

Minutes of the Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) Advisory Committee (STAC)



Date: January 23, 2009
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Location: LaQuinta Inn – Grants Pass
 243 NE Morgan Lane
 Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Type of Meeting:	Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program Advisory Committee
STAC Members in Attendance:	Rich Heap, Dave Dunahay, Norm Ritchie, Tod Jones, Armand Peña, Tom Petersen, Bill Hastie, Gary Enoch, Mike Brochu
Not in Attendance:	Bob Rees, Lauri Mullen, Rosemary Furfey, Sammie Mosley
ODFW Staff:	Tom Friesen, Debbi Farrell, Rhine Messmer, Robert Bradley, Chuck Fustish, Dan VanDyke
Public:	Ray Tharp, Keith Miller, Janos Olah, Greg Graham, Ed Chapman, Valerie Peña, Walter Pose, Ethel Pose, Ian Reid, Hal Borg, Craig Smullin

Agenda

Agenda Items:

Friday, January 23, 2009

- Call to Order and Introductions
- Agenda Approval
- Approval of October 2008 Meeting Minutes
- Area STEP Reports
- Upper Rogue District Presentation
- Propagation Project Review – Rhoades Pond
- STEP and the 25 year Angling Plan
- ODFW Budget Update
- STAC Mini-Grant Application Review
- 2009 STEP Conference Updates and Discussion
- Marine Reserves Update
- STEP Administrative Updates
- Volunteer Recognition
- Public Comments

Saturday, January 24, 2009

- Tours of Savage Rapids Dam & Elk Creek Dam breaching projects and Gilbert Creek & Mays Creek restoration projects

Call to Order, Introductions, Agenda Approval

Dave Dunahay, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Introductions were made.

Chair Dunahay presented today's agenda for review. No significant changes were made since originally distributed. An ODFW budget update was added.

Approval of October 2008 Meeting Minutes

The October 3, 2008, STAC meeting minutes were reviewed.

Motion:

R. Heap motioned to approve the October 3, 2008 meeting minutes with no changes. The motion was seconded and approved by the Committee, 9-0.

Area Reports

STAC members reported on activities in their area.

Lauri Mullen – Upper Willamette

(Tom Friesen provided an overview of the report submitted by the area).

Bill Hastie – Mid-Willamette

Most of the focus has been in education. Working with Ducks Unlimited “Web Foot” program. The program will have curriculum available to teachers whom participate, the program ‘comes to you’ for the workshop. Creeks and Kids is scheduled for July 20 – 24, 2009 at Logan Valley; a few slots are still available. The program received R&E funding assistance and registration is \$45.00 which includes everything except for transportation to the workshop.

Norm Ritchie – Lower Willamette

The Egg-to-Fry program in the area is expanding but not as fast as demand is increasing. A new chiller unit has been located costing approximately 50% of the one commonly used in the past. The newer unit has been under evaluation and is showing favorable results. More information will be provided. STEP Conference planning is continuing.

Gary Enoch – Upper Rogue

Gary and Dan Van Dyke will cover the area report along with activities during the “Upper Rogue District Presentation.”

Tod Jones – North Coast

The salmon propagation projects at Astoria area high schools will change from Tule to Rogue River stock Chinook salmon. A new propagation approval will be needed. Tod is also working on an HGMP and propagation application for the reintroduction of lower Columbia River chum salmon.

Dave Dunahay – Eastern Oregon

A Redband trout monitoring program on the Crooked River is generating data. They are discovering the extent to which eagles eat these fish with transponders being found “in the darndest places”. Egg-to-Fry projects are doing well. Kids know the difference and want salmon eggs rather than trout eggs.

Rich Heap – Lower Rogue

The Egg-to-Fry program is fostering the Adopt-a-Stream program within schools. Broodstock has been collected from the Chetco River. Fish in the 40 and 50 pound class were not uncommon. Volunteers collected scales and other data from 215 carcasses in the river.

