

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

WATER Steering Team Meeting

DS Consulting Office

December 19, 2016

http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Willamette_Coordination/

Facilitator's Summary

Action	By Whom?	By When?
Include 'location of meeting' in future meeting summaries.	DS Consulting	12/26/16
Coordinate internal conversations with WATER representatives to discuss the draft Guidelines. Provide input on the Guidelines to DS Consulting by late February for compilation.	Steering Team to DSC	February (for compilation in advance of March MF meeting)
Provide an updated grid to the group to use in internal conversations re: WATER Guidelines	DS Consulting	12/26/16
Connect with Ian to share the updated Engineering Milestones timeline with Steering Team members	DS Consulting	12/26/16
Continue efforts to clarify the critical path forward for all three passage options; provide a flow chart to the RM&E Team; and ask that the RM&E sub-group incorporate the critical path into the Middle Fork RM&E Plan	Steering Team/Dan	January
Continue effort to coordinate a workshop to explore operational passage.	Ian	Post RME plan draft
Share the revised MF RM&E 1 page summary with Rich and Stephanie, and then the RM&E Team on 1/5	Joyce, Marc, DSC	Before 1/5
Discuss internally and provide written response to the Steering Team re: the Corps' decision on funding the paired release study in FY17.	Corps	By January Steering team meeting
Provide the Steering team with a regionally ranked/prioritized list of RM&E projects.	Joyce, Rich	By January Steering team meeting
Send the Cougar outplanting plan to the Steering team; review and provide response at January meeting.	Bernadette; BPA & Corps	By January Steering team meeting
Email Joyce a description of NMFS' determination of the need for outplanting at Green Peter	Marc	ASAP

Participants (for all or part of the meeting): Chris Allen (FWS), Leslie Bach (NPCC), Joyce Casey (USACE), Ian Chane (USACE), Bernadette Graham-Hudson (ODFW), Nancy Gramlich (ODEQ- on the phone), Marc Liverman (NMFS), Dan Spear (BPA), and Karl Weist (NPCC).

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg; Support: Emily Stranz, DS Consulting

Welcome, Introductions, & Follow-up

Facilitator, Donna Silverberg, welcomed the group, noting that the purpose of the day's session was to discuss issues and seek consensus on process, substance and outcomes for efforts that impact all participants engaged with the Willamette system.

Donna asked the group if there were any additional edits to the 11/10 and 11/29 meeting summaries. There was a request for DS Consulting to include the location of the meeting in the header on the

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summary; they will do so moving forward. Other than that, there were no additional edits and the summaries were approved.

WATER Updates

Take-aways from the December 1st Managers' Forum meeting: The group recapped the Managers' Forum meeting, noting that one important message shared from the Managers was their collective interest in ensuring that the WATER process is collaborative. They heard Managers express that they want the Managers' Forum to be a collaborative effort, as well as all other WATER teams. The managers agreed to encourage and hold accountable both themselves and their staff to ensure a collaborative process. Upon reflection, the Steering Team felt that the tone of the Managers' discussion was positive and served as a good redirection for the WATER process. The conversation seemed to lay the foundation for future potentially tough conversations. The Steering Team expressed that they look forward to seeing how the process moves forward, as the group came together in ways that they had not done before. Steering Team members noted that the commitment to collaboration is necessary at all levels, especially from the chairs of WATER Teams. Similar to the Managers, the Steering Team felt that, in order for real positive change to occur, the Managers will need to build on this new collaborative foundation through more frequent meetings. Donna noted that there are meeting polls out for the next three Managers' Forum meetings tentatively scheduled for March, May, and September 2017.

One action item from Managers' Forum was for each entity to have internal discussions with their team regarding needed changes to the WATER Guidelines. The Managers felt that the Guidelines were generally good. However, they wanted input from those "living and working in the WATER process" to inform changes to the Guidelines. Donna created a tool to help with these conversations: a grid that provides space to clarify the purpose, roles/responsibilities, decision authority (i.e. what latitude should the team have for discussions and recommended decisions?), and relation to others for each of the WATER Teams. She asked that this grid be used to discuss and record what is needed for team members to feel the region is doing its best regarding the WATER system, and then send to DS Consulting.

