

Lower Nicola Watershed Connectivity Remediation Plan: 2021 - 2040

Canadian Wildlife Federation

29-04-2024

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	3
Project Overview	5
Plan Purpose, Approach, and Scope	5
Vision Statement	6
Project Scope	6
Target species	10
Barrier Types	12
Connectivity Status Assessment and Goals	15
Connectivity Status Assessment	15
Goals	16
Barrier Prioritization	17
Horsefly River Watershed Barrier Prioritization Summary	17
Work Planning	20
Annual Progress Report	20
Operational Plan	20
Annual Work Plan	21
References	23
Version History	24
Appendices	25
Project Partners	25
Planning Team	25
Key Actors	26
Supplementary Information	27
Situation Analysis	27
Strategies & Actions	28
Strategy 1: Crossing Remediation	28

Strategy 2: Lateral Barrier Remediation	28
Strategy 3: Dam Remediation	29
Strategy 4: Barrier Prevention	29
Strategy 5: Communication and Education	29
Theories of Change & Objectives	30
Operational Plan	30
Funding Sources	34
Data Download and Methods	35
Modelled Anadromous Salmon Habitat Maps	35
Connectivity Status Assessment Methods	35

Acknowledgements



This plan represents the culmination of a collaborative planning process undertaken in the Lower Nicola River watershed over many months of work with a multi-partner planning team of individuals and groups passionate about the conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems and the species they support. Plan development was funded by the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk, and the RBC Bluewater Project. We were fortunate to benefit from the feedback, guidance, and wisdom of many groups and individuals who volunteered their time throughout this process.

— this publication would not have been possible without the engagement of our partners and the planning team (see Table 1).

The Canadian Wildlife Federation recognizes that the lands and waters that form the basis of this plan are the traditional unceded territory of the Nlaka'pamux/Scw'exmx and Syilx peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn from the stewards of this land and work together to benefit Pacific salmon and Steelhead. A special thank you to the Lower Nicola Indian Band for sharing the traditional Nłe kep'mxcín (Nlaka'pamuxcin) names used in this plan.

We recognize the incredibly rich history of fish and fish habitat conservation and restoration work that has occurred in the Lower Nicola River watershed to date. A special thank you to Richard Bailey for providing background and contextual information on the myriad threats facing anadromous salmonid populations in the Lower Nicola. Thank you to Richard, Paul Mozin, Sarah Ostorforoff, and Tom Willms for identifying lateral barrier sites to assess during the 2021 field season. We are excited to continue partnering with local groups and organizations to build upon existing initiatives and provide a road map to push connectivity remediation forward over the next 10 years and beyond

Project Overview

Plan Purpose, Approach, and Scope

The following Watershed Connectivity Remediation Plan (WCRP) represents the culmination of a one-year collaborative planning effort, including action implementation, for the Lower Nicola River watershed, the overall aim of which is to build collaborative partnerships within the watershed to reduce the threat of aquatic barriers to migratory fish and the livelihoods that they support. This 10-year plan was developed to identify priority strategies that the Lower Nicola River WCRP planning team (see ‘Planning Team’ for a list of team members) proposes to undertake between 2021-2031 to conserve and restore fish passage in the watershed, through lateral and thermal barrier remediation, crossing remediation, and barrier prevention strategies.

WCRPs are long-term, actionable plans that blend local stakeholder and rightsholder knowledge with innovative GIS analyses to gain a shared understanding of where remediation efforts will have the greatest benefit for migratory fish. The planning process is inspired by the Conservation Standards (v.4.0), which is a conservation planning framework that allows planning teams to systematically identify, implement, and monitor strategies to apply the most effective solutions to high priority conservation problems. There is a rich history of fish and fish habitat conservation and restoration work in the Lower Nicola watershed that this WCRP builds upon and aims to compliment over the length of the plan. This includes work undertaken by the Scw’emx Tribal Council and the five member or affiliate nations (see Project Scope), the Nicola Watershed Governance Project, the Nicola Basin Collaborative, and the Risk Assessment Methodology for Salmon (RAMS). The planning team will aim to work with the Nicola Watershed Governance Project and the Nicola Basin Collaborative to promote coordination, decision-making, and implementation related to this plan.

The planning team compiled existing location and assessment data for potential barriers, habitat data, and previously identified priorities in the watershed, and combined this with local and Indigenous knowledge to create a strategic watershed-scale plan to improve connectivity. To expand on this work, the Lower Nicola River WCRP planning team applied the WCRP planning framework to define the “thematic” scope of freshwater connectivity and refine the “geographic” scope to identify the portions of the watershed where connectivity remediation efforts will take place. Additionally, the team selected target fish species, assessed their current connectivity status in the watershed, defined concrete goals for gains in connectivity, and developed a priority list of barriers for further field investigation to achieve those goals. Field

assessments were completed for 28 longitudinal barriers on the preliminary barrier list and 12 lateral barriers that were Identified by the Scw’emc Tribal Council and Richard Bailey during the summer of 2021, followed by a series of WCRP Update Workshops in spring 2021. The aim of these workshops was for the team to receive updates on progress made during the field season, review assessment results and identify priority barriers, revise the connectivity status assessment and goals, and update the Operational Plan for 2022. While the current version of this plan is based on the best-available information at the time of publishing, WCRPs are intended to be “living plans” that are updated regularly as new information becomes available, or if local priorities and contexts change. As such, this document should be interpreted as a current “snap-shot” in time, and future iterations of this WCRP will build upon the results presented in this plan to continuously improve the practice of aquatic barrier remediation for migratory fish in the Lower Nicola River Watershed. For more information on how WCRPs are developed, see Mazany-Wright et al. (2021).

Vision Statement

Healthy, well-connected streams and rivers within the Horsefly River watershed support thriving populations of migratory fish, improving the overall ecosystem health of the watershed. In turn, these fish provide the continued sustenance, cultural, and ceremonial needs of the Northern Secwépemc people, as they have since time immemorial. Both residents and visitors to the watershed work together to mitigate the negative effects of anthropogenic aquatic barriers, improving the resiliency of streams and rivers for the benefit and appreciation of all.

Project Scope

The primary geographic scope of this WCRP is the Lower Nicola River watershed, located in the Thompson drainage basin of the Fraser River system in south-central British Columbia with a drainage area of 376,064 ha (Figure 1). The scope constitutes the Lower Nicola “watershed group” as defined by the British Columbia Freshwater Atlas (FWA), which excludes the Guichon Creek drainage and the Nicola River and Quilchena Creek drainages upstream of Nicola Lake. A consistent spatial framework was necessary to undertake a watershed-selection process at the provincial scale to identify target watershed to improve connectivity for salmonids. The Lower Nicola River watershed was identified by the BC Fish Passage Restoration Initiative as one of four target watersheds for WCRP development (Mazany-Wright et al. 2021b). Culturally and economically important populations of Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are all found in the watershed, which historically supported Indigenous sustenance and trading economies (Table 3; Lower Nicola Indian Band 2015, ESSA 2019, Coldwater Band 2021).