Armand Peña – Tenmile, Coos and Coquille

Spawning went well but fell short of targeted numbers due to a high percentage of jacks and age 3 fish. About 100 school children participated in the process. The Morgan Creek Hatchery and education center construction is approximately 60% complete. The 2008 Coos County Steelhead Derby netted about \$12K to \$15K. The annual Salmon Derby is scheduled in September. There may be a

partnership next year with the Douglas Timber Operators that had a derby generating about \$80K net in previous years. (Mike Brochu is a member of the Timber Company's derby committee.)

Mike Brochu – Umpqua STEP

Greg Huchko is fairly new to the program and is doing a great job. Habitat restoration has included placing large woody debris. Small swim pools have been replaced with “tomato bins” for propagation rearing. Net pens are in place for spring Chinook in Winchester Bay. The Umpqua Fishermen's Association collected enough broodstock for 200,000 fall Chinook eggs, falling a bit short of the goal of 300,000. This will be a challenge when it comes time for fin-clipping, as there were only 30,000 to be clipped last time. Golden shiners have reappeared in Diamond Lake, likely introduced illegally by an angler. The broodstock boxes funded through a mini-grant worked well.

Tom Petersen – Mid Coast

A new form has been introduced to improve reporting past achievements and future plans. The Whitaker Creek trapping facility has been repaired with changes to reduce theft of materials and fish as well as withstand high water events. Ident-i-Cards were distributed through license agents and were well received by everyone. The “Stream Team” program is now a requirement for seventh graders in some schools. There are 14 field trips scheduled. There are 31 Egg-to-Fry incubators in just two schools.

Public Comment: R. Messmer asked the committee if they are aware of any other outdoor activities offered in the schools; is STEP the only one? Everyone agreed that due to budget shortfalls the majority of the programs have been eliminated.

Public Introductions

Members of the audience currently present for the meeting introduced themselves.

Upper Rogue District Presentation

Dan Van Dyke presented a status update. The Rogue basin is very productive, even with today's level of development and degradation. The headwaters start near Crater Lake with the main tributaries being Big Butte, Little Butte, Applegate, and Illinois Rivers. Bear Creek is the most urbanized. Grants Pass and the surrounding valley are also highly urbanized. The river system has a relatively high gradient and suffers from high water temperatures during the summer. It has relatively low fish species diversity. It is also unique in having the largest population of “half-pounders” – a steelhead with a life history that includes a very short time in the ocean before returning each year.

While two major dam-breaching projects are being conducted, there are many others in the district, some of which are no longer in use or have been abandoned. Ongoing studies are showing the importance of seasonal streams that are used by steelhead and some coho salmon during periods of flow even though there is no surface water part of the year. The Small Stream, Urban Stream, Intermittent Stream program is creating attention and stewardship of these streams in the urbanized areas to improve habitat and fish production.

Public Comment: There is a need to increase fines for transporting live invasive species such as baitfish. Rhine Messmer responded that there is a legislative action proposed that would make such an act a felony.

Propagation Project Review – Rhoades Pond

Robert Bradley, ODFW, presented the Rhoades Pond STEP Propagation Proposal for renewal of the existing program.

Rhoades Pond located on the Three Rivers tributary of the Nestucca River which is approximately one mile above the town of Hebo. It has been operated and funded by the Nestucca Anglers since 1999. The program

was originally operated by ODFW but was terminated due to budget cuts. It produces 100,000 smolts which are 100% fin-clipped and released in the basin.

The last five years the fish have been released in September – October. The new proposal provides a more flexible timeline to adjust for water flows.

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Is there a negative impact on native Chinook salmon? The late release is usually after most native fish have gone to the ocean. This creates a risk that the hatchery fish reach the ocean under less favorable conditions.
- What is return rate? Angler success with catching fin-clipped fish indicates the program is successful to some extent, but there is not adequate data to fully assess it.
- The proposal is accountable and allows for monitoring of stray rates and contributes to the fishery.

