UCRTT
UPPER COLUMBIA REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM

Meeting Notes
12 August 2009

For more info contact: Casey Baldwin 509-664-3148 casey.baldwin@dfw.wa.gov

RTT Attendance: Karl Polivka, Casey Baldwin, Kate Terrell, Michelle McClure (via phone), Russell Langshaw, Steve Hays, Keely Murdoch, and Joe Kelly.

Others present: Derek VanMarter

This meeting had the sole purpose of reviewing proposals for the 10th round of SRFB funding and 2009 Tributary Committee process. These results will be provided to the Tributary Committees and the Citizens Advisory Committees for the Chelan and Okanogan Lead Entities. Scores represent the average of all RTT members who submitted a score for that project and attended the meeting. Cost effectiveness tier levels were based on a quadrant diagram described in the Salmon Recovery Plan and delineated at the median proposal cost and biological benefit for this round of review (Figure 1). Evaluating cost effectiveness on a continuum and across a broader timescale and range of projects would also be effective. For more information on the criteria or scoring process please contact Casey Baldwin or see the RTT project scoring criteria, which is appendix D of the RTT Biological Strategy (http://www.ucsrb.com/resources.asp).

Overall, this was a very competitive group of projects with a median total score of 108, which was 9 points higher than last year. There was one tie, which was between the two Methow Conservancy projects at a total score of 110. We ranked the Tawks 2 easement ahead of the Hardy easement because it scored 5 points higher on biological benefit and was less expensive, giving it the advantage with respect to cost effectiveness (Figure 1). Several of the proposals where very close to the median for biological benefit and / or cost so we present those as Tier x-y.

Table 1. Summary of the average score within each category, the total score and the cost effectiveness tier level for proposals evaluated by the Regional Technical Team. Cost effectiveness tiers can be seen in Figure 1.

UPPER COLUMBIA REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM RATING SCORES FOR SRFB/TRB FUND 2009

Sub-basin	Project Type	TITLE	Biological Benefit Average	Certainty of Success Average	Total Score	Cost Effectiveness (Tier level)
Wen	Protection	Tall Timbers Easement	89	43	132	Tier 2
Wen	Protection	White River Nason View	85	42	127	Tier 2
Entiat	Protection	Entiat Troy Acquisition	83	39	122	Tier 2
Entiat	Design	Tyee Protection Design	79	43	122	Tier 1
Wen	Restoration	Upper Whitepine	76	42	118	Tier 1
Methow	Protection	Tawlks 2 Easement	73	37	110	Tier 2
Methow	Protection	Hardy Easement	68	42	110	Tier 2-4
Entiat	Restoration	Entiat Hatchery	70	39	109	Tier 2
Wen	Restoration	Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow	67	41	108	Tier 4
Entiat	Restoration	Foreman Floodplain	68	38	106	Tier 1-3
Wen	Assessment	Lower Whitepine	69	34	103	Tier 1
Wen	Assessment	Peshastin Reconnection Assess-	59	36	95	Tier 3
Entiat / Wen	Assessment	Habitat Farming Assessment	53	40	93	Tier 3
Methow	Protection	Lower Libby Acquisition	61	31	92	Tier 3
Wen	Restoration	CMZ 6 Monitor Flats	59	32	91	Tier 3-4
Okan.	Restoration	Driscoll Island	50	32	82	Tier 3
Okan.	Protection	McLoughlin Falls Protection	61	12	73	Tier 4

