**Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)**

**Steering Team Meeting**

July 14, 2016

### Facilitator’s Summary

#### Facilitated by DS Consulting

***In the room:*** Bernadette Graham-Hudson (ODFW), Marc Liverman (NMFS), Alyssa Mucken (OWRD), Dan Spear (BPA), Jason Sweet (BPA) Karl Weist (NPCC);

***Participants on the Phone:*** Nancy Gramlich (ODEQ), Lawrence Schwabe (Grand Ronde Tribe);

***Facilitation Team:*** Donna Silverberg (facilitator), Emily Plummer (support/notes)***,*** DS Consulting

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| **ACTION** | **RESPONSIBLE PARTY** | **BY WHEN?** |
| Connect with the State regarding Steering Team representation | DSC | August meeting |
| Discuss the Steering Team’s structure, processes and roles | All | August meeting |
| Identify what would be helpful for the Managers’ Forum to address and how to improve communications between the teams | All | August meeting |
| Make a list of tough issues that may have been avoided in the past, however, need to be addressed in order for the group to move forward | All | August meeting |
| Send Doodle poll to schedule the August and September Steering Team meeting | DSC | ASAP |

## Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator, Donna Silverberg, welcomed the group and explained that the purpose of the day’s session is to clarify how the Steering Team works together and interacts with other WATER Teams in order to promote meaningful and effective participation. The group decided that, because attendance was light and no representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) were present, they would table the conversation regarding the Steering Team’s charter and processes until a later date and use today’s session to reflect on results from the assessment interviews and what is needed moving forward.

## Facilitation Team’s Update

Donna shared that DS Consulting was brought on by BPA to help the WATER Managers’ Forum, Steering Team, and RM&E Team clarify process, decision making and communication within and amongst the teams. She shared that in 1998 she helped the region in the development of the Columbia River Regional Forum and DS Consulting has been mediating/facilitating that process ever since. DS Consulting is glad to be working with the WATER teams on the Willamette and is under contract to do so until September 2016. Thus far, DS Consulting has conducted assessment interviews with the Steering and RM&E Teams, and will do the same with the Managers’ Forum in order to better understand what is needed to help move the teams in a positive direction. DS Consulting will facilitate meetings, work with the groups to develop and provide agendas and summaries, and help the groups to implement meaningful and productive processes.

With regards to the assessment interviews, Donna provided the group with a process assessment chart which captured common themes heard during the interviews. The chart listed the strengths, areas for improvements, specific ideas for improvements, principles and guidelines, and issues that team members would like to see addressed. Donna stressed that, across all agencies, the facilitators heard recognition of the groups’ challenges, as well as a sincere desire to work together to improve both process and outcomes.

Those present read through the chart and reflected on what stood out to them:

