

**Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program
Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025 @ 1:30-3:30
USBWP Conference Room**

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Bruce Mulkey, Chair

V.D. Olson, Bruce Mulkey, Daniel Bertram, Mike Edmondson, Jessica Buelow, Paddy Murphy, Joe Snapp, Jackie Ingram, Thayne Kauer, Josh Chapman, Shannon Williams, Kelly Schade, Charlie Williams, Caleb Wallis, Steve Stringham, Abbie Gongloff, Bryce Oldemeyer, Gavin Aguilar, James Whittaker, John Loffredo, Rachael Valeria, Stacey Meyer, Amber Young, Megan Heller, Courtne Ghere, Justin Saydell, Heidi Messner, Hunter Distad

Agenda Modifications

Approval of September Meeting Notes

Presentation

Conservation Easements 101 (C Williams)

- Who are we?
 - Locally founded, governed and staffed non-profit organization
 - Serve Lemhi and Custer counties
 - Founded in 2005 by four local ranchers, with the goal of providing an option beyond selling out or subdividing
 - Thirteen conservation easements totaling 13,553 acres and over fifty stream miles
 - Four fee title properties totaling 562 acres
- Our values
 - Conservation NOT preservation
 - Respecting private property rights
 - Protecting our landscapes and lifestyles
 - No solicitations
- What is a conservation easement?
 - A voluntary, legally binding agreement between a landowner and a “qualified conservation organization”
 - Landowners continue to use, manage, live on, sell or pass the land to their heirs
 - Restrictions are tied to the title of the land and run in perpetuity
 - Each conservation easement is tailored to the property
- Common Misconceptions: Conservation easements DO NOT
 - Remove property from the tax rolls
 - Grant public access
 - Have to encompass the entire property
 - Prohibit all future construction/ability to split property
 - Prohibit livestock use
 - Transfer ownership of the property to the land trust
- Types of Conservation Easements
 - Purchased: Funding is secured from an outside source to pay the landowner for the value of the easement
 - Donated: Landowner donates the value of the easement
 - Hybrid: Landowner donates value of the easement and outside funding secured to pay the associated costs
- The Process
 - Landowner inquiry
 - Secure funding
 - Negotiations and due diligence
 - 12 – 18 months from time all funding is secured to closing
- Prohibited Uses
 - Commercial feedlots and dairies
 - Mining

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- Hazardous materials, dumping, junkyards
 - Alteration of natural waterways
- Valuing Conservation Easements
 - Must be appraised by an appraiser certified to appraise conservation easements
 - Land trust cannot pay over appraised value
 - Before value & After value
 - Value of the conservation easement is the difference between before and after values
- Role of the Land Trust
 - Ensure the terms of the easement are being met, in perpetuity
 - Annual stewardship and monitoring visit
- In progress projects
 - Eight active projects
 - One privately funded
 - Three NRCS Ag Land Easement Program funded
 - One hybrid donated
 - Three funded by a statewide NRCS regional conservation partnership program award
 - 4,500+ acres

Overview of RME efforts within the USBWP (Oldemeyer/Young)

- The Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RME) efforts occur all throughout the Upper Salmon River Basin
 - Fish-in/Fish-out monitoring (Population level)
 - Fish-in = Adult Chinook and steelhead that spawn within the basin. These are quantified using spawning ground surveys
 - Fish-out = Juvenile's that leave the system. These are quantified using Rotary Screw traps or PIT Tag arrays
 - Site specific monitoring
 - Improvements in juvenile abundance estimates
 - Address issues with sparse/missing data
 - Questions to address:
 - How many fish use restored habitats?
 - How long do fish occupy habitat?
 - What effect does using restored habitat have on growth, outmigration timing, and survival to Lower Granite Dam
 - Litz Cords
 - Main stem
 - Side Channel Entrances
 - Angle to thalweg
 - Proportion of river going into side channel
 - Approach velocities
 - Sweeping velocities
 - Depth
- Population Status
 - Major declines in salmon, steelhead, and other cold-water species in the Columbia River Basin
- Salmon and steelhead life histories within the basin
 - Spawning Adult
 - Eggs
 - Fry
 - Smolt
- Habitat Conservation Efforts
 - Connectivity
 - Barrier Removal
 - Increased Flows
 - Fish Screens
 - Small Scale Restoration
 - Beaver Dam Analogs
 - Large Wood Treatment

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- Fencing Enclosures
 - Large Scale Restoration
 - Floodplain Rebuild Projects
 - Easements
- Lemhi River
 - One of the most important spawning areas for migratory salmonids
 - 2 of 31 tributaries maintained functional connectivity
 - Three rotary screw traps
 - Lower Lemhi
 - Upper Lemhi
 - Hayden Creek
 - Arrays located all throughout the Lemhi and tributaries
- Empirical Data
 - Snorkel Surveys
 - Electrofishing
- Summary
 - Tons of work going on in the Upper Salmon that is highly collaborative
 - Multiple, complimentary RM&E efforts occurring simultaneously to answer questions of various scales and scopes
 - RME and conservation efforts over the last 20 years have significantly increased our knowledge of these systems and have helped sustain populations in the Upper Salmon Basin

