

Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation – Tributary Committee 2016 Annual Report

Project: Methow Watershed Beaver Reintroduction

Agreement #: 2015-01 W

Report Date: March 31, 2017

Reporting Period: January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016

Work accomplished during the reporting period:

- This year we released 31 beavers to 11 sites in 6 sub-watersheds.
- We downloaded temperature and flow monitoring data twice from 130 data-loggers at 34 stream monitoring stations, capturing more than 970,000 records for stream temperature and stream flow.
- We connected with 5,919 people in 46 programs about water quality, salmon, beavers, and climate change. This included elementary and high school students, adult education, radio programs, and public events.
- We contributed measurably to the specific salmon recovery objective of restoring beaver populations and their damming propensity that increases the value of salmon habitat in a wide variety of ways.
- We shared our experience with other agencies and NGO groups at conferences, in classroom workshops, and an intensive field techniques course (Portland State University Environmental Professional Program). These reached more than 200 participants from several western states and as far away as Maryland.
- We hosted a summer intern from Bowdoin College in Maine to act as a full crew member and gain beaver restoration and salmon recovery knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- The project was featured in the Yale Climate Connections radio program that aired on June 16th. <http://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2016/06/beavers-and-climate-resilience>
- We presented our work as part of a day-long beaver workshop at the River Restoration Northwest Conference in Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA.
- We presented our work at the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Conference in Wenatchee
- The Methow Beaver Project was featured in the Methow Valley Newspaper <http://methowvalleynews.com/2016/01/23/beavers-may-be-part-of-answer-to-climate-change/>
- Provided river ecology and climate change presentations to 37 environmental studies students in 2 days at Whitman College in Walla Walla.
- We hosted a three-day knowledge exchange with the Sky Beaver Project on field data collection methods.
- We completed a film documentary (targeted initially at agency managers) about beaver restoration as a tool for climate adaptation. (Distribution plan currently in process for a winter and spring tour – including the Salmon Conference in April 2017). Expanded outreach to funders and other interested practitioners is planned for summer 2017.
- We hosted a two-day Ecology class for 20 Washington State University students.
- We helped improve the Beaver Restoration Guidebook to version 1.02 as the essential reference for beaver ecology, salmon habitat enhancement, and wetland and stream improvement.
- We collaborated with two graduate students from North Cascades Institute (NCI) for four day-long Beaver Ecology and salmon recovery field classes with Independent Learning Center (ILC) High School students.

- We conducted a field ecology day about beavers, water, salmon, and climate change for a Conservation Leaders class of 17 students from 4 foreign countries and 7 US states
- Engaged 3 college interns and taught students from elementary to grad school about beaver ecology, ecosystem process, Fish-beaver connections, the benefits of this keystone species to aquatic ecosystem health, and climate adaptation. (860 students this period).
- We worked with Okanogan County Public Works to install culvert protection at two sites in Okanogan County to prevent beaver-caused roadway flooding while allowing beavers to remain in good habitat. Our Okanogan County Engineer indicates that the protectors have been successful and is expected to save the county several thousand dollars per year. We are excited to expand application of this concept to other areas, to keep beavers in place, maintaining good wetland habitat.
- We continued to monitor beaver movements with instream readers throughout the Methow Watershed to document their dispersal and movements and potentially discover other places they are benefitting salmon habitat.
- We enjoyed incorporating 49 volunteers that contributed 886 hours of project work. Volunteers cleaned, carried, fed, trapped, educated, and monitored alongside our project staff. They have been another key audience for our education effort and some of the most effective message carriers about water storage and climate change.
- We have reached out to WA Department of Natural Resources to explore opportunities for beaver retention and reestablishment on state owned aquatic lands (SOAL), in the past this work has been primarily focused on USFS lands.

Work planned to be accomplished for the next reporting period:

- Grant completions and delivery of reports to the Tributary Committee.
- A chance to share the film with the Committee

Challenges:

An important change is coming in 2017 with the retirement of our current project manager, Kent Woodruff, and the elevation of our current team member, Torre Stockard, to manager. This transition has already started, and we expect that as Torre takes on more responsibilities, she will reach out to meet with the Regional Technical Team and Tributary Committee members to discuss opportunities for future cooperation on the project.

The timing of this transition corresponds well to the recently completed work efforts and will allow the Project to both evaluate past priorities and practices and strengthen emerging partnerships and techniques. Two of these emerging opportunities spring from the continuing participation as crew members by two masters students who are engaging in post graduate researcher work in collaboration with us from WSU and UW and our expanding collaboration with WDFW and the Colville Tribes to gain specific understanding of salmon habitat benefits realized with beaver.

Photographs:



Little Star School students at the hatchery



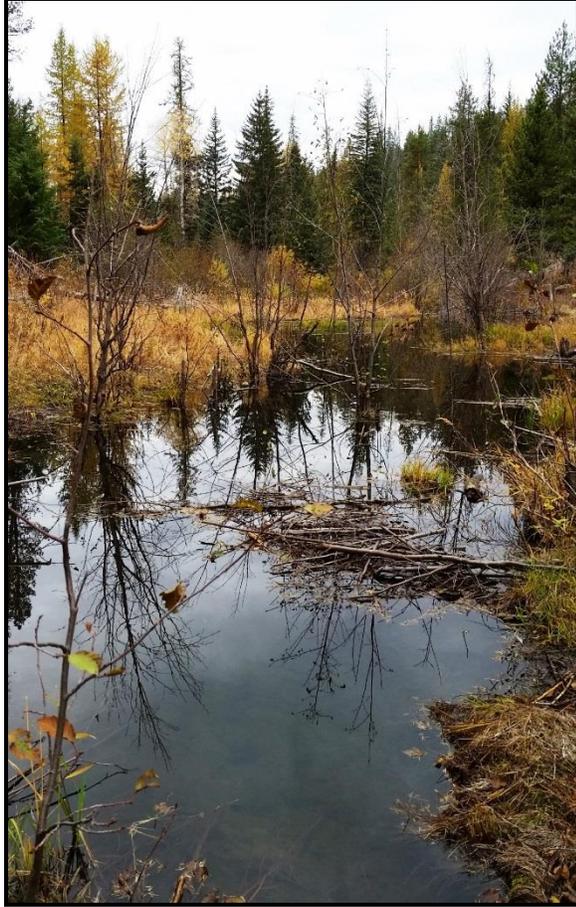
Data collection at Little Bridge Creek



A lower Chewuch establishment



High mountain water storage in Upper Beaver Creek



Upper Beaver Creek Establishment
(topmost of 11 ponds in this colony location)