



Wells, Rocky Reach, and Rock Island HCP Tributary Committees Notes 10 February 2022

Members Present: Chris Fisher (Colville Tribes), Tom Kahler (Douglas PUD), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Kate Terrell (USFWS), Catherine Willard (Chelan PUD), Justin Yeager (NOAA Fisheries), and Tracy Hillman (Committees' Chair).

Members Absent: Jeremy Cram (WDFW).¹

Others Present: Aaron Rosenblum (CF) and Jason Lundgren (CF) joined the meeting for the Goodwin Side Channel Monitoring Results Presentation. Hans Smith (YN), Chris Butler (YN), Dave Duvall (Grant PUD), and Deanne Pavlik-Kunkel (Grant PUD) joined the meeting for the Nason Creek RM 3.4-4.6 Project Presentation.

The Wells, Rocky Reach, and Rock Island Hydroelectric Projects Habitat Conservation Plans Tributary Committees held a conference call on Thursday, 10 February 2022 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.

I. Review and Adopt February Agenda

Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Committees adopted the proposed agenda.

II. Review and Approval of the January Meeting Minutes

The draft 13 January 2022 meeting notes were reviewed and approved by the Tributary Committees.

III. Monthly Update on Ongoing Projects

Tracy Hillman gave an update on funded projects. Most are progressing well or had no salient activity in the past month.

- Barkley Irrigation – Under Pressure Project – The sponsor (Trout Unlimited; TU) reported that the project team continued to work through the Little Barkley removal permitting process. Iviation has been working on the Construction Safety and Phasing Plan and they should have it completed by the second week in February. A few small cleanup details along the BIC/MVID pipeline easement will be addressed this spring. The team continues to work through the individual well and DOT/FAA easements along with cleanup at Meredith Gap.
- Chiwawa Nutrient Enhancement Project – The sponsor (Cascade Fisheries; CF) reported they are preparing the water-quality data and effectiveness monitoring reports.
- Johnson Creek Habitat Restoration Project – The sponsor (TU) reported their consultant continues to work on the final design and they expect to have it completed for agency review in early February.

¹ Jeremy provided his votes on decision items following the meeting.

- Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project – The sponsor (TU) reported there was no new activity on this project.
- Upper Burns and Angle Point Project – This project is complete. The sponsor (Yakama Nation; YN) is preparing the final report.
- Peshastin RM 3.4 Side Channel Project – The sponsor (Chelan County Natural Resources Department; CCNRD) reported they continue to collect, manage, and evaluate groundwater elevation and temperature data to assist with design development. In addition, they submitted the preliminary design package to a variety of stakeholders for review and comment. They also submitted a budget amendment on this project (see discussion below).
- Napeequa Side Channel Connection Project – The sponsor (CF) reported that the Tall Timber Board of Directors is no longer interested in relocating the failing access road. CF will prepare a final report and the project will be terminated.
- Restore Chiwaukum Creek Project – The sponsor (CF) did not provide an update this month.
- Nason Ridge Acquisition – The sponsor (CCNRD) did not provide an update this month.
- Beaver Creek Barrier #40016 Correction Project – The sponsor (CCNRD) reported they continue to work on preliminary designs. They also started coordination with Chelan PUD and the landowners to discuss utility relocations.
- Goodwin Side Channel Assessment Project – This project is complete. The sponsor (CF) is preparing the final report.
- Chumstick Baseflow and Riparian Enhancement Project – The sponsor (Cascadia Conservation District; CCD) did not provide an update this month.
- Nason Kahler Instream Complexity Project – The sponsor (CCNRD) did not provide an update this month.
- Big Meadow Creek Fish Passage Project – The sponsor (CF) reported they continue to work on the design and intend to implement the project in summer 2023. They provided the Rock Island Tributary Committee with the 30% designs and asked the Committee to provide feedback and comments.
- Lower Chiwawa River Floodplain Reconnection and Instream Enhancement Project – The sponsor (CCNRD) reported that Inter-Fluve is developing the hydraulic model to evaluate existing conditions.
- Alder Creek Floodplain Restoration Project – The sponsor (YN) reported there was no new activity on this project.
- Wenatchee Entiat Beaver Powered Restoration Project – The Tributary Committee/Sponsor Agreement has been signed.
- Methow Thermal Refugia Restoration Assessment Project – The sponsor (Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation; MSRF) reported they have developed a data analysis template and R code for analyzing site-specific data.
- Chewuch RM 4.2 Fish Enhancement Project – This project is complete. The sponsor (YN) is preparing the final report.
- Mission Wood Amendment Project – The sponsor (CF) reported they are close to finalizing a work agreement with the US Forest Service and are on track to implement the project in 2022.