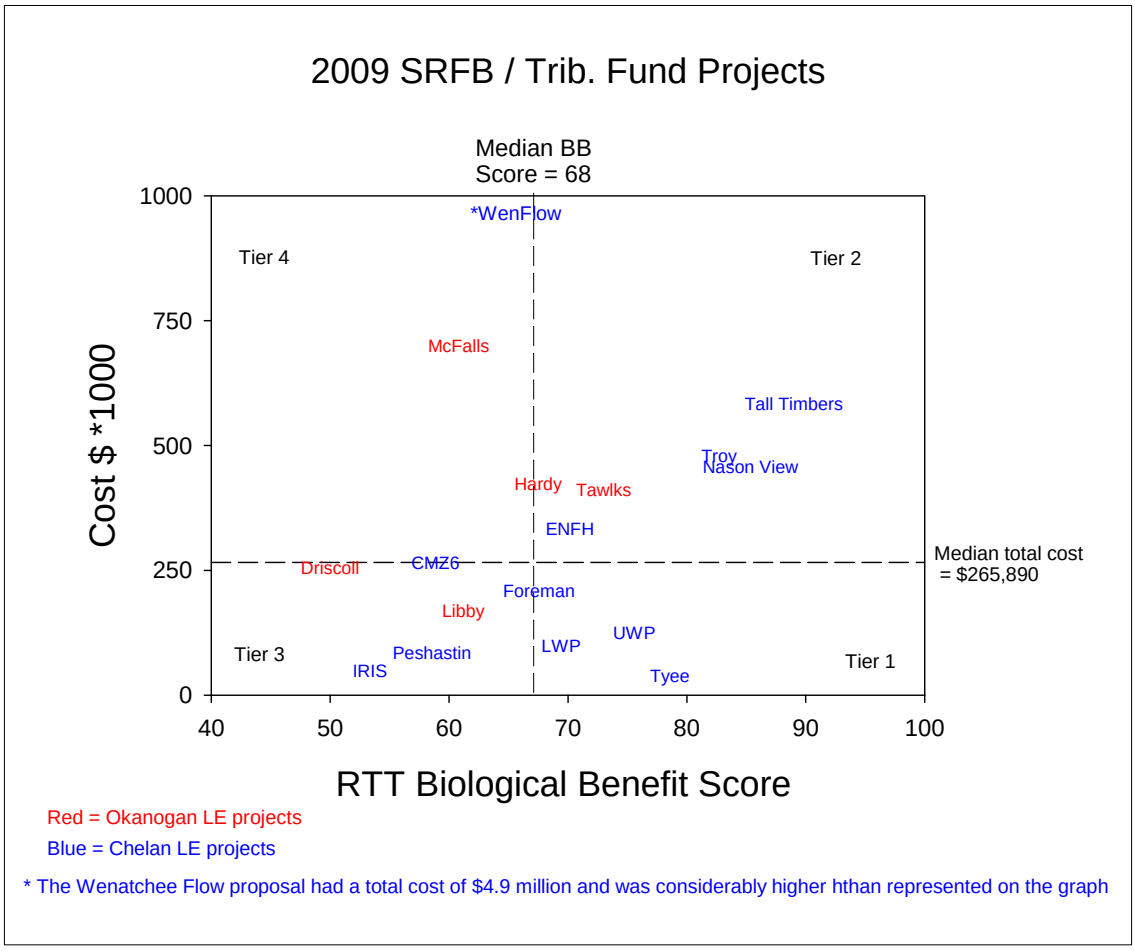

Figure 1. Cost versus biological benefit based on RTT project review score for biological benefit and the total cost of the project.

Project Review:

Mcloughlin Falls: We recognize that this area is one of the few in the mainstem Okanogan that has functional riparian and floodplain habitat and that it is worth protecting. We appreciated the project sponsor focusing the proposal on one property, as requested at the pre-proposal presentation. However, this proposal seemed premature, as several aspects critical to a successful project were missing. A landowner agreement form was not included in the proposal and there were no details provided regarding transaction costs, appraisal, legal review, and other essential functions of completing a real estate transaction. There was no detail on how the budget was developed or how the value of the land was determined. The property was not well focused on the riparian / floodplain areas (only 24% of the land was in the riparian zone) and it would have been more effective to link the various funding sources to appropriate portions of the property (upland versus riparian). No stewardship plan was provided. It was not clear how WDFW would manage the land or the extent of riparian protection that would be administered. Good points were made regarding the inadequacy of current regulations for protection, however, a strong case was not made for why this particular piece of property was at risk. Despite the relative functionality of the adjacent parcels through this reach, this property is not well connected with other functional habitats at the larger scale.

Lower Wenatchee Flow: The RTT provided an early review of this project, in which we stated:

> "We believe this potential project has merit as an important contribution to increasing instream flow, which has been identified as a limiting factor in the Wenatchee River basin. The benefits to fish habitat and survival based on improvements in physical habitat and water quality of this project are difficult to quantify with modeling efforts (such as PHABSIM). We stress that this project has potential important implications for increasing instream flow in the future (by "paving the way" for other interests to do similar projects). The risks of a project like this are low, it will increase instream flow, and it is an important component of an overall restoration strategy for the lower Wenatchee River."

Considerable additional detailed information was provided during that review, and we refer the project sponsor and other interested parties to our memo dated 20 February 2009 for those details.

Additional comments made during this review were that this project provides potential for a later habitat restoration project related to the sidechannel, there could be cumulative benefits of numerous small actions to restore flow, more detail in the budget would have been helpful and it was not clear if specific TMDL models had been run to evaluate this action.

