



YAKIMA BASIN
FISH AND WILDLIFE
RECOVERY BOARD

MINUTES

May 23rd, 2007 Board of Directors Meeting
As approved by the Board of Directors, 7/25/07

Time & Location: 5:00 to 7:20 pm, at Roza Dam

Attendance:

Board: Paul Ward (Yakama Nation), David Bowen (Kittitas County), Terry Keenhan (Yakima County), Dave Brown (City of Yakima), Nancy Lillquist (City of Ellensburg)

Staff: Alex Conley, Executive Director, Tiffany Bowen, AmeriCorps volunteer

Other Participants:

Jim Milton (Yakima Basin Water Resources Agency), Phil Miller (GSRO), Chris Drivdahl (GSRO), Jeff Tayer (WDFW), Richard Visser (WDFW), David Lind (Yakama Nation),

Meeting Topics:

Tour of Roza Dam

The meeting began with an informal tour of Roza Dam and Fisheries Facility. Participants viewed the fish ladder and adult Chinook in the fish trap, the dam (including “tucked” and untucked gates), and the fish screens. Mark Johnston of the Yakama Nation led the tour. The rest of the meeting was held outdoors on the dam.

Agenda & Minutes

Chairman Bowen convened the meeting. Roll was taken and the presence of a quorum confirmed. A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Nancy Lillquist and seconded by Terry Keenhan. The motion carried. A motion to approve the minutes for the April 25th meeting was made by Dave Brown and seconded by Terry Keenhan. The motion carried.

2007 SRFB Funding Round Preparations

Alex updated the Board on the status of the 2007 SRFB project review process. He announced that applications were available and that the process had been advertised via email, our web site and pre-releases to local papers. He presented the Board with a revised schedule for the local review process. He noted that the size of the overall SRFB has still not been determined, but that 10% would be allocated to the Mid-Columbia Region. Board staff will continue discussions with Klickitat County over allocation of the overall Mid-Columbia allocation as more information about amounts requested becomes available.

FCRPS Biological Opinion Update

Phil Miller of the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office gave an update on the Federal Columbia River Biological Opinion remand process. On May 21st, the Action Agencies (AA's: USBOR, USACE and BPA) released their updated draft proposed action (PA). Phil noted that the Board's letter to the State of Washington had been useful in preparing the State's response to the initial draft, and that the revised drafts did respond to the points that were made by the State and the four regional recovery organizations. Phil emphasized that the new documents made clear that there was a commitment by the action agencies to coordinate tributary habitat mitigation efforts with Washington's Regional Recovery Boards and their local Salmon Recovery Plans. We will need to work with the action agencies to identify what for this coordination should take. Alex noted that he and the directors of the Snake, Upper Columbia and Lower Columbia Recovery Boards had met with Washington's Northwest Power and Conservation Council delegation to begin discussions about the form this coordination should take. He noted that the Board's roles will need to be carefully defined to add value to the process without attempting to take on the roles of the fisheries co-managers. Phil Miller recommended that the Board wait until the response of the judge and other parties to the current draft was clearer before developing additional input into the process. The judge's response is scheduled for June 20th, with additional documents due from the AA's on June 30th. The Board also discussed the distinction between the FCRPS BiOp process and the related but separate need to address ESA issues related to the BOR's Yakima Project, and noted its hope that its recovery planning efforts could inform that process.

WDFW Grazing Lawsuit Issues

Jeff Tayer handed out the 60 day notice to sue for violation of the Endangered Species Act filed by the Western Watersheds Project against WDFW for grazing activities on WDFW lands. He and David Bowen discussed the process used to develop the grazing management plan for the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area. Jeff asked if the Board and its Salmon Recovery Plan could be used to develop guidance and/or assurances for grazers who want to avoid possible ESA liabilities. The suit appears to be based on the presumption that any grazing within a watershed with listed fish species constitutes take under Section 9 of the ESA. The Board asked Alex to develop a draft letter for their consideration that would emphasize that while the Board's salmon recovery plan specifically notes the need to use best management practices to address areas where livestock grazing has had negative effects on fisheries habitat, it in no way supports the interpretation that any grazing within a watershed de facto constitutes take under Section 9. Board members discussed possibilities for Habitat Conservation Plans or other mechanisms to provide specific assurances to land managers, and identified this as a topic for further discussion.

Recovery Plan Update

The Board briefly reviewed the current status of the Board's Steelhead Extract of the Yakima Basin Salmon Recovery Plan and its incorporation into the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Recovery Plan under development by NOAA. Alex asked for Board feedback on the draft materials provided at the last meeting. He noted that three significant meetings were held in the previous month. One brought together biologists engaged in steelhead monitoring in the Yakima Basin to discuss the current status of monitoring efforts and how they would have to be supplemented to give the population status information needed to judge progress towards recovery plan goals. This is a key step in developing a monitoring component for the recovery plan. The local technical team also met May 18th to review recent products from NOAA's Interior Columbia TRT, and then met on May 23rd with TRT members to discuss the Yakima Stock Status reports

and what needs to be done to finalize them. These meetings were productive and put the Board on track to finalizing proposed recovery scenarios that are well-synchronized with the TRT assessments. Alex asked for Board members to be ready to respond to draft language prior to the next meeting. He also asked Board members about the level of participation they would like in review of drafts of the Mid-Columbia Plan being developed by NOAA; the Board asked for a summary and status report on the NOAA plan at the next meeting.

Contract Review

Three new contracts are under development. The Board's contract with WDFW to act as Yakima Basin Lead Entity will expire June 30th. A new contract will be issued in July, and will reflect a \$5,000 increase to \$65,000 for the year. Deliverables will stay essentially the same. No Board action is needed at this time.

Alex presented the Board with the IAC monitoring contract for NOAA funds to support intensively monitored watershed programs. He explained that we had been allocated \$52 thousand to conduct a feasibility study for an intensively monitored watershed program in the Yakima Basin. The Board emphasized the need to coordinate this work with existing monitoring and facilities, and emphasized that it was not the Board staff's role to take on actual on-the-ground monitoring duties. A motion to approve the contract was passed by the Board.

The current regional organization operations contract with IAC will expire on June 30th. Alex noted that our funding had been approved by the SRFB on May 3rd, and presented the Board with the template that will be used to develop a contract for those funds. Chris Drivdahl noted that the SRFB wants specific deliverables to provide accountability for implementation contracts. Alex will work up first draft and send out to the full board ASAP. A final draft will be presented to the Board for approval at the June meeting.

Personnel Issues

Alex announced the hiring of Angela Begosh as program coordinator, and asked for input on the final draft of the offer letter. Dave Bowen announced that he would be coordinating a performance review of the executive director in the next two weeks, and would appreciate any feedback from Board members.

Financial and Activity Reports

The Board received written reports on Board finances and the Executive Director's activities.

Announcements

Alex and Chris Drivdahl noted that they were working on arranging a tour for Mike Gregoire (Governor's husband) in July that would focus on seeing habitat improvement projects in progress. Alex encouraged Board members to participate in the June 13th panel discussion during the plenary session for the Yakima Basin Aquatic Science & Management Conference.

Other Business

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, June 27th in Yakima. The July meeting would be held in Ellensburg, and ideally would be linked to the proposed project tour with Mike Gregoire. The Board suggested that the annual meeting be held in July, in conjunction with the Cle Elum Hatchery open house. No additional public comment was received. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.