

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

Steering Team Meeting Tuesday, May 4, 2021

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

Facilitators Summary

[Edits from ODEQ, USFWS]

Action	Who	By When
Consider questions posed around basin-wide monitoring and connect with RM&E representative prior to the next Joint meeting.	ST reps	June Joint RM&E/ST meeting
Coordinate internally for monthly Willamette EIS updates at Steering Team meetings.	Ida	6/1 meeting

Participants on the phone: Leslie Bach (NPCC), Brad Eppard (Corps), Ian Chane (Corps), Nancy Gramlich (DEQ), Mike Hudson (USFWS), Anne Mullan (NOAA), Erik Peterson (Corps), Kelly Reis (ODFW), Ida Royer (Corps), Lawrence Schwabe (CTGR), Daniel Spear (BPA), Kate Wells (NOAA);

Facilitator and Notes: Nancy Pionk & Emily Stranz, DS Consulting.

Welcome & Introductions - Nancy Pionk, DS Consulting Facilitator, welcomed the group and noted that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues and seek consensus on process, substance and outcomes for efforts affecting participants engaged in the Willamette system. The Steering Team reviewed and approved the March 2, 2021 Steering Team and April 6, 2021 Joint RM&E and Steering Team meeting summaries.

Check-in on Current & Future Budgets - Ida Royer, Corps, reported on the current and future budgets as the new Steering Team Chair. She noted that the Corps is still waiting on the FY22 budget and expects to have it by the end of this month. Ida will provide an update at the June 1st Steering Team meeting.

Interim Measures Implementation Updates – Ida updated the team that the PDT continues their work on the IMs. As part of the IMs implementation, the PDT and RM&E teams are planning studies for Foster and Detroit. There was inquiry as to when the NEPA processes for Cougar and Fall Creek IMs would be initiated; Ida reported that the current schedule calls for public comment on the Cougar operations in October 2021 and in December 2021 for Fall Creek.

Debrief Managers Forum Meeting – The group shared their take-aways and agency reflections from the April 29th WATER Managers Forum. There was a sense of opportunity to shift towards a common vision and appreciation for a shared focus on creative thinking and problem solving, trust building, and transparent communication. Many noted an interest in working together on a unified approach to move regional projects forward when national support is required. The need for congressional support for these efforts was highlighted and it was suggested that current and potential future non-federal partners could play a big role in helping to communicate the value and need to fund the work. Lawrence shared that the Grand Ronde Tribal Council sees recovery of the species and passage as top priorities and the Tribe has been working to help move these efforts forward, although has had some delay due to COVID. Some were interested in leveraging relationships with WATER partners and other interested

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

stakeholders to create positive change, and Mike noted that the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program is a good example of multi-stakeholder success in working together to secure funding and implement efforts to support threatened and endangered species. Kate noted that although it is hard work, if the WATER teams work to identify common needs and goals, they can move in the same direction despite different agency missions. Many noted excitement to work with Liza Wells, who will be taking over as the Deputy District Engineer for the Portland District, as Kevin Brice retires.

Nancy P. reported that the next steps will be for the Managers to bring new leadership together, reforming the group and then moving forward to identify the common vision. It is expected that the next Managers Forum will take place in July 2021.

Basin-wide Monitoring - With the intent of supporting regional discussion on basin-wide monitoring needs, Nancy P. asked the Steering Team to help clarify the issue statement and to explore whether there is a unified view that this group can bring forward to the Managers later this summer. She noted that these conversations should seek to get clear on the issues, perspectives, purpose, vision, and ideal situation.

The group had initial discussions on the value and purpose of gathering basin-wide monitoring data, noting that it aides the adaptive management process and helps better understand the bigger picture, allowing for strategic management decisions in real time, as well as over time. Basin-wide data would allow for a more holistic, flexible, and nimble approach to management. The following additional thoughts were provided:

- Ultimately, information on Smolt to Adult Returns (SARs) will be needed to determine if passage is successful.
- Longer term trends will show impacts.
- If basin-wide monitoring had been implemented with the 2008 BiOp, there would be nearly 15 years of data to help inform decisions today.

Some of the hurdles to implementing basin-wide monitoring were discussed. It was noted that there are limitations and that the group should think strategically about how to leverage available resources to have the most impact. There are significant funding issues: the CRFM funding constraints and limited O&M funds limit the Corps' spending on basin-wide monitoring and will mean that the region needs to think creatively on how to accomplish this work. It was noted that utilizing existing infrastructure would help, and ensuring that the basin-wide monitoring approach would be flexible to allow for future infrastructure changes (i.e. a new passage system installed at a project).

The group acknowledged the funding challenges outlined by the Corps, the value in having more information to inform decisions, as well as an interest in working to identify a path forward that can be presented to the Managers for a decision. The Steering Team members present agreed to the following statement:

The Steering Team partners recognize the value of having basin-wide monitoring data to use to adaptively manage the system and species moving forward. There are still many questions that need to be explored, and there will be a need for creative problem solving to figure out how to implement.

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

To further this conversation, the RM&E and Steering Teams will discuss the following questions:

- 1) What is the purpose?
- 2) What does a basin-wide monitoring program look like to you?
- 3) What are the advantages?
- 4) What are the disadvantages?
- 5) What are the barriers?
- 6) What are the opportunities and capabilities, and where is there overlap?

Moving forward, both the Steering Team and RM&E Team will consider these questions and then come together in a joint meeting to discuss. The Joint meeting will be scheduled for June, ahead of the July Managers Forum meeting.

Regional Information Sharing –*Team Members*

WATER Team Updates

- **RM&E Team** – RM&E Team members (ODFW, NOAA, and the Corps) worked together to obtain PIT tags, tag and release 2,000 wild steelhead surrogates that were otherwise going to be released untagged. This was noted as a good example of regional collaboration!
- **HT Team** – The HTT recently presented their report to NPCC which focused on restoration efforts; the report details a lot of good work that was accomplished in the basin.
- **Flow Team** – Due to limited flows, mainstem flow targets have not been set for this year. The Corps is waiting for the tributary flows to increase to implement the IMs. Water supply forecasts for March and April were well below normal in the North Santiam, with 13% and 46% respectively. Eric noted that steady spring rain is needed in order to meet conservation pool targets. Lookout Point is down 47% from where it should be this time of year. There is 1.2 maf in storage this year.

Eric noted that there was a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for lowering the Detroit conservation pool by 5ft; the pool was lowered due seismic concerns. Lookout Point and Hills Creek also have these safety measures. This means starting the conservation season with a little less water and flexibility; however, Eric thanked ODFW and NOAA for working with them on the decision to store water higher in the basin.

Willamette EIS Update – Moving forward, Ida will find someone from the Corps to provide monthly updates on the Willamette EIS, particularly where the EIS interacts with WATER issues. Eric Peterson, Corps, provided an update on EIS process milestones, he reported:

- Draft EIS available for public review and comment in June 2022
- Draft Biological Assessment to the Services in August 2022
- Draft BiOps to the AAs in April 2023
- Revised final EIS in July 2023
- Final EIS/ROD in December 2023, followed by final BiOps.

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)

Partner updates – Eric noted that there was FONSI on reallocation/Willamette Basin Review. Additionally, the pedigree analysis contract was awarded, allowing 5 years of data to be processed.

There were no additional updates from Steering Team members.

Next Steps – Nancy P. recapped that the Steering and RM&E Teams will continue conversations around basin-wide monitoring in preparation for a July Managers Forum. As part of that process, a joint team meeting will be scheduled in June.

The next Steering Team meeting will be on June 1, 2021 from 2:00-4:00PT.

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