Motion:

R. Heap motioned to recommend approval of the Rhodes Pond Propagation Proposal renewal. The motion was seconded and approved by the Committee 9-0.

ODFW Budget Update

Norm Ritchie presented the highlights of the Governor’s Recommended Budget for ODFW as reported to the External Budget Advisory Committee in a memo dated 12/12/08. The primary concern is with the fact that general fund and lottery fund income is being cut while sport fees are being increased substantially, thus increasing the budget percentage from sport fees while the services these are to provide are becoming a smaller part of the department’s overall expenditures.

Rhine Messmer, ODFW pointed out that many expenditures not typically considered sport angling services directly benefit sport anglers. He provided a three page internal “Budget Fact Sheet” further clarifying the proposed budget. Eighty percent of the increase will maintain existing programs, with the remaining 20% to fund various enhancements. Included in the fee increase will be an increase in the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) program. The R&E program is a part of the Recreational Fisheries section of ODFW and has direct benefits to the fisheries along with close ties to the STEP Program.

For additional budget information go to: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/budget/>

STEP and the 25-year Angling Plan

Rhine Messmer, ODFW Recreational Fisheries Program Manager presented the plan. The focus will be on expanding angling opportunities, with an emphasis on young people. Angler education will be a large part of the program, possibly including a “camp host” type program. Funding does not detract from other programs such as salmon and steelhead. Ed Bowles has stated this will be a high priority for the R&E program.

ODFW has heard from the public. “More fish” is the primary message. We must also keep current anglers happy (avoid reducing existing program services to add this program). Access to fishing is also an issue to address in this program.

STAC Comments: This could add a fifth component (“Fishing Education”) to STEP and the work of STEP Biologists. STAC and staff have some concerns with reducing existing tasks to be able to take on new ones. Additional resources must be provided.

STAC members were encouraged to review the plan further and make additional comments to Rhine.

Public Comments

The Department of Forestry has a program “Kids in the Woods” that might be a good resource. Also, the Ashland YMCA has a fishing camp that has been successful. The kids attending the camp come home and “teach their parents” the knowledge they learned.

T. Friesen asked Committee members to contact him with any feedback regarding the 25-Year Angling Plan. The Plan is really adding a component to the STEP Program, not re-working the concept. There will be more discussion with the STEP Biologists regarding the possible changes to duties as it relates to the proposed plan.

Mini-Grant Application Review

Prior to review of submitted STAC Mini-Grant Applications, Tom Friesen reported the R&E Board approved an additional \$5,000 towards the STAC Mini-Grant program to provide grant opportunities through the end of the current biennium.

He also reviewed changes made to the application as discussed by the committee in previous meetings. The committee agreed that funds should be distributed based on receipts and/or invoices rather than providing funds up front. Project Completion Reports are required to be submitted when the project phase being funded is complete rather than the whole project. Minor changes to the project do not require STAC review, the Committee agrees that this will be up to staff’s judgment. It should also be noted that Mini-Grants will not fund administrative costs.

Motion:

N. Ritchie moved for acceptance of the above modifications and guidelines. The motion was seconded and approved by the Committee 9-0.

Mini-Grant 07-50

The Committee reviewed Mini-Grant 07-50 “Environmental Science Education.” The request included a \$150 expense for transportation, which is typically rejected. The \$150 for “additional resources” lacks adequate detail.

Motion:

R. Heap motioned to approve MG 07-50 in the amount of \$250.00, with the condition that an itemized list of “additional resources” was included with the project completion report. The grant amount was reduced by \$150 (funding for field trips was eliminated). The motion was seconded and approved by the Committee 9-0.

Mini-Grant 07-51

The Committee reviewed Mini-Grant 07-51 “Egg-to-Fry Equipment.” The proposal is for two classes in Warm Springs which is a part of the Madras School District.