- **ACTION:** Steering Team members will help coordinate internal conversations with their WATER managers and representatives to discuss the draft Guidelines. They will use the tool to provide input on the Guidelines, getting it to DS Consulting by late February so that it can be compiled for the March Managers' Forum.
- **ACTION:** DS Consulting will provide an updated grid to the group to use in those conversations.

Group of Four (G4) progress: Joyce Casey, USACE, reported that the G4 met last week to continue discussions aimed at clarifying issues to assist the WATER Teams in moving forward. She shared the following updates:

- The G4 has been working to clarify the authority of the various guiding documents used in managing the Willamette system. This effort is a direct response to issues surfacing in the RM&E team which require clarity about the priority of direction from the BiOp/RPA, COP, and HGMPs. To help clarify, Joyce asked Leanne Holmes, USACE Portland District Attorney, for input. Leanne responded that the BiOp/RPAs are the primary guiding documents and the subsequent COP and HGMPs are intended to support implementation of the BiOp/RPA. Leanne plans to share her interpretation of the document authority with other federal agency attorneys, who can then distribute it to their teams. Joyce noted that this opinion helps clarify sticking points between the RPA and COP, and should help the RM&E Team determine study needs moving forward. Dan Spear, BPA, noted that the COP was written as part of a Systems Configuration Plan, called for in the BiOp and was intended to help expedite implementation of the BiOp by providing more details.
- Following the December Managers' Forum, the G4 started discussing the WATER Guidelines, specifically the purpose and role of the G4. G4 is not called out in the draft 2008 Guidelines and

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they thought clarifying their role might be helpful for everyone. They began by drafting language to add to the Guidelines, which Joyce shared:

The Group of Four is a problem solving, interagency coordinating team, focused on implementing the Willamette Project BiOp. They do this by information sharing and trouble-shooting of internal and external issues related to the Endangered Species Act and RPAs that stem from the BiOps. They are the primary ESA liaison to their Federal Managers' Forum members and they work to keep the Managers apprised of broad level ESA issues.

The Steering Team discussed the purpose and process of the G4 in the WATER process: originally, the G4 was stood up to help resolve issues that were causing impasse in the WATER teams. It now has morphed into another WATER Team. Donna observed that often, when the G4 is mentioned, other team members look down. She shared her experience that this might indicate discomfort around the G4 and invited discussion about this. The group noted the exclusiveness of the group, the uncertainty of their role, and the impact of their conversations. They wondered why issues are discussed at the G4 instead of the Steering team. It was suggested that issues should first be addressed by the Steering team, and if the federal ESA folks feel a need for internal discussion, then move the issue to G4, but bring it back to the Steering Team. Some expressed that, by bringing the start of issue discussions back to the Steering Team, it may give the Steering Team a chance to be successful in its collaboration.

In addition, the steering team suggested that the G4 be renamed to the “Willamette Section 7 Team”, to be more in line with the description of the work they do.

The Steering team also discussed the structure of the WATER process and federal coordination on the BiOp. It was noted that the WATER process is unique, evolving, and ongoing. Dan noted that the WATER process was mirrored off of the Columbia process. However, WATER focuses its collaboration on structural improvements, as compared to the technical management of the system.

Engineering milestones: Ian Chane, USACE, shared that he had updated the engineering milestones timeline and brought a revised version to share with the Steering Team. Ian had to leave the meeting prior to being able to share; **DS Consulting will connect with Ian to get the updated timeline out to the Steering Team.**

Middle Fork RM&E Plan

The Steering Team revisited the draft Middle Fork RM&E Plan. Dan reported that he is working on getting the BPA contractor lined up to draft a flow chart of the critical path which will include all three passage options. He shared that there have been some contracting delays so the flow chart will not move forward until January. Marc noted that the “critical path” should be the longest path forward and is the one that sets the timeline. Actions for all three paths should be sequenced together so that they can get as much information about all of the options as quickly as possible. Marc drew an example of the critical path:

