

# Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program

## Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 @ 1:00 p.m.

### IDFG Conference Room

#### Agenda

**Attendees:** Mike Edmondson, Daniel Bertram, Don Olson, Heidi Messner, Harley Wallis, Bruce Mulkey, Curtis Beyeler, Paddy Murphy, Steve Stringham, Rosana Rieth, Linda Price, Kim Caywood, Mark Norm, Chad Stevenson, Megan Heller, Ryan Hilton, Suzanne Nebeker, Greg Schoby, Kat Gillies-Rector, Graham Freeman, Brian Drake, Jeff Fealko

#### Agenda Mods

- Mike Edmondson will need to speak earlier in meeting for round table updates

#### Approval of Dec Meeting Mins

- Approved

#### Tech Team Update - Zach Salada

- Presentation to review projects that have been ranked in tech team and presentations given by project sponsors and guests
- Since Dec AC - 1 project ranking (Elk Meadows), Presentations (stage zero and BLM IRA funding), Project Highlights (Water Transactions,
- Elk Meadows Project Ranking
  - Existing conditions - Lack of in channel habitat, some beaver activity, trail running through meadow
  - Proposal - Reroute the existing trail around the meadow and provide some low tech restoration
- Stage Zero - Presented by the USFS enterprise team
  - Discussed how stage zero restoration works
  - Discussed examples in other states
- BLM restoration landscape presentation
  - \$161 million from IRA
  - Field offices decided where an intense level of restoration would be funded
  - 21 focal areas were selected, 3 focal areas in Idaho. Upper Salmon River Landscape
  - Upper Salmon River Landscape focuses on:
    - Invasives
    - Riparian
    - Fish Habitat
  - \$9.1 Million available for Upper Salmon River Landscape
- Project Highlight Beaver Dam Analogs on IDL Property (Pahsimeroi)
  - Completed in 2018
  - Included:
    - Graded inset floodplains
    - BDA construction
    - Large wood
  - Juvenile rearing is moving farther upstream in 2020
  - Goals:
    - Connect floodplain
    - Increase habitat complexity
    - Improve stream hydraulics
- Rangeland Restoration - BDA Hawley Creek - Tulley Mackey
  - Goals:

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- Increase floodplain connection
- Improve riparian habitat
- Quantify improvements
- Utilized Drone Assisted Stream Habitat Survey
- Also measured stream profiles
  - Post BDA installation showed channel aggradation and created slow water habitat
- Electrofishing
  - Showed species high species densities is treated area of target species
- IDWR - Administrating Min Stream Flow Rights
  - Discussed basic water law, History of Water Resources Board, and Idaho Constitution
  - Explained how water users are compensated through the program

#### **Presentation - Greg Schoby - Chinook Salmon and steelhead forecast**

- The presentation focuses of Chinook forecasting
- 2024 Wild Fish Forecast
  - Upper Salmon MPG Total: 1,517 fish
    - Lemhi - 314 fish
  - Total for Idaho: 7,373
- Why:
  - US v. Oregon - divides the amount of harvest between tribes and states
    - The forecast helps managers set seasons and divide tribal and state harvest
    - Greg gave an example of how Oregon and Washington set fishing season in Columbia to help protect Snake River Basin fish based on these forecast
  - How:
    - Chinook have very predictable life history
    - Life History Run reconstruction
      - 10% come back as Jacks, 80% as 2 year old, 10% as 3 years
        - Knowing how many fish came back as jacks helps forecast future years
        - These relationships have been based off of many years of data
    - Fish numbers are counted at Lower Granite Dam in the fish ladder and window
      - Some fish as handled to get measurements and genetics
    - Wild forecast get broke into four groups
      - Hells Canyon, MF Salmon River, SF Salmon, Upper Salmon River
      - Genetics help figure out where the fish are headed by basin and the red counts help further refine which population they will go to (e.g. Lemhi, Pahsim, etc).
      - Hatchery Forecast and Wild forecast help managers set local fishing dates
    - Forecast performance
      - When numbers are declining: forecast is higher than actual and when numbers rising forecast is less than actual
    - Ocean Conditions (NOAA stoplight) are a big indicator on determine if there will be a good return
    - The Ratio of Jacks to Adults has been changing, which impacts forecast (higher ratio of jacks returning vs older fish)
    - Increase in predators in the Lower Columbia have also impacted predictions

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- Steelhead have much less predictable life history making it hard to predict fish mangers predict returns

