

Meeting Summary
Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Technical Committee
Web Conference
9am – 12pm, June 2, 2020

In attendance:

1. Colin Wahl, Tulalip Tribes
2. Gretchen Glaub, Snohomish County
3. Alexa Ramos-Cummings, Snohomish County
4. Daniel Howe, Snohomish County
5. Heather Khan, WA Dept. of Ecology
6. Jessica Hamill, Snohomish County
7. Erin Murray, Puget Sound Partnership
8. Marty Jacobson, WA Dept of Ecology
9. Jim Shannon, Port of Everett/City of Everett
10. Jamie Bails, WDFW
11. Elizabeth Butler, RCO
12. Mindy Rowse, NOAA
13. Michael Crewson, Tulalip Tribes
14. Doug Hennick, Wild Fish Conservancy
15. Carson Moscoso, Snohomish Conservation District
16. Kevin Lee, WDFW
17. Dave Lucas, Snohomish County
18. Susan O'neil, ESA
19. Micah Wait, Wild Fish Conservancy
20. Josh Kubo, King County
21. Denise Krownbell, Seattle City Light
22. Kurt Nelson, Tulalip Tribes
23. Kirk Lakey, WDFW
24. Lindsey Desmul, WDFW
25. Keith Binkley, SnoPUD
26. Channing Syms, WDFW
27. Brett Shattuck, Tulalip Tribes
28. LG Lowe???
29. Mike Rustay, Snohomish County
30. Stephanie Celt, WA DNR
31. Kathleen Pozarycki, Snohomish County
32. Aaron Kopp, Snohomish County
33. Pete Verhey, WDFW
34. Sky Miller, Snohomish Conservation District
35. Lisa Tario, Snohomish County
36. Erik Stockdale, Snohomish County
37. Matt Baerwalde, Snoqualmie Tribe
38. Mark Stamey, Geoengineers
39. Aimee Fullerton, NOAA

Meeting Summary:

Introductions

Colin opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda, and introductions. Heather introduced Marty Jacobson who is the new nonpoint staff person working in Stillaguamish and Snohomish watersheds at Ecology. He is originally from Iowa, but has been in Seattle for 6 years and has a background in policy and restoration work.

2020 SRFB/PSAR Update

Gretchen reminded the group that final SRFB applications are due June 29th. Also, this Monday LE staff will have a chance to speak with the technical reviewers about their concerns and what information is still needed to address the “needs more information” (NMI) status proposals. The date for finalizing the ranked list recommendations has been pushed back until we have a better idea of where the projects stand and the technical reviewers (hopefully) clear them all. Sponsors were directed to get in touch with Elizabeth and Gretchen if they need more help getting their applications submitted.

Erin added that PSAR applications were submitted last Friday. Hopefully, there will be a ranked list by June 26th.

Floodplains by Design - Snohomish County

Jessica Hamill gave an overview of Snohomish County’s project proposal. This work will build on the current Sustainable Lands Strategy effort and include a mix of programmatic and capital actions at multiple scales (watershed, reach, and site-specific). There are two funding sources for acquisitions to support riparian work and agriculture viability. Reiner Farm is an example – Tulalip Tribes is purchasing riparian habitat and PCC Farmland Trust will hold the agriculture easement. The Acquisition Strategy is intended for directing the Fbd funds specifically, but will build upon the strategy that Tulalip Tribes has put together prioritizing parcels for fish. See presentation for details.

Fish in, Fish out Presentation

Colin reviewed this year’s salmon numbers for escapements, forecasts, and traps in the Snohomish.

Last year’s Chinook forecast predicted 3,500 fish but the reality came in well below that number. He noted there is inherent error in forecasts and error in estimates. Last year’s total escapement estimate was 1,600 - the worst on record. The forecast for 2020 is 3,400 fish (similar to last year). Outmigration numbers for Chinook have looked pretty good for the past 3 years so there is hope.

Colin reminded the group that the recovery goals are based on productivity. The target is 14,000 returning spawners per year as indicative of good productivity; low productivity would be 64,000. The majority of fish are spawning in the Skykomish basin.

Coho estimates were close to the conservative forecast (38,000 - 39,000). They are still in critical status though. The goal is 50,000 fish.

