board meetings.

Action 6: Accept Resignation of Darci Hays

As noted in the updates, Darci has taken a new full time job. Bill Bowles moved to accept her resignation, Michael Largent seconded the motion which passed by consensus.

Snake River Salmon Recovery

The Board proceeded to discuss options on how to move forward and fill her job duties. John had looked into the matter and discussed potential options with the WWCC. The Board discussed how important a presence in the office was, discussing the desired outcome and cost associated. The Board thought that it would be worth looking into a call forwarding service and that some combination of WWCC support and an in-office presence should be considered. If the new Funding Coordinator position is in the office, that would limit additional need to have an office manager in the office. John will follow up with WWCC to get specific details for discussion at the next Board meeting.

Presentation: 2017 Regional project Implementation Part 2

John presented the second part to the 2017 regional project implementation presentation focusing on WRIA 34 (WRIA 32 had previously been presented). In summary 17 projects were implemented or are ongoing in WRIA 35 in 2017:

- SRFB Funded:
  - Asotin County Geomorphic-Watershed Assessment
  - Asotin Riparian Protection Project
  - Tucannon salmonid survival and habitat utilization
  - Restoring Pataha Creek with Simulated Beaver Dams
  - Alpowa Instream Post Assisted Log Structures
  - Alpowa Fish Passage
  - Buford Creek Barrier Fish Passage Design (HWY 129)
  - Penawawa Creek Instream Habitat Rehabilitation
  - Asotin IMW Monitoring
  - Steptoe Creek Passage
  - Tucannon PA 6-9 Implementation
- Partners with other Funding:
  - Tucannon PA 13 Design
  - Tucannon PA 17 Design
  - Tucannon PA-28 Phase III Design
  - CHaMP Monitoring

Action 7: Approve May 22, 2018 for next Board meeting to be held in Walla Walla at the WWCC Water Center at 6:00 PM.

A motion was made by Bill Bowles and seconded by Jon Jones to hold the next Board meeting at 6 p.m. in Walla Walla at the WWCC Water Center at 6:00pm. The Board approved by consensus.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. by SRSRB Chair, Roland Schirman.

Signed By: Roland Schirman Date: 6/26/2018

Roland Schirman, Chair, Snake River Salmon Recovery Board