#### **USBWP Project Updates - Matt Belnap - Adaptive Management of Lower Lemhi Rehabilitation Project (LLRP)**

- Update on adaptive Management on LLRP
- Series of Events that kicked started the adaptive management
- This year partners monitored the Lemhi to make sure icing wasn't an issue
- Want to discuss why the adaptive management project hasn't yet been completed
  - Alternatives were completed in May 2023 that would alleviate the risk of ice
  - Engineers had 80% done by end of August 2023
  - Permitting started once 80% was done
  - Bid went 9/14/23 and must run in paper for 2 weeks. Went to bid with unfinished design to expedite project completion
  - Contractor pre-bid meeting on 9/22/23 , bid closed 10/5/23, Bid accepted 10/12/23
  - Notice to proceed with construction on 10/25/23. This is the official go-ahead for contractor to start work
  - Five days after notice to proceed, final engineering was done and construction started on 11/8/2023
  - Project was not able to be completed by the first big cold snap in the middle of Jan
    - Generally a project of this size would likely take 2 years to get designed and permitted
- Mark Norm - Did the bid reflect the commitment to the community to get this project done before the next cold season?
  - Matt B. - We didn't make it explicitly known. They did make sure contractors knew that certain milestones needed to be completed to ensure ice would not stop water from flowing through projects
- Suzane N - Three different permits were needed. How can the county do a permit without doing a study?
  - Matt B. & Jeff F. - Lemhi county floodplain permit (i.e. no rise permit) requires study to evaluate the 100 year flood plain and show what changes would happen based on the project. In this case, it was showed that there would be no increased risk to base free flowing stage. FEMA does not currently account for ice in their regulations in the Baker Area. In downstream areas where FEMA requires ice considerations, and an additional 1.5 feet of elevation is required.

#### **Round Table Updates:**

- Mike Edmondson - OSC
  - Update on Columbia River System Operation (CRSO) litigation status update (i.e. Lower Snake River Dams)
  - Final Record of Decisions for action Agencies and signed in 2018 , NOAA issued non jeopardy BiOp
  - Plaintiffs in lawsuit - Environmental Groups, Tribes, State of Oregon, NGOs
  - Idaho joined lawsuit as intervening defender (i.e. same side as Federal Gov)
  - 2021 Region was informed Federal Gov would try to settle lawsuit
    - Idaho was not party to many of the settlement negotiations
    - Facilitated settlement negotiations

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- Outside of the mediated process six sovereigns ( states and tribes) a proposal was developed to Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI)
- Sometime during the negotiation goals shifted from recovery to healthy and harvestable which is generally 2 to 3 times higher than recovery goals
- The CBRI was presented to the fed gov as a proposal
- After the CBRI was proposed, shortly after the fed gov and sovereigns said they were close to a settlement agreement
- They utilized the CBRI and presented it to the courts asking for a 5 - 10 year stay in litigation
- The commitments in the CBRI are largely funded through existing programs
- When BPA signed MOU presented to the court it was done under the NW Power Act
  - Litigation over this signing has to be done within 90 days of signing
- Idaho currently deciding if they are going ask for legal review of the BPA signings of the MOU
- Idaho has signed BPA fish accord which could be impacted by Idaho asking for legal review
- Idaho has received around \$178 million in fish accord funds since 2008
- If Idaho sues BPA over MOU, BPA will terminate Idaho's fish accord
  - While Idaho could potentially not have an accord fund, it is likely habitat work would still continue
- Idaho has to determine if the discovery step is worth the risk of losing accords. The legal review will likely happen regardless of if Idaho joins the legal review or not. The Public Power Council is the entity considering the lawsuit.
- The decisions to join the lawsuit will be made by the governor's office
- There is nothing in the current MOU that would allow the removal of the Lower Snake River Dams
  - Only congress has this authority
- Linda Price:
  - New field manager position is open in Challis
  - New IRA funds need to be expended by end of fiscal year
- Paddy Murphy:
  - Deadwater released 3 weeks early and steelhead has been good over the last month (less than 10 hrs per fish)
  - There is some legislature being considered that would require out of state residents to go to controlled hunts.
- Harley Wallis
  - Good snow in upper Pahsimeroi from May down there isn't great snow
- Caywood
  - There is some icing on the Lemhi River near Tendoy
- Beyeler
  - Looking at redesigning projects based off of risk assessment that was done last year
  - Project manager back to work
- Messner
  - 4 conservation easements in progress
  - 2023 - 21 landowner inquires and 3 more in 2024
- Rieth
  - Salmon Basin - SWE up to 89%
  - Lemhi SWE in the lower 80%

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- Over 40 applications from EQIP and other programs and 30 current contracts
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program- April 5th due date (this is for IRA funds)
- New staff - Josh Chapman
- Rosana's last day in current position
- Stringham
  - Fishing has been great and thanks F&G for getting boat ramps open

#### **Next Meeting Schedule**

- June 5th, 2024 @ 1:30 pm