



Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

May 7, 2021
Board Meeting
Conference Call/Webinar

Minutes
Approved: June 4, 2021

Present: Taylor Aalvik, Dan Cothren, Paul Greenlee, Richard Mahar, Gary Medvigy, Todd Olson, Gary Stamper, Don Swanson, Olaf Thomason, Jade Unger, Del Wilson, and Rudy Salakory, TAC Chairman

Absent: Lee Grose, Hal Mahnke, Ann Rivers, and Dennis Weber. Chairman Olson excused the absent members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: No announcements.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Chairman Olson stated Board member Rivers could not attend the meeting today so her assistant, Josalun Hasz, is attending to take notes to pass along to Senator Rivers.
- Kessina Lee, WDFW introduced Laura Brown to the group as their new Estuary Restoration Coordinator with WDFW. Ms. Brown has been with the department since January 2021.
- Kessina Lee gave an update to the group on pinniped removal near Bonneville Dam, noting that cumulatively, this season, the crews have removed 30 pinnipeds at the dam including 12 stellar sea lions and 18 California sea lions. She added that just this week they have lethally captured and removed 12 animals (2 Stellar and 2 California). There are three more weeks of active management that crews will be at the dam before they break down for the fall which coincides with animals leaving the area. She added that the Legislature funded WDFW's request to support the Columbia River work and they received \$1.5 million for the biennium.
 - Board member Medvigy asked if we are pushing up on any capacity on the number of animals that can be removed. Ms. Lee stated there is a limit on the 5-year limit with NMFS but we are not anywhere near that number at Bonneville, Willamette, and in the tributaries.
 - Board member Stamper asked what is the maximum number of animals that can be removed on the 5-year license. Ms. Lee stated she didn't have the exact numbers in front of her. But thought it was about 540 California and 300 stellar sea lions.
 - Board member Aalvik thanked Ms. Lee for her report. He explained that from a historic perspective, sea lions have always been in the Columbia River but they were managed in the past and stated we are getting back to that. Sea lions were a cultural item for the Tribes since time immemorial. In the past, sea lions were harvested and Tribes took great care in how the harvest was managed by respecting the resource. He added that the sea lions should be managed in a way that is sensitive to cultural values.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Director Manlow provided an update on budgets relating to programs that are a priority to the LCFRB:

- SRFB budget is at \$30 million which is up from \$25 million from last round. This means we could be looking at anywhere from \$18 - \$21 million grant round for the state. For the Lower Columbia it could mean \$3.6 - \$4.8 million for projects. We currently have \$6.8 million in ask for this grant round.

- The Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board program has funded quite a few projects in the Lower Columbia. Our focal area is the Lower Cowlitz. The budget came in at \$26 million which is status quo.
- Coastal WCRRRI program came in at \$10 million, and down from \$14 million last year. This means that the one project we had on the list was not funded. We will look at alternative match sources.
- FFFPP program came in at \$5.9 million, up from \$5 million last year.
- Riparian Forestry Easement program received \$6 million, up from \$2.5 million.
- Pinniped removal has an operating budget of \$1.5 million for the next biennium.
- WDFW will receive \$51 million statewide for hatchery infrastructure improvements.
- There was \$300K allocated for feasibility work for a new hatchery on the Cowlitz River and is a follow up from the Orca recommendation in 2018.
- WDFW will receive \$2.5 million for Landowner Technical Assistance under the HPA program.
 - Board member Stamper asked if the information on the budget awards was in the Board packet. Director Manlow stated no, he pulled the information from several sources.
- In terms of our own operating budget, staff is in the process of renewing our contract with RCO. The LCFRB receives \$80K per year for Lead Entity functions and this amount has been status quo for the last 15 years. This year, we notice there were additional tasks for Salmon Recovery Portal (SRP) that were added to our contract. We are in discussions with RCO to add an additional \$25K in funding for these tasks. Director Manlow commended Ms. Smee and Ms. Johnson on their work with the RCO with SRP. He also noted there is still a need to reevaluate Lead Entity funding statewide as the LCFRB is at the bottom of the state for LE funding.
 - Board member Aalvik asked who is the current SRFB Chair. He also asked if staff could forward SRFB meeting notices to the Board. He felt it was important for Board members that could attend the meetings to listen in to see how the funding is being allocated throughout the state. Director Manlow stated staff will forward SRFB meeting notices to the Board members. These are public meetings. Director Manlow stated Jeff Breckel is the Chair of the SRFB. He is up for re-appointment but unsure whether the Governor has re-appointed him to the position. Director Manlow also noted that Mr. Breckel is aware of our funding situation given his past with the Board, and that he is in regular communication with him on a variety of statewide issues. Mr. Manlow also noted that we were successful in changing the project allocation for the region based on metrics - the Lower Columbia used to receive 15% of the statewide allocation and now we receive 20%.
- Davis Lake: At the last meeting, Board member Stamper asked about Davis Lake and the need to put together a meeting. Staff has been doing some footwork on this and has been talking with landowners, WDFW, and the Conservation District. However, we are still in the interview process to find the intersection of all the issues with our mission as a Board. There are ESA listed steelhead and Coho in the system.
- Board member Wilson has continued working on landowner incentives and attending the interviews with staff. This relates to a topic the SRFB will discuss at their September retreat.
- EF Lewis Program Review: Staff has been involved in the interview process as a follow up to the EFL program review. Staff has been interviewing Board members trying to get a better sense to integrate recovery work into programs the Board is engaged in as individual entities.
- Coast Sustainable Partnership: We are working with the Coast to set up a joint meeting with OFM. OFM has been conducting regional tours to better understand what the recovery issues are in each of the regions around the state. Director Manlow has been coordinating with the Coast for a meeting on the Grays River, in partnership with the Cowlitz Tribe and Columbia Land Trust.

