

**MIDDLE COLUMBIA CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING
NOVEMBER 4, 2010
SUMMARY**

INTRODUCTIONS

Bill Blosser, facilitator, advised that the process is moving from a long period of planning into implementation. We will be talking about the role of the Implementation Team and its possible work plan for the coming year. Bill asked that each person in attendance introduce themselves and describe what work they have already been doing to implement this plan.

Rod French, ODFW District Biologist in The Dalles. He covers Fifteenmile Creek and the Deschutes River. Current projects related to recovery plan implementation include operating a large fish trap in the Deschutes River used for estimating population. Using funding from BPA for intensive fish-out/fish-in monitoring in Fifteenmile Creek; also Trout Creek monitoring.

Brent Smith, ODFW Assistant District Biologist in the John Day. They have been working on passage projects. Although he is fairly new to the current position, he has been in the basin for over 10 years.

Brett Brownscombe, Freshwater Trust. In the Mid-C region, they have been working on flow restoration focused on Fifteenmile Creek, Hood River system, John Day and Umatilla. They have a handful of non-flow restoration projects, primarily in the John Day; the bulk are partnerships or lead by local entities such as SWCDs. They are also working improving the implementation process, with a focus on permitting. They are working with the Governor's Core Team process - trying to make the regulatory process easier for entities working on the ground.

Rick Craiger, OWEB Regional Coordinator. We work with watershed councils, SWCDs and irrigation district on habitat work and flow restoration, with projects all over the region. Significant investment in the Hood River Basin on water quality work. Reintroduction that PGE and tribes are doing to improve habitat. Have done work in the Metolius River system. They haven't done that much in the Lower Deschutes. Working with farmers on minimum tillage programs. Also working on flow monitoring in Fifteenmile Creek to get a better understanding of water management in that system.

Tom Davis, Native Fish Society. Upper Deschutes River Steward. The Native Fish Society is an advocacy organization. Significant progress has been made in recovery efforts with OWEB and other funding.

Bill Duke, ODFW District Biologist out of Pendleton. Involved in fish enumeration facilities and overseeing BPA funded habitat restoration projects.

Sasha Twelker, Gilliam-East John Day Watershed Council. They have quite a few projects going on addressing habitat improvement, water quantity and quality.

Jessica Irzyk, Sherman County SWCD. They are engaged in a lot of habitat work and working with landowners on erosion control. The riparian buffer program is really popular. Also working on watershed assessments. Doing work in Grass Valley Canyon and working with the Lower John Day Conservation Workgroup as well.

Kevin Blakely, ODFW John Day Watershed District Manager out of Pendleton. Implementation activities include two fish habitat restoration projects funded through BPA, screening and passage projects, other district activities in the Walla Walla, Umatilla, Willow Creek, and John Day basins.

Jason Kehrberg, Grant SWCD. The SWCD takes in all the Upper Mainstem, South Fork, Middle and North

Fork John Day River. They have evolved into an implementation arm for the funders, i.e. BPA, Bureau of Reclamation and other small funders. They help private landowners deal with reclamation. Replacement of irrigation diversions - 100th project just completed last year and 60 are on a waiting list to be approved. They complete 20 - 30 miles of riparian fencing per year. Work on combined animal feeding operations.

Scott McCaulou, Deschutes River Conservancy. They are working to restore water quality in the Deschutes basin. Working on flow restoration in tributaries above Pelton Round Butte Complex (PRBC). Integrate closely with watershed councils and the Deschutes Land Trust. Working on the purchase of senior water rights, on the ground restoration, monitoring water management planning with irrigation districts and municipalities; undertaking ecological flow studies. Trying to determine the relationship between ecology and flow below Bowman Dam.