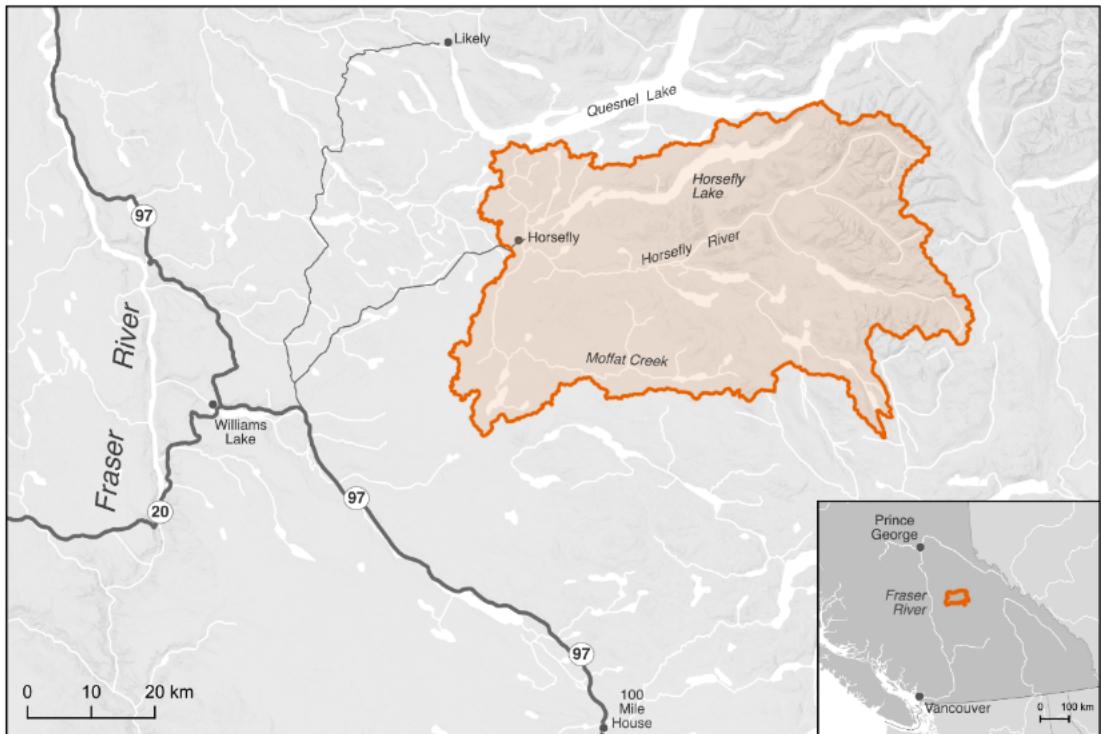


Figure 1: The primary geographic scope — the Horsefly River watershed — located in the Fraser River system.

The primary geographic scope of this WCRP is the Horsefly River watershed, located in the upper Fraser River drainage basin in central British Columbia (Figure 1). The scope constitutes the Horsefly River “watershed group” as defined by the [British Columbia Freshwater Atlas](#) (FWA). A consistent spatial framework was necessary to undertake a watershed selection process at the provincial scale to identify target watersheds to improve connectivity for salmon. The Horsefly River watershed was identified by the BC Fish Passage Restoration Initiative as one of four target watersheds for WCRP development Mazany-Wright et al. (2021b). The Horsefly River watershed has a drainage area of 276,603 ha, spanning from the Quesnel Highlands in the southeast to the confluence with Quesnel Lake in the northwest. Culturally and economically important populations of Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, and Sockeye Salmon are all found in the watershed, which historically supported Indigenous sustenance and trading economies (W. L. F. Nation. (2021), X. F. Nation. (2021)).

The Lower Nicola River watershed comprises parts of the traditional territory of the Nlaka’pamux/Scw’exmx and Syilx peoples, represented by the Scw’exmx Tribal Council, the four member nations (Coldwater Band, Nooaitch Band, Shackan Indian Band, and Upper Nicola Band), and the individual nations of the Lower Nicola Indian Band and the Cook’s Ferry Band. The Nlaka’pamux/Scw’exmx and Syilx peoples steward the land and the waters of the Lower Nicola River watershed. The planning team will pursue early, meaningful, and continued engagement with First Nations communities involved in work and projects related to this plan. It will be necessary to receive permission from the communities for any work to occur on their territory.

The geographic scope of this WCRP was further refined by identifying “potentially accessible” stream segments, which are defined as streams that target species should be able to access in the absence of anthropogenic barriers (Figure 2). Potentially accessible stream segments were spatially delineated using fish species observation and distribution data, as well as data on “exclusionary points”, which are waterfalls greater than 5 m in height, gradient barriers based on species-specific swimming abilities, and “watershed exclusion areas”, which are portions of the watershed where barrier remediation efforts should not occur. These maps were explored by the planning team to incorporate additional local knowledge, ensure accuracy, and finalize the constraints on potentially accessible stream segments. The planning team identified a few tributaries to the mainstem Nicola River as watershed exclusion areas due to intermittent or insufficient flows to support restoring connectivity for the target species, including Hamilton Creek and agricultural irrigation ditches just downstream of Nicola Lake Dam. Additionally, Stumplake Creek and Peter Hope Creek were identified as watershed exclusion areas due to the presence of invasive Yellow Perch (*Perca flavescens*). It is unclear whether existing barriers located in these systems will be effective in preventing the downstream spread of Yellow Perch, but the planning team advised maintaining the barriers for the time being. All stream segments not identified as potentially accessible were removed from the scope for further consideration. The resulting constrained geographic scope formed the foundation for all subsequent analyses and planning steps, including mapping and modelling useable habitat types, quantifying the

current connectivity status, goal setting, and action planning (Mazany-Wright et al. 2021a).



The thematic scope of this WCRP is freshwater connectivity. Connectivity is a critical component of freshwater ecosystems that encompasses a variety of factors related to ecosystem structure and function, such as the ability of aquatic organisms to disperse and/or migrate, the transportation of energy and matter (e.g., nutrient cycling and sediment flows), and temperature regulation (Seliger & Zeiringer 2018). Though each of these factors are important when considering the health of a watershed, for the purposes of this WCRP the term “connectivity” is defined as the degree to which aquatic organisms can disperse and/or migrate freely through freshwater systems. Connectivity can be disrupted by physical barriers to connectivity in the longitudinal (i.e., upstream-downstream) and lateral (i.e., connectivity between the mainstem and adjacent wetlands, floodplains, side channels, and off-channel habitat) planes, including dams, weirs, stream crossings, dykes, linear infrastructure, waterfalls, and debris flows. Freshwater systems can also be disconnected by “physiological” barriers that prevent the free dispersal of species, including thermal (i.e., reaches where stream temperatures are too high) or flow (i.e., reaches where stream flow is insufficient to support the requirements of any life stage) barriers.

The broader Nicola basin has been designated as a temperature- and flow-sensitive watershed in British Columbia, and both factors significantly affect connectivity for fish species in the Lower Nicola (ESSA 2019, MFLNRORD 2018). The changing thermal regime of the Lower Nicola

River watershed is a growing concern, with two scales of thermal disconnectivity occurring within the watershed — watershed-scale changes in thermal regimes and localized barriers preventing access to thermal refugia.

The watershed-scale changes to the thermal regime are linked to several landscape-scale drivers including increases in water withdrawals, changes in land use, deforestation (due to resource extraction and mountain pine beetle infestations), and climate change, which are exacerbated by subsequent changes to channel-forming processes (ESSA 2019). These changes have created annual thermal barriers that prevent access to headwater reaches from the mainstem channels along the valley floor. This has resulted in the adaptation of an early-migrant Chinook Salmon population, which uses the upper portions of Spies Creek and tributaries and the upper reaches of the Coldwater River, where access to the spawning grounds requires passing through the lower sections before the stream temperatures create physiological thermal barriers. These returning adults pass through the lower reaches in May and June as the freshet starts to abate, then hold in deeper pools for two months until they spawn in mid-to-late August (R. Bailey, Nooitach Band, pers. comm.).

Localized thermal disconnectivity in the lateral dimension occurs when rearing and out-migrating juveniles are unable to access side-channel and off-channel thermal refugia and holding pools due to changing channel processes exacerbated by upland management and the development of linear infrastructure including dykes, roads, railways, and trails. These groundwater-serviced reaches located in side channels or off-channel habitats provide thermal refuge for juvenile fish in the watershed, and can also provide critical refuge for returning spawners. When these lateral refugia become disconnected from mainstem channels, lethal stream temperatures can cause juvenile die-offs. Activities that restore and protect connectivity to these lateral refugia, particularly those cooled by groundwater sources, can help mitigate thermal disconnectivity in the watershed.