	2017	2018	2019
Operations	A	B	C
Reservoir		A, B	C
Head of Reservoir	A, B	C	

In this example, the critical path would be the operational passage option, as it takes the longest to research and thus needs to set the schedule so it is not delayed. Marc pointed out that they will need to consider what studies can be done at the same time and where there are efficiencies. For example, can information from studies on Operations A inform Reservoir A and B? The group noted that, once the

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flow chart is finalized, it will need to be added to the RM&E plan. They suggested that the RM&E Subgroup (Stephanie and Rich) continue working together to incorporate the critical path and study plans for all three options. The operational passage workshop that Ian is working to coordinate should occur after the RM&E sub-group drafts the plan.

- **ACTION:** The Steering Team will continue efforts to clarify the critical path forward for all three passage options. They will provide a flow chart to the RM&E Team and ask that the RM&E sub-group incorporate the critical path into the Middle Fork RM&E Plan.
- **ACTION:** Ian will continue coordinating a workshop to explore operational passage options.

Donna noted that the G4 also reviewed comments and revised the 1-page summary of the Middle Fork RM&E Plan that was originally drafted to share with the Managers at their December meeting, but wasn't because it needed more revisions. She shared the G4's edits with the Steering Team. The group reviewed the revised draft and noted the following:

- The information available in FY22/23 on Cougar passage performance will be preliminary and multiple years of data will be needed to get a comprehensive understanding on how well it is working.
- Although the data will be preliminary, there will be take-aways and lessons learned along the way. The Corps has pointed to the Cougar passage effort as a source of information for future decisions. They expect to be able to plan, build, test, and modify while gathering important information to inform future projects. Joyce noted that the Corps and the region will need to pay close attention to how things are going along the way in order to learn from the experience.
- It is important to remember that all of the projects are all different and will have different needs.
- The group also discussed the NPCC report on fish passage at high head dams; it was noted that the report does not provide a recommendation or synthesis; however, the case studies may provide good lessons learned.
- A key question for the Corps is: can the region move on to the next project before proving that Cougar is successful?

AGREEMENT: The Steering Team approved the G4 edits on the Middle Fork RM&E Plan introductory summary and suggested that it be provided to Rich and Stephanie. The 1-page summary will be used as an introduction to the Middle Fork RM&E Plan.

- **ACTION:** Joyce and Marc will share the revised document with Rich and Stephanie and let them know that the Steering Team approved the revisions.
- **ACTION:** DS Consulting will share the updated version at the RM&E team at their January 5th meeting.

RM&E elevated issues

The Steering Team continued conversations on the issues elevated from the RM&E Team in October. They discussed the overarching issues of project funding, the prioritization process, and the perception of a "conflict of interest" raised by having researchers at the table prioritizing projects that they could bid on. The Steering Team felt strongly that discussions would be improved by producing a regionally ranked/prioritized list of projects to provide a more comprehensive picture of how research and monitoring projects compare in importance. This should then be supported by clarification of the expected amount of funds available for the Willamette projects. They agreed to ask the RM&E Team to provide a regionally ranked list of projects with a funding cutoff line to the Steering Team in January 2017 (all 1's and 2's using the Five Fingers of Consensus).

- **ACTION:** The RM&E Team will provide the Steering Team a regionally ranked list of projects which incorporates each agency's separate ranking into one combined list and shows the funding

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cutoff line. Joyce will work with Rich to put the list together for the Steering Team's January meeting.

Additionally: the Corps' funding situation is complicated and there are not enough funds to provide for all of the studies every year. The predominant source of funding for projects in the Willamette is CRFM funds, which are strictly allocated for "passage" at projects. This causes tension within the WATER process because the RPA requires studies that Corps staff do not feel can be justified as "informing passage". As a result, they are not judged to qualify for CRFM funding. It was pointed out that how "passage" is defined is important to clarify. Studies that look at how fish are moving in the system and where wild and hatchery fish are released in a given year are useful to help inform conclusions and decisions on fish passage. The group also suggested that funding sources other than CRFM should be explored in order to implement the full range of RPA measures which NMFS determined necessary to avoid jeopardy.

