

## **2023 Fall WRTAC Meeting Notes**

August 29, 2023, 10:00 am (MDT)

Avista Noxon Multipurpose Room

### **WRTAC representative attendees:**

Avista – Eric Oldenburg

Idaho Department of Fish and Game – Ken Bouwens

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality – Chantilly Higbee (10:26)

Kalispel Tribe – Ken Merrill (conference line)

Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club – David Gillespie

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) – Jason Blakney

Montana Department of Environmental Quality – Keenan Storrar (conference line)

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Valerie Kurth

Noxon Cabinet Shoreline Coalition – Rick Robinson

Panhandle Chapter Trout Unlimited – Bill Love

U.S. Forest Service (Cabinet) – Chris Rossel (10:48)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Carter Fredenberg

Diane Williams Rock Creek Alliance (conference line)

### **Other attendees:**

Avista – Monica Ott, Shana Bernall, Lisa Johnson, Paul Kusnierz, Sean Moran, Ben Birdsall, Arthur Potts, Davina Brown

Avista Grant Writer – Susan Drumheller

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality – Bob Steed (10:26)

Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) – Sarah Busmire

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Travis Rehm

NorthWestern Energy – Jon Hanson (conference line)

### **Welcome and introductions:**

Eric Oldenburg welcomed those in attendance and discussed the purpose and agenda of the meeting. The purpose is to update the WRTAC on the progress of the 2023 implementation efforts and identify any issues and/or actions that need to be forwarded to the Management Committee for their September 20, 2023 Fall Meeting

### **Other business:**

- Consent Mails
  - Appendix C Upstream Fish Passage protocol revision: IDFG Westslope Cutthroat Wild Broodstock Evaluation
- Instructions for the development of 2024 project plans and 2023 Annual Work Summaries

- Review of properties purchased and held by Avista in support of the CFSA at 5- and 10-year intervals – Arthur Potts
- Avista Grant Writer update – Susan Drumheller
- Clark Fork Heritage Resource Program (Appendix R) update – Lisa Johnson
- Winter Meeting Date
  - Tuesday, January 16, 2024 was selected for the WRTAC meeting.

#### Appendix A: Idaho Tributary Habitat Acquisition and Fishery Enhancement Program

Ken Bouwens provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix A for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Habitat Restoration Scoping Allocation
  - Strong Creek
- Habitat Restoration and Acquired Property Maintenance and Monitoring Allocation
  - Proposed Treatments
- Priority Native Salmonid Habitat Acquisition and Conservation Allocation
- Idaho Field Station Operation and Maintenance
- Pack River Watershed Management Plan Addendum
- Trestle Creek Habitat Enhancement Project Phase I
  - Trestle Creek Mouth Land Acquisition
  - Swan Creek
- Rattle Creek Habitat Enhancement Project Design
  - Rattle Creek evaluation profile
- Fish Resource Monitoring, Enhancement, and Management Plan

#### Appendix B: Montana Tributary Habitat Acquisition and Recreational Fishery Enhancement Program

Travis Rehm provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix B for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Habitat Restoration Monitoring and Native Salmonid Abundance Monitoring Plan
- Redd Surveys in Montana Tributaries
- Stream Gage Monitoring
- Crow Creek Bull Trout Investigation
- Upper Prospect Creek LWD Project
- Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group Project Coordination
- Habitat Restoration Monitoring, Maintenance, and Contingency Allocation
- Habitat Restoration, Property Acquisition, and Conservation Easement Contingency Allocation
- Prospect Creek Bull Trout Salvage Evaluation (New)
- Sims Meander Stream and Floodplain Restoration Project

- Vermilion River Restoration Projects 4 - 6 Survey and Design (New)
- St. Paul Trailhead Improvement Project (New)
  - Reroute trailhead
- Upper Thompson River Connectivity Project (New)
- Cabinet Gorge and Noxon Reservoir Fisheries Monitoring Plan
- Mountain Lake Fisheries Monitoring Project
- Lower Bull River Day Use Boat Access Site Operation
- Noxon Reservoir Boat Ramp Improvements
- Managing Aquatic Invasive Plants on Noxon and Cabinet Gorge Reservoirs
- Dreissenid Mussel Sampling on Noxon and Cabinet Gorge Reservoirs
- Noxon Reservoir Bathymetry Update
- Upper Thompson River Connectivity Project (New)

