

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

Steering Team Meeting

January 5, 2021

Via WebEx Conference

http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Willamette_Coordination/Steering_team/WST.html

Final Meeting Summary

[Edits from Corps, ODFW]

Participants on the phone: Brad Eppard (Corps), Nancy Gramlich (DEQ), Mike Hudson (USFWS), Anne Mullan (NOAA), Kelly Reis (ODFW), Lawrence Schwabe (CTGR), Glen Smith (BPA), Dan Spear (BPA), Andy Traylor (Corps), Karl Weist (NPCC);

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

Action	Who	By When
Provide edits to December meeting summary	Anne	1/8/2021
Coordinate with Kate regarding meeting schedule	Anne & Emily	1/15/2021
Provide ST and RM&E Teams with communication and conflict resolution process suggestions for further discussion.	DSC	February meetings
Check internally to see if there are ways to proactively prepare contracts for future awarding when funding is secured.	Andy	2/2/2021
Update RM&E Progress Tracking spreadsheet to include filters and links to reports where possible.	Nancy	2/2/2021
Review and provide input to DSC re: the RM&E Progress Tracking spreadsheet	Steering Team	2/2/2021
Check internally and follow up with the Steering Team regarding the Corps' plan and timing for responding to the Cooperator's input on the draft EIS alternatives.	Andy	2/2/2021

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 the December 1st meeting summary; NOAA needed additional time to review the summary and will get any edits to Emily by Friday, January 8th. Pending no additional edits, the meeting summary will be considered approved.

Anne noted that Kate Wells is now the Acting Willamette Branch Manager, stepping in after Marc Liverman's retirement. Kate will now be NOAA's representative at the Steering Team; however, she may have a conflict with the meeting time. Anne and Emily will coordinate if the time needs to be shifted.

FY 21 Budget and Project

Andy Traylor, Corps, reported that there are no major budget changes since the December 2020 meeting report, noting that the Corps is now in Quarter 2 of FY20 and all work efforts are on schedule. Andy shared that Suzy Hill, project manager for the Willamette NEPA, High Head Bypass, and RM&E efforts has taken a different position within the Corps. Andy will keep the Steering Team updated on her replacement.

Regarding the budget, Andy noted:

- For FY21 the total CRFM budget is \$42.8M. The Willamette has \$10.7M allocated, lamprey Accords have \$19.9M (see bullet below), and the Walla Walla and Portland District together will receive \$12.1M.
- Detailed updates on Foster Adult Fish weir, Fall Creek adult facility, and Cougar downstream passage were provided at the last Willamette Fish Facility Design Workgroup. (WFFDW) meeting.

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- The screw-trapping contract for monitoring as part of the interim measures has had some contracting delays, however, bids are due today (1/6/21). The Corps team continues to push hard to get the contract awarded. The screw-trapping funding will come from the RM&E budget.
- Funding for EIS modelling efforts is not included in the RM&E budget. Brad clarified that the EIS modelling is to assess and analyze the alternatives for decision-making and is not considered RM&E. Kelly noted that if there is overlap in the RM&E and EIS modelling/analysis budget, it is hard to decipher given the level of detail provided. Some Steering Team members expressed interest in having more budget detail provided.
- The current budget includes lamprey funding through 2023; the Corps does not expect to receive any additional lamprey funding for that period.
- The CRFM budget includes work efforts in the Willamette River Basin, as well as the Columbia River Basin. There are 22 projects included in the budget for FY21 that are outside of the Willamette, however, the Willamette will receive the majority of the CRFM funding this year.

2020 Review and 2021 Look Forward

Report back on WATER Teams Assessment: Nancy Pionk, DS Consulting, reported back to the Steering Team on her recent conversations with Steering Team and Managers Forum representatives, as well as the annual Facilitation Services Evaluation. She noted that she was not able to speak with Marc before he retired, so the summary does not include NOAA's perspective. (See WATER Steering Team Process Check-in Summary and Recommendations, a separate document.)

Nancy highlighted that most representatives signaled that relationships are strong, and individuals appreciate working together. The team roles are clearer than in the past, and there is still room to improve on coordination between teams. This is an area where the DS Consulting Team will work to improve process moving forward. The facilitation team will plan to bring communication and conflict resolution suggestions to the WATER teams in February for discussion.

The ongoing budget limitations are a consistent challenge, creating a lot of frustration and feelings of limited progress. Some team members expressed frustration and a perception that, with limited funding, the Corps' appears to be funding their priority projects, and not what other WATER partners see as priority; copepod research was provided as an example of this. The group discussed the need to identify and enhance where there is opportunity for WATER collaboration and influence. Andy added that providing additional transparency on the Corps' priorities and "must haves" ahead of the regional RM&E prioritization process may be helpful. This has occurred in the past, however, not consistently.