Mitigation of the landscape-scale drivers of changes to the thermal regimes are outside of the scope of this plan. While vital for the long-term resilience of the watershed, the broad land-use patterns, over-subscription of water withdrawals, and climate change that are causing chronic thermal issues in the watershed require more complex, coordinated, and resource-intensive solutions than this planning process can provide. This plan is intended to focus on the direct remediation and prevention of localized, physical barriers to lateral thermal refugia and longitudinal connectivity to maintain fish passage to spawning, rearing, and refuge habitat. Lateral, and associated thermal, connectivity was identified by the planning team as the primary connectivity concern in the watershed within the defined scope of this plan.

Target species

Target species represent the ecologically and culturally important species for which habitat connectivity is being conserved and/or restored in the watershed. In the Horsefly River watershed, the planning team selected Anadromous Salmon as the target species group, which

comprises Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, and Sockeye Salmon. The selection of these target species was driven primarily by the targets species of the primary fund supporting this planning work.

Anadromous Salmonids

Anadromous salmon are cultural and ecological keystone species that contribute to productive ecosystems by contributing marine-derived nutrients to the watershed and forming an important food source for other species. Salmon species are sacred to the NStQ, having sustained life, trading economies, and culture since time immemorial (W. L. F. Nation. (2021), X. F. Nation. (2021), N. Singi pers. comm.). The stewardship of the resources and fisheries in their traditional territories are imbued in the spirit of the NStQ through a symbiotic relationship based on respect – the NStQ never take more salmon than is needed and there is no waste. The entirety of the salmon is used - smoked and dried to sustain the NStQ through the winter months, the roe harvested for consumption, salmon oil rendered to be stored and traded, and the skin used to store the oil (Wilson, Twohig, and Dahlstrom (1998), X. F. Nation. (2021), N. Singi pers. comm.). The salmon runs begin to return to the Horsefly River watershed in early August, and the NStQ traditionally celebrate and feast at this time. The harvest of the salmon strengthens the cultural connection to the land and the waters, providing an important food source for communities and the opportunity to pass knowledge and ceremony to future generations through fishing and fish processing (W. L. F. Nation. (2021)^c, X. F. Nation. (2021)).

Anadromous salmon populations in the Horsefly River watershed have declined significantly in the past few decades, with the populations of all three focal species being listed as Threatened or Endangered by the Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada (COSEWIC). This has been exacerbated by the Big Bar landslide on the Fraser River in 2019, leading the four NStQ communities to voluntarily close the salmon fishery from 2019-2022. The stewardship of their waters continues through the work of the NStQ member communities and the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council. See Appendix A for maps of modelled anadromous salmon habitat in the Horsefly River Watershed.

Chinook Salmon | Kekèsu | *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

Chinook Salmon are the first to return each year, usually in early August DFO (1991), and have the most limited distribution within the watershed. Known spawning occurs in parts of the Horsefly River mainstem above the confluence with the Little Horsefly River and throughout McKinley Creek as far as Elbow Lake (DFO (1991), S. Hocquard, pers. comm.). Important rearing systems include Patenaude Creek, Kroener Creek, Black Creek, Woodjam Creek, Deerhorn Creek, and Wilmot Creek (S. Hocquard, pers. comm.).

Coho Salmon | Sxeyqs | *Oncorhynchus kisutch*

Coho Salmon are the most widely distributed of the three focal species in the watershed, with the ability to migrate into smaller, upper tributary systems DFO (1991). Spawning occurs in the Little Horsefly River between Gruhs Lake and Horsefly Lake, McKinley Creek below McKinley Lake, Woodjam Creek, Patenaude Creek, Tisdall Creek, and Black Creek. Rearing fry and juveniles have been observed in the Little Horsefly River, Patenaude Creek, and McKinley Creek up to Bosk Lake (DFO (1991), S. Hocquard pers. comm.).

Sockeye Salmon | Sqlelten7ùwi | *Oncorhynchus nerka*

Sockeye Salmon have historically been the most abundant of the three focal species in the watershed, though the population has seen significant declines in recent years (DFO (1991), S. Hocquard pers. comm.). Sockeye Salmon spawning is known to occur throughout the Horsefly River (up to the impassable falls), in the Little Horsefly River between Gruhs Lake and Horsefly Lake, Moffat Creek (up to the impassable falls), and McKinley Creek up to Elbow Lake (Pacific-Salmon-Foundation (2020), DFO (1991), S. Hocquard pers. comm.). Additionally, a spawning channel aimed at enhancing the Sockeye Salmon population was constructed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in 1989 DFO (1991). Currently, there are no Sockeye Salmon rearing in the Horsefly River watershed – all emergent fry migrate down to Quesnel Lake.

Barrier Types

The following table highlights which barrier types pose the greatest threat to anadromous salmon in the watershed. The results of this assessment were used to inform the subsequent planning steps, as well as to identify knowledge gaps where there is little spatial data to inform the assessment for a specific barrier type.

Table 1: Connectivity status assessment for (a) linear habitat (spawning and rearing) and (b) overwintering habitat in the Horsefly River watershed. The Available Habitat KEA is evaluated by dividing the length of linear habitat that is currently accessible to target species by the total length of all linear habitat in the watershed. The Available Overwintering Habitat KEA is evaluated as the sum of all areal overwintering habitat that is accessible to target species.

Barrier Types	Extent	Severity	Irreversibility	Overall Threat Rating:
Road-Stream Crossings	Very High	Very High	Medium	Very High
Lateral Barriers	High	Very High	High	High

Barrier Types	Extent	Severity	Irreversibility	Overall Threat Rating:
Small Dams(<3m height)	Medium	Very High	High	Medium
Trail-stream Crossings	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Natural Barriers	Medium	High	Low	Low

Small Dams (<3 m height)

There are 35 mapped small dams on “potentially accessible” stream segments in the watershed, blocking a total of 357.4 km (~67.24% of the total habitat) of modelled spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous salmon, resulting in a medium extent. The extent rating of these structures was confirmed by the planning team. There are two known fish-passage structures in the watershed, including on the dam at the outlet of McKinley Lake. The remaining dams likely block passage for anadromous salmon and would require significant resources to remediate. However, due to the limited extent of dams in the watershed, a final pressure rating of Medium was assigned. Four small dams were identified on the priority barrier list (see Appendix B). Three of the dams require further assessment and confirmation of upstream habitat quality, and the dam observed at the outlet of Kwun Lake does not exist.

Road-stream Crossings

Road-stream crossings are the most abundant barrier type in the watershed, with 70 assessed and modelled crossings located on stream segments with modelled habitat. Demographic road crossings (highways, municipal, and paved roads) block 357.4 km of habitat (~67% of the total blocked habitat), with 94% of assessed crossings having been identified as barriers to fish passage. Resource roads block 357.4 km of habitat (~67%), with 94% of assessed crossings having been identified as barriers. The planning team felt that the data was underestimating the severity of road-stream crossing barriers in the watershed, and therefore decided to update the rating from High to Very High. The planning team also felt that an irreversibility rating of Medium was appropriate due to the technical complexity and resources required to remediate road-stream crossings.

Trail-stream crossings

There is very little spatial data available on trail-stream crossings in the watershed, so the planning team was unable to quantify the true Extent and Severity of this barrier type. However, the planning team felt that trail-stream crossings are not prevalent within the watershed and that, where they do exist, they do not significantly impact passage for anadromous salmon. As most crossings will be fords or similar structures, remediation may not be required, or remediation costs associated with these barriers would be quite low. Overall, the planning

team felt that the pressure rating for trail-stream crossings was likely Low; however, the lack of ground-truthed evidence to support this rating was identified as a knowledge gap within this plan.