#### Appendix C: Fish Passage/Native Salmonid Restoration Plan

Shana Bernall provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix C for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Upstream Fish Passage Program
  - Ask MC for approval of additional funds for Cabinet Gorge Fish Passage Facility operation and Maintenance
- Westslope Cutthroat Trout Transport Evaluation
  - Travis provided an update
- Native Salmonid Restoration Plan Five-Year Plan
  - Draft report incorporating all aquatic PM&E measures to be available this fall
- Tributary Trapping and Downstream Juvenile Bull Trout Transport Program
  - Purchase/fabricate a mobile fish handling trailer
- PIT-Monitoring Station Operation and Maintenance
  - Ongoing
- Graves Creek Bull Trout Translocation Project
  - Twelve additional thermographs deployed
- Graves Creek Permanent Weir Trap Enhancements
  - Design for traveling debris screen
- Fish Capture Facilities Operation, Development, and Testing
  - A few lingering items that were commitments as part of construction of the Cabinet Gorge Fish Passage Facility were either completed or are in the works including installation of panels behind the entrance and holding pool, installation of new entrance gate position indicators, and hydraulic monitoring.
  - Discussions related to fish passage at Noxon Rapids Dam are currently on hold as we continue to learn more about fish presence downstream of Noxon Rapids

Dam and to provide time to evaluate the success of the Cabinet Gorge Fish Passage Facility.

- Cabinet Gorge Fish Passage Facility Minor Modifications
  - The Fish Passage Subgroup approved three projects to be funded out of the “Cabinet Minor Modifications” budget including purchasing additional stop logs and installing an uninterrupted power supply for the air compressor. The group also approved making improvements to the Vee trap to help retain fish, but no funds were spent toward that work to date.

#### Appendix D: Bull Trout Protection and Public Education Project

Sean Moran provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix D for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Idaho Protection and Education Officer Support
  - Dustin Masin – ongoing patrolling
- Montana Bull Trout Education and Communication Support
- Montana Bull Trout Education Outreach Support
  - New Bull Trout sign at Graves Creek
- Montana Game Warden Support
- Trout Unlimited Outreach Coordination
- Pend Oreille Water Festival Support

#### Appendix E: Watershed Councils Program

Sean Moran provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix E for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Pack River Watershed Council and Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District
- Lower Clark Fork Watershed Council Projects
  - Sarah Busmire is the new LCFWG coordinator

#### Appendix F1: Clark Fork River Water Quality Monitoring Program

Paul Kusnierz provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix F1 for 2023.

#### Appendix F2: Monitoring of Noxon Reservoir Stratification and Mobilization of Sediment Nutrients/Metals

Paul Kusnierz provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix F2 for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Results to be presented at MC meeting

#### Appendix F3: Aquatic Organism Tissue Analysis

Paul Kusnierz provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix F3 for 2023. Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Samples sent in, still waiting on results

#### Appendix F4: Water Quality Protection and Monitoring Plan for Maintenance, Construction, and Emergency Activities

Eric Oldenburg provided an update of Appendix F4 for 2023 and noted that there was presently nothing on his radar that would require him to enact the Water Quality Protection and Monitoring Plan.

#### Appendix F5: Dissolved Gas Supersaturation Control, Mitigation, and Monitoring

Paul Kusnierz and Ken Bouwens provided an update of all the projects proposed within Appendix F5 for 2023.

- Total Dissolved Gas Monitoring
  - Ongoing, permanent pipes for shore station
- Project Scoping Allocation
- Analysis of Gas Bubble Disease Monitoring Data
- Mapping the Potential for Fish to Compensate for Total Dissolved Gas in the Lower Clark Fork River
- Nutrient Level Impacts on Salmonid Populations in the Lower Clark Fork River
- Temperature Monitoring Data Compilation
- Trophic Monitoring in Lake Pend Oreille and Pend Oreille River Idaho
- Box Canyon Reservoir Northern Pike Suppression
  - Ongoing, Northern Pike abundance has been maintained
- Lake Pend Oreille Experimental Walleye Angler Incentive Program
- Lake Pend Oreille/Clark Fork River Walleye Population Assessment
- Lake Pend Oreille Lake Trout Angler Incentive Program
- Lake Pend Oreille Lake Trout Netting Program
  - Report set to be out soon
- Lake Pend Oreille Bull Trout Population Monitoring and Evaluation
- Lake Pend Oreille Nearshore Index Netting
- Idaho Protection and Education Officer Support
  - No Bull Trout found in possession
  - Increased patrol time on Lake Pend Oreille
- Lake Pend Oreille Tributary PIT-Monitoring Station Installation
  - Lower and Upper Pack River
- Lake Pend Oreille Tributary PIT-Monitoring Station Operation and Maintenance
- Clark Fork River Population Monitoring
- Lower Clark Fork River Flow Mode
- Lake Pend Oreille and Pend Oreille River Creel Survey
- Lower Clark Fork River Genetics Evaluation (New)
- Gas Supersaturation Control Program Total Dissolved Gas Abatement

Appendix T: Project Operations Package

Eric Oldenburg provided an update of the projects proposed within Appendix T for 2023.

Specific projects for which there was meaningful discussion are noted below.

- Cabinet Gorge Fish Hatchery Spring Water Collection System Upgrade
  - On schedule and currently within budget

**The meeting adjourned at 3:56 pm (MDT).**