

Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Team
 October 12, 2016 Meeting Summary

Action	Assignment
1. Continue working on pressures analysis; bring to the Team at a future meeting.	Susan O’Neil, Ed Connor, & Jeff Hard
2. Share ranking of Intrinsic Potential models for barriers in HUC-10s.	Dave Price
3. Develop a strategies and actions table for barriers identified at this meeting and send out.	Bob Wheeler, Claire Chase, & Elizabeth Babcock
4. Determine if NOAA’s technical writer contractor can develop the strategies and actions into a narrative.	Elizabeth Babcock

Welcome, Announcements, & Old Business – Bob Wheeler, facilitator for the Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Team (“Recovery Team” or “Team”), welcomed participants and led introductions (*please see end for a list of participants*). The facilitator reviewed the agenda, meeting purpose, and ground rules.

Report from Topic Leads Meeting – The NMFS team lead and facilitators convened a smaller group of Topic Leads, who are also members of the Recovery Team and knowledgeable about one or more components of the draft Recovery Plan. The Topic Leads identified that, as much as possible, Recovery Team meetings should focus on working sessions to make progress towards deadlines instead of a meeting of updates. The group will likely meet again throughout the Recovery Team’s efforts to keep the overall work on track and strategic.

Recovery Goals Update – Joe Anderson updated the Team about his efforts working with a small technical team to develop recovery goals in conjunction with co-managers. His team spent some time recently writing a draft document that describes an approach to abundance and productivity recovery goals. Moving forward, he plans to work with Ken Currens and Jim Scott to develop a policy process for how to appropriately vet the recovery goals with policy makers.

Pressures Update – Susan O’Neil updated the Team about her efforts working with other Team members to further develop the pressures (stresses and stressors) to be identified and addressed in the draft Recovery Plan. The plan is to first work on barriers (dams and culverts), and then some other pressures will be ready for the Team to address, such as marine survival. The small group has also been working to evaluate how much the data from the Puget Sound Pressures Assessment (PSPA) can be used in the steelhead-specific pressures analysis. They hope to have something to show the Team at the next meeting.

A Team member mentioned that freshwater habitat will be a major part of the draft Recovery Plan, and the current idea is to work on habitat protection and restoration once the pressures have been further articulated.

Announcements

- Since the last Team meeting in June, the settlement agreement between various plaintiffs and NOAA was settled. The settlement agreement includes several components:
 - Commitment to complete a draft Recovery Plan by December 2018 and a final Recovery Plan by December 2019.
 - Commitment to send Team meeting information via the listserv on NOAA’s website.
 - Commitment to allow the plaintiffs to send a representative to Team meetings.

- A letter was sent to Elizabeth Babcock in response to her letter sent on behalf of the Team regarding adequate funding for watersheds to work on steelhead recovery. The response letter summarized the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP)'s inability to put steelhead funding into their budget request since they are focused on Chinook recovery implementation. The letter noted that if PSP feels they can show success in implementing the Chinook recovery plan, they will have a stronger argument to ask for steelhead funding in the future.
 - WDFW did note their \$700,000 budget request for continued steelhead survival research.
- Christy Goldfuss from the White House Council on Environmental Quality will tour Puget Sound next week and will meet with tribes, federal agencies, and the Salmon Recovery Council.
- The status review on steelhead has yet to be finalized but Elizabeth Babcock is working on that among other responsibilities. She is working from the draft shared in March 2016 that will now include more information on freshwater habitat and listing factors, among other information.

Marine Survival & Predation – Susan O'Neil, Joe Anderson, and Neala Kendall are all working with the Steelhead Workgroup of the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project (SSMSP). This technical workgroup is developing draft strategies and actions that they will share with the Team; they anticipate these being in an adaptive management plan format. In addition to being shared with the Team, these draft strategies and actions will likely be shared with the SSMSP coordinating committee, which is where some legal strategies could be developed.