Erin Stone, facilitator for Lower John Day Conservation Work Group. Steering committee is comprised of representatives from three counties (Sherman, Wheeler and Gilliam), three SWCDs, Freshwater Trust, EcoTrust and other organizations. Goal is to view John Day as a whole watershed and work jointly on projects to leverage funding. Three main projects - Grass Valley Canyon, Thirtymile Creek and Mountain Creek. Watershed assessments are being prepared on these watersheds with OWEB funding. Conservation, education and community development are the group's three main goals. Also addressing the regulatory piece and conflicting timeframes and requirements in the permitting process. Freshwater Trust is working with us to see if we might be a pilot project in the John Day basin. More than anything, we are working on improving communication between USACE, watershed councils and landowners. We now have a joint project in which we are going to get both sides of the lower John Day river fenced to the satisfaction of the landowners, the USACE and OWEB.

Dave Dunahay, Central Oregon Flyfishers. In many ways he represents the end users of these good efforts. Also on Salmon Trout Advisory Committee and Inland Waters Advisory Committee. Hes' here to learn and see the results.

Don Ratcliff, PGE. PGE has been working on fish passage for 15 years. Currently working on habitat and water projects at PRBC. There is a tremendous amount of research going on, including test and verification studies looking at densities of salmon and steelhead in reintroduced populations and post-project habitat monitoring. Encouraged team members to contact him for a facility tour.

Jamie Swan, BPA. They have an extensive fish and wildlife program, allocates funding in 4 states. In the John Day and Deschutes basins, helping with funding and management of the ODFW screen shop. Working on Trout Creek project in Deschutes with ODFW. Also working on reintroduction and habitat restoration projects with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon.

Dirk Renner, USFWS Partners Program. They are working on a program to facilitate habitat restoration on private lands. They are working with watershed councils, SWCDs and landowners in the Upper John Day and Upper Deschutes basins; with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO) in the Upper Deschutes; and with SWCDs on both passage and restoration projects. Also, working on Crooked River restoration projects.

Tom Straughan, Oregon Department of Agriculture, NE Oregon Region. In Mid-C, they have 12 management areas. Primary focus is compliance with statutes for the SWCDs. He provides technical assistance and funding to 13 SWCDs. Working on riparian conditions and waste discharge.

Sue Greer, OWEB Regional Coordinator, covers the Umatilla, John Day and Oregon side of Walla Walla basins. We are the funders for a lot of restoration projects going on. Also involved in education and outreach.

Ron Graves, Wasco County SWCD. He has learned to take advantage of various funding sources over his 20

years with the district. We have made big effort locally to get agriculture community to convert to no-till. Riparian buffer program with funding from BPA and OWEB - establishing riparian buffers in area 300 miles of streams. Last several years focusing more and more on irrigation water use efficiency; helping landowners by upgrading irrigation tools/equipment and to adopt better agriculture practices. Designing piping systems for irrigation districts and still trying to figure out how to get them funds. Just completed feasibility study on Rock Creek. Bank stabilization and habitat improvement on Fifteenmile Creek where we used 70 logs to roughen the bank surface. Replaced three parallel undersized culverts for fish passage.

Tami Sasser, Umatilla Basin Watershed Council. Their primary program is water quality monitoring specific to TMDL monitoring; including trends and effectiveness monitoring. Working with NRCS, OWRD, and ODFW on fish passage barrier, flow restoration, and monitoring projects. Also part of Umatilla Basin restoration team.

Heidi Hartman, Umatilla County SWCD. Working with Umatilla Basin restoration team that is a collaborative effort of local organizations and agencies to pool resources and have a more strategic approach to restoration. Upland focused; off-channel watering projects, production agriculture, incentive projects funded through various agencies. A lot of projects recently in the satellite office in Hermiston as they have unique issues, e.g. Lower Umatilla Basin ground water management area. They have a person working with irrigation districts on piping projects; outreach and education to small acreage landowners. Potentially going to partner with Oregon Freshwater Trust on an irrigation efficiency project funded by OWEB on the Upper Walla Walla River, working with landowners on in-stream flows. Have seven critical groundwater management areas; water quantity is an issue and they have a lot of large agriculture - have to find the balance for everyone's needs.

Brian Wolcott, Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council. Working on irrigation efficiency - piped over 13 miles of irrigation delivery canals – and on rewatering the Walla Walla River. Several areas were dry river beds in the summer and now fish hang out there. Working on water quantity and quality and groundwater issues; fish passage and riparian habitat restoration; and levy setbacks.