- Nason RM 12 Floodplain Reconnection Project – The Tributary Committee/Sponsor Agreement has been signed.
- Methow 3R Floodplain Restoration Feasibility Study Project – The sponsor (MSRF) reported they are holding coordination meetings to determine opportunities and constraints at each of the five identified action areas.

IV. Review of Draft Rock Island and Rocky Reach HCP Tributary Committee Action Plan

Chelan PUD provided the Rock Island and Rocky Reach Tributary Committees the Draft Rock Island and Rocky Reach HCP Tributary Committee Action Plan for 2022 (see Attachment 1). Members reviewed and unanimously approved the plan.

V. Review of Tributary Committees' Policies and Procedures

The Committees continued their review of their Policies and Procedures document. Specifically, they discussed Section 5 (Review Procedures) of the document. Tracy Hillman asked Committee members whether there is a need to revise Section 5 to specifically state what criteria can and cannot be used to evaluate applications. He reminded members that both YN and CCT representatives have been instructed to vote no on each other's applications (YN will abstain on any CCT applications that propose work on the CCT Reservation). These policy-level decisions are outside the criteria outlined in Section 5 of the Policies and Procedures document. Brandon Rogers added that funding decisions should not be based entirely on policy decisions. This prevents the Committees from funding good projects.

Although members understand the policy-level issues between the tribes, some members realize that constraining the criteria for making funding decisions will not help the process. After reviewing the Dispute Resolution Process, it was determined that the dispute process was not set up to address this kind of issue. It was also pointed out that changing funding decisions from unanimous to majority vote would not be acceptable to all members. One option presented during the meeting was to remove the Full Disclosure Section under Tributary Committee in the HCPs (Section 7.3.2 in the Wells HCP). That section indicates that the Committees may approve a project that may benefit a person or entity related to the committee member, or an entity that appointed the committee member. By removing that section, members of the Tributary Committees would not be allowed to submit applications for Plan Species Account Funds. Not all members supported this idea.

Ultimately, all members agreed that the policy-level issues between YN and CCT cannot be resolved within the Tributary Committees, nor can they be resolved within any HCP committee. This is an issue that the tribal governments will need to address outside the HCP process. Chris Fisher stated that he is encouraging CCT leaders to speak with YN leaders. He hopes that tribal leaders will be able to resolve this issue.

The Tributary Committees decided to make no changes to the existing Policies and Procedures document at this time.

VI. Goodwin Side Channel Monitoring Results Presentation

Aaron Rosenblum and Jason Lundgren (CF) joined the meeting for the Goodwin Side Channel Monitoring Results Presentation (see Attachment 2). Aaron began by describing the goal and objectives of the study and the location of the study site. The goal of the study was to evaluate the feasibility of habitat restoration within the Goodwin Side Channel, which is located on the Wenatchee River between RM 11.7 and 12.1. This assessment was needed to determine hydrology and extent of groundwater influence in the side channel. Aaron also described the limiting factors and limiting life stages in this

reach of the Wenatchee River. Restoration at this site would address in part limiting factors and life stages.

Aaron briefly described the methods used during the study. They installed five groundwater monitoring wells and one barometer in the project area. Piezometers were placed in each well to measure pressure and temperatures hourly. In addition, during monthly site visits, crews recorded temperatures and water depths in the side channel. They also measure water levels and temperatures within the Wenatchee River adjacent to the side channel. Crews snorkeled the side channel four times in 2021 to determine fish use. Topographic surveys were conducted in 2020. Habitat within the side channel was assessed qualitatively, and dissolved oxygen concentrations were also measured.

Aaron then showed results from their assessment efforts. He noted that the side channel is connected to groundwater and groundwater temperatures are moderated compared to surface water temperatures. He also indicated that the existing side channel is connected to the Wenatchee River when flows in the river reach 8,000 cfs. This means the side channel is connected at the upstream end on average 36 days per year. He noted that the habitat in the side channel is suitable for salmonid rearing, and several salmonids (mostly coho salmon) were observed in the side channel. However, water quality is an issue during late summer as surface temperatures increase and dissolved oxygen levels decrease. He added that riparian vegetation is robust in several areas but is lacking in other areas.