The workgroup will meet on November 10 to share technical research updates; Team members are invited to listen if interested. After that, the whole SSMSP (including the Canadian side) will have a retreat on December 1&2 to further advance their project.

The Team discussed their interaction with the SSMSP workgroup and coordinating committee, recognizing that they will be taking the strategies and actions to incorporate into the draft Recovery Plan. The Team agreed to take the scientific information and then may need a policy-based discussion within the Team on some before incorporating into the Plan.

Skagit Steelhead Recovery Planning – Steve Hinton from the Skagit River System Cooperative shared an update of their local process to develop a recovery chapter. His update included the following of their current work:

- They have a strong basis of current conditions and a lot of their habitat development is done. They have also thought a lot about how to consider habitat capacity.
- They have been working with Joe Anderson and others on the model framework and are awaiting feedback from a journal which will give a good foundation on co-variate relationships.
- They are developing a gaps section of their plan to highlight where there is missing information.
- So far, they have not yet developed recovery goals or actions and they are watching how the Team may develop those and/or guidance for the watersheds.

Barriers Strategies & Actions Development – The Team started their workshop on barriers by hearing from Dave Price, who works closely with the Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB). In advance of this meeting, Dave provided some language about the fish barriers problem statement and how to start addressing it.

In walking through the draft documents provided by Dave, points included:

- “HUC-10” refers to a sub-watershed delineation that is federally recognized and used widely.
- Fish barriers are usually described as 90% of fish to pass 90% of the time at regular flows, but that definition is based on a 6-inch trout. Salmonids can be different, so fish barriers often represent a greater barrier for salmonids.

- WDFW currently has gaps in their data on stream segments, meaning that there may be a lot of unknown barriers depending on ownership.
- A lot of fish barriers owned by timber companies have been removed or repaired since 2000 because of the Road Maintenance & Abandonment Program (RMAP) borne from the Forests & Fish Agreement. Since those have to be completed by 2016 (or 2021 for those with extensions), there will likely be a drop in barrier removal progress after those dates.
- It is challenging for WDFW to track when barriers are removed or repaired because individual landowners are not required to report when they do those activities.
- Small forest landowners are making progress but still have a long way to go in their ownership, especially since they are only obligated to fix their fish passage barriers when they harvest. However, WDFW has had a high success rate working with small forest landowners in the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP). This program is so popular that there is currently a backlog of interested property owners. WDFW prioritizes areas for this program based on the amount of habitat that would be opened (to all fish, not just anadromous fish).
- The culvert injunction required three state agencies to fix their barriers in three years. WDFW will complete their obligation in October 2016, and State Parks will also be complete by the deadline. DNR is almost complete; they have one outstanding barrier that was unclear whether or not it met the injunction criteria.
 - WSDOT is different: they have until 2030 to fix their barriers and they often have really expensive barriers to fix or remove. Right now they are focusing on the easy ones to fix that may help open more habitat.
- The Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) was created in 2014 and since then has seen a lot of progress. They have a few approaches:
 - The coordinated approach is between WDFW and local governments or lead entities to work on projects that would help repair or remove barriers, especially those lower in the watershed.
 - The watershed pathway asks a lead entity to nominate a HUC-10 that if all barriers were fixed, would be the most successful in opening up habitat in that lead entity's boundary.
- WDFW assembled a list of 89 projects on the fish barrier removal list that will be forwarded to the legislature; 79 of which they are asking for direct funding for design and/or construction.
- Some limitations WDFW has found over time are the capacity of watershed group and landowner willingness.

Dave recommended a watershed-based approach for steelhead-specific barrier strategies and actions. He also recommended starting with the Fish Barrier Removal Board, and if/when talking with legislators about funding, show that cities and counties have a certain match obligation.