Lateral Barriers

There are numerous types of lateral barriers that potentially occur in the watershed, including dykes, berms, and linear development (i.e., road and rail lines), all of which can restrict the ability of anadromous salmon to move into floodplains, riparian wetlands, and other off-channel habitats. No comprehensive lateral barrier data exists within the watershed, so pressure ratings were based on qualitative local knowledge. Lateral barriers are not thought to be as prevalent as road- or rail-stream crossings but are likely very severe where they do exist. Significant lateral barriers are known to occur along the mainstem of the Horsefly River, which disconnect the mainstem river from historic floodplain and off-channel habitat. Overall, the planning team decided that a High pressure rating adequately captured the effect that lateral barriers are having on connectivity in the watershed. Work to begin quantifying and mapping lateral habitat will begin in 2022-23, as described in the Operational Plan under Strategy 2: Lateral barrier remediation.

Natural Barriers

Natural barriers to fish passage can include debris flows, log jams, sediment deposits, etc., but natural features that have always restricted fish passage (e.g., waterfalls) are not considered under this barrier type. Natural barriers are difficult to include in a spatial prioritization framework due to their transient nature. The planning team identified known natural barriers that occur throughout the watershed, such as beaver dams and log jams. Generally, these natural barriers are only severe impediments to fish passage during low-flow years, but reduced baseflows have become more common in recent years. Based on this, the planning team felt that natural barriers will be severe most years where they exist, but are mostly reversible, resulting in an overall pressure rating of Low.

Connectivity Status Assessment and Goals

Connectivity Status Assessment

The planning team devised two Key Ecological Attributes (KEAs) and associated indicators to assess the current connectivity status of the watershed – Accessible Habitat and Accessible Overwintering Habitat (Table 2). KEAs are the key aspects of anadromous salmon ecology that are being targeted by this WCRP. The connectivity status of Anadromous Salmon was used to establish goals to improve habitat connectivity in the watershed and will be the baseline against which progress is tracked over time.

The current connectivity status assessment relies on GIS analyses to map known and modelled barriers to fish passage, identify stream reaches that have potential spawning and rearing habitat, estimate the proportion of habitat that is currently accessible to target species, and prioritize barriers for field assessment that would provide the greatest gains in connectivity. To support a flexible prioritization framework to identify priority barriers in the watershed, two assumptions are made: 1, any modelled (i.e., passability status is unknown) or partial barriers are treated as complete barriers to passage and 2, the habitat modelling is binary, it does not assign any habitat quality values. As such, the current connectivity status will be refined over time as more data on habitat and barriers are collected. For more detail on how the connectivity status assessments were conducted, see Appendix B.

Table 2: Connectivity status assessment for (a) linear habitat (spawning and rearing) and (b) overwintering habitat in the Horsefly River watershed. The Available Habitat KEA is evaluated by dividing the length of linear habitat that is currently accessible to target species by the total length of all linear habitat in the watershed. The Available Overwintering Habitat KEA is evaluated as the sum of all areal overwintering habitat that is accessible to target species.

Target Species	KEA	Indicator	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Andromous Salmon	Available Habitat	% of total linear habitat Current Status:	<80%	81-90%	>90%	74

Comments: Indicator rating definitions are based on the consensus decisions of the planning team, including the decision not to define Fair. The current status is based on the CWF Barrier Prioritization Model output, which is current as of March 2022.

Table 3

Target Species	KEA	Indicator
Andromous Salmon	Available Overwintering Habitat	Total Area (m ²) of overwintering habitat accessible Current Status:

Comments: No baseline data exists on the extent of overwintering habitat in the watershed. A priority action is included in the Operational Plan (strategy 2.3) to develop a habitat layer, and this will be used to inform this connectivity status assessment in the future.

Goals

Table 4: Goals to improve (1) spawning and rearing and (2) overwintering habitat for target species in the Horsefly River watershed by 2024 and 2040. The goals were established through discussions with local partners and represent the resulting desired state of connectivity. These goals are subject to change as more information and data become available, including the plan timeline (e.g., the current connectivity status assessments).

Goal #	Goal
1	By 2040, the percent (%) of total linear habitat accessible to anadromous salmon will increase from 9% to 15%.
2	By 2024, the total area of overwintering habitat accessible to Anadromous Salmon will increase by 100 m ² .

Barrier Prioritization

Horsefly River Watershed Barrier Prioritization Summary

The primary conservation outcome of the WCRP will be the remediation of barriers to connectivity in the Horsefly River watershed. To achieve Goal 1 in this plan, it is necessary to prioritize and identify a suite of barriers that, if remediated, will provide access to a minimum of 115.78 km of spawning or rearing habitat (Table 5):

Table 5: Spawning and rearing habitat connectivity gain requirements to meet WCRP goals in the Horsefly River watershed. The measures of currently accessible and total habitat values are derived from the Intrinsic Potential habitat model described in Appendix B.

Habitat Type	Currently accessible (km)	Total	Current Connectivity Status	Goal	Gain requi
Spawning and Rearing	394.46999999999997	531.51	74%	96%	115.78

The barrier prioritization analysis ranked barriers by the amount of habitat blocked to produce an “intermediate barrier list” comprising more barriers than are needed to achieve the goals. A longer list of barriers is needed due to the inherent assumptions in the connectivity model, habitat model, and gaps in available data. Barriers that have been modelled (i.e., points where streams and road/rail networks intersect) are assumed to be barriers until field verification is undertaken and structures that have been assessed as “potential” barriers (e.g., may be passable at certain flow levels or for certain life history stages) require further investigation before a definitive remediation decision is made. Additionally, the habitat model identifies stream segments that have the potential to support spawning or rearing habitat for target species but does not attempt to quantify habitat quality or suitability (see Appendix B), which will require additional field verification once barrier assessments have completed. As such, the intermediate list of barriers below (Table 7) should be considered as a starting point in the prioritization process and represents structures that are a priority to evaluate further through barrier assessment and habitat confirmations because some structures will likely be passable, others will not be associated with usable habitat, and others may not be feasible to remediate because of logistic considerations. The intermediate barrier list was updated following the barrier assessments and habitat confirmations that were undertaken during the 2021 field season - some barriers were moved forward to the “priority barrier list” (see Table 6) and

others were eliminated from consideration due to one or more of the considerations discussed above (see Table 8). The priority barrier list represents structures that were confirmed to be partial or full barriers to fish passage and that block access to confirmed habitat. Barriers on the priority list were reviewed by planning team members and selected for inclusion for proactive pursuit of remediation. For more details on the barrier prioritization model, please see Mazany-Wright et al. (2021a).

ID	Watercourse name	Road name	Location/coordinates	Barrier type	Barrier owner	Barri
----	------------------	-----------	----------------------	--------------	---------------	-------

ID	Watercourse name	Road name	Location/coordinates	Assessment step completed	Passa
----	------------------	-----------	----------------------	---------------------------	-------

Table 8: List of barriers that were prioritized as part of the first iteration of the priority barrier list (field assessments occurred during the 2021 field season). Some structures were removed from consideration for pursuit of proactive remediation following discussions with the planning team due to these structures not existing, being associated with usable habitat, or deemed not feasible to remediate based on cost and other considerations.

ID	Watercourse	Road name	Location/coordinates	Reason for exclusion	Method of exclusion	Comments
----	-------------	-----------	----------------------	----------------------	---------------------	----------

Table 9

ID	Watercourse	Road name	Location/coordinates	Reason for exclusion	Method of exclusion	Comments
----	-------------	-----------	----------------------	----------------------	---------------------	----------

Out of the 15 on the intermediate list, 16 require further field assessment before selection as a final barrier to pursue for remediation:

There are currently 15 barriers on the priority barrier list, which will be pursued for proactive remediation to achieve the connectivity goals in this plan:

ID	Watercourse name	Road name	Location/coordinates	Type of rehabilitation - cover new

Work Planning

Annual Progress Report

Operational Plan

The operational plan represents a preliminary exercise undertaken by the planning team to identify the potential leads, potential participants, and estimated cost for the implementation of each action in the Horsefly River watershed. The table below summarizes individuals, groups, or organizations that the planning team felt could lead or participate in the implementation of the plan and should be interpreted as the first step in on-going planning and engagement to develop more detailed and sophisticated action plans for each entry in the table. The individuals, groups, and organizations listed under the “Lead(s)” or “Potential Participants” columns are those that provisionally expressed interest in participating in one of those roles or were suggested by the planning team for further engagement (denoted in bold), for those that are not members of the planning team. The leads, participants, and estimated costs in the operational plan are not binding nor an official commitment of resources, but rather provide a roadmap for future coordination and engagement to work towards implementation of the WCRP.

