

Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E)
October 27, 2021

http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Willamette_Coordination/Willamette_RME/RME.html

Facilitator's Summary
[Edited by ODFW, USACE]

Present for all or part of the meeting: Leslie Bach (NPCC), Fenton Kahn (COE), Michael Hudson (USFWS), Dave Jepsen (ODFW), Anne Mullan (NMFS), Jim Myers (NMFS), Christine Petersen (BPA), Kelly Reis (ODFW), Jeremy Romer (ODFW), Luke Whitman (ODFW), Jeff Ziller (ODFW);

Facilitation Team: Emily Stranz and Nancy Pionk (DS Consulting).

Welcome and Housekeeping - Emily welcomed the group and conducted a round of introductions. The RM&E team approved the September 23, 2021 RM&E meeting summary with no additional edits. The team welcomed Luke Whitman who will serve as ODFW's RM&E representative moving forward. Dave Jepsen will continue to stay informed of WATER RM&E matters and provide back-up support.

RM&E Planning – The Federal Family Managers are meeting on November 2 to clarify what WATER teams should be discussing, given the current litigation. DS Consulting will report to the WATER groups the results of that conversation and will then convene teams as appropriate. Pending that discussion, Emily sought the team's input on future RM&E discussion needs.

Team members supported using meeting time to update the sub-basin planning spreadsheets and develop potential concepts for studies outside of those covered by the injunction RM&E. There was also support for utilizing the RM&E meeting time to share information about data collection efforts in the basin (WATER and beyond), as well as to discuss publicly available information from the Injunction RM&E process. This would provide an opportunity to have an open conversation with regional experts that can inform future work and learnings in the basin. DS Consulting will incorporate these topics into the RM&E Meeting calendar and agendas, moving forward.

Fenton noted that the Corps has developed a public-facing website that will provide information and updates on injunction actions; it includes information on which Interim Measure or Injunction measure an action is addressing. The webpage can be accessed here:

<https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/Locations/Willamette-Valley/Injunction/>.

Team Updates

Update on ODFW plans to evaluate fall drawdown at Cougar - Jeff Ziller and Jeremy Romer, ODFW provided an update on ODFW's study plan to evaluate the court-ordered IM at COU (See PowerPoint presentation, a separate document) in fall 2021. Jeff noted that the study plan is to drawdown the COU reservoir to approximately 25 feet above the Regulating Outlet (RO) by November 1 (and hold till December 15) and provide low head pressure reservoir spill to allow Chinook to migrate through the RO. The Corps had planned to implement a study to evaluate the operation; however, was unable to do so due to funding/contracting constraints. ODFW was able to utilize ODFW resources to implement the study to ensure that data was collected this year.

The evaluation objectives of the study are to:

1. Evaluate the ability to derive survival estimates using existing infrastructure;
2. Determine dam passage efficiency;
3. Compare date of detection of the different release groups; and,
4. Compare survival rates (if data permit) to previous data.

The study calls for 6,000 fish from McKenzie Stock to be PIT-tagged and released above and below the dam. On October 21st, 2,000 fish were released above the dam and 1,000 were released below. A similar release is planned for November 10th. Survival data will be collected at downstream interrogation sites. Jeff noted that there were 134 recaptures in the screw trap below the Cougar RO the first few days and ODFW is getting good information on injury rates and size of migrants. The study will also provide data on adult returns. In response to a question about the Willamette Falls PIT detection site, Luke noted that the juvenile passage antennas at Willamette Falls are currently operating; however, the adult ladder readers need hardware updates and tuning.

Mike highlighted the importance of getting as much information as possible from this study and was hopeful that this effort could help confirm what is sufficient for a robust data set. Jeff noted that this study is a pilot to test infrastructure to see how well information can be collected with the infrastructure available and to learn how well this type of release does with successive studies.

FY21-22 Study updates-Fenton noted that the pedigree studies have been funded; however, the results will not be available until later in summer or fall 2022 because of the earlier delays in getting the contract to OSU. The desktop modeling for fry survival in the Middle Fork is also ongoing. Otherwise, the FY22 studies previously discussed by the team have been supplanted by the court injunction. However, Fenton reported that the Foster spill evaluation study previously planned and discussed by the RM&E team for 2022, is included in the court injunction measures and will move forward next spring. The Corps expects to solicit a research proposal from PNNL for an active tag (radio telemetry) study, so that the results can be compared with previous studies.

Wild Fish Surrogate Program Update – Earlier this year, the Corps had planned to have OSU rear fish for the screwtrap efficiency testing. However, after the injunction order, the decision was made to use hatchery fish for the screwtrap efficiency testing and use OSU-reared surrogate fish for studies under the injunction RM&E measures. Anne noted that the screw trap contractor has indicated it takes more fish than originally thought to establish robust efficiency data. Jeff noted that the Willamette and McKenzie hatcheries did not meet broodstock requirements this year which will affect availability of fish for 2022.

Screwtrapping Update - The screwtrap work is ongoing. The contract with Cramer ends in November. A new contract is already in place with Environmental Assessment Services (EAS), which will allow for a smooth transition from Cramer to EAS in November. Based on input from the RM&E team, the contract with EAS is a three-year contract, so we don't have to do contracts annually and potentially have different contractors each year. EAS has already started screw trap work at Hills Creek to evaluate the operations this fall. Fenton appreciated the efforts by ODFW, USFWS, and NMFS to get permits in place. He noted that there is overlap between the contractors to ensure a smooth transition.

