

Meeting Notes
12 December 2007

Location: Douglas County Land and Trans. Services Bld., 140 19th St., East Wenatchee

Executive session: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

RTT members present: Casey Baldwin, Kate Terrell, Tracy Hillman, Joe Lange, Joe Kelly

1. CCNRD Request for review; CMZ site 2

Casey distributed the Request for Product Review provided by Aaron Bosworth of The Watershed Company. Casey relayed several concerns from an RTT member who was not present at the time of the discussion. After some discussion, the RTT members present agreed that the group should review the CMZ site project, but would need more information from the Applicant. However, a quorum was not present so the decision to do the review was not official. Additionally, with the holidays approaching there would not be time to get additional information from the Applicant and conduct the review by the January meeting. Therefore, the group decided to have Casey request the additional information (more detailed proposal and designs) to bring to the January 9th meeting when the RTT would be able to make an official decision about doing the review.

2. Added agenda item: Lower Entiat Implementation and ISEMP monitoring.

Casey mentioned that there was concern from the Entiat Watershed Planning Unit and the USBR regarding the difficulty in obtaining funding for instream structure projects in the Lower Entiat. Some of that concern related back to a comment in the August RTT notes that might need additional clarification.

The group agreed that the RTT notes from August 2007 did not state that all instream structures in the lower Entiat should be delayed until monitoring results were available. The notes described concern over "additional similar instream structure projects", indicating that at least the rock barbs and possibly the other untested log designs in the Keystone proposal were the concern. The May 2007 version of the RTT Biological Strategy includes "Instream / LWD pool forming structures" as a Tier 1 action type to address the limiting factor "Habitat Diversity". Due to the uncertainty of success for any type of structure in a high-energy system the RTT recommends using a diverse approach that is adaptable based on monitoring results.

The group also discussed the ISEMP in the Entiat and the fact that it is a critical component of the M&E strategy as it's defined in the Recovery Plan. Its scope, rigorous design, and long timeframe make it a valuable assessment tool to guide ongoing and future habitat restoration efforts in the Entiat Watershed, the Upper Columbia Region, and perhaps other areas of the Pacific Northwest. Kate mentioned that efforts were underway for ISEMP to provide interim results at the project level.

The group agreed that would be a very valuable step towards alleviating some of the concern regarding project level effectiveness of the recent habitat actions in the Lower Entiat for both technical reviewers and funding entities.

3. Operating Procedures

The RTT did not have sufficient time to complete this review. Casey asked for final comments to complete the edits at the January meeting.

Regular Session: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

RTT Members in Attendance: Casey Baldwin, John Arterburn, Tracy Hillman, Kate Terrell, Joe Kelly, Joe Lange, Chuck Peven, Bob Rose, Michelle McClure, Cameron Thomas, Russell Langshaw

Others in Attendance: Derek Van Marter, James White, Pamela Nelle, Rick Woodsmith, Jennifer Molesworth, Joe Spinazola, Ed Lyon, Jennifer Bountry, Todd Maguire, Rob McAfee, Steve Kolk, and Mary Jo Sanborn

1. Review and adopt agenda

Casey briefly reviewed the agenda for the day and asked for comments and additions. Ed Lyon asked to add the Big Valley reach assessment Matrix of Pathways and Indicators to the discussion. The Bureau would appreciate feedback from the RTT on the pathways and indicators approach.

2. USBR approach and methods

Jennifer Molesworth explained the approach to assess 80 miles of the mainstem Methow River. Much of the “low-hanging fruit” of habitat projects had been completed, and a lot more habitat complexity projects were being pursued. Prior to moving forward with many of these, the Bureau wanted to conduct an assessment of the overall function of the watershed and the existing natural processes. The current focal areas for reach assessments include Big Valley, Chewuch, Middle Methow, Twisp and the Goat Reach (mainstem Methow above Weeman Bridge).

3. Expectations from the RTT

- Big picture scale-Is it a reasonable approach? Has USBR missed something?
- Future utility for monitoring: are the indicators appropriate, details related to the Matrix of Pathways and Indicators.
- Next steps: are there more check-ins with the RTT? If so what do those look like? (revisit at the end)

4. Methow Subbasin Geomorphic Assessment (USBR, Jennifer Bountry)

Jennifer Bountry explained the methods that the Bureau used to conduct the Methow Subbasin Geomorphic Assessment (formerly known as the Methow Instream Habitat Restoration Project – MIHRP). She reviewed several of the results and products from

the Bureau's effort, and described the reach level ranking process that the Bureau team used to help prioritize the project areas, particularly to differentiate between those that need protection versus those that need efforts to restore naturally functioning processes.