Nason Creek, Upper Whitepine: This is an excellent proposal for a project that is not over-engineered, considers the issues affecting this reach, seeks to restore processes, and potentially leads to important headway with the railroad. This is a good first phase of restoring processes to this reach and efforts to upstream and on the South side of the railroad should not be abandoned. This would be an excellent candidate for pre and post project effectiveness monitoring.

Peshastin Creek: This is an important project that represents one of the few opportunities to reconnect Peshastin Creek with its historic channel. This is a good opportunity to cost share with DOT and leverage other, non-salmon recovery funding sources for the next phases of the project. More details on developing a partnership with DOT for phase 2 and 3 would be helpful. The assessment should include the entire reach and not exclude the portion upstream of DOT's chronic deficiency site. The link to spawning habitat needs to be better supported. Pre-project monitoring could lead to later understanding of benefits to spawning, if it is documented there after the project is implemented. Landowner outreach and communication are critical components to the success of this project.

Tall Timbers Easement: This project is well focused in the floodplain and there is a definite risk of degradation with subdivision or change of management. This is prime spawning and rearing habitat for a very weak but important component of the Wenatchee spring Chinook population. Additional benefits are for protection of key sockeye spawning areas, rather than steelhead.

White River Nason View Acquisition: This project is well focused in the floodplain and the cost savings is substantial, due to the link with the DNR program. Although the development opportunities might be challenging, we assumed that state and federal agencies would be required to grant easements for access if it were to be sold to someone with an interest in subdividing or developing. This is not as critical of a spawning area as Tall Timbers, but still provides important rearing areas and channel, riparian, and floodplain function.

Libby Creek Acquisition: A stewardship plan was not provided. Without a stewardship plan there was uncertainty regarding the future activities that might or might not be allowed to happen on the property. Logging, grazing, mining, farming, hatchery development, etc. are all allowed to occur on state lands. If this property is purchased with salmon recovery dollars there should be some additional restrictions placed on the uses that could occur. Details were not provided regarding transaction costs, appraisal, legal review, and other essential functions of completing a real estate transaction. This property was not connected to functional habitat on the downstream end. Although upstream parcels were in relatively good shape currently, they were not protected so in the future this parcel could be more isolated from other functional habitat further upstream.

Habitat Farming: Given the low cost, connection to landowners and the community, and uncertainty of biological benefits this project may be more appropriate for a Community Salmon Fund project. The concept of developing an alternative to easements and acquisitions has value for certain parcels.

The pre-proposal included an economic model that was not competitive with permanent conservation easements and acquisitions. This proposal does not include an attempt to

re-calculate the economic model to a level that might appeal to orchardists (more than CREP) but that is still economically viable when compared to easements or acquisitions. The methods of their assessment are not well described.

The proposal states that they will seek 4-6 properties for the program, but how that search will be conducted was not well described. The proposal did not appear aware of the extensive assessment of riparian areas that has already occurred in the Entiat (GeoEngineers 2007, USBR tributary and reach assessments). Those efforts should provide all the technical information necessary to select parcels based on biological benefit. Likewise, the YN is conducting an assessment of Peshastin Creek under the Fish Accords. Reaches / parcels in need of restoration and protection of riparian areas have been / will be identified from these efforts. Therefore this project needs to concentrate on the landowner commitments and finding an economic model that will work. It appears that the HFEP advisory board will pick some properties, but there are no quantitative criteria described for that selection process. There needs to be an explicit link between the landowner opportunities and the biological priorities.

It is not clear how the modified approach is better or different than other project sponsor efforts to locate opportunities to protect and restore habitat. It is not clear how the next phase would be different than the old paradigm of implementing a riparian restoration and / or securing a conservation easement.

Driscoll Island Ford: The removal of the ford may be appropriate for salmon recovery dollars but the proposal did not describe the biological benefit to reconstructing the ford. The budget did not provide enough detail to separate these two aspects of the project. Land, wildlife, and recreation management are not appropriate objectives for salmon recovery funding sources. To be viable for salmon recovery, the project needs to restore the island to a natural condition and have an exit plan. The exit plan needs to include specific restoration components, a limited timeframe, and clear objectives for the vision that are compatible with salmon recovery objectives.

It was not clear why the proposal dropped the discussion of thermal benefits to the Similkameen River. Reducing temperature in the Similkameen was a potential benefit for steelhead rearing, assuming temperature effects in the Similkameen would be measureable.

The budget was not well justified or explained. For example, what would the $55k for site restoration actually be used for? There should not be that much damage to the surrounding area from removing and reinstalling the ford.

There are good “pre-treatment” data on fish use in this area so effectiveness should be relatively easy to document.