The Team then brainstormed strategies and actions specific to barrier repair or removal, which included:

- Maintain support for the FBRB and related programs
- Use the Plan to highlight the gap in fish passage removal programs
 - Ask for additional resources to be put towards those programmatic gaps
 - Align industry/business (BNSF) actions to be steelhead-friendly
 - Education and technical assistance at the City/County level
 - Leverage existing programs (Floodplains by Design, FEMA BiOp)
- Funding and Resources
 - Find more funding/resources
 - Diversity of funding/resources
 - Maintain existing funding/resources
- Education, social science/marketing

- When telling the story of fish passage barrier correction, figure out how to do it so people get energized instead of overwhelmed.
- Educate about the need for culvert correction to adapt/be resilient to climate change
- Educate on abandonment of roads
- Program alignment to ensure consistency for prioritizing which culverts to focus on (between state agencies, cities, counties, etc.)
 - Share expertise, improvements in technology, etc. to keep everyone up to date on best practices
 - “Roster of experts” who have been trained/certified in culvert correction that is available to local groups
 - Local watershed groups to provide steelhead-specific information to WDFW and others
- Regulation: prevention of new fish passage barriers
- Increase data and information
 - Incorporate steelhead-specific information to the FBRB’s work (separate program, incorporate information into existing programs, etc.)
 - Map and align DIPs to HUC-10s
 - When inventorying: focus on already prioritized areas.
 - Build for future climate change impacts (storm events, higher/lower flows, etc.)
 - Ask watershed-level salmon recovery groups canvas their jurisdiction annually and report corrected barriers to WDFW.
- Barrier corrections should recognize needs of beavers

The facilitators will take this brainstorm and populate a strategy/action table for the Team’s review before the next meeting. Elizabeth Babcock will also check with NOAA’s technical writer contractor to see if the strategy/action table will be helpful for her to develop a narrative for the draft Recovery Plan.

Public Comment

Hal Boynton, Puget Sound Anglers:

Studies show that the Salish Sea is contributing to the steelhead population decline. We have 11% on the Queets and a fraction of that in Nisqually. Why aren’t we getting more effort to increase the funding in those areas? Funding for the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project is a fraction of the adequate funding needed. Concerned that we could fix the entire freshwater habitat but the marine environment would still be problematic for steelhead.

Al Senyohl, Steelhead Trout Club:

Impressed with the scientific and technical information shared at this meeting. On the sport fishing side, we’re interested in what’s going to happen with the Skagit. Also found the barriers discussion fascinating. The key element is the settlement agreement, but deadlines are in place now and should be the focus.

Administrative Updates & Questions

- A Team member asked if there need to be more site-specific actions for the barriers strategies and actions; this will be further discussed at the next meeting.
- The next meeting will be in December, and the next meeting topics may include:
 - Recovery goals policy process;
 - Results from the multi-variate pressures analysis;
 - Marine survival preliminary strategies and actions from steelhead workgroup; and
 - More work on barriers strategies and actions.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.

Participants:

Name	Affiliation
Joe Anderson	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Elizabeth Babcock	National Marine Fisheries Service
Barry Berejikian (phone)	Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Marian Berejikian (phone)	West Sound Watersheds Council
Hal Boynton	Puget Sound Anglers
Nick Chambers	Trout Unlimited
Alan Chapman (phone)	Lummi Natural Resources
Ed Connor	Seattle City Light
Ned Currence	Nooksack Indian Tribe
Ken Currens	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Jeff Hard (phone)	Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Steve Hinton	Skagit River System Cooperative
Neala Kendall	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Michael McDonald (phone)	Washington Department of Transportation
David Nash (phone)	Kitsap County
Kurt Nelson	Tulalip Tribes
Susan O'Neil	Long Live the Kings
Tristan Peter-Contesse	Puget Sound Partnership
Scott Powell	Seattle City Light
Dave Price	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Phil Sandstrom	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Al Senyohl	Steelhead Trout Club
Amilee Wilson (phone)	National Marine Fisheries Service
Bob Wheeler	Triangle Associates
Claire Chase	Triangle Associates