Brandon Rogers noted that because of the groundwater influence, it may be best to not create a permanent connection with the Wenatchee River. Restoration at this site should focus on the downstream connection. Brandon also suggested the addition of riparian vegetation plantings. Chris Fisher agreed with Brandon and noted that a perennial connection may dilute the temperature benefits of groundwater within the side channel. He also pointed out that the energy of the Wenatchee River is focused on river right. Thus, any connection constructed on river left (where the side channel is located) may fill in with sediment.

Members thanked Aaron and Jason for the presentation and recommended the sponsor develop a restoration design. The design should consider the comments from the Committees and take full advantage of the assessment results.

VII. Budget Amendment

Peshastin Creek RM 4.3 Side Channel Project

Last month, representatives from CCNRD gave a presentation to the Rock Island Committee in which they described their 60% restoration designs for the Peshastin Creek RM 4.3 Side Channel Project. They asked for feedback on the updated designs and indicated they would ask the Committee for a budget amendment that would allow them to prepare final (construction-ready) designs. Following the presentation and discussion, the Committee submitted comments in writing to CCNRD on the 60% designs (those comments are identified in the January meeting notes).

In early February, CCNRD submitted their budget amendment on the Peshastin Creek RM 4.3 Side Channel Project. They asked the Rock Island Tributary Committee for an additional \$89,882, which would be used to prepare 90% and construction-ready design packages for the project. The sponsor intends to have the designs completed by the end of 2022. Following extensive discussion during and after the meeting, the Rock Island Tributary Committee, because they were not united on moving forward with the project, decided to not fund the proposed additional design work.

This was a difficult decision. Although the Committee recognizes the importance of reconnecting floodplains and side channels, some members believe this project may actually increase stranding and entrapment of steelhead and spring Chinook salmon because of the seasonality of flows in the side channels. The complete dewatering of the side channels during portions of summer and the potential for water temperatures in the side channels to increase during warmer months when the channels are watered

may reduce fish survival in the channels. There is also a possibility that steelhead will spawn within the side channels at higher flows. If so, their progeny will likely perish when the channels dewater.

Some members believe the sponsor should focus their efforts on increasing structural complexity within the main channel rather than reconnect or construct side channels across the floodplain given the current constraints. However, those members may support reconnecting side channels provided the pools within the side channels do not completely dewater. That is, the pools need to be deep enough to capture groundwater and maintain temperatures and water quality (e.g., adequate dissolved oxygen levels) necessary to sustain juvenile steelhead and Chinook salmon during critical low flow periods.

VIII. General Salmon Habitat Program Application

Peshastin Creek RM 2.5 Project

Last month, the Committees received a General Salmon Habitat Program Application from CF titled, *Peshastin Creek RM 2.5 Project*. In addition, representatives from CF and CDLT gave a presentation on the proposed project. The purpose of the project is to conduct an appraisal of the 20.5-acre floodplain located on lower Peshastin Creek and develop conceptual restoration designs. The total cost of the project is \$132,825.20. The sponsor requested the full amount from HCP Plan Species Account Funds.

After the presentation and review of the application in January, the Committees indicated they needed additional information before they could make a funding decision. The Committees identified several questions and those were shared with the sponsor in January (those questions are identified in the January 2022 meeting notes). On 25 January, CF and CDLT provided responses to the Committees' questions.

Following considerable discussion during and after the meeting, the Committees declined the opportunity to fund the project at this time. The Committees concluded that the 20.5-acre floodplain is not at high risk of being developed. Indeed, the sponsors noted that the landowners are conservation minded and do not want to develop the floodplain. Therefore, the Committees are not interested in funding an appraisal.

Members were divided on whether they would support restoration work on the floodplain at this time. Even if the landowners agree to restoration work without a conservation easement, some members believe the sponsor needs to determine in more detail what restoration potential exists on the floodplain. Once they have this information, they may be more inclined to support the design of restoration work at this site. These members were calling for patience. Other members, however, see value in moving forward with the alternatives and design work because floodplain reconnection is a high-priority action in Peshastin Creek and, in this case, there are willing landowners. Because the Committees are not united on moving forward with this project, the Committees will not fund the proposed alternatives and design work at this time.