Strategy / Actions

Strategy 1: Crossing Remediation

- 1.1 – Remediate crossings that are acting as barriers
- 1.2 – Lobby that the government enforce their regulations
- 1.3 – Initiate a barrier owner outreach program for locations on the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.4 – Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model
- 1.5 – Knowledge Gap: conduct field assessments on updated preliminary barrier list using the provincial fish p
- 1.6 - Update longitudinal connectivity goal if additional barriers are added to the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.7 – Knowledge Gap: Identify and map crossing ownership for barriers on the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.8 – Knowledge Gap: Compile road maintenance schedules
- 1.9 – Knowledge Gap: Survey trail-stream crossings to confirm low pressure rating values

Strategy / Actions

Strategy 2: Lateral Barrier Remediation

- 2.1 – Remediate dikes / berms / other structures that are acting as barriers
- 2.2 – Initiate a barrier owner outreach program
- 2.3 – Knowledge Gap: Identify and map year-round lateral habitat, as well as overwintering habitat
- 2.4 – Knowledge Gap: Map lateral barriers and barrier ownership
- 2.5 – Knowledge Gap: Develop a framework to assess and prioritize between different lateral barrier remediations

Strategy 3: Dam Remediation

- 3.1 - Remediate Dams
- 3.2 - Install Fish Passage
- 3.3 - Connect with Cattleman's Association to explore a partnership to remediate dams
- 3.4 - Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model
- 3.5 - Knowledge Gap: Assess dams to determine whether they exist and are truly blocking salmon habitat
- 3.6 - Knowledge Gap: Identify and map dam ownership

Strategy 4: Barrier Prevention

- 4.1 – Explore potential partnerships with industrial companies
- 4.2 – Stabilize sediment sources that are explicitly linked to sediment wedges or erosion that are acting as barriers

Strategy 5: Progress Tracking Plan

- 5.1 - Implement the WCRP Progress Tracking Plan
- 5.2 - Develop a communication action to raise awareness and support for this WCRP

Total:

Fundraising total:

Proponent/government contribution total:

Annual Work Plan

References

- DFO. 1991. *Fish Habitat Inventory and Information Program - Stream Summary Information*. DFO.
- Mazany-Wright, N, S M Norris, N W R Lapointe, and B Rebellato. 2021a. “A Freshwater Connectivity Modelling Framework to Support Barrier Prioritization and Remediation in British Columbia.” *Canadian Wildlife Federation*.
- . 2021b. “Fish Passage Restoration Initiative Target Watershed Selection Process: Technical Documentation.” *Canadian Wildlife Federation*.
- Nation., Williams Lake First. 2021. *Secwepemc Land Use Patterns*. <https://www.wlfn.ca/about-wlfn/history/>.
- Nation., Xatśūll First. 2021. “Traditional History.” *XFN*.
- Pacific-Salmon-Foundation. 2020. *Methods for Assessing Status and Trends in Pacific Salmon Conservation Units and Their Freshwater Habitats*. The Pacific Salmon Foundation, Vancouver, British Columbia. PSF.
- Wilson, I. R., K. Twohig, and B. Dahlstrom. 1998. *Archaeological Overview Assessment Northern Secwepemc Traditional Territory*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/forms-publications/aoa_williams_lake_northern_secwepemc_traditional_territory_1998_report.pdf.

Version History

v.1.0 – March 2024

Project Partners

Planning Team

Table 12: Horsefly River watershed WCRP planning team members. Planning team members contributed to the development of this plan by participating in a series of workshops and document and data review. The plan was generated based on the input and feedback of the local groups and organizations listed in this table.

Name	Organization
Betty Rebellato	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Nick Mazany-Wright	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Nicolas Lapointe	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Sarah Sra	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Colin McGregor	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Guy Scharf	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Thomas Gristey	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Simon Norris	Hillcrest Geographics
Brian Englund	Horsefly River Roundtable
Helen Englund	Horsefly River Roundtable
Judy Hillaby	Horsefly River Roundtable
Mike Ramsay	Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Kate Hewitt	Northern Shuswap Tribal Council
Edna Boston	Soda Creek Indian Band
Mike Stinson	Soda Creek Indian Band
John Walker	Williams Lake First Nation
Nishitha Singi	Williams Lake First Nation

Name	Organization
Josh Noseworthy	Global Conservation Solutions

Key Actors

Table 1.

Individual or Organization Name	Role and Primary Interest
Cariboo Mining Association	A mining company that has been op...
Consus Management Ltd.	Local wildlife consultants in the wa...
Dawson Road Maintenance Ltd	A road design and maintenance com...
DWB Consulting Services Ltd.	Local wildlife consultants in the wa...
Freshwater Fisheries Society of British Columbia	This group can provide project assis...
Larry Davis	A biologist and local wildlife consul...
Local ranchers	These individuals can facilitate cons...
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO)	FLNRO can assist with providing loca...
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI)	MOTI may own barriers and can plan t...
Property owners along river and tributaries	These individuals can facilitate cons...
Quesnel River Research Centre	This group can help with field asses...
Steve Hocquard	A local consultant (Steve Hocquard) c...
Tolko Industries Ltd.	A privately owned Canadian forest p...
Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance	This group can be contacted for advi...
West Fraser	A integrated forestry and diversified...

Supplementary Information

Situation Analysis

The following situation model was developed by the WCRP planning team to “map” the project context and brainstorm potential actions for implementation. Green text is used to identify actions that were selected for implementation (see Strategies & Actions), and red text is used to identify actions that the project team has decided to exclude from the current iteration of the plan, as they were either outside of the project scope, or were deemed to be ineffective by the planning team.

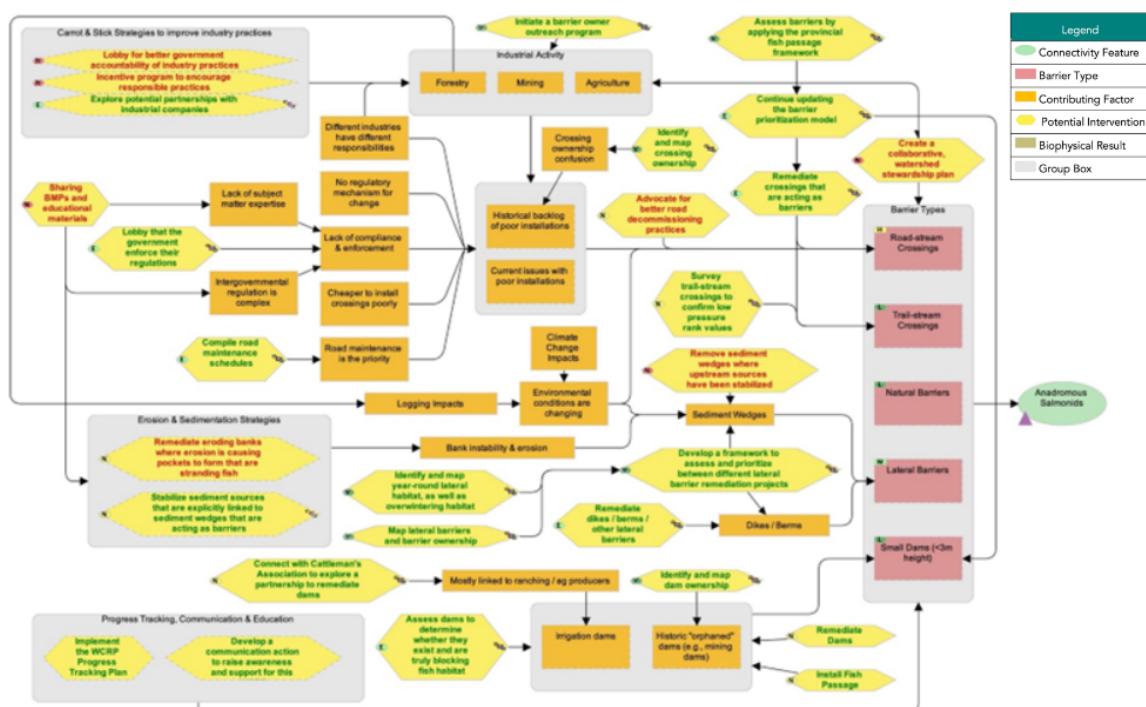


Figure 2: Situation analysis developed by the planning team to identify factors that contribute to fragmentation (orange boxes), biophysical results (brown boxes), and potential strategies/actions to improve connectivity (yellow hexagons) for target species in the Horsefly River watershed.