Motion:

T. Jones motioned to approved MG 07-51 in the amount of \$199.00. The motion was seconded and approved by the Committee 9.0.

STEP Conference

Tom Friesen reported on the results of searching other possible conference venues. Those that showed an interest only had open dates coinciding with holiday weekends. It is hoped that we can reschedule at Mount Hood Community College for the fall. The college will not confirm available dates until after the fall class schedule is established; this was in April or May last year. The Conference Committee decided to reduce the number of concurrent activities by attrition – by not backfilling any speakers who committed for last year but will no longer be able to participate this year.

Marine Reserves Presentation

T. Friesen provided an updated to the Marine Reserves (MR) proposals. The OPAC proposal has reduced all the proposed MR sites down to two. There is a potential third that would be some portion of an area identified south of the Coos Bay jetties. All Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have been taken out of the proposal for now.

Administrative Updates

Tom Friesen provided the following overview:

- A proposal for a STAC meeting in the capital, possibly the January 2010 meeting. STAC agreed it would be a great venue with the possibility to meet with the Governor's Natural Resource staff and possibly applicable legislative committee chairs.
- Tom is working on the next biennium funding for:
 - The Mini-Grant program; changing the maximum individual grant from \$750 to \$2,000 and the program's total budget from \$25,000 to \$50,000
 - STEP Propagation Fish Food
 - An Egg-to-Fry equipment grant.
- The Education and Outreach publications (including the Egg-to-Fry teachers' manual) are dated. Debbi has retyped them to allow updates and edits. Tom and Debbi were not aware that there had been an Egg to Fry equipment setup and maintenance manual. (STAC members can check with volunteers to see if anyone has a copy of this old document that can be copied.)
- Agenda items for April's STAC Meeting
 - Legislative update including all legislation affecting ODFW's budget and programs
 - 25-Year Angling Plan update
 - A report by Rosemary Furfey regarding the application of Puget Sound Steelhead mitigation to Oregon's steelhead recovery.
 - PFMC update on salmon seasons
 - STEP Conference update
 - Ocean Salmon and Halibut seasons as set by PFMC.
 - District presentation including a visit to Delta Ponds
 - Charlie Corrarino on Conservation and Recovery issues
 - Movement of the Arctic Tern colony from Sand Island to another area away from the Columbia River Estuary.
 - Willamette BiOp and plans this will generate for hydro project operations.
 - Post Marmot Dam removal affects on the Sandy River (fish habitat, sediment migration location and movement rate, etc.) John Esler would be a great presenter.
 - Having an educator to speak about current educational requirements

Some of these can also be appropriate for a later STAC meeting.

Volunteer Recognition

Chuck Fustish and Gary Enoch recognized the Middle Rogue Steelheaders chapter of Trout Unlimited for a long history of volunteer projects. "It takes over two file drawers just to hold the project records!"

Phil Hager was also recognized as being a prolific volunteer, working on screw traps, hoop traps, including their design and construction, and important help with the "Small Stream, Urban Stream, Intermittent Stream" project.

Jim Hutchins was recognized by STAC for his volunteer work which has also earned him the Oregon Stewardship Program Award from the Bureau of Land Management. Jim travels over 1,200 miles each month

volunteering his time for habitat work and coordinating various educational and youth outings which equal over 2,000 hours per year.

Public Comment

Hal Borg presented a fish egg incubator box concept manufactured by Jordan Scotty, Victoria BC. Each unit holds up to 1,000 eggs in individual compartments to protect them from spreading disease and allowing volitional release. The units are designed to be fastened to the stream bottom. They have the potential of having a lower life-cycle cost, less maintenance and easier logistics compared to older-style hatchboxes (sedimentation must be monitored). Eggs can be introduced as soon as they have hardened after fertilization but could be held until they are eyed eggs, which may allow them to be otolith-marked.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.