* Marc Liverman, NMFS, was surprised to see ‘clear numeric ranking used for RM&E’ listed as a strength, as this is an issue, from NMFS’ perspective, where NMFS is not feeling heard.
  + Jason Sweet, BPA, acknowledged Marc’s concern, and offered that, as a newcomer to this process, it is positive that the RM&E ranking is one of the big issues, as it can be fixed relatively easily.
* Karl Weist, NPCC, noted that the idea of rotating the Steering Team chair between agencies is interesting; however, the Corps and BPA are the agencies that have ultimate responsibility for the outcomes and so there may be good reason for them to chair the meetings. Karl thought that there may be other process-related responsibilities that other agencies could take on, for instance note taking.
* Alyssa Mucken, OWRD, saw themes of ‘interest to do more work together, be productive, and increase in-meeting productivity’. It is clear that the teams all want to work better together. Alyssa also noted people’s need for increasing the accessibility of information that is shared; for instance, having information online for the team and the public to access.
* Dan Spear, BPA, pointed out the shared desire for increased communication and a better written record to ensure that there is shared understanding of what was said and agreed to. He also pointed to the group’s lack of trust and high stakes that may contribute to people second guessing what they hear from others – this too would be improved with better tracking of the conversations. He also saw and supports a desire for more work together as a group and fewer side conversations.
* Jason Sweet, BPA, noticed the common need for a clear dispute resolution process and to clarify the RM&E prioritization process. He compared the WATER structure to regional coordination on the Columbia River, noting that WATER seems to be missing the senior level oversight group (such as the Senior Hydro Team)– which could help with dispute resolution between the Steering Team and Managers’ Forum. He also pointed to the duplication of RM&E and Steering Team members and suggested that there should be an intentional distinction between representatives on these teams, or another management level team should be stood up.
  + Donna noted that on the Columbia River system the teams were encouraged to resolve issues at the lowest level and there was a clear elevation process for when a team was not able to resolve the issue.
  + Steering Team members expressed that the current elevation process does not work and thus there is nothing gained from elevating so issues are not resolved. This is why the ‘group of four’ was created - to help resolve issues that were elevated from the RM&E and Steering Teams. However, an open resolution process was not established and only federal entities are represented at the G-4. [Facilitator’s Note: It was noted via edits that the “Group of Four” was established to develop biological metrics to help clarify the actions necessary to meet them.]
  + There seemed to be general support for improving the current team structure and process instead of adding more teams to WATER. It was also noted that some entities may not have additional representatives to send to the various meetings.
* Bernadette Graham-Hudson, ODFW, reflected that there is commitment from the agencies, high stakes, vested interests, and everyone involved wants to see this effort be a success. She also noted that it is difficult to be fully engaged without first addressing the concerns expressed by the group.
* Nancy Gramlich, ODEQ, pointed to confusion in regards to decision space and process and a need for more clarity on who the decision makers are in the WATER process and how decisions are made.
  + In response, Donna recapped what is outlined in the WATER Guidelines, noting that the Action Agencies (Corps, BPA, and BOR) are the decision makers and that NMFS and USFWS provide scientific recommendations and ensure BiOp alignment. The purpose of the Steering Team is to provide joint recommendations, which are intended to be consensus recommendations, on technical and policy issues.
  + Marc expanded that Section 7 of ESA Consultation details the ‘interagency cooperation’ process, which gives the Services the power to elevate if there is not agreement (for instance to the ‘God Squad’ or courts). He noted that the region previously decided it would be better for the species and the region if all of the agencies worked together.
* Lawrence Schwabe, Grand Ronde, emphasized the need for transparency. He shared that representatives need access to information to stay informed on what is happening and to understand project goals, research needs, and decision criteria. This way, those entities that do not have time to participate in all of the groups can stay informed and provide input.

The Steering Team agreed that they need to discuss the WATER guidelines and to revise them where necessary to clarify participation, processes, and roles. For instance: NPCC and OR Water Resources are not listed as members in the Guidelines, and the Governor’s Office is; It needs to be clear who is representing the Governor’s Office (Bernadette shared that ODFW is currently representing the Governor’s Office). Donna agreed to help ensure that all of the Oregon representatives are clear about their participation on the Steering Team. Additionally, she suggested that, at the next meeting, the team revisit the day’s original agenda to clarify the structure, process and roles of the Steering Team.

* **ACTION:** DS Consulting will help to clarify the State’s representation on the WATER Teams.
* **ACTION:** The group will discuss the Steering Team’s structure, processes and roles at the August meeting.

## Setting the Stage for Productive Conversations

Donna provided the group with three documents that her team uses to help groups work collaboratively (attached), they included:

* + - What makes for good collaborative process?
  + Discussion protocols, and
  + The Five Fingers of Consensus tool

Donna shared that the DS Consulting Team is currently working with the RM&E team to develop common definitions of terms and revise their prioritization process. They will be meeting again on July 18th. Additionally, DS Consulting attended the Managers’ Forum on July 7th and will provide a summary from that meeting as soon as possible. Moving forward, they will work with the Managers to determine what needs to happen to build trust and engage the group productively.