The group reflected on the need for funding conversations and solutions to happen at higher levels, noting that the decision-making on the overall budget is out of the hands of regional managers. It was suggested that the Managers have conversations at the Managers Forum, or in sub-groups if more appropriate, regarding how to elevate the region's budget concerns and needs. Donna noted the sensitivity of talking funding in the WATER group and suggested that she can help coordinate conversations for the Managers.

Regarding RM&E funding, Andy noted that in the past, the Corps has been cautious at the beginning of the fiscal year to reserve some funds, in case problems arise. From a practical perspective, if the team can tee-up lower cost studies and contracts for later in the fiscal year, the Corps would be better poised to implement efforts quickly if funds become available. On a larger scale, the Corps is talking internally about how to best position downstream passage efforts for quick implementation when funding does become available. In response to inquiry, Andy committed to checking internally on potential options to prepare contracts ahead of time for quick awarding, even if funding is not yet secured.

RM&E Progress Timeline - Nancy walked the group through the RM&E Progress timeline, which DS Consulting drafted in response to a request from Steering Team members for a tool to track progress (see the RM&E Progress Timeline, a separate document). She asked the Steering Team to review the spreadsheet and let DS Consulting know if there are other methods/visuals that would be helpful for the group to assess progress. Initial feedback from Steering Team members was that the tracking was helpful, and adding links to reports, as well as filters to allow for queries would be helpful. Additionally, Nancy noted that moving forward the facilitation team will make concerted effort to help the WATER teams clarify processes, potential overlap, and progress.

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Regional Updates

- **Willamette EIS Update** - Andy shared that the team had been planning for public engagement meetings in January 2021, however, those meetings may be pushed to a later time due to the shift in project management. The meeting will provide a preview of the measures and is not intended to be a formal comment period. Currently, the plan is for a Spring 2022 DEIS public comment period and a FEIS in Fall/Winter 2023. The Record of Decision is planned for March 2024.
 - In response to inquiry regarding the timing of public outreach, Andy committed to following up with the Steering Team regarding the Corps' plan and timing for responding to the Cooperator's input on the draft alternatives.
- **Water Resources Development Act** - The Action Agencies are preparing for the process approved through WRDA, which allows for them to study potential changes in authorization of the Willamette River projects. Dan noted that this would be a study that may create changes in the future depending on Congressional decisions.

WATER Team & Member Updates

- **HTT** - The next HTT meeting will be on February 4 from 9:00-11:00; agenda items include a presentation from Brooke Penaluna (USFS fisheries scientist) on 2021 fish sampling in the Willamette, and the NPCC review of the Willamette Umbrella project and next steps. Additionally, in January/February, the group will provide a solicitation announcement for HTT FY22 project funds. Karl noted that two of the main funding HTT mechanisms are concluding this year.
- **ODFW** - Kelly shared that the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program will open a solicitation for FY23 funding on February 1st. Also, fishing and hunting license sales are up in 2020, possibly an outcome of people spending more time outdoors during the pandemic.
- **NOAA** - Anne shared that the Willamette Branch is staff limited and they hope to fill empty positions in the future. Currently the branch is working internally with their restoration team on strategic planning. The intention is to be able to share with partners for strategic restoration efforts throughout the basin.
- **USFWS** - Mike shared that the annual lamprey exchange is happening next Tuesday and if anyone wants more information, they can contact Mike. Also, USFWS has a post-doc candidate in Montana who is helping to develop lamprey passage guidance. Mike will share the document once it is ready. Additionally, USFWS is working on a biological feasibility assessment for bull trout reintroduction in the South Santiam. They expect to share a draft with the partner group (Corps, ODFW, and USFS) in March. Mike will keep this team updated. Anne noted that a biological opinion will be needed and that early coordination on timing will be helpful due to a heavy workload at NOAA.
- **BPA, Grand Ronde, ODEQ, and NPCC** had nothing further to report.

Next Steps

Donna shared that the DS Consulting team is shifting facilitation roles for the WATER process. Moving forward, Donna will facilitate the Managers Forum, Nancy will facilitate the Steering Team, and Emily will facilitate RM&E. This will allow facilitators to provide more focused support for the individual teams, while supporting the overall WATER process. Nancy will facilitate the Steering Team starting in February.

The next Steering Team meeting will be on February 2, 2021.

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).