Mark Webb, County Judge in Grant County.

Those joining by telephone then introduced themselves:

Scott Lawrence, PGE. Project manager for the Pelton-Round Butte Complex fish passage project and responsible for PRBC funding.

Sarah Kelly, DSL. Resource coordinator for NE OR. Currently working on implementing the removal of dams.

Amy Charette, North Fork John Day Watershed Council. They are working on habitat restoration, water quality, and water quantity projects in the North Fork and Middle Fork John Day.

Brett Hodgson, ODFW Fish and Wildlife Biologist in Deschutes Basin. He is responsible for fish management decisions and how they relate to fish reintroduction above Pelton-Round Butte Complex.

Steve Namitz, USFS, Malheur/John Day area. They are currently working with many partners on fish screens and passage projects.

Jim Webster, CTUIR. Current activities include an array of projects from passive to active instream enhancement and restoration in the Umatilla, Walla Walla, and John Day. Work with multiple landowners both on and off the reservation.

Dan Rife, USFS, Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests, working on fish passage issues in Whychus Creek,

Crooked River, and John Day River.

OVERVIEW OF RECOVERY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Rosemary Furfey, NOAA Fisheries, said she is happy that we are now out of the planning process and that implementation activities have already started. Rosemary provided a PowerPoint presentation on the NOAA DPS-Wide Recovery Plan for Middle Columbia River Steelhead that can be viewed at the following website: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp.

Sue Knapp, GNRO, said that the plan has been in a development process for four years. The current administration and staff is going to be transitioning out, but working with the new governor's team. Sue is confident that the new administration will support recovery plans as our current Governor has. She advised there is a huge momentum on getting these plans implemented as there are about five other recovery planning processes going on right now. Her PowerPoint presentation on the Oregon Recovery Plan for Middle Columbia Steelhead and Implementation Framework can be viewed at the following website: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp.

Implementation Team Member Questions/Comments

(Implementation team comments are in *italics* followed by staff response in regular text.)

During the planning process it became apparent that for many of the tributaries there are limited ways to accurately count the number of smolts going out and adults coming in. Are there going to be better methods for monitoring?

There will be a coordinated effort to conduct monitoring throughout the basin. If you look at the recovery plan you notice there is a more focused effort to look at research and monitoring throughout the basin. We are trying to expand and focus the monitoring dollars.

There was a mention of the coastal Coho Plan in the Mid-C Plan. In that plan, it was clear that ODFW was left holding the bag for things happening in the watershed that they had no control over. DEQ and ODA are here today and that's good as they are major players. EPA is not here and I am disappointed in that. DLCD isn't here and that is also disappointing. Most of the problems in the watersheds that I'm familiar with revolve around land use. Would like to see more presence of DLCD. Steelhead are no longer extirpated from the Upper Deschutes - they are passing downstream. I'd like to see their status revised and apply some programs to them. Bureau of Reclamation dams represent major issues in the Upper Deschutes basin.

We do have listed fish now above Pelton Round Butte dam. We are working on a 10J rule that would declare those fish to be experimental populations. There are efforts to give some coverage while restoration actions are happening.

Agree with transition period but would not like it to be 10 years – five years would be good.

ODFW has never applied a retroactive 10J rule. If the population is determined to be nonessential, how does that factor into delisting?

Spatial distribution is provided by including that population. Reintroduction is absolutely consistent with the recovery plan. We need to improve the viability of the west side Deschutes population and reintroduction is key to that.

A portion of fish that we are putting back are the original fish (took wild fish and put them in hatcheries). When we put fish back in the Crooked River some of the fish came from the original gene species. We don't have self sustaining runs there yet but we will.

In the Upper Deschutes basin, the vast majority of the Crooked River Basin isn't subject to reintroduction efforts. It's important to recognize this.

It should be though. The Native Fish Society says 95% of historical spawning habitat was above the dam. Passage and flow are very critical in the Crooked River.