Chum escapement was well below the forecast – the worst on record. This is consistent throughout Puget Sound for other species as well. He noted the closed fishery on chum last year.

Steelhead also declined last year.

Colin mentioned that due to the Covid pandemic impacting field work and monitoring there will be gaps in next year's data.

Fbd Letters of Support

Gretchen asked the Tech Comm for a recommendation on submitting letters of support for the basin's 4 Fbd proposals. This recommendation will be presented to the Forum on Thursday. Letters of support from the LE are required in Fbd applications. The Tech Comm already approved supporting the other 3 projects in the basin. After the Snohomish County Fbd presentation earlier in the meeting, the Tech Comm approved recommending it receive a letter of support as well. The group commented it would appreciate updates periodically from any funded Fbd projects.

Water Quality White Paper

Colin reported that King County has been a big partner in moving this effort forward. The paper mostly focuses on temperature. The advisory panel includes Elissa Ostergaard and Kollin Higgins. A draft is currently under internal review. Colin is working on inclusion of contaminants and toxics (from Sandy O'Neil's work). Remaining topics in progress include DO, nutrients, and sediment turbidity. Some subjects are beyond the scope of this paper (hydrology/water quantity, climate change, new data analyses, etc.) and/or are addressed in other reports such as the climate change white paper and the SBPP. Colin reviewed the timeline for completion. See presentation for details.

Roundtable Updates

Mike Rustay reported on Snohomish County's monitoring Smith Island with beach seining off of the levee. Eight beach seines were conducted. Chinook and Coho were captured along the new levee. Water temperatures were pretty warm. Fish appear to be rearing during the higher tide cycle. Like others, they won't have much data this year due to work impacts from Covid, but the fish are still out there.

Brett Shattuck reported Tulalip Tribes will begin removal of the Pilchuck Dam in the next month or so. There will be a remote live camera on site if people want to watch the progress.

Matt Baerwalde reported that WDFW in Olympia has a proposed using the Salmon Recovery Portal (formerly Habitat Work Schedule) to track the WREC plan implementation. He thinks that is encouraging for adaptive management. There is a list of policy recommendations being developed by the WREC ranging from broad concepts (water conservation generally) to more detailed programs to promote things like water conservation. There is a cross-watershed invitation to participate in discussing water conservation specifically using outreach and education to water consumers. Many conservation districts are on the invite list. Matt supports building on our existing networks and support services, like SRP.

Gretchen commented that a lot proposed projects seem to be water acquisition and conservation-focused. So is SRP the right tool to track those types of projects? There has also been discussion of the Tech Comm reviewing projects/progress too, but she is not sure about where those conversations are going.

Susan added that the WREC has not tackled adaptive management yet. They have proposed forming a "disappearing task force" group that meets maybe once or twice. She will loop Gretchen in as that develops. The Forum has come up in WREC conversations, but it's not an approach that's been used in other WRIs so room for further discussion there.

Mike Crewson asked about the outline for the plan update and if any sections are available for review yet. Gretchen said the team is not quite that far along yet with only a draft table of contents still needing internal review. But the Tech Comm will hear more in a couple of months.

Kirk commented on the joint letter out of Olympia and WDFW representatives from different watersheds. The process for Hirst and the WREC is centered on getting water and keeping water in the streams. A permit-exempt well will take water out and we need water for water. The best way to offset an actual water withdrawal is to replace that with actual water. There is a lot of variability with managed aquifer recharge, habitat, and timing projects. The consistency and variability will be significant, but there is a known amount of water being withdrawn annually. The intent of the legislation is to achieve actual offsets not potential offsets. Habitat projects are good for net ecological benefit and purchasing water is difficult. It can't be purchased if it isn't available. But that is the first and foremost priority for the WREC process. The habitat projects can try to offset what we are unable to achieve with water acquisitions.

Denise shared that Seattle City Light and partners were successful in planting 15,000 trees on Stausel Creek property with support from a climate adaptation grant. The property is 154 acres. 51 acres were planted with trees adapted for projected future climate (30-50 years out) sourced from southwestern Washington and California. They will be monitoring on test plots for growth and survivorship. A lot of natural regeneration is occurring. Denise will present monitoring results to the group.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.