The RTT asked about the method to prioritize project areas. Clearly, Big Valley jumps out as a place to start, but RTT members asked what the plan is for moving through to the next area. Jennifer said they were not sure but that was part of what they were hoping to get from presentations and interactions such as today's meeting or a group such as the Methow Restoration Council (MRC). The RTT also asked how the Bureau defined habitat complexity. Jennifer said that the term was used generally; it was used to describe the reaches of the river that have multiple features of river function.

5. Reach Assessment (USBR, Ed Lyons)

Ed Lyon described the approach and products from the Big Valley Reach assessment. He asked for focused feedback on how the Bureau can connect the matrices of pathways and indicators to VSP parameters.

6. General discussion (focused on 1-3 above)

The group had a significant discussion about the use of EDT as a way to determine project area effectiveness in addressing limiting factors. Bob Rose mentioned the potential utility of the MPI and monitoring for populating the EDT attribute data set.

The RTT suggested the possibility of focusing on the actual effects of floodplain function rather than the general causes. Also, the RTT suggested that it might be helpful to have the actual data included in the MPI tables, rather than just the qualitative ranks. It would be beneficial to assemble a working group to help refine the effort to relate it to local priorities. **However, the task and scope were not clear so the RTT requested a list of specific questions that the RTT might respond to in terms of reviewing the process. The group also suggested a clear, succinct description of the program's goal, what it was trying to achieve and how individual components such as the MPI fit in.**

The group agreed to a general approach whereby Jennifer Molesworth will pull together a local subgroup (comprised of representatives from the Methow Restoration Council, the Bureau and some RTT members) to review the detail of the reach assessment. During that process the working group can identify those areas where it could benefit from specific feedback or guidance from the RTT on how to move forward.

7. Nason overview (Steve and Mary Jo)

Mary Jo briefed the group on the Bureau's process in Nason Creek. She said it was a similar effort to that described in the morning, and that the Wenatchee Habitat

Subcommittee is at similar cross-roads to that described earlier. The Subcommittee would like to use this information to help identify and prioritize projects.

Jennifer Bountry explained the methods that the Bureau used to conduct the Nason Creek Geomorphic Assessment. She reviewed several of the results and products from their effort and handed out packets with tabular and GIS images that articulated the kind of information that was available for the RTT to use in determining potential biological benefit.

8. & 9. Wenatchee Habitat Subcommittee Prioritization Framework (Mary Jo, Cameron Thomas, Chuck Peven) and Nason Discussion (all)

Mary Jo addressed the group regarding the current prioritization framework, and distributed additional materials to the members for the discussion. Cameron added that this prioritization process was a first attempt to identify how to proceed through the watershed. Mary Jo clarified that they are asking the RTT specifically for a biological benefit rating for each of the project areas that the subcommittee can use to conduct the feasibility rating.

Bob Rose expressed some concern with the “top down” approach of the framework and there was discussion related to that concern. The RTT discussed the notion of starting at the upstream sites first, and then working down the watershed. There are obviously several factors that will drive feasibility of any particular project. The challenge is to determine whether the inability to proceed in any stretch of the reach would prohibit further action down the watershed.

Casey pointed out that the spatial scale and detail of information available to the RTT from the USBR was different than what the draft prioritization framework assumed. Mary Jo indicated that the WHSC would need to complete another draft of the prioritization framework prior to the RTT starting their participation in the process.

10. RTT discussion of if/how/when to do the biological benefit portion of the framework (contained within the Wen. Watershed Hab. Subcom. “request for review”)

Casey is going to review the request and consult with more members of the RTT on how it will take up the request from the Wenatchee Watershed Habitat Subcommittee. These decisions will have to be delayed until the January meeting.

Casey concluded by thanking the USBR for their presentation and pointed out the impressive quality and quantity of information they have provided to the Region, which will serve as a solid scientific foundation for implementation of recovery projects.

Casey adjourned at 3:15PM