Really pleased that the agencies that are involved right now are here. With the budget situation, they really don't have to be here. Capacity issue is huge - DLCD does not have capacity to participate but they know about the recovery plan. Trying to put together a guidebook with examples of how to do certain types of restoration actions.

A couple of things have happened - passage of Measure 76 - room for optimism as it passed by 60% in every county. ODFW and NOAA staff did a great job in setting the example and GNRO participation and process facilitation has been great. We recognize that we are going to have to put a lot more effort in this from both the agency and non-agency end of things. Popular time to beat up on government but I want to recognize the amount of good work put into this.

The whole sounding board process was phenomenal – a disparate group of people basically unanimously approved this plan. Nobody thought this was possible at the beginning; now there is a lot of good momentum.

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Adrienne Averett, ODFW Eastside Implementation Coordinator, advised that she is brand new to the position, is a native of Virginia and spent last 11 years working on fisheries management, instream flow research, and water supply planning. Adrienne is looking forward to working with the Implementation Team on steelhead recovery in the Mid-C basin. Adrienne gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Recovery Implementation Team which can be viewed at the following website: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp.

Function and Form Discussion

Adrienne asked group members if they are comfortable with the function and form of the Implementation Team.

Seems very process oriented. How will this accomplish recovery on the ground? Very top down rather than bottom up. We all have a pretty good idea what needs to be done and how to go about it - how does this process facilitate that?

The plan is intended to minimize process and maximize action. There will necessarily be some process-oriented stuff because a lot of coordination among groups and communication upward and downward is needed. Our goal is that the Implementation Team will focus on Actions: what can we do as a group and what can each watershed council, SWCD, and land owners do to help accomplish recovery?

Assume this group would get each of the annual reports. Would be valuable to not just focus on what is being done but take it a little further, i.e. wish list.

2012 is the first year for which a complete set of actions will be defined (2010 and 2011 actions are pretty much already decided) – we will start working collectively to figure out what we want to work on that year. The reports will have an adaptive quality, addressing what is working and what is not.

Sounds like the groups on the ground will continue to do their work and will have local autonomy. How we link our actions across the landscape is what we need to build on. Build on existing efforts - autonomous, running efforts. Incorporating on the ground, local efforts.

The network vision gives people the time and space to meet to discuss recovery actions in the Mid-C equally. All folks at the table are equally important.

The Implementation Team idea is based on two-way communication. Local entities working on the issues / recovery, but we want to make sure that the local implementers understand what is prioritized in the Plan to help guide efforts.

Passage could be a priority issue in the Upper John Day. What I think I heard is there are entities out doing work on the ground, strapped for time, have relationships with landowners. If this is going to impose top down stuff, it could impose restrictions on actually on-the-ground work, i.e. take away from time spent on the ground.

We do not want the Implementation Team to get in the way of any on-the-ground efforts. That would be counterproductive. Efficient engagement will be important, i.e. we won't always meet in person. We will start using electronic tools to use your time more efficiently and minimize travel time to meetings. Will work with Tom and Rosemary on the Implementation Schedule and send out a draft for your feedback. If we do need to meet, it will likely be in a small working group; we will generally rely on electronic forms of communications, conference calls, etc. We will have an annual team meeting to discuss the annual report and actions that have been implemented over the past year, next steps, and to discuss what's been working and what hasn't.

Chapter 12 in the plan is too top down. Local groups should continue doing what they are doing. At the same time, it will be important to bring local groups together to coordinate actions to create more efficiency. Overall coordination is needed to get to recovery and delisting.

ODFW and NOAA totally agree that local groups should continue doing what they are doing. And, that coordination and prioritization is needed among them. Adrienne requested that she be advised if the group or members feel like the implementation team processes are getting too top heavy. The team is going to rely on each other to ensure that we are operating under an efficient engagement model.

Agree that bottom-up approach is critical, but good top-down is important. On-the-ground is pretty efficient a lot of times; the problem is the top-down priorities are not set right. Top-down prioritization and assistance is critical.

I think it goes both ways, i.e. it's the responsibility of locals to plan appropriately to accurately show what the local priorities are.

