



Steering Committee Meeting

Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Suite 4

1800 Glenn Highway, Palmer

Tuesday January 10, 2017 1:30 – 4 pm

NOTES

Facilitator: Arni Thomson **Notetaker:** Marc Lamoreaux **Coordinator:** Jessica Speed
Steering Committee Participants: Amy O’Conner, Trent Liebich, Frankie Barker, Tracy Smith, Christy Cincotta,

Welcome new and returning Steering Committee members, farewell to departing

New At-Large Steering Committee Member Amy O’Conner provided an update on her organization, The Alaska Center. They are focusing on clean energy and salmon habitat issues. These include the Susitna Dam, Mat-Su riparian set-backs, clean water and clean air. They have a staff lobbyist in Juneau to help assure public involvement. More than 100 letters were sent to Board of Fish on the Title 16 salmon habitat proposal.

Christy Cincotta, returning Tribal Seat Steering Committee Member talked a bit about the Tyonek Tribal Conservation District. They are implementing their Watershed Action Plan and replacing 3 culverts this year.

Trent Liebich, who oversees USFWS Anchorage and Juneau Offices Habitat Restoration is transitioning to replace Jon Gerken as our USFWS Steering Committee Representative.

Jessica Speed acknowledged Jessica Winnestaffer and Corrine Smith’s great work with the Partnership since its inception, with regrets to lose their institutional knowledge, yet appreciation of new representatives’ involvement. Jessica S. will send Jessica W. and Corinne cards and members can contribute to these by e-mail to Jessica.

Partnership Business

- NFHP application update (Jessica)
 - Update

An application was submitted to USFWS for National Fish Habitat Partnership for funds covering local salmon habitat related projects