

**Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program
Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 6th, 2023 @ 1:30-3:30
USBWP Conference Room**

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Bruce Mulkey, Chair

Agenda Modifications

Approval of October Meeting Notes - approved

Tech Team Update

Salada

Presentation

- Redd Distribution in the USBW Meyer/Heller
 - 2023 Redd Distribution within the USBW (Meyer and Heller)
 - Megan Heller: Megan gave a presentation on the distribution chinooks salmon redds counts in 2023. Areas surveyed: Segments of Mainstem Salmon (Valey Creek), Lemhi River (Including Hayden Big Springs), Pahsimeroi river including Patterson/Big Springs, North Fork Salmon, East Fork salmon including Herd Creek, Yankee Fork Salmon including west fork, and Panther creek. Overall there was a decline in the number of Redds in every major population group, river blow outs occurred in drainages in the upper salmon river (from Ross Fork Fire in 2022), and may have made early redds, hard to detect from air when blowouts raise turbidity levels. Of note was that there seemed to be more live fish than seen in previous years which means some redds may have been later than expected. This could be one thing that contributed to the overall decline.
Numbers:
NF Salmon – 10yravg: 27, 2022: 38, 2023: 12
Panther Creek – 10yravg: 23, 2022: 349, 2023: 23
Lemhi River – 10yravg: 134, 2022: 373, 2023: 178 (Big Springs: 2, Hayden: 16)
Pahsimeroi – 10yravg: 106, 2022: 121, 2023: 24 (Patterson: 6)
E.F. Salmon – 10yravg: 153, 2022: 87, 2023: 8 (Herd: 0)
Yankee Fork – 10yravg: 5, 2022: 20, 2023: 3 (W.F.: 1)
Upper Salmon – 10yravg: 339, 2022: 211, 2023: 164 (Valley: 16)

-Alex Stacey: Alex gave a presentation on the distribution of Steelhead, Rainbow, and Bull Trout redd counts in 2023. Areas Survey for Steelhead and Rainbow: Bohannon (Rainbow redds:5 ,Steelhead Redds: 0) Kenney Creek (Rainbow redds:1 ,Steelhead Redds: 0), Little Springs (Rainbow redds:22 ,Steelhead Redds: 0), and Big Springs (Rainbow redds:33 ,Steelhead Redds: 4), Lemhi River (Rainbow redds:5 ,Steelhead Redds: 0). Overall, the trend is a little up compared to last year, but down compared to the 10 year average.

Areas surveyed for Bull Trout redd counts: Bear Valley (redds: 29), Big Timber (redds: 3) , Rocky Creek (redds: 3). Bull trout weir data: Bear Valley (redds: 75), Hayden Creek (redds: 11). Redd walk counts were overall down compared to last year and the 10 year average. Weirs were more successful that in previous years catching Bull Trout on Bear and Hayden.

**Please contact Megan Heller or Stacey Meyer if you need these data. They are working through some QAQC issues, so they have not made it publicly available.

New Business

- Pratt Creek Project Follow Up Stewart'

Pratt creek project went in 2018. Project goals were to put Pratt creek into new channel alignment, install new bridge for fish passage on new channel, install stock water and fencing to keep cattle out of stream, and plant native vegetation along the new channel. Joe showed pictures of before and after the project was completed, went from a meadow without much cover on the channel to a nice looking, willow vegetated stream. During highwater, water jumped from the new channel, to the old channel at the

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vehicle ford. Installed plug and water is back into the new channel. Trout Unlimited will monitor for now, but the risk is low that it will go back into the old channel again.

- Pratt Creek Soil Moisture and Well Data McCutcheon

Ryan presented results from Monitoring the hydrologic impacts of transition from flood to sprinkler irrigation, and the migration of Pratt Creek stream channel. Ryan outlined the geography of the study area and stated that there are 8 diversions, 4 places of use, and 2 return flows. To set the table, Ryan showed some of the hydrologic trends (precipitation, streamflow, and groundwater), from 2015 through 2022. In summary, streamflow, soil moisture, and groundwater levels have largely trended down since 2018, with annual precipitation at it's highest in 17/18. Soil moisture levels show an annual drying trend since conversion from flood to sprinkler in 2018. Soil moisture levels at sites 1 and 2 were at wilting point for most of the year. Seems to be that soil moisture and groundwater levels will decrease when switching from flood to pivot, at least in this case study. Important to note that these data also corresponds with an overall regional drying trend.

Bertram: When do we daylight this project?

Ryan: sees value in keeping monitoring going, it's cheap and easily accessible to keep going and he would like to see trend for a few more water years to make the data more robust.

Jeff Fealko: Groundwater slide question: Project went in Oct 18, so 2017/18 are pre project and show more fluctuations. After project there were less fluctuations but a higher base level of water. Jeff wonders if trend continues can we say it's because of the project?

Ryan: Would like a few more water years' worth of data before concluding that the decrease in groundwater levels in this area is from the project

USBWP Project Updates

Bertram

Daniel asked Jeff to talk about the adaptive management going on at Eagle Valley. Jeff gave a brief history of the project: started in 2019, phase 1 where the icing occurred is at the upstream end of the project. Showed where the ice jam formed, some reasons that it formed, and then went into the adaptive management currently being implemented. A swale was build that goes around the entire project, on the east side of the river. More "off ramps" designed throughout the project reach. Swale and off ramps will act as an avenue for water to go around any potential ice jams and not get backed up. Other actions include better water conveyance through the project so that ice can move through without being slowed down or hung up by anything it could attached to. Removed abrupt change at the upstream end of the project to improve conveyance. Adaptive strategies also including, designing the bottom of the project so that this would be the most likely spot for an ice jam within the project, thus allowing water to use swales and off ramps in the event of a jam. The big swale is graded so that it will not capture the main channel. There is a lot of bank habitat (trees, stumps, etc.) where flow will read 0.0 cfs and may trigger ice to accumulate. A lot of this will be taken out to discourage ice accumulation. Pulled out all fencing from the project area (some ice was caught up on one last January). Cameras and temp loggers (air and water) are deployed throughout the project site (and will be deployed throughout the Lemhi river for monitoring) and are being watched closely. Adaptive management will likely wrap up by mid-January because of delays early on. If it gets colder and ice formation ramps up, there are many contractors nearby who will be quickly mobilized to help as needed.