We are in the forming phase - we'll morph into whatever form we need to morph into to get work done. This is just a template. We'll learn as we work together.

Operating Guidelines

Proposed operating guidelines were included in Adrienne's PowerPoint presentation and also emailed to the group. Adrienne requested that members look these over to ensure that they are comfortable with them and advise her if there are any questions or suggestions. Adrienne will email the group to get comments and revisions. She specifically asked the funding experts in the group to help with Section IV.f.

Survey

A survey is also included in Adrienne's PowerPoint presentation as a tool to collect information on who is doing work where, and other parties who should be contacted. Adrienne will distribute the survey results to team members. The various work groups of the Implementation Team can be established based upon the survey results.

Website

Adrienne advised the group of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Recovery Plan website:

www.dfs.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp. The website will be updated to include implementation team information (e.g. meeting summaries, PowerPoint presentations, materials, etc.).

The focus should be recovery rather than delisting.

It would be really helpful if Adrienne could be a person to help move projects that are listed as priorities through the regulatory process. I don't know how much you have contemplated this position helping with that but there is a need.

Sue has been working closely with NMFS to address these types of systemic issues. If there are certain needs, we could arrange a workshop on how to do the permitting, and bring in technical assistance and funding.

There is going to be a time period where things are being worked out, but projects are moving in the meantime. If Adrienne has a list of projects from Grant SWCD and plans on them getting done within a year but one of the projects gets held up for some regulatory issue, could Adrienne go to bat for that project?

NMFS and ODFW together would be working with action agencies to determine the most effective way to approach a new project and make it run the most smoothly. Part of Adrienne's job is to fill this role. If folks are having issues, then they need to let her know, she can help resolve bottlenecks and can serve as a conduit.

Where do you get your information about what the actual problems are?

A lot of agency staff state and federal as well as implementers on the ground have been providing feedback. Sue Knapp advised members that the Core Team has been working on a strategic plan that gives an approach to how to improve the efficiency of regulatory review for restoration projects on private lands. Eight objectives have been identified, with specific actions for each. We've also outlined what the problem is for each objective. From there we developed an action plan matrix to add more information on who is actually going to work on each specific action including timeline and concerns. Visited with the Federal Caucus this week and they are doing a similar process. We are working together with the feds and the state on this. It's kind of like a guidance document. She will disseminate this strategic plan to the team.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULES

Oregon Conservation and Recovery Plan Implementation Schedules

Tom Stahl, ODFW, advised he is largely responsible for coordinating this process. His job is to make sure that recovery plans are implemented across the state and that they do not just sit forgotten on a shelf. He will also be working to ensure consistency and efficiency between the plans. ODFW has just hired three implementation coordinators.

Conservation plans are at a state level. Recovery plans are at a federal level - requirement of Federal ESA Act. Often times they are one in the same but have to move through different processes. The Mid-C Plan is both.

Tom's PowerPoint Presentation on Conservation and Recover Plan Implementation Schedules can be viewed at the following website: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp.

When is the Implementation Schedule going to be out?

NMFS is working with ODFW on a prototype right now. We would like to get it out very soon. An opportunity for comment will be provided. The two-way communication has not happened yet but there will be that opportunity.

Most people in this room are doing work that implements this plan. Some know it and others don't and have been doing it for years. When does the clock start so to speak? How do they know whether it's something to report as an implementation of the plan? You could use our database and look over the last 10 years and find actions that qualify. How do they know what actions need to be done so that when they're working with a landowner they might get support for doing more work with the landowner? Plan does excellent job of identifying limiting factors but didn't find specific priority actions. How do folks know that something is more important than something else? They are going to hopefully implement the plan over time and make those actions be more proactive and solicit the work and evolve it to implement those actions. We need to know what those specific actions are. Assume will happen in the small geographic work groups. How does it all mesh?

As you state, plan implementation is already underway. It is documented in various places. We don't have the intent to go back and do annual reports for prior years. Annual reports will be for future efforts. For 2010, all habitat ground work has mostly been done, work for 2011 is already pretty well planned. 2012 seems to be the first year that the plan will have some guiding priorities / influence. Communication needs to start happening between the small work groups. We will want to capture what is being done in 2011 but the communication of the priorities in the plan won't affect work until 2012.