Joyce clarified for the Steering Team that the Corps is not withholding information on the amount of funds available because of a perceived conflict of interest with ODFW. In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the Corps merely needs to ensure that they do not provide potential bidders what they expect a specific project to cost. Discussions about the merits of research or projects (without funding amounts attached) do not raise the conflict of interest flag.

The group also touched on the roles of the RM&E and Steering Teams in regards to decision making around projects. It was suggested that the conversation regarding which projects should be funded and which should not includes both technical and policy considerations. Thus, the Steering Team should be engaged in that aspect of the conversation and the RM&E Team should not. Donna asked the Steering Team to consider whether or not the decision on what projects move forward should be a RM&E or Steering team decision. It was also suggested that the Steering Team develop regional criteria to help determine whether RM&E projects meet the needs and values of the region.

Issue 1: Paired release study: Bernadette reminded the Corps that, as of the November Steering Team meeting, the Corps was going to review the information needs presented by the region and respond in writing with a decision of whether or not to fund the paired release study.

→ **ACTION:** The Corps will discuss internally and provide written response to the Steering Team.

Issue 2: Annual parentage analysis, spawning surveys and screwtrapping: The Steering Team reviewed and discussed the RM&E questions posed in the elevation paper. NMFS, ODFW, USFWS, and NPCC agreed that this study is a priority. NMFS noted that the study may not be a priority in 2017 (won't know until the ranked list is shared), however, it is an annual study and delaying it will create a data gap. The group discussed the utility of the long-term dataset and whether the region has sufficient data already. It was noted that spawning surveys are called for in the RPA, and other aspects of the study inform requirements of the RPA, such as the life cycle model and annual fish management decisions, as well as decisions called for in the HGMPs.

Throughout the conversation, it was clarified that ODFW, NMFS, NPCC, and USFWS all agreed that the study informs critical data needs that go beyond baseline data and are tied to passage. ODFW pointed to the Cougar outplanting plan as an example of how data, such as the data that would be gathered in this study, helps inform management and decisions related to passage. The Corps and BPA agreed to talk internally and to review the Cougar outplanting plan before agreeing that the study informs passage.

All present (ODFW, NMFS, NPCC, USFWS, USACE and BPA) agreed that they do not know how this study compares to other studies or whether other studies are more important, as they have not seen a

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prioritized list of studies for the region. Once they have the prioritized list (see discussion above) they will be able to respond to the RM&E Team's question.

→ **ACTION:** BPA and Corps will review the Cougar outplanting plan as an example of how this type of information could be used to inform passage decisions and will bring a response to the Steering Team's January meeting. Bernadette will send the plan to the Steering Team asap.

Issue 3: Green Peter outplanting, parentage, spawning surveys and screw trapping: The group reviewed the statement in the RPA regarding outplanting at Greenpeter. The RPA calls for outplanting at Green Peter, if NMFS determines that it is needed. Marc stated that NMFS has indeed determined it is needed. He also shared that this project was ranked as a medium priority for NMFS. Again, the Steering Team felt they cannot respond to the priority and need for the study without seeing how it compares to other studies in the region. The Steering Team will wait to finalize their assessment of the study after they have the prioritized RM&E list. In the meantime, the Corps would like a written record of NMFS determination.

→ **ACTION:** Mark will email Joyce a description of NMFS' determination of the need for outplanting at Green Peter.

Next Steps

- The Steering Team will help coordinate internal agency conversations about the 2008 Guidelines.
- They will also continue efforts in drafting the Middle Fork RM&E Plan. Once they have a prioritized list from the RM&E Team, they will revisit the elevated issue #3.
- The Corps will come prepared with response to issues 1 and 2 to the January meeting.
- The January meeting will be from 1:00-4:00 p.m. on January 26th.

With that, Donna thanked the group for their efforts and the meeting was adjourned.

This summary is respectfully submitted by DS Consulting. Suggested edits are welcome and can be sent to Emily Stranz at emily@dsconsult.co.