

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

**Steering Team Meeting
December 1, 2020
Via WebEx Conference**

Meeting Summary
[Edits provided by ODFW, USACE]

Participants on the phone: Eric Andersen (BPA), Leslie Bach (NPCC), Brett Blundon (USFS), Brad Eppard (Corps), Nancy Gramlich (DEQ), Anne Mullan (NOAA), Kelly Reis (ODFW), Lawrence Schwabe (CTGR), Glen Smith (BPA), Dan Spear (BPA); Andy Traylor (Corps);

Facilitation Team: Donna Silverberg, Nancy Pionk & Emily Stranz, DS Consulting.

Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping

Facilitator Donna Silverberg welcomed the group to the meeting and conducted a round of introductions. She reviewed the agenda and noted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues and seek consensus on process, substance, and outcomes for efforts affecting participants engaged in the Willamette system.

The group reviewed and approved the November 3rd meeting summary.

Action Items from Prior ST Meeting/Progress Reports:

Updated FY21 budget and capabilities - Andy Traylor, Corps, noted that the Corps is moving forward with FY21 and no longer will have updates on FY20 work efforts. The Steering Team agendas will be adjusted accordingly, to include updates on FY21 budget and projects.

Andy shared a list of the FY21 projects and current budget for Willamette River projects, including FY21 capabilities, FY21 president's budget (PBud) and reallocated funds. He noted that the Corps expressed over \$51M in capabilities, received \$3.7M from the PBud, and carried over previous fiscal year funds to contribute to an overall FY21 budget of just over \$10.7M for the Willamette River System. Andy updated the team on the projects that are moving forward, or being wrapped up for when funds are available in the future:

- Detroit downstream passage - monies were reallocated to get the project to a logical stopping point until construction funds are available.
- Foster fish weir - monies were reallocated to get the project to a logical stopping point until funds are available.
- Foster adult fish facility - design work will be funded in FY21.
- Cougar downstream passage plans and specs - monies were reallocated to continue finalizing the plans and specs.
- Cougar downstream passage alternative re-evaluation - this work will continue in FY21.
- Fall Creek Adult fish facility - the work to line the pipe is funded and should be wrapped up in FY21.
- High head bypass - There will be ongoing RM&E at Green Peter in FY 21.

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- Willamette Biological Assessment and NEPA EIS is funded for FY21.
- Willamette operational fish passage PDT is funded for FY21.
- RM&E systemwide - Willamette RM&E was funded for FY21.
- Program coordination, which includes costs associated with litigation, is also funded for FY21.

Andy noted that there will likely be some shifts throughout the year and the Corps will keep the Steering Team updated along the way. Kelly Reis, ODFW, asked if there was flexibility to shift more funds to RM&E if there were high priority needs. Andy noted that currently there are not additional funds for RM&E, also, the Corps feels that the current RM&E needs are funded; however, if funds are made available and RM&E needs change, the Corps is open to considering options.

WATER Planning and Process - What can we do now to set up the basin for success?

The Steering Team reflected on current and future information needs in the basin, and how to best prepare for future decision-making, given the current challenges. It was noted that it is important for WATER partners to also engage in the Willamette EIS process, as that process will inform the next Biological Opinion and will benefit from regional thinking and conversation via the Cooperating Agency mechanism. The new BiOp is expected in 2023.

Regarding 2021 and 2022 actions, the WATER teams will continue to discuss, and address information needs for effective and efficient decision making. Steering Team members noted the following:

- Pedigree analysis results will be very informative and may result in potential management changes in sub-basins.
- Expanding screwtrapping data gathering downstream of projects during passage operations would provide helpful data.
 - Current screwtrapping plans are still in the works, however, due to contracting delays, screwtraps are not expected to be in place until early 2021. Brad noted that a new solicitation is going out and that process will take a few weeks; the Corps team is keeping close track of the progress.
- Downstream passage operations are being implemented at Detroit, however, due to contracting delays, screwtraps have not been installed to monitor passage. NOAA wondered whether it is worthwhile to continue the operation if no screwtraps are in place for monitoring? Anne Mullen, NOAA, suggested that it could be helpful to consider other ways to monitor passage come next fall. Dan Spear, BPA, noted that BPA supports the current operation, however, also supports learning and adjusting operations as learning occurs. He noted that the goal is to have successful fish passage.
- CTGR, ODFW, and NOAA all expressed interest in more RM&E. A question was raised regarding how any extra funds or savings are allocated by the Corps, for instance, if savings are realized from a delayed start in monitoring, or a contract coming in lower than anticipated? Andy responded that the Corps considers input from regional partners via the ongoing WATER prioritization process, however, ultimately the decision to allocate additional funds is an internal Corps decision. He noted that there are other priorities within the CRFM program, for example within the Columbia River System, that might be of higher priority, and unfortunately, consideration of these priorities is not

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always visible to this team. Andy stressed that the Corps still relies on its partners and regulatory agencies to help gain information, perspectives, and make decisions.

- Brad noted that if there is extra money in FY21, the team can certainly revisit evaluation methods next fall. He encouraged the RM&E team to think about what evaluation could look like, noting that now is the time to clarify those RM&E needs.

Regional Updates

Willamette EIS Update - The Corps recently presented their thinking and approach for analyzing actions regarding climate change as part of the EIS alternatives. The presentation was appreciated by NOAA.

WATER Team Updates

- **Flow Team** - The Flow team is looking forward to discussions around the impacts from the 2020 fire season on water quality, woody debris, etc. There are current efforts focused on saving woody debris, that needs to be removed for safety reasons, to use for future restoration efforts.
- **Habitat Tech Team** - is meeting on December 3 to discuss dual credits, the Willamette umbrella project, and preliminary monitoring. They will also be reporting to the NW Power and Planning Council regarding anchor habitats and funding concerns.
- **WFPOM** - WFPOM is having conversations around implementing monitoring at Lebanon Dam. ODFW would like to have monitoring in place by May 1, 2021.

Partner updates - Corps: Brad shared that the Willamette River Basin Science Review is cancelled for 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, the Corps is considering having researchers present their preliminary results at RM&E, the Steering Team, or other regional meetings. The Corps will keep partners updated as plans progress.

Other partners present did not have any additional updates to share.

Next Steps

Donna noted that the next Steering Team meeting will be on January 5, 2021. She encouraged Steering Team members to put some thought into continuing today's conversation around what is needed for success in the basin, as this conversation will continue in January. Additionally, in January, DS Consulting will report back on Steering Team member's insights regarding what is working well and what could be improved in the WATER forum.

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

The next Steering Team meeting will be on January 5, 2021 at 12:30.

This meeting summary is respectfully submitted by the DS Consulting facilitation team. Edits are welcome and can be sent to Emily Stranz (emily@dsconsult.co).