2025 Redd Surveys (Valeria)

- Redd count locations include North Fork, Lemhi, Pahsimeroi, East Fork, Yankee Fork, and Upper Salmon
- Ground Survey Lengths
- North Fork: 15.8 miles
 - Lemhi: 94.9 miles
 - Pahsimeroi: 26 miles
 - East Fork: 20.5 miles
 - West Fork Yankee Fork: 7 miles
 - **Total: 164.2 miles**
- Aerial Survey Lengths
 - Panther: 32 miles
 - Lemhi: 10.3 miles
 - East Fork: 21.1 miles
 - Yankee Fork: 21.9 miles
 - Mainstem Salmon: 79.7
 - **Total: 165 miles**
- Overall decline in number of redds (Lemhi steady, PAH and Upper Salmon saw an increase)
- East Fork blowout made early redd detection difficult
- 2025 redd counts
 - North Fork: 3
 - Panther Creek: 9
 - Lemhi: 70
 - Bear Valley: 0
 - Big Springs: 3
 - Big Timber: 0
 - Canyon: 0
 - Hayden: 16
 - Little Springs: 0
 - Pahsimeroi: 51
 - Patterson: 2
 - East Fork: 11
 - Herd: 0
 - Yankee Fork: 1
 - West Fork Yankee Fork: 0
 - Upper Salmon: 176
 - Valley Creek: 23

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- Pole Creek: 1

USBWP Project Updates

- USBWP TT rankings and presentations (Buelow)
 - September
 - Evaluating genetic introgression from hatchery-origin steelhead (Matthew Cambell – IDFG)
 - Lemhi River Basin Model Updates and Tools (Carter Borden – CCI)
 - Lower Lemhi Rehabilitation Project (Megan Heller – IDFG)
 - Mount Hood Environmental (Jessica Buelow)
 - October
 - Hanging T Phase 1 (Courtne Ghere – IDFG)
 - Hayden Screw Trap (Courtne Ghere – IDFG)
 - Mule Shoe Bridge Replacement (Hunter Distad – OSC)
 - Tower Creek Private Culvert to Bridge (Steve Fisher – LSWCD)
 - IDFG Monitoring Staff Support (Stacey Meyer – IDFG)
 - Low Tech Process Based Restoration (Toni Ruth – TNC)
 - November
 - Diamond D Loon Creek Passage Project (Jessica Buelow – MHE)
 - Lemhi River Ranch Restoration Project (Jessica Buelow – MHE)
 - Lemhi Hayden Reach Phase 3 (Megan Heller – IDFG)
 - L6 Letter of Support (John Loffredo – IDWR)
 - Bar G Farms Pahsimeroi (Cassi Wood – TU)
 - Warm Springs Stream Complexity (Karma Bragg – CSWCD)

Old Business

- Lemhi winter ice monitoring updates (Heller)
 - Lower Lemhi Rehabilitation Project
 - Downstream of Baker
 - 2.4 river miles
 - Long-term, large-scale project
 - 2005 – Present
 - Current Status
 - Two phases of adaptive management complete, working towards third
 - Graduate Research student from University of Idaho studying ice formation in the Lemhi and how this can guide future restoration efforts
 - 2025 – 2026 Monitoring Plan
 - Condition Monitoring
 - Cameras
 - Drone Flights
 - Weekly Updates
 - Design Team
 - Contractors prepared for potential ice management
 - On the ground presence
 - Cameras
 - 24 cameras
 - Paired with staff gauges to monitor stage and air/water temperature recorders
 - Distributed throughout the Lemhi Basin
 - Focus on the LLR project
 - Allow staff to monitor ice development and respond quickly
 - Landowner Coordination
 - Weekly Updates
 - Forecast
 - Site Conditions
 - Relevant Imagery

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New Business

- Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Funding (Gongloff)
 - 33 Applications
 - 16 from Clearwater: \$6,649,969
 - 17 from Upper Salmon: \$10,147,024

Advisory Committee Membership

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| ○ Bureau of Land Management | Guyer / Whitson |
| ○ Not Present | |
| ○ Governor's Office of Species Conservation | Edmondson / Freeman |
| ○ Wolf depredation down | |
| ○ Grizzly depredation up | |
| ○ Possibility of OSC and OEMR merge | |
| ○ Idaho Department of Fish and Game | Murphy |
| ○ Great hunting and fishing weather this fall | |
| ○ L6/L7 consolidation meeting Elks December 17 th at 6PM | |
| ○ Landowner – East Fork / Clayton | Jackie Ingram |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ Landowners – Lemhi | V.D. Olson / Mulkey |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ Lemhi County Commissioner | Caywood |
| ○ Not Present | |
| ○ Lemhi SWCD | Kauer |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ Non-agency fish and wildlife interest | C. Williams |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ NRCS | Chapman |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ Pahsimeroi | C. Wallis |
| ○ No Update | |
| ○ Recreation | Stringham |
| ○ More anglers than last year | |
| ○ Size of fish down from last year | |
| ○ Shoshone-Bannock Tribes | Snapp |
| ○ Working with BOR on concept design for PAH property | |
| ○ UI Cooperative Extension – Salmon | S. Williams |
| ○ Government summit December 18 from 8am – 430pm | |
| ○ U.S. Forest Service | Schade / Aiello |
| ○ Aiello will represent USFS going forward | |

Vacant Positions

Custer County Commissioner
Landowner – Main Salmon

Next Meeting- March 11th at 1:30 PM at the USBWP Conference Room

Adjourn