Suggested Meeting Approach – In response to the request to streamline the WATER meetings, DS Consulting suggested holding the Steering and RM&E meetings on the same day and having a “joint session” between the meetings to share information that pertains to both teams. (See diagram below.)

The RM&E team supported this approach and suggested utilizing the standing monthly RM&E or Steering team meeting time already held on calendars. They also suggested keeping the monthly cadence on the calendar, but canceling meetings if there are no agenda items to discuss.

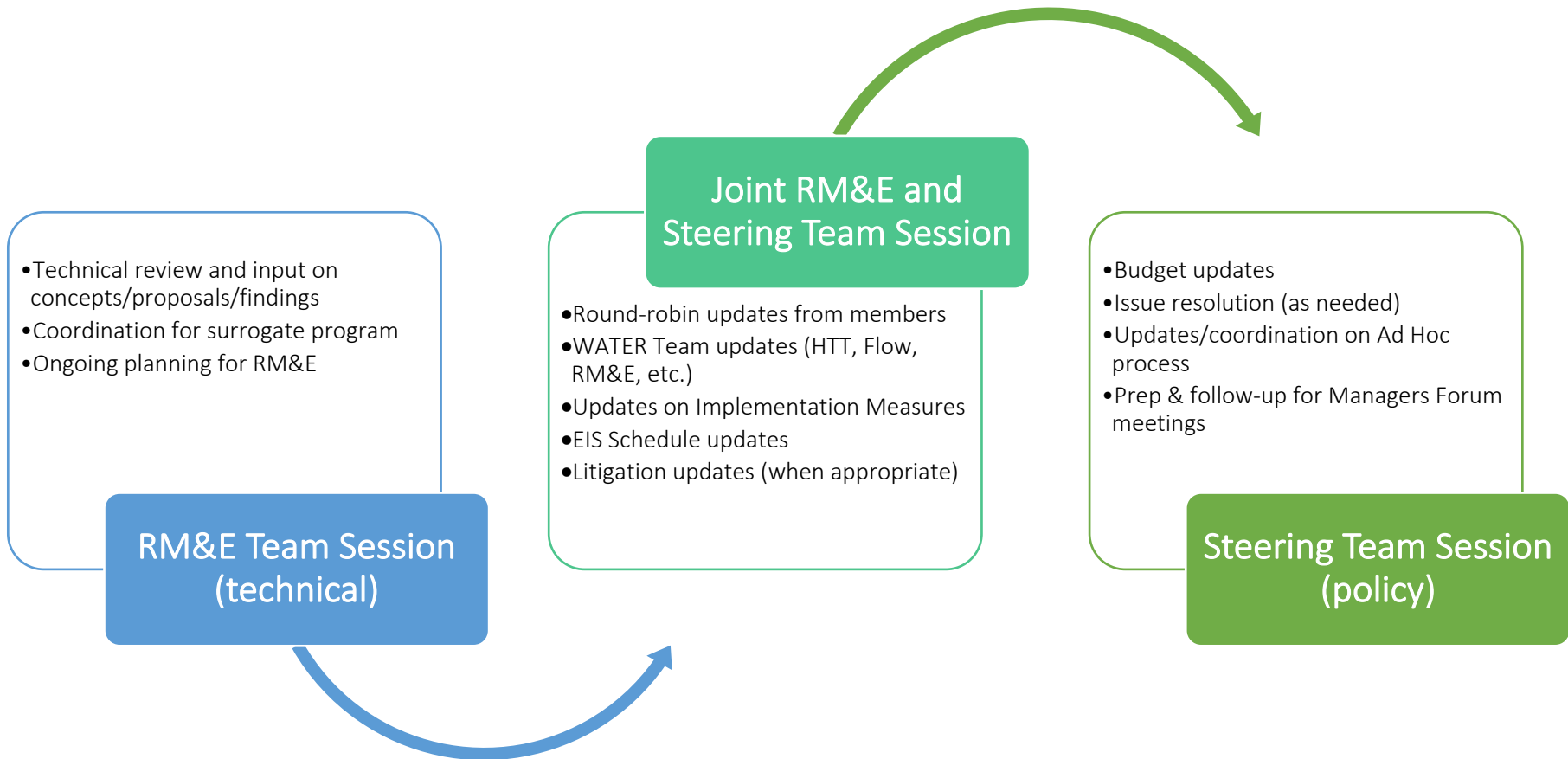
[Update: The Steering Team also supported this approach and suggested that the meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of the month.]

Next Steps - The DS Consulting Team will work with Steering and RM&E Team members to try and find a time that works for everyone for the new meeting sequence. Additionally, DS Consulting will send a link to the team for the annual facilitation services survey. Emily noted that the facilitation team utilizes the input to improve services and greatly appreciates the input.

The next RM&E Team meeting will be December 7th, unless otherwise coordinated

And with that, Emily thanked the group and adjourned the meeting.

This summary is provided by DS Consulting. Suggested edits are welcome and can be provided to Nancy at nancy@dsconsult.co



***Note: Due to scheduling conflicts, the Steering Team will meet first, then jointly, and the RM&E Team will meet following the Joint session.**