Issues are being pointed out that have been a source of frustration that we've heard throughout the process. Prioritization is pretty general; it isn't fine enough to tell you which specific landowner to work with.

The Umatilla Basin is a good example of local prioritization. We have been mapping out our priority areas and zones.

You're going to know where you need riparian restoration the most but the other part - what's the low hanging fruit, i.e. if you have a very willing landowner on a less priority area - there will be a push for this effort as it's easier.

The prioritization frustration has been lingering for a long time. Will this Implementation Schedule and moving to implementation allow us to respond to a couple key funding issues? When we pool all these actions / projects - we will be able to look at how the money is being spent and if it's being spent appropriately. And also is every agency funding appropriately. There will be tracking and reporting opportunities.

Funding guidance experts in the room can help us with this process; help us figure out who else is out there. This will help us maximize our efforts.

Performance audits are needed; it is amazing how many projects that were done in the 90's have failed. You can learn a lot from your mistakes.

That gets at effectiveness monitoring. Look at the 4-Hs - this plan is 90% habitat; the other 3 H's are fairly minimal issues.

Speaking of non-habitat issues, I thought I should mention whirling disease.

Stray hatchery fish are a big problem in the Deschutes River.

NOAA Mid-C Implementation Schedule

Rosemary discussed the Mid-C Implementation Schedule. She advised there is national guidance on recovery planning that requires that NMFS adopt/develop Implementation Schedules. We have to do this for the full DPS. We have four Implementation Schedules representing the four management units; we will knit them together as an Implementation Schedule for the full DPS. The hope is that this doesn't sit on the shelf and that people actually use it. It's handy, useful and a quick reference and starts to put the projects out there. The reason it is important is that NMFS is often asked to report on progress in implementing the plan. We

are now developing a West Coast-wide tracking system. The Mid-C is being used as a West Coast pilot.

Implementation tracking seems to be monitoring pretty high dollar projects. In terms of steelhead, it doesn't look like much monitoring has been done so no data to show the effectiveness of all these actions we have been doing. What type of monitoring component is involved?

Some actions are research and monitoring (R/M). There will be a research and monitoring component. There will be staffing specifically for R/M and there is a tremendous focus on research and monitoring right now.

There are many people with invested interest in research and also monitoring. Suggest another interest in post-audit monitoring.

That's exactly why we hired Implementation Coordinators to make sure this is happening and is being documented.

What's the conversation on sorting at hatcheries between tribes, Washington and Oregon?

The Mitchell Act EIS will direct Mitchell Act dollars for the funding of hatcheries. The EIS documents the impacts of hatcheries and what can be done to address them. Hatchery genetic management plans, with review by NMFS, are going to be required. There is also guidance in the recovery plans on what can be done. Variety of venues addressing hatcheries right now - it's a hot topic.

So you think it's possible that we can get to the numbers in steelhead production and there will still be a hatchery program and we'll still get delisted.

There are other obligations - dam mitigation programs, tribal treaty programs. Variety of forums that would move toward changing the hatchery program but there will still be these other obligations to meet.

WRAP-UP

Adrienne discussed the pending Mid-C implementation tasks for the next six months to year. These Next Steps presentation slides can be viewed on the website at:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/mid_columbia_river_plan.asp.

Rosemary, Sue, Tammy and Adrienne will be at the OWEB conference having a roundtable discussion about the Mid-C in two weeks.

Bill said that the next full meeting of this group won't be for another year. There will be subgroups and contact via email.

Bill thanked everyone for coming and for the wonderful turnout. We owe a lot to ODFW for hiring three coordinators and everyone who has spent a lot of time and resources on this. Bill noted that Rich Carmichael was incredibly important and responsible for the quality of this plan and that we got such a high consensus.

Sue advised she believes that this is going to be a really strong and incredible team under Adrienne's leadership.

Meeting adjourned.