Matt Belnap: asked for progress report. Jeff: they are almost finished with the big swale.

Daniel Bertram: showed monitoring sites of game cameras and temp loggers along the Lemhi River. This will allow remote monitoring of video feed and temperatures. Please call Daniel anytime of the week or day if you see any ice jams forming.

Daniel then did an update on the Quagga Mussel eradication effort that he was a part of. Daniel gave a background on what quagga mussels are and why they are such a huge issue: they are microscope when they are veligers (free floating quagga babies) and then they will attach to a substrate when they transition to adults. This can be anything -rock, pumps, pipes, anything with a hard surface. The problem is mainly two things: 1) quagga mussels are able

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to filter an immense amount of water for their size and thus reduce nutrient availability for all other aquatic organisms in the food web and 2) because they are hard to remove and pack in tightly/on top of each other, they can become a maintenance nightmare if they get into irrigation or any type of water conveyance mechanism. Idaho State Department of Agriculture has had a rapid response plan in place if they find quagga mussels in Idaho. Plan: 1. Notify impacted entities 2) implement containment measures 3) conduct delimiting surveys 4) explore treatment options. The first thing was to shut down access to the stretch of river affected and to clean all boats that were in the area in the past few months. Set up cleaning stations and had great participation. The stretch of river closed was from Twin Falls to Centennial Park. After deciding on a treatment option, the chemical natrix was ordered from North Carolina where it had to be made because they don't keep 50k gallons of natrix on hand. Traveled to Idaho by truck and treatment began on 10/3 and went on for 10 days, a total of 192 hours of treatment using 46,475 gallons of natrix. Monitored to maintain less than 1ppm which is within allowable drinking water standards according to the EPA. All the copper was out of the system by 10/18. There was major fish and other aquatic species death, but this was an unfortunate outcome of the treatment chosen. Given that the potential for devastating effects from a quagga infestation could be major species diversity loss and millions or billions of dollars in cost, this is acceptable. Daniel then talked a bit about post treatment monitoring. Ended with talking about how it would affect us in the Upper Salmon Basin if it got up here.

Advisory Committee Membership

- Bureau of Land Management Price
-Paige Kimble took over fish bio position for someone who left for a higher position.
-new rule making
- Governor's Office of Species Conservation Edmondson
Graham Freeman- quagga and pcsrf updates have already been done, just want to shout out to everyone who present, they did a great job!
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game Murphy
-Weather is the opposite of last year at this time, which means it's been easier to winterize screens and traps. Grass has been growing really well this year which has cut down on early season depredation and allows them to stay up high longer. Some hunters upset by the lack of snow and grass growth causing elk and deer to be higher up than in previous years at this time. Had amazing steelhead fishing this fall. Non resident tags went on sale on Dec 1st and IDFG did 14,000,000 in revenue. A discussion followed on lines for tags, how tags are administered, how that might change and why it might not change, Overacker brought up the point that this system is not equitable for people who can travel to Idaho to wait in line. Online waiting lists were in the 40,000 range.
- Landowner – East Fork Baker
-nothing
- Landowners – Lemhi V.D. Olson / Mulkey
Mulkey: good grass year, hard to get the cows to come home. Had tough spot where cattle would get caught and stuck called the "hell hole" on his ranch. Used a drone to herd them out.
- Landowner - Pahsimeroi Wallis
Got the bridge installed and it was a good year for producers on the Pahsimeroi. Lack of snow is worrying...
- Lemhi County Commissioner Caywood
-nothing
- Lemhi SWCD Beyeler
-new project manager – Steve Fisher.
- Non-agency fish and wildlife interest Overacker
-New hire at the land trust, Heidi Messner
-raffle coming up, 200 total tickets, \$100 each, win a side by side
- NRCS Rieth

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- we are 78% snow water equivalent and 80% for water year
- new planner coming on in February to help with large workload
- Equip applications came in since the last meeting
- some new funding for ranching practices under the inflation reduction act
- Recreation Stringham'
 - Good steelhead run this fall with good escapement
- UI Cooperative Extension – Salmon Williams
 - handed out schedule for winter school, they have a good line up this year with great presenters. You can join virtually or in person. Replacing carpet in the Brooklyn, so offices will be disrupted for a few weeks next year.
- U.S. Forest Service Gebhardt / Schade
 - new supervisor for the forest just started
 - Chuck Mark, the old supervisor, getting a lifetime award for work on the Frank Church wilderness and wild and scenic rivers
 - did a tour of pine creek with county, corps, IDWR, IDFG: road is basically gone, might need to pull the bridges out, there will be fish passage issues on this creek till it can be cleaned up with new stream crossings

Vacant Positions

Shoshone – Bannock Tribe
Custer County Commissioner
Landowner – Main Salmon

Public Comment

-none

Schedule Next Meeting

-March 6th 1pm USBWP Conference Room

Mulkey

Adjourn