



Baker River Project License Implementation

Joint Aquatic Resources Group/Terrestrial Resources Implementation Group

Final Meeting Notes

November 1, 2012 ~ 9 am – 1 pm

PSE Burlington w/ Web-X and Conference Line

Team Leader: Jacob Venard, jacob.venard@pse.com

PRESENT

Jacob Venard, Tony Fuchs, Scott Heller, and Haley Edwards (PSE); Brock Applegate, (WDFW); Stan Walsh and Devin Smith (SRSC); Sue Madsen (Skagit Fisheries); Jeremy Gilman (USFS); Michael Kirshenbaum (Skagit Land Trust); Jamie Riche, facilitator (PDSA).

ACTION ITEMS

- Jacob Notify the ARG and TRIG about the proposed changes to the timeline
- Jacob Invite Ira to attend the January joint ARG/TRIG meeting to explain the logistics related to the possible agreement with the Skagit Land Trust

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Welcome; review previous notes, action items
- Process review
- Loon Platform Update, Haley
- Pre-proposal review (3 submitted)
- Next steps

REPORT ON OLD ACTION ITEMS

Jacob reported that PSE's internal accounting question regarding funding of non-acquisition activities under the license has been resolved and Sue reported that a contract is in the works. Devin added that once the underlying question was addressed, the contracting process moved quickly.

LOON PLATFORM UPDATE

Haley took the opportunity of having ARG and TRIG folks together to share her early thoughts about potential changes to the location of the Lake Shannon platform. She walked the group through a review of loon nesting platform maintenance activities over the 2011 and 2012 seasons. The Lake Shannon platform has been damaged both years due to debris getting caught in braces and ropes. She showed the Noisy Creek platform and noted the relative lack of damage. She suggested repairing the Lake Shannon platform using the Noisy Creek design and relocating it to an area with less debris. She then projected a map showing the location of loon observations from all loon surveys since 2007 and suggested a couple locations for the group to consider. The group talked about site selection considerations, including habitat, predators, debris, and lake elevation at key times during the year. Haley will conduct additional research this month about three possible sites to which the group agreed (Brock may join in for a site visit) and will report out at the December 6 TRIG meeting.

PROCESS REVIEW

Jacob referenced the Aquatic Riparian Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Plan and related Procedures. These documents spell out evaluation and ranking criteria in section 6.6.2; highlights include: predicted long-term costs and benefits, location, integration w/ other license articles, weed management, Article 505 expenditure guidelines, habitat characteristics, partnering of funds and potential supplemental funding, monitoring requirements, timing, and the presence of existing requirements for action.

Jacob briefly reviewed the process. He noted that three pre-proposals were received this year and the project proponents are in attendance today to share an overview of their projects and get feedback from ARG and TRIG members to help them think about whether and how to present full proposals.

He also reminded attendees that proponents could still submit full proposals even if they didn't submit a pre-proposal. Today's meeting is intended to serve as an early-vetting feedback session for potential project sponsors, and is not a binding requirement for moving forward.

Timeline: The group talked about the timeline. There is pressure to move this process earlier in order to better align with the SERF Board timeline. After some discussion about the pros and cons of different timelines, the group agreed to the following changes:

- Full, "formal" proposals will be due January 15 (one month earlier than in the past);
- Potential project sponsors will be invited to give presentations to the ARG & TRIG on January 24; and
- A joint meeting of the ARG & TRIG will be scheduled for February 12 for funding decisions.

POTENTIAL ARHWG / SKAGIT LAND TRUST PARTNERSHIP

Sue updated the group about an idea for PSE to contract with the Skagit Land Trust for identifying and proposing land acquisition options for the ARHWG to consider. This would be similar to PSE's contract with RMEF to support the TRIG's land acquisition efforts. It is a slightly different process and there are some logistical challenges that are different than the TRIG/RMEF partnership. Jacob will ask Ira to summarize and explain this for us. Brock noted that the 505 Implementation Document may need to be updated to ensure it is consistent with any process changes moving forward. Assuming the logistics can be worked out, watch for a contract to come through as a proposal for expenditure of 505 funds. Any questions? Ask Jacob, Sue, or Ira.

PRE-PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS

1. Baker Lake Fish Barrier Replacement Project, presented by Jeremy Gilman, USFS

This project would replace three fish barrier culverts on Rd 11 (two barriers) and the Boulder Creek campground (one barrier) in Baker Lake, improving unnamed tributaries to Little Sandy Creek. Access to a large wetland complex is inhibited by one of the barrier culverts; the other two pipes in question are on the same stream and create fragmented habitat connectivity.

Devin suggested more detail regarding fish passage within the culverts. Sue noted that the costs seem low for the project. Jeremy confirmed USFS has absorbed the engineering costs already, which Sue noted is a benefit to the project. Sue and Brock suggested quantifying the habitat that would be improved.

Jacob asked whether these culverts are already required by law. Jeremy noted that USFS is required to maintain these pipes, but Article 505 funding would significantly expedite the timeline and subsequent benefit to riparian habitat. Sue suggested USFS note when this work would otherwise be done in order to strengthen the proposal. Stan will need to talk about this funding requirement question with his colleagues. Jacob noted that much of the land in the basin is USFS-owned, so we are likely to run into this question again, and there may be other signatories who need to research the same question.

2. Riparian Improvement, presented by Sue Madsen, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Michael Kirshenbaum, Skagit Land Trust

The proposed project would involve riparian plantings and invasive plant control on a 45-acre parcel purchased by the Land Trust in 2012. Michael attended today's meeting in order to demonstrate the Land Trust's support for the proposal. He noted that the Land Trust sees the intrinsic value of this parcel as well as its role within a larger restoration effort. Tony noted the focus on cottonwood, pointing out the alignment with other Baker efforts. Brock suggested Sue strengthen the tie with Oregon Spotted Frogs. Devin suggested being clear about the post-blackberry removal plan (replanting).

3. Possible acquisition, presented by Devin Smith, Skagit River System Cooperative

Devin came to share information about a property acquisition proposal for ARHWG to consider. Because this is an acquisition proposal, details are not included in our notes. Have questions? Contact Devin, Stan, or Jacob.

The group talked about a variety of issues related to this potential acquisition. Given the complexities involved, it seems unlikely that this could be ready for a full proposal by January, but Devin, Stan, Jacob, et al. will start the conversations and this may come back as an appraisal/research proposal.

NEXT STEPS

- Formal proposals are due Jan. 15.
- ARG / TRIG meeting Jan. 24 – presentation of full, formal proposals
- ARG / TRIG meeting Feb. 12 – vote on proposals for funding and notification to applicants

MEETING EVALUATION

- Good dialogue
- Quality feedback and collegiality
- Pre-proposal vetting and feedback process valuable
- Wonderful pics of Jacob's daughter, pumpkin carving
- Surprised by light attendance
- Request RSVP in future for accurate meal planning