



Baker River Project License Implementation **Terrestrial Resource Implementation Group**

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PRESENT

Tony Fuchs, Jacob Venard, Scott Heller, Tom Flynn, Mel Walters, Haley Edwards, and Joel Schleppi (PSE); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Doug Couvelier (Upper Skagit); Emily Wirtz (Sauk Suiattle); Shauna Hee (USFS); Brock Applegate (WDFW); Peter McBride by phone (Swinomish); and Jamie Riche, facilitator (PDSA).

DECISIONS TODAY: Does the TRIG approve of using the available funding in the SA 602 TERF fund for the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe's proposal for capturing four (4) elk on the Alder Creek property, attaching GPS collars, and tracking them for up to three years?

2014 TRIG MEETINGS

Quarterly on first Thursdays: Dec. 4, 2014 with conference calls as needed

ACTION ITEMS

- Scott Send Shauna the data from the Swift Creek Noxious Weed survey

PREVIOUS / ONGOING ACTION ITEMS:

- Tony Create laminated maps of the region and AC/BH properties, bring to mtgs (from 6/5)
- Haley Send Theresa info about current raptor nests around the project (from 3/6)
- Stan Coordinate mtg between PSE and the Tribes re: access on acquired lands (still in the works)

SAFETY MOMENT

Mel reminded folks to be careful around downed power lines. Always assume they're hot! The same goes for a tree or anything else leaning against power lines. Assume they're electrified. Call it in; keep others away.

DECISION

Emily updated the group regarding changes to the proposal. She directed folks' attention to bullet 2 in the project description on the use of data, and clarified that the traps would not be used to capture bulls.

After reading Brock's email about the possible use of 602 vs. 514 funds, Doug agreed and wondered if 514 might be the more appropriate fund for this activity. Tony noted that the 514 is specifically for evaluating our management activity on acquired lands, but this proposal is an expansion of a larger basin-wide tribal / agency effort. It will provide useful information, but it is not focused on our acquired lands, making 602 the more appropriate fund. He also pointed out, that the current procedures document doesn't currently include collar data as an activity. The TRIG could choose to update the procedures to include additional ways to measure management activity, but this collar work is still a larger focus than 514 is intended for. He also noted that the cameras approved at the last meeting are a 514 activity since they are focused on the acquired lands.

A quorum was confirmed; no proxies were noted. The decision was approved as presented by consensus of those present. Emily was encouraged to go forth and do good work.

Let the state know about any “Limpers” you see: Emily also noted that Hoof Disease (no longer called Hoof Rot Disease), is showing up in the Nooksack herd. It is similar to, but different from, the strain seen in the St. Helens herd. If you see “limpers,” please let the state know. *Record animal location, gender, and age class and report it to the State.*

BRCC / LICENSING UPDATE

Tom and Jacob gave a brief update on the work of the other resource groups, noting an upcoming Recreation / Law Enforcement meeting 10/21 and celebrating the record-breaking work at the hatchery! PSE’s Paul Wetherbee has moved to a new position, and Irena Netik has stepped into the role of *Director, Hydroelectric Resources*.

Article 505 Update: With Scott out on PTO (Paid Time Off), Jacob reported on the Article 505 process improvement meeting held July 30. Notes went out with details. The meeting agenda focused on how to handle scope / costs changes to projects that have already been approved. Scott is working on updating the process document accordingly and will send that out for review, revision and approval.

Stan asked if there was discussion around how to manage the budget in terms of in-basin vs. out-of-basin projects. He will watch for the edits from Scott to see if this has been addressed, and noted that this issue may merit additional dialogue.

Annual Reporting Schedule: Jacob reported that the process to update the annual reporting schedule is ongoing. At this point, we’re just waiting on CRAG (they need a quorum response; Doug will help). Assuming they approve the change, too, PSE will forward the streamlined schedule to FERC for final approval.

Next BRCC Meeting: The fourth Wednesdays will continue to be reserved for BRCC conference calls as needed. In-person meetings are scheduled semi-annually (spring and fall). The next in-person BRCC meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2014 in Burlington.

BOTANICAL UPDATE

Tony reported for Scott, noting that the Article 508 Noxious Weed HMP (Habitat Management Plan) went out for review and was approved July 7 by consensus. Several weed treatments were completed this summer. 7/1, retreated areas in the UB Compound; 7/15, retreated areas along the Lake Shannon shoreline (found a lot fewer! Making good progress at Lake Shannon.) They also surveyed WB20 (one of seven wetlands with Reed Canary Grass management work underway) to identify treatment areas, and mapped out sites for treatment next year.