Donna reiterated that trust is currently an issue across all of the WATER teams and that there are discussion format changes that can be made to help the teams improve relationships. She provided the example of checking in on what you think you hear before adding your own input (e.g. “What I heard you say is “\_\_\_\_”, is that right?. Also, Donna encouraged people to stop saying ‘yes, **but**’ and instead, enhance the collaborative process by saying, ‘yes, **and’.** The latter statement does not negate what the first person said, instead it builds on it, allows the first statement to be validated, and limits potential defensive reactions. Donna suggested that the next time that the Steering Team meets, they should generate a list of how they will know that they are building trust; this list can then be used as a gauge to measure progress and successes.

Donna asked the group what they feel would be helpful for the Managers’ Forum to address and how to improve the overall process. The Steering Team shared some initial ideas and will continue thinking on this. They noted:

* The Steering Team should have input on the Managers’ Forum agendas.
* Agendas should be developed well in advance so that the Managers can plan ahead and know if they need to attend the meeting.
* For the Managers’ Forum meetings, develop progress reports that share information at a high level, but with depth. This could be part of a briefing packet that is put together by the Steering Team with input from all of the agencies.
* If there is no progress made, there is no need for a meeting—AND meetings need to occur twice a year.
* As a worst case scenario, the Managers’ Forum can help resolve disputes.
* The Managers Forum should provide high level leadership and direction to the WATER teams and be informed as to what the teams are working on.
* The Managers’ Forum needs to discuss a broader strategy for avoiding jeopardy in the Willamette.
* **ACTION:** The Steering Team will continue to identify what would be helpful for the Managers’ Forum to address and how to improve communications between the teams.

Additionally, the group discussed content issues that need to be addressed within the WATER process. Because there are such high stakes and very different opinions of how successful the big-four projects could be, there may be a tendency to avoid difficult conversations; for instance, about taking a multi-pronged approach to avoiding jeopardy. The uncertainty and risk of the big-four was acknowledged and the group generally shared the sentiment that if the region is working collaboratively, success is more likely.

Jason and Dan assured the team that BPA is committed to the passage plan. Dan suggested that the Managers’ Forum should discuss the broader strategy to avoiding jeopardy, such as habitat and hatcheries. Jason suggested that other parallel efforts to avoid jeopardy would be beneficial. Bernadette noted that from ODFW’s perspective, the focus should be on impacts from flood control/hydropower, as that is the biggest limiting factor at this point in time. She continued that there is concern from ODFW that the AAs want to focus on issues that distract from implementation of the major RPA actions, including looking for ways reduce their mitigation responsibilities. She pointed out that the COP clearly states the AAs recommendation to reduce or eliminate hatchery programs. ODFW is willing to stand alongside the AA’s to secure funding, however, they need to be engaged in the conversations and have some of fish management needs addressed as well. *[Note: it was clarified via edits that the COP* *recommended that the spring Chinook above conservation and recovery levels in the North and South Santiam be reprogrammed elsewhere and that summer steelhead releases be eliminated in the Santiams.]*

Dan suggested that it would be helpful to have a conversation with everyone involved regarding what is known and what can be done to make improvements to the system, including and beyond the hydro system. This way the region could be informed, weigh the risks and make decisions together. Donna suggested a full day work session might help to address the current science, remaining information needs, and potential improvements for the hydro system, hatcheries, habitat and harvest. Others thought this approach might be helpful. Bernadette was concerned that this workshop would detract from other conversations that need to happen, for instance passage standards and Middle Fork passage. Dan suggested that examining everything could lead to win-win scenarios with a little creativity.

Donna asked that each representative think about topics that need to be addressed through the WATER process which have been avoided due to the difficulty of the conversation. The conversation of conflict of interest was pointed to during assessment interviews and is an example of what Donna suggested the group list out.