IX. Nason Creek Floodplain Enhancement Project Presentation (with the PRCC Habitat Subcommittee)

Chris Butler and Hans Smith with YN gave a presentation to the HCP Tributary Committees and PRCC Habitat Subcommittee titled, *Nason Creek Floodplain Enhancement Project – Realignment of SR 207* (see Attachment 3). Chris began the presentation by describing the location of the proposed project on Nason Creek (between RM 3.4 and 4.6). Chris explained that the State Route (SR) 207 alignment has disconnected the floodplain from Nason Creek in this reach. Given the alignment, there continues to be extensive road damage from erosion. This leads to constant road maintenance and repairs. Looking at the historical GLO (General Land Office) map, Nason Creek meandered extensively through this reach. SR 207 reduced sinuosity, disconnected the floodplain from the stream, and reduced habitat for fish.

Chris identified some of the scientific reports that helped guide their alternative analyses and feasibility study. Previous evaluations conducted by CCNRD identified causeways, bridges, and road relocations as alternatives for restoring floodplain connectivity in this reach. None of these alternatives were

implemented because of cost (~\$33 million), safety, sensitive area impacts, private lands, and complex infrastructure with high O&M (operations and maintenance) costs. In addition, road relocation must account for areas prone to avalanches. YN, working with several partners, determined that road relocation is feasible and identified relocation alternatives. Importantly, realignment would completely remove the two most egregious CED (chronic environmental deficiency) areas along the existing highway, avoid private land impacts, avoid the avalanche areas, minimize infrastructure, and avoid sensitive areas. Chris said relocation of the highway would reconnect and restore about 20 acres of floodplain habitat, including side channels and wetlands. It would also open about 0.4 miles of stream corridor for instream habitat restoration.

Chris described the goals of the road realignment alternatives and feasibility analysis. Those goals include ensuring the highway maintains efficient and safe traffic flow, minimizing impacts of the highway to Nason Creek, decreasing flood impacts to the highway prism, minimizing earthwork and impacts to public lands, and avoiding impacts to private lands. Based on these goals, Chris identified and discussed results from the three alternatives they evaluated. The first is the 35-mph concept, which would cost about \$7.2-7.7 million. The second is the 45-mph concept, which would cost about \$8.1-8.5 million. The final is the 55-mph concept, which would cost about \$10.8-11.5 million. For each concept, Chris showed the alignment of the highway and area of habitat restoration potential. Chris also identified their project partners (e.g., WSDOT, USFS, BPA, Chelan County, etc.) and current and future funding sources.

Chris concluded the presentation by outlining their next steps and timeline. He said they will solicit funding from different entities for design and construction, continue coordination with their partners and others, coordinate with permitting agencies, and develop a request for proposals for permit-level designs to be completed by the end of this year.

Chris Fisher asked how firm are the cost estimates? Chris Butler responded they are likely high estimates. He said they tried to capture the highest potential estimate in their analysis. Justin Yeager asked whether the cost estimates include decommissioning the existing road. Chris said no. Removal of the existing highway prism will be the last task of the project.

The Tributary Committees and Habitat Subcommittee thanked YN for the presentation.

X. Information Updates

The following information updates were provided during the meeting.

1. Approved Payment Requests received in January and February 2022:

Rock Island Plan Species Account:

- \$144.38 to Clifton Larson Allen for Rock Island financial administration in January 2022.
- \$808.39 to Chelan PUD for Rock Island project coordination and administration during the fourth quarter of 2021.

Rocky Reach Plan Species Account:

- \$144.37 to Clifton Larson Allen for Rocky Reach financial administration in January 2022.
- \$747.03 to Chelan PUD for Rocky Reach project coordination and administration during the fourth quarter of 2021.

Wells Species Account:

- \$2,288 to Douglas PUD for Wells project administration in 2021.

- \$643.06 to Chelan PUD for Wells project coordination and administration during the fourth quarter of 2021.
2. Tracy Hillman reported that the PUDs deposited funds into each of the Plan Species Accounts in January 2022. Douglas PUD deposited \$310,501.91 into the Wells Plan Species Account and Chelan PUD deposited \$855,132 into the Rock Island Plan Species Account and \$405,007 into the Rocky Reach Plan Species Account. As of the end of January, the unallocated balances within each account are \$1,976,692 in the Wells Plan Species Account, \$2,960,517 in the Rocky Reach Plan Species Account, and \$4,696,831 in the Rock Island Plan Species Account. The total unallocated balance across all accounts is \$9,634,040.

XI. Next Steps

The next meeting of the Tributary Committees will be on 10 March 2022.

Meeting notes submitted by Tracy Hillman (tracy.hillman@bioanalysts.net).