Strategies & Actions

Effectiveness evaluation of identified conservation strategies and associated actions to improve connectivity for target species in the Horsefly River watershed. The planning team identified five broad strategies to implement through this WCRP, 1) crossing remediation, 2) lateral barrier remediation, 3) dam remediation, 4) barrier prevention, and 5) communication and education. Individual actions were qualitatively evaluated based on the anticipated effect each action will have on realizing on-the-ground gains in connectivity. Effectiveness ratings are based on a combination of “Feasibility and”Impact”, Feasibility is defined as the degree to which the project team can implement the action within realistic constraints (financial, time, ethical, etc.) and Impact is the degree to which the action is likely to contribute to achieving one or more of the goals established in this plan.

Strategy 1: Crossing Remediation

ID	Actions
1.1	Remediate crossings that are acting as barriers
1.2	Lobby that the government enforce their regulations
1.3	Initiate a barrier owner outreach program for locations on the barrier remediation shortlist
1.4	Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model
1.5	Knowledge Gap: conduct field assessments on updated preliminary barrier list using the provincial fish p
1.6	Update longitudinal connectivity goal if additional barriers are added to the barrier remediation shortlist
1.7	Knowledge Gap: Identify and map crossing ownership
1.8	Knowledge Gap: Compile road maintenance schedules
1.9	Knowledge Gap: Survey trail-stream crossings to confirm low pressure rating values

Strategy 2: Lateral Barrier Remediation

ID	Actions
2.1	Remediate dikes / berms / other lateral barriers
2.2	Initiate a barrier owner outreach program
2.3	Knowledge Gap: Identify and map year-round lateral habitat, as well as overwintering habitat
2.4	Knowledge Gap: Map lateral barriers and barrier ownership

ID	Actions
2.5	Knowledge Gap: Develop a framework to assess and prioritize between different lateral barrier remediation options

Strategy 3: Dam Remediation

ID	Actions	Details
3.1	Remediate Dams	
3.2	Install Fish Passage	
3.3	Connect with Cattleman's Association to explore a partnership to remediate dams	This intervention involves
3.4	Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model	The model will be updated to include
3.5	Knowledge Gap: Assess dams to determine whether they exist and are truly blocking fish habitat	Four dams are identified as potential targets for remediation.
3.6	Knowledge Gap: Identify and map dam ownership	

Strategy 4: Barrier Prevention

ID	Actions
4.1	Explore potential partnerships with industrial companies
4.2	Stabilize sediment sources that are explicitly linked to sediment wedges or erosion that are acting as barriers

Strategy 5: Communication and Education

ID	Actions	Details
5.1	Implement the WCRP Progress Tracking Plan	The WCRP Progress Tracking Plan will be developed and implemented.
5.2	Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness and support for this WCRP	This intervention includes developing a communication plan to raise awareness and support for the WCRP.

Theories of Change & Objectives

Theories of Change are explicit assumptions around how the identified actions will achieve gains in connectivity and contribute towards reaching the goals of the plan. To develop Theories of Change, the planning team developed explicit assumptions for each strategy which helped to clarify the rationale used for undertaking actions and provided an opportunity for feedback on invalid assumptions or missing opportunities. The Theories of Change are results oriented and clearly define the expected outcome. The following theory of change models were developed by the WCRP planning team to “map” the causal (“if-then”) progression of assumptions of how the actions within a strategy work together to achieve project goals.

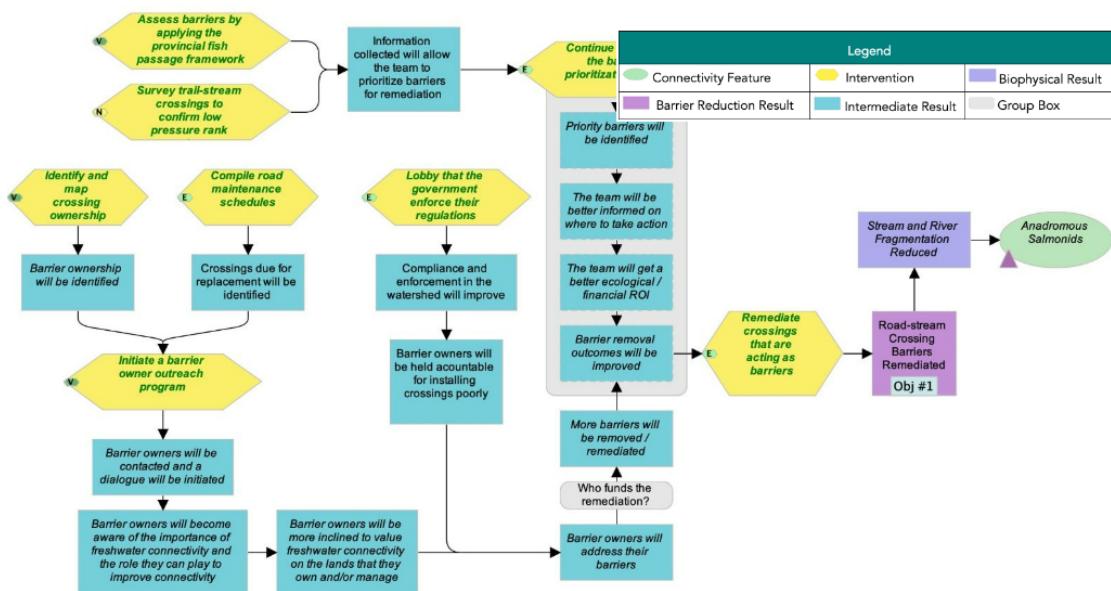


Figure 3: Theory of change developed by the planning team for the actions identified under Strategy 1: Crossing Remediation in the Horsefly River watershed.

Operational Plan

The operational plan represents a preliminary exercise undertaken by the planning team to identify the potential leads, potential participants, and estimated cost for the implementation of each action in the Horsefly River watershed. The table below summarizes individuals, groups, or organizations that the planning team felt could lead or participate in the implementation of the plan and should be interpreted as the first step in on-going planning and engagement to develop more detailed and sophisticated action plans for each entry in the table. The