Tyee Ranch Protection Design: This is a large and important piece of property for protection and restoration. The draft stewardship plan includes appropriate actions and limitations. There appears to be legitimate threats to subdividing and selling and the

timing is critical due to threats from the family moving off site. This project may benefit from future check-ins with technical groups such as the EHSC and the RTT to ensure that the configuration and terms are consistent with watershed goals and salmon recovery efforts (including monitoring).

Entiat Troy Property: The riparian portion of this property is a valuable piece of floodplain and riparian habitat. Without an appraisal, more details should be provided to justify the cost estimates. Details ($/acre) of nearby comparable properties would provide more confidence in the budget and appraisal criteria. More details should be provided on the option to sell the upland area and use the proceeds for restoration here or on other salmon recovery related properties within the Entiat. It was difficult to determine the connectivity with other habitat strongholds in this reach. However, it appears that there are some areas within protection, and other areas in public ownership along the riparian corridor in this reach.

Foreman Floodplain Reconnection: This proposal represents a unique opportunity to reconnect sidechannel / floodplain habitat in the lower Entiat, which is a high priority restoration strategy. This proposal is a good start to restoring river processes in this reach. We hope that this proposal will open the door to larger project opportunities at this site as discussed on the site tour. The proposal should be explicit about whether or not this project will preclude other projects at this site, if the landowner were to change his/her mind or decide to allow more.

The final proposal did not describe the objectives for frequency and duration of sidechannel activation.

More details would be helpful regarding the LWD structures in the sidechannel. We recommend not limiting the wood structures in the sidechannel to the margins. More detail would be helpful to understand how this project would recruit wood.

We encourage the project sponsor to solicit feedback from the RTT as this design is further developed.

It was good that the sponsor included implementation monitoring, even better would have been an explicit link to coordinating with ISEMP and the IMW strategy.

It was not clear why so much revegetation work would be needed. The area is heavily forested and it would be most effective to implement this project with as little disturbance as possible to existing vegetation. There needs to be more details on the revegetation plan to justify the budget. The area is densely vegetated so it would be more cost effective and beneficial to leave the existing trees, rather than replanting.

Lower Whitepine Assessment: Implementing large complex projects that intend to restore natural processes at these locations in Nason Creek are very high priority. We encourage the project sponsor to include the RTT during the development and review of the alternative analyses. If the project aspired to achieve 50 % design then they could

begin permitting. There should be more emphasis on the outreach with stakeholders on a project this complex. Cost share opportunities were discussed at the pre-proposal presentation that were not mentioned or included in the final proposal.

CMZ site 6: Reconnecting the historic channel on the North side of the highway is the biological and geomorphic priority for this site. This proposal seeks to engineer a much smaller and less functional channel that was not present historically and will include negative impacts of removal of mature riparian vegetation. The proposal should not claim that there will be benefits to riparian vegetation since there will be a net loss of riparian vegetation due to the channel excavation. During the presentation, project proponents claimed that only 6 mature cottonwoods would need to be removed. It is not clear from the proposal if the new, expanded length will have a greater impact on the existing vegetation.

4500 cfs will provide flow through from late April to Mid July, however, extending to 3000 cfs would, on average, add about 5 weeks of additional flow through and therefore be more beneficial.

More detailed and extensive Level 1 effectiveness monitoring of projects such as this would help alleviate uncertainties in the potential biological benefit, geomorphic stability, and the tradeoff due to loss of functional riparian vegetation.

The site preparation schematic appears to show log structures in the thalwag of the sidechannel. We recommend that the log structures be placed in the thalwag of the sidechannel, not just along the margins, as they were at CMZ site 12.

Hardy Easement: This is in an important biological reach, it is well connected with other easements, and this area is under high pressure for development. However, the likely homesites on this property seem to be naturally segregated from the areas where the important ecological function and fisheries use would occur. Of the projects in this round of review, this property has the lowest quantity of shoreline, a relatively low proportion of floodplain (55%), and is the most expensive per acre.

Tawlks 2 Easement: This is in an important biological reach, it is well connected with other easements, but it is not clear that there is an immediate threat to it and developable areas seem to be naturally segregated from the areas where the important ecological function and fisheries use would occur. This proposal does not eliminate future development only reduces the amount by 4 home sites at a price of $105,600 per homesite.

ENFH: The general consensus was that this project had high biological merit because it intends to restore ecological processes. However, there was **s**ome concern about the lack of completed modeling and the uncertainty of the design without the modeling. The ELJ size and placements need to take those modeling results into account. The function and need for the revetment ELJ's should be better justified.