* **ACTION:** All members will make a list of the tough issues they believe may have been avoided in the past and need to be addressed in order for the group to move forward.

**Next Steps**

The group discussed the next steps needed to pave the way for constructive collaborative process: The DS Consulting team will review the process assessment chart with USFWS and the Corps, specifically noting the suggestions for process improvements. The Facilitation team will also connect with State agency representatives to get more information on the State’s participation and to clarify who is charged with representing the Governor’s Office. They will also work with Ian Chane to determine the new Steering Team representative for USFWS.

DS Consulting will send out a Doodle poll to schedule the August and September meetings.

* The August meeting will be scheduled for either August 11th, 12th or the week of August 15th (for 10:00-2:00 or 1:00-4:00; including 1:00-4:00 on August 11th) and the meeting will focus on the process conversation around the Charter.
* The September meeting will be a workshop format focused on more substantive issues. DS Consulting will work with Steering Team members to shape the agenda. It was suggested that the session addresses potential improvement in the Willamette system such as passage performance, habitat, hatcheries, and efforts in the Middle Fork. Donna suggested that there could be workshop stations for each of the four H’s and agencies could bring relevant information to the workshop to share and discuss what has been done and what can be done to improve that aspect of the system. It was suggested that OR Parks, OWEB, and Willamette FIP should be involved in that conversation.

The Steering Team representatives will each generate a list of issues that need to be discussed with the help of the facilitators. This list should include the tough issues that may have been avoided in the past due to risk, emotion, or difficulty. They will bring this list to the next Steering Team meeting.

To close the session, the group shared something that they appreciated about the day’s conversation, they expressed appreciation for:

* The group’s commitment to make the Steering Team function better.
* Getting issues on the table that needed to get on the table for discussion.
* That the conversation was both process oriented and substantive, instead of solely updates.
* The attitude of the group: everyone was interested in working together to find ways to improve, and was forward focused.
* Recognition that the Corps is part of the team and that their involvement and input is necessary.
* The professional facilitation for the meeting is very helpful, especially with diverse agencies at the table. Facilitation will also be helpful in lessening the pressure on the Corps and be an added service to all.
* The groups’ engagement and commitment.
* The coffee and donuts.

And with that, Donna thanked the group and the meeting was adjourned.

This summary is respectfully submitted by the DS Consulting Facilitation Team. Suggested edits are welcome and can be provided to Emily at emily@dsconsult.co.

**WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD COLLABORATIVE PROCESS?**

Query: Think of a project with which you have been involved that was GOOD e.g. all members of the group felt they contributed to an outcome with which all members were satisfied. What were some of the characteristics of this project? Below are some ideas that have surfaced after many years of working with groups seeking to work collaboratively.

**Some characteristics we have seen that lead to success**

* Members used good communication techniques
* The group was **clear about its task and goals**
* People used “I” messages
* People asked questions that **encouraged people to talk**, not get defensive
* People **listened** to what others were saying, rather than planning what they were going to say, talking to someone else or reading the paper
* People **showed empathy** for others feelings; they didn’t roll their eyes or make “the big sigh”!
* People **summarized or paraphrased** others to make certain they understood what was being meant
* Members **did not engage in gossip** outside of their work together
* People **concentrated on interests, not positions**

They focused on why something was important to them, not just what.

* People recognized and tolerated that different **group members processed information** in a different way—some quickly, some orally, some after seeing something written or presented, some after having time to reflect.
* **Assignments** were **jointly developed** and assigned and individuals **followed through** with those assignments on a timely basis.
* **Meetings were facilitated** by someone that everyone trusted to get through the agenda in a fair and even handed manner—sometimes this was a neutral person outside of the group itself.
* A **supportive, respectful atmosphere** was developed that led members to trust each other.
* The group agreed to a **process for decision making and resolving disputes** early in their collaborative process

Once the process was determined, the group was transparent about the process and the decisions they or individuals in the group made.

**How can this be done?**

* Begin by looking at shared values and interests
* Clarify the goals, purpose and roles of the group and the people in the group
* Find or create some event that allows people to view each other as people, not just representatives of their ‘group’ (e.g. field trip to look at…, interactive training or workshop, group potluck or BBQ, etc.)
* Be aware that body language MAKES A DIFFERENCE
* Commit to being transparent with process and decisions
* LISTEN, and let people know you have heard them
* Commit to building and maintaining relationships throughout the effort—and after.

##### Discussion Protocols

* Approach the process and the discussions with a willingness to hear others’ views so you may solve problems together.
* Let the mediator/facilitator know when you would like to speak or ask a question.
* When you do speak:
  + Speak as though you are right
  + Listen as though you may be wrong
  + Maintain a professional tone and approach to all discussions.
* Treat each other with respect by listening to each other’s thoughts without interjecting words—or body language.
* Focus on what is important to you and what you need, rather than on an argument for the sake of arguing. Look for mutual gains, not just for yourself.
* Speak again only after others who want to have done so.
* If your question or comment has already been said, don’t say it again unless you need further clarification or unless you want the group to know that more than one person shares a point of view.
* Separate the people from the problem: be hard on the problem and easy on the people.
  + Use “I” statements: speak for yourself and not others.
* Give others a chance to finish their statements before asking or interjecting something new.
* Hold side conversations at breaks…or in the hall.
* Keep your focus in the room. Put your cell phones and other devices into silent or vibrate mode and look at them only if you are expecting an emergency.
* Between meetings, treat this process and discussions as private and do not engage in discussions, online or in person, which might be construed as divisive by others. Instead, look for opportunities to build trust by developing and maintaining a tone that supports mutual resolution of difficult issues.
* Have tough discussions when a mediator/facilitator is available to help them be most productive.

Using Consensus

The word consensus comes from the Latin “consentire”, meaning ‘to feel with’ or ‘perceive with’. It is defined as “group solidarity in sentiment and belief”. Because so many people are pleased with the long-term results of consensus decisions, many groups are choosing to use consensus as their decision-making method.

Prior to using consensus, a group first must decide whether it will use “pure” consensus (with no alternative method for decision-making), or “modified” consensus (with a fallback method such as voting or executive decision). Both can work to help groups make important and effective decisions. What is critical is that the group is clear about which method it is using before it begins a decision-making process. If a fallback method is chosen, it is important to define precisely the circumstances under which the fallback method will be used. This might be: an agreed upon time limit is reached, the issue involves minor spending issues, a timely decision is critical for moving forward, or there is no possibility of a consensus due to policy views of the entities present, etc.

# STRAW POLL CONSENSUS

One of the most trying aspects of consensus for some people is the tendency for groups to “talk an issue to death” as they struggle for unity of thought. The following straw poll system has been developed to help groups “see” where members stand in the course of a conversation. It is important that the straw poll not be used to circumvent discussion, but rather to aid and allow members to have a sense of whether or not more discussion is needed. No matter what the straw poll shows, it is always recommended that group members be asked whether or not there is a need for further comments or discussion.

How it works:

After a statement or questions is clarified, members are asked to show the group where they stand on the issue by raising one or more fingers, as follows:

“1” I can say an enthusiastic yes to the decision (or action).

“2” I find the decision acceptable and have no serious objections. Improvements could be made, but aren’t necessary.

“3” I can live with the decision, but I’m not overly enthusiastic. I have questions about the strengths & weaknesses and need more discussion or more work done.

“4” I do not fully agree with the decision and need to register concern. However, I will not block the decision. More discussion is necessary for full support.

“5” I do not agree with the decision and will actively block its movement. More discussion is necessary or an alternative resolution is needed.

CAUTION: If one member shows a 3, 4 or 5, the group should make time to listen to and consider what the person has to say, if that person wants more discussion.