Ms. Smee gave an updated on the Board's COVID response. She is working with the technical staff in our building to figure out what is needed for a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting. WSDOT is preparing for some employees to return after June 30th. It is unclear if the building will be opened to the public at that time. WSDOT is interested in the LCFRB back to work plan. Staff is getting together with our schedules to figure out when we will be in the office.

Chairman Olson stated as far as meeting in-person, the earliest would be at the Board's office in July. Ms. Smee stated she would like to have the first in-person meeting at WSDOT to make sure we have what we need technically. However, she is open to calling other counties to see what technology they have to conduct a hybrid meeting.

- Board member Greenlee stated it is better to get the hybrid meetings to work correctly then quickly.
- Board member Aalvik asked if there was a new policy coming out for people who have been vaccinated. Chairman Olson stated he is unaware of any policies. Ms. Smee will be tracking this.
- Board member Medvigy hasn't heard or had any discussions regarding vaccinated vs. unvaccinated in-person meeting procedures. He offered the PSC building for meetings.

BUSINESS MEETING

Item #1 Consent Agenda

Board member Greenlee moved and Board member Stamper seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. No discussion. Motion carried.

Item #2 Tacoma Power Agreement for CRR Fund

Director Manlow presented the item to the Board. This agreement will provide \$75K from Tacoma Power to manage their CRR grant round. Included in the Board packet is a draft Scope of Work. On the fiscal/staff capacity front, this the last year of the CCCWRF program and will free up staff time to manage the CRR. He explained that this program is part of the FERC relicensing settlement agreement process. Tacoma Power has established an escrow account with approximately \$17 million for projects in-lieu of upstream volitional fish passage. The long-term fish passage approach is trap and haul. Director Manlow noted the goal of the project aligns very well with the recovery plan.

Director Manlow stated staff is looking to integrate this program with the SRFB grant round process. In 2018, we entered into an agreement with Tacoma Power and ended up truncating that agreement due to shifts in the decision making process and structure. Since that time, staff has been in regular contact with Tacoma Power to figure out a revised agreement to better meet the needs of the LCFRB and Tacoma Power.

Applicants would apply for funds through the LCFRB. Project evaluation, scoring and ranking would be done through the grant round to come up with a list. The list would be presented to the Fisheries Technical Committee (FTC) for final approval. Then for the projects Tacoma Power deems a good fit for the program, Tacoma Power would release the funds to LCFBR to enter into contracts with sponsors.

Director Manlow stated staff is comfortable at this point and it could be a long standing agreement looking at least five years. He added that this could be a public outreach opportunity because we seldom have the funds

to do a focused investment in outreach, education, and working with community groups. This is a good time for habitat investment in the basin.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- Board member Aalvik stated the Cowlitz Tribe is not a signatory to the Tacoma Power Relicensing Agreement and the Board isn't either. His concern is accepting funds that is deviating from fish passage and managing on their behalf and a bigger issue with him and who he represents. He stated at this time, he has to recuse himself and not to continue the conversation on how in-lieu funds are managed.
- Board member Stamper stated Lewis County is not part of the Relicensing Agreement either. They do have a representative that is able to listen in on meeting but is not a voting member.
- Chairman Olson made a point of clarification regarding the flow chart. He asked whether as Board members, we approve the ranked project list as we do for SRFB projects. Director Manlow stated yes, the way the review process would work would be in line with the SRFB project process where the TAC and Board would both conduct the review. At the end of the process, the CRR projects would be removed in ranked order and they would be presented to the FTC for a thumbs up or thumbs down. Director Manlow added that the value Tacoma Power sees in this process is the rigor of having the technical review and the review of the Board.
- Board member Greenlee stated it seems like this has been worked on in great detail, and asked if we are on a time constraint to approve or whether it could be postponed. He stated the reason he asked is, if it were postponed, would the Cowlitz Tribe and Lewis County find it useful? He asked whether a month be enough time to work with the respected constituency to have the conversations then inform the Board on those results.
 - Board member Aalvik stated it would take two months for the Cowlitz Tribe due to elections.
 - Board member Stamper stated they have asked the committee to look at both, the Cowlitz Tribe and Lewis County. They have submitted letters to Tacoma Power but it hasn't worked out yet. He added that he is frustrated they are not voting members, but was unsure how long it would take.
 - Director Manlow stated the Board is not a signatory to the Settlement Agreement. We are a technical advisor to the FTC and as a partner in implementing programs working with them on their fisheries plan to ensure they align well with the Recovery Plan priorities. He added in terms of timing, the challenge for staff is there is a lot of work to do between now and the next grant round with updating grant manuals and preparing outreach strategy. However, a month would not delay the process too much.
- Board member Greenlee asked the Board how they would feel about passing the item and adding a note that says the LCFRB hope that the Cowlitz Tribe and Lewis County would be included in the FTC. Director Manlow stated he doesn't know who best weigh into that discussion because it is a different forum.
- Board member Stamper indicated consideration needs to be focused on the projects. This is a much bigger political issue for the LCFRB but the Board needs to move forward with this project. He stated he will continue to fight to get representation on the FTC.