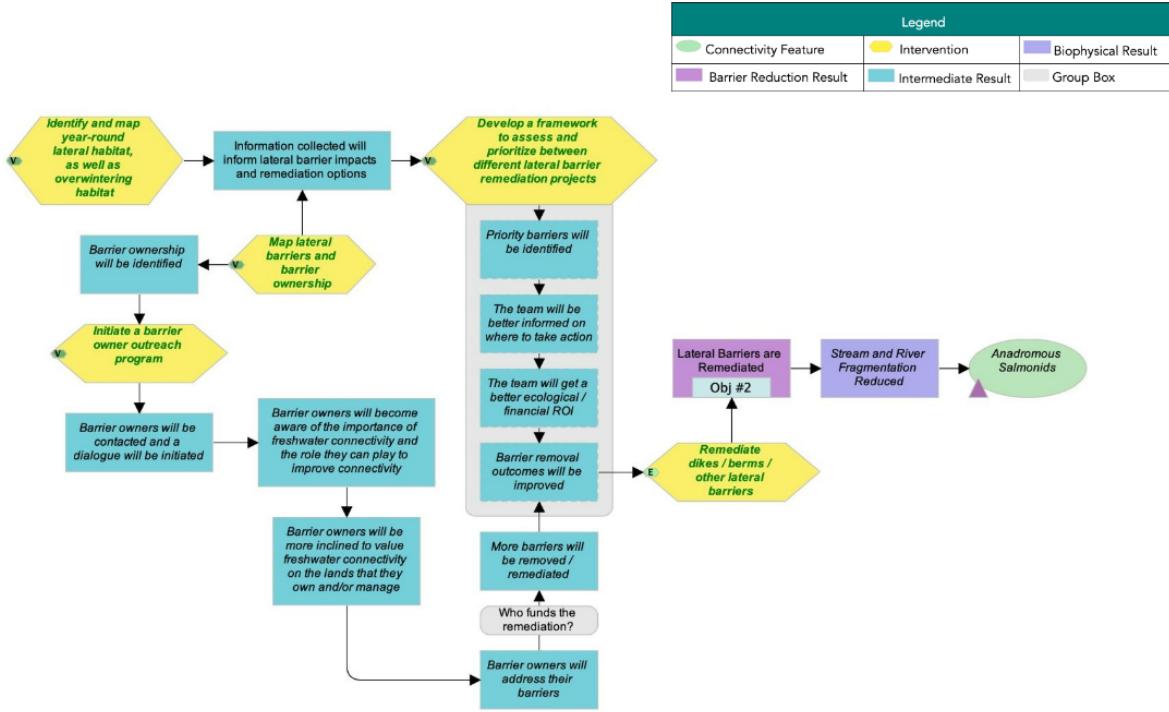


Figure 4: Theory of change developed by the planning team for the actions identified under Strategy 2: Lateral Barrier Remediation in the Horsefly River watershed.

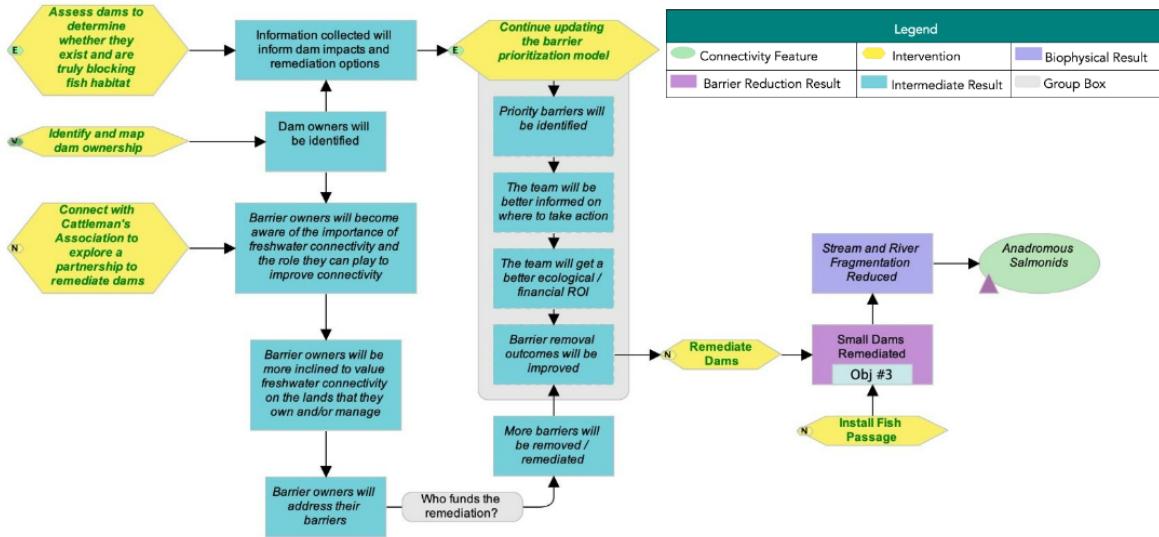


Figure 5: Theory of change developed by the planning team for the actions identified under Strategy 3: Dam Remediation in the Horsefly River watershed.

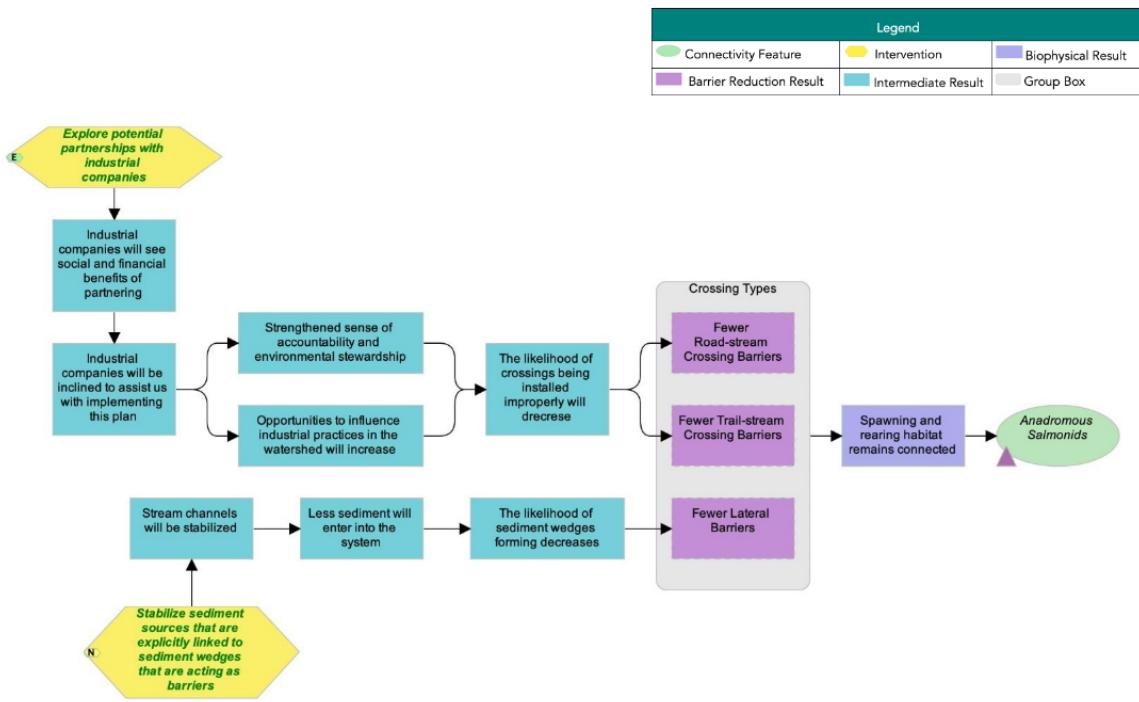


Figure 6: Theory of change developed by the planning team for the actions identified under Strategy 4: Barrier Prevention in the Horsefly River watershed.

individuals, groups, and organizations listed under the “Lead(s)” or “Potential Participants” columns are those that provisionally expressed interest in participating in one of those roles or were suggested by the planning team for further engagement (denoted in bold), for those that are not members of the planning team. The leads, participants, and estimated costs in the operational plan are not binding nor an official commitment of resources, but rather provide a roadmap for future coordination and engagement to work towards implementation of the WCRP.

Strategy / Actions

Strategy 1: Crossing Remediation

- 1.1 – Remediate crossings that are acting as barriers
- 1.2 – Lobby that the government enforce their regulations
- 1.3 – Initiate a barrier owner outreach program for locations on the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.4 – Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model
- 1.5 – Knowledge Gap: conduct field assessments on updated preliminary barrier list using the provincial fish p
- 1.6 - Update longitudinal connectivity goal if additional barriers are added to the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.7 – Knowledge Gap: Identify and map crossing ownership for barriers on the barrier remediation shortlist
- 1.8 – Knowledge Gap: Compile road maintenance schedules
- 1.9 – Knowledge Gap: Survey trail-stream crossings to confirm low pressure rating values

Strategy 2: Lateral Barrier Remediation

- 2.1 – Remediate dikes / berms / other structures that are acting as barriers
- 2.2 – Initiate a barrier owner outreach program
- 2.3 – Knowledge Gap: Identify and map year-round lateral habitat, as well as overwintering habitat
- 2.4 – Knowledge Gap: Map lateral barriers and barrier ownership
- 2.5 – Knowledge Gap: Develop a framework to assess and prioritize between different lateral barrier remediations

Strategy 3: Dam Remediation

- 3.1 - Remediate Dams
- 3.2 - Install Fish Passage
- 3.3 - Connect with Cattleman's Association to explore a partnership to remediate dams
- 3.4 - Knowledge Gap: Continue updating the barrier prioritization model
- 3.5 - Knowledge Gap: Assess dams to determine whether they exist and are truly blocking salmon habitat
- 3.6 - Knowledge Gap: Identify and map dam ownership

Strategy 4: Barrier Prevention

- 4.1 – Explore potential partnerships with industrial companies
- 4.2 – Stabilize sediment sources that are explicitly linked to sediment wedges or erosion that are acting as barriers

Strategy 5: Progress Tracking Plan

- 5.1 - Implement the WCRP Progress Tracking Plan
- 5.2 - Develop a communication action to raise awareness and support for this WCRP

Total:

Strategy / Actions

Fundraising total:

Proponent/government contribution total:

Funding Sources

Funding Source	Spending Restrictions and Conditions
Land Based Investment Strategy	Assessment and remediation
Environmental Enhancement Fund	Fish and wildlife passage improvements
Community Salmon Program	For projects supporting the salmon
Southern Boundary Restoration and Enhancement Fund	Supports 3 activities: (1) de
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation Enhancement and Restoration Grants	Projects that focus on freshwa
Environmental Damages Fund	Direct funds received from f
Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk	Program for non-profits, Inc
Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk	Funding program aimed at a
BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund	Funding for Indigenous entre
Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk	Program for Indigenous grou
Federal Gas Tax Fund - Community Works Fund	Funding available to local go
Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund	For those projects where flo
Community Gaming Grants	Funding for non-profit organi
Sitka Foundation	Funding for registered chari
TULA Foundation	Supports various environme
Vancouver Foundation	Granting agency for commun
BC Conservation Foundation Small Project Fund	Funding available to Non-pr
Real Estate Foundation of BC General Grants	Funding for First Nations, c

Data Download and Methods

Modelled Anadromous Salmon Habitat Maps

High-resolution PDF maps of the Horsefly River watershed and model results can be accessed [here](#). The watershed is divided into multiple maps sheets to allow for detailed examination of modelled spawning and rearing habitat, multiple barrier types, and priority barriers identified through this planning process. The locations of WCRP priority barriers and associated map sheet numbers are shown below. In each individual map sheet, priority barriers are symbolized using the following notation:

Connectivity Status Assessment Methods

The connectivity status assessment for anadromous salmonids in the Horsefly River watershed builds on existing connectivity modelling work undertaken by the BC Fish Passage Technical Working Group, resulting in a flexible, customizable open-source spatial model called “bc-fishpass”. The model spatially locates known and modelled barriers to fish passage, identifies potential spawning and rearing habitat for target species, and estimates the amount of habitat that is currently accessible to target species. The model uses an adapted version of the Intrinsic Potential (IP) fish habitat modelling framework (see Sheer et al. 2009 for an overview of the IP framework). The habitat model uses two geomorphic characteristics of the stream network — channel gradient and mean annual discharge — to identify potential spawning habitat and rearing habitat for each target species. The habitat model does not attempt to definitively map each habitat type nor estimate habitat quality, but rather identifies stream segments that have high potential to support spawning or rearing habitat for each species based on the geomorphic characteristics of the segment. For more details on the connectivity and habitat model structure and parameters, please see Mazany-Wright et al. (2021a). The variables and thresholds used to model potential spawning and rearing habitat for each target species are summarized in Table 15. The quantity of modelled habitat for each species was aggregated for each habitat type and represents a linear measure of potential habitat. To recognize the rearing value provided by features represented by polygons for certain species (e.g., wetlands for Coho Salmon and lakes for Sockeye Salmon) a multiplier of 1.5x the length of the stream segments flowing through the polygons was applied.

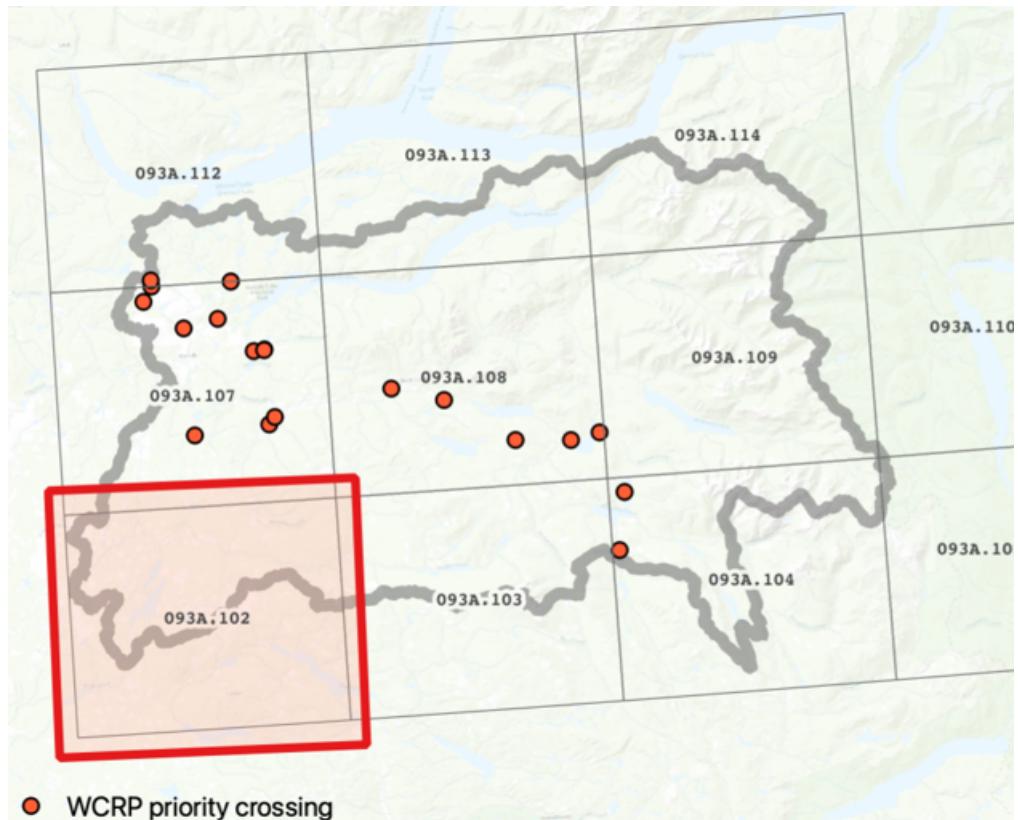


Figure 7: Horsefly River watershed overview map identifying the portions of the watershed covered by each map sheet (grey squares) and the prioritized barriers on the intermediate barrier list (orange points; see Appendix B).

Species	Channel Gradient (%)	Mean annual discharge (m ³ /s)
Chinook Salmon	0-3 (Busch et al. 2011, Cooney and Holzer 2006)	0.46-322.5 (Bjornn and Reiser 1991, Neuman and
Coho Salmon	0-5 (Roberge et al. 2002, Sloat et al. 2017)	0.164-59.15 (Bjornn and Reiser 1991, Sloat et al. 20
Sockeye Salmon	0-2 (Lake 1999, Hoopes 1972)	0.175-65 (Bjornn and Reiser 1991, Woll et al. 20