On the east parcel of Alder Creek at the wetland with a major blackberry infestation, Scott has flagged the areas for native veg release work. The *blackberries* will be cut next year. Tony reminded the group that this is not a survey year for *Carex flava*. Scott is interested to see if the new pool level requirements will affect *Carex flava*. The new Aquatics Table guidelines will be used in 2016. The Swift Creek erosion project to add Large Woody Debris is scheduled to start 9/30. Scott conducted Noxious Weed surveys of the project area. Shauna asked for those data.

LOON UPDATE

Haley reviewed the update she emailed out, including the survey totals since the last meeting. 6/11: 2 on Baker; 6/23, 3 on Baker, 4 on Lake Shannon; 7/9: 1 on Shannon; 7/25: 3 on Shannon, 1 on Baker. The survey season *has* concluded and she’s working on an updated map showing the sightings. No loons were observed on or near the platforms in 2014.

Platform maintenance is scheduled later this month, *buoy maintenance will be addressed prior to the 2015 nesting season*. Brock wondered if a log boom might work better than buoys. Haley noted that there haven’t

been maintenance issues with buoys lately and they seem to work (people respect them), so she suggests staying with buoys.

OSPREY UPDATE

The Osprey surveys are complete; Mel is still analyzing the data, but shared a preliminary report with the TRIG. Boat surveys were conducted April – August and a helicopter survey was completed in July. He noted about the same number of nests as previous years with a few more young (5 at Lake Shannon, a couple at Upper Baker, 1 near Burpee Hill property).

The maintenance monitoring report is due the end of the year. This will report on the 10 artificial nest structures that were installed in the late 1980's. In the current license, TRIG has approved tree modifications to encourage Osprey into more natural nesting structures. Now, the artificial nesting bowls are used exclusively by Canada geese, and Osprey are using only the trees (yeah!).

Mel's team usually cleans the bowls after nesting season, before the water drops. The water levels dropped early this year for dam safety inspections. Most of the platforms are fine, but #3 has vegetation in it because it has literally never been used (even before the altered trees were available, not in all Mel's 'many years' with PSE). Mel described the work involved in cleaning this particular bowl because of its height (40 ft) and location. It would be particularly difficult and dangerous to clean due to the low water level and the lack of barges on the lake. Barges are not available again until next spring. This work could be done next spring / early summer.

Given that this structure has literally never been used, and given that nesting structures are not a limiting factor in this area, Stan would be comfortable with TRIG considering the elimination of this structure altogether. But he noted that he would defer to others with greater interest in this article if they want to maintain it. Shauna asked to view pictures of the structure and its location. Mel confirmed that there is only vegetation in the bowl, no man-made debris. There is enough vegetation that it may preclude Osprey use as a nesting site (thus resulting in only nine artificial structures available during the 2015 season), but there are no hazards. The group talked about the options at some length, and finished the conversation after lunch.

Due to the cost of moving a barge and the safety risk to people associated with removal, maintenance, and replacement of this particular structure, Shauna noted that the USFS gives its ok for bowl #3 to be out of commission for one season. She and Brock agreed that they do not want the structure decommissioned altogether, and want PSE to maintain 10 artificial structures even though there are more natural structures in the area because of unknowns related to the increased fish production throughout the project. TRIG agreed.

LEGACY WOOD

Haley reported that she will be visiting Alder Creek to look for Legacy Wood opportunities in the harvest area. She will also review Burpee Hill for snag locations and reserve trees in the harvest and forest areas.

BALD EAGLES

Haley reported that three nests were confirmed active during the 7/3 survey. She also pointed out the incidental observations table in the report, noting that surveyors look for eagles when they're out for Osprey, too. The 6/23 observation with a question about a new nest has been confirmed.

ARTICLE 410 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Haley reported that PSE's Kulshan boat ramp work to add an extra lane is in the planning phase and permitting is getting underway. *She has reviewed the project with respect to the LA 410 species, and anticipates no negative effects to the species or their habitats.*

502/514 SONG BIRD MONITORING

Haley shared the report on bird surveys at Burpee Hill Unit #2 conducted 5/27, 6/10, 6/17. Nothing out of the ordinary, but Haley said it was particularly fun to hear the blue grouse. Station 4 showed the greatest

diversity and abundance. Emily asked where it is and Haley said it is the one near the knotweed treatment area. It is also close to where the snags were created.

ARTICLE 504

Tony reminded folks that there is a healthy fund for wetland enhancement work. He invited folks to bring ideas to the TRIG. So far, weed management has been the only activity.

514 ELK MONITORING

Tony projected a map of the west parcel of Alder Creek Unit #5 (SW corner), noting aggressive thinning is planned to remove the small trees and brush. Tony has set up one of the game cameras on a game trail near the access road. He's also going to set up a pellet count plot and planning to monitor canopy cover, including the evergreen component, before the thinning work in order to establish a baseline. If you have a preferred method for pellet count surveys, let Tony know.

Tony is planning to put the other game camera in Burpee Hill Unit #6 at the end of the road that crosses the creek near the planned harvest area. Peter offered to place a camera near the pasture area at Alder Creek. TRIG appreciates this and wants to take advantage of the offer. Tony has spent \$1,200. Of the \$2k authorized at the last TRIG meeting. TRIG encouraged him to buy more cameras up to his budget authority.

DOCUMENT UPDATES

Tony reported that he and his team have begun updating the Burpee Hill Management Program Document as noted in the last meeting. It's not ready for review, yet, but it is coming soon. For the Alder Creek road retirement work, four of the culvert removals were associated with fish-bearing streams, thus requiring an HPA. The HPA has taken more time than expected due to agency changes in the process, which called for an amendment to the Forest Practice Permit. All the planned roadwork has since been completed. Culverts along the road have been removed, water bars installed, and the area re-seeded.

LICENSE REFRESHER / DOCUMENT REVIEW

Tony noted that his meetings to review license-related processes and documents have been as beneficial for him as it has been for the others who have attended. He's happy to keep hosting these reviews. Please let him know if you are interested. All are welcome.

ACQUISITION UPDATE

Joel updated the group about Property G, the parcel re-reviewed at the last TRIG meeting and found to still be a good fit. Pre-acquisition work is underway, and Joel expects the purchase to close in October. Tony is working on a generic Timber Management Plan. As before with previous acquisitions, the TRIG will work together on the property Program Document after the purchase is final.

Joel also updated the group about acquisition work related to an approved Article 505 project. Have questions about any acquisition activities? Call Joel or Tony.

WORK PLANS

Tony walked the group through the work plans on acquired lands. He brought the group's attention to the harvest plan for Burpee Hill Units #4.1 and #6. There were four Goshawk Survey stations, and Tony, Peter and at times Brock have conducted two years of surveys and did not find any Goshawks in that process. There has been no evidence of activity on the nest, either. No Goshawks have been observed in the area at all since Tony saw a single bird near the nest in 2011. And it might not have been an active nest even in 2011 since he only observed one bird. Peter agreed that the process was comprehensive and noted that zero is a clear result. Even though there is no activity, they're planning to maintain a buffer around the nest tree. Peter suggested Tony and Haley look for possible alternate nest trees when they're out. Look for ones with defects lower to the ground; they aren't always looking for big trees. Tony affirmed that he and Haley will watch for and protect those types of trees.

Tony pointed out that forested wetlands and steep slope areas will not be harvested or managed for elk forage. They are also planning to maintain a 50' visual buffer around roads. Tony proposes moving forward with the harvest this fall. TRIG agreed. The net revenue from the harvest will be deposited into the Elk Management O&M fund.

Tony showed photos of summer work on the acquired lands, starting with Alder Creek. Alder Creek Units #15, #12 and #21 (the rehabilitated pasture in the east parcel) are getting a lot of elk use (pellets galore!). Also the harvested area shows signs of good elk forage use. He showed photos of the vegetation growing in the replanted areas, noted the good forage value of the species. He also showed photos of the culvert removal, roadwork, and new gate at Alder Creek. At Burpee Hill, he used a map to show the roads that have been cleared on the plateau (BH 1100 road), allowing workers to drive into the site.

He and Haley walked the group through a color-coded spreadsheet showing progress on the work plans developed for both parcels. The handout shows project scope, status as of August, funding source, estimated cost, actual cost (as of August), and remaining budget.

BUDGET UPDATE

Tony very briefly reviewed the budget spreadsheet, noting that much of the summer work isn't yet showing since this report is accurate through Q2. The next TRIG meeting will include summer work and will reflect a larger change in some of the accounts.

O&M Accounts:

Article 502 Forest: \$11k
Article 503 Elk: almost \$50k
Article 504 Wetlands: \$181k
Article 505 ARHWG: \$323k
Article 508 Weeds: \$88k
Article 511 Legacy Wood: \$67k
Article 514 Effectiveness Monitoring: \$101k

The TERF Fund has about \$8k

Capital Accounts:

Note: There have been acquisition approvals that are not shown here because they have not been completed.

Article 502 Forest: \$163k
Article 503 Elk: \$2.44m
Article 504 Wetlands: \$67k
Article 505 ARHWG: \$2m

Meeting Evaluation – Worked Well

- Great participation – quorum present
- Tacos a nice lunch option
- Still need big laminated maps for these meetings

Draft TRIG Agenda, December 4, 2014

- Welcome, Go Round, Safety, Agenda, Action Items
- License / BRCC Update
- Standard Updates: Botanical, Osprey, Loons, Legacy Wood, 505
- Review TRMP (Annual Review)
- 514 Elk Baseline Update
- Acquisition Update
- 2015 Work Plan, Budget Updates