Board member Greenlee moved and Board member Medvigy seconded to authorize the Director to enter into contract with Tacoma Power for management of their Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery (CRR) fund for habitat restoration and protection projects.

No discussion. Motion carried with Board member Aalvik recusing himself.

Item #3 Joint IMW SRFB Letter

Director Manlow presented the item to the Board, noting that we are asking for the SRFB to continue funding the Lower Columbia Mill/Abernathy/Germany (MAG) and Snake River (Asotin) IMW projects. These projects are funded through SRFB dollars, but not taken from the regional project allocations. This relates to the monitoring that goes along with the IMW projects. He noted IMW projects are intended to evaluate the effectiveness of stream habitat restoration projects in producing benefits to fish. To date, we have treated about 30% of the accessible habitat in the Abernathy watershed. The Cowlitz Tribe has been the primary sponsor of getting the work done on these projects.

Director Manlow stated we have done a lot of collaboration with the Snake River Watershed. The SRFB is re-evaluating the monitoring portfolio and how much money they allocate towards project effectiveness, regional projects and IMWs. He stated this letter highlights the importance of IMWs to our two regions.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- Chairman Olson added the Board packet really dives into the level of detail and shows the significance and the work that has been done to date and how it could be lost if funding is not continued for ongoing monitoring.
- TAC Chairman Rudy Salakory stated \$3.9 million has been invested into the MAG and restored over 30% of the watershed. Unfortunately, it will take time to see the results of the monitoring.

Board member Greenlee moved and Board member Wilson seconded to authorize the Chair to sign a joint letter with the Chair of the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (SRSRB), recommending the SRFB continue funding monitoring for the Lower Columbia and Snake River IMW projects. No discussion. Motion carried.

Item #4 TAC Member Appointment

Director Manlow presented the item to the Board. He stated the TAC has had longstanding representation from USFWS. When Ron Rhew retired, Sam Lohr was appointed to the TAC. Mr. Lohr has announced his retirement at the end of June 2021. This is not an established seat in legislation but the Board has the authority to appoint members to the TAC. The USFWS has recommended Jared McKee take fill Mr. Lohr's position. Mr. McKee is a fish passage engineer and has extensive experience working on a variety of restoration projects, including community based restoration. Director Manlow stated Mr. McKee has been vetted with the TAC and it was a consensus decision to recommend him.

Questions and comments from the Board:

- None

Board member Aalvik moved and Board member Greenlee seconded to approve Jared McKee to the TAC for the USFWS position.

Discussion:

-Board member Aalvik stated there is federal representation on TAC, he added that it is important to have that federal layer of understanding. Is there a representative from NOAA on the TAC? Mr. Salakory stated that seat is currently empty.

-Chairman Olson agreed with Board member Aalvik stating we need to fill the NOAA seat on the TAC.
Motion carried.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

- Board member Greenlee stated he attended the Salmon Recovery Conference. He added that it was interesting and there is a need for monitoring. He suggested if it is possible to get the recordings from the conference then we should. He referenced the presentations regarding the Elwa Dam and Fire Management.
- Chairman Olson agreed with the importance of the Conference and get the recordings if possible.
- Board member Wilson stated, he also attended the Conference and recommends all Board members attend.
- Director Manlow stated the Blue Forest presentation was of interest to all of the COR directors.
- Board member Medvigy asked staff for information regarding options for better oxygenating Lake Vancouver and Lacamas Lake. Board member Aalvik noted there is potential to reconnect channels to better serve this purpose.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

/lc

Approved in open session on 6/4/2021.



Signed: _____
Todd Olson, Chairman