Date: March 25, 2025
Place: Dayton Best Western
Format: Regular Meeting started at 4:00 p.m.
Board Members in Person: Marty Hall (CC), Mike Denny (WW), Jon Jones (WC), Sean Thurston (CC); Kris Fischer (CTUIR); Brian Shinn (AC); Don Jackson (CC); Bradley Johnson (AC), Chad Whetzel (WC)
Board Members on Phone: Bowles (GC),
Others in Person: Kris Buelow (SRSRB), Ali Fitzgerald (SRSRB), Steve Martin (SRSRB); Jim Peterson (citizen), Michael Largent (past board member)
Others on Phone: Reid Camp (SRSRB), Dave Karl (WDFW)

Verify Quorum / Agenda Approval and Public Comment

SRSRB Vice Chair Bowles called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm and verified a quorum (9 in person, 1 on phone). A motion was made by Mike Denny to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Kris Fischer and passed by consensus. Welcome Walla Walla County Commissioner, Bertha Clayton and Whitman County Commissioner, Chad Whetzel to the Board.

Public Comment: Who is the Salmon Mean Business document for and what is the ultimate intent? They're supportive of salmon. Jim has video of last 100 mi of Deschutes River contamination and what's been done to remedy it. Recommends we watch the video to see if there's value to their techniques.

Action – A motion was made by Sean Thurston to approve the consent agenda as presented which included two items (1) February 2025 expenses and (2) February 2025 meeting notes. It was seconded by Brian Shinn and the Board approved the motion by consensus.

Discussion Items:
Discuss salmon recovery message – Salmon Mean Business (Commerce)— This brochure was created after the 2008 recession and discussion on whether to continue to fund salmon restoration after seeing somewhat limited response. Indicators that salmon restoration benefits everyone. Dollars for restoration are used in the counties they're spent. Restoration provides jobs and commerce across the state. In 2017, we expanded our message to combine with Oregon and Idaho plus Tribes and bring that message to DC and federal agencies. The data is somewhat out of date. Steve is interested in getting quotes from board members and others in support of the SRSRB and salmon restoration as part of the updates. Steve will also work with RCO to get correct information for project funding details. Would the SRSRB be interested in providing edits, updates, or quotes from themselves or others related?

Board is in support of this exercise. Also in support of a 1 page glossy handout for future meetings. Who will be the recipient of these handouts? This is kind of for the general public so they know what we're working on.

Discussion: Port of Walla Walla want to visit with the folks working on the front lines of various activities, including salmon restoration. These handouts are good for politicians too as they're easy to read and get take home messages. Flyer for general public, plus this more detailed document. Make sure to focus each to the target audience and ensuring updates every so often like every two years or so. Focus efforts on election years for politicians and general public. Also work to coordinate outreach efforts among organizations. The Upper Columbia is hiring a consultant to update numbers. Are we interested in something more detailed like that or a more general update? Supportive of 1-page document to start. Consider QR codes for more details.

2025 Lead Entity Draft Project Proposal overview and next step(s) — Ali shared the draft ranked project lists for the regular SRFB grant round and the riparian funding grant round. Funding is unknown but anticipating about $2M for each pending funding through the current legislative session. The regular list includes eight projects, seven of which being restoration and one being design. The riparian list includes three projects.

Kris Fischer commented on importance of Tuusi Wana project being a very large, notable project particularly for lower river work. That project fell below the funding line last year and again, is potentially below the funding line for 2025 despite being a 3-mile, large project that could be a a good reference for lower river restoration in the future. The one design project is at the bottom of the ranked list due to being outside of priority areas and due to intentional scoring emphasis on restoration over designs. The Lead Entity Committee reserves up to 15% of funding to fund designs projects if they deem it worth funding.

Tucannon Wooten Wildlife Area, PA 5 – 15 assessment update — Kris and Kris presented updates. PA 5-15 is essentially the Wooten Wildlife Area, and historic spawning areas for spring Chinook. There are also lakes, infrastructure, etc in the floodplain. To assess the potential for salmon restoration, an assessment was completed. That assessment included the entire river and include site specific restoration actions. Projects were ranked based on benefit to fish and cost. The lakes were avoided somewhat in that original assessment. Two years ago, this PA 5-15 specific assessment was completed to evaluate the existing and historic floodplain. Met last week to learn about the fish program, tribal perspectives, and alternatives for restoration. Next steps: co-managers will meet to develop preferred alternatives that will suit the group moving forward.

NWPCC Fish and Wildlife Program and amendment process— BPA was created to market electricity generated by the dams. Congress created the NW Power and Conservation Council to balance those needs with fish needs. When the 2008 Biological Opinion regarding the federal hydropower system was issued, one requirement was for the hydropower system to mitigate its impacts by improving habitat conditions (to gain survival benefits) in the Tucannon within our region and via the SRSRB-administered Tucannon Programmatic funded by BPA. Accountability and strategic priorities for the basin are informed through the basin-wide assessment. Every several years, the fish and wildlife program is required to be updated via an amendment process that involves Tribal, agency, public and stakeholder comments. We have an opportunity to provide comments (recommendations). Staff will coordinate with partners and other recovery organizations to assess potential comments if any are identified. One that was discussed here was out-of-basin impacts to survival, in particular, predation.

Update – Announcements and Items of Interest
Executive committee call actions: No actions
RTT update: Reid shared the draft agenda including grant round updates, bylaws, Yaka-pedia, Tucannon Fall Chinook update, Upper Walla Walla Assessment, and roundtable updates.

Action: Letter of support for Trout Unlimited to complete Asotin IMW monitoring analysis and reporting— Steve provided a summary for the current IMW monitoring project proposal. Monitoring is a standalone project funding pot and requires a letter of support from the region. Steve Bennett provided a proposal that is more focused on analysis and data analysis but it may not need to be funded through the monitoring pot. Steve is recommending getting the letter of support now regardless of if it goes for the monitoring funding or gets funded elsewhere as a wrap up project.

Brian Shinn made a motion to sign a letter of support for the Asotin IMW monitoring project as discussed. Marty Hall seconded the motion and it passed by consensus.
[Editor's note post-meeting is that the project is not eligible for these funds]

Action: April 22nd, 2025 board meeting to be held at the Dayton SRSRB office 410B East Main at 6 PM— A motion was made by Sean Thurston and seconded by Mike Denny to hold the next Board meeting at the Dayton SRSRB Office. The Board approved by consensus.

Meeting adjourned at 5:51 by Vice Chair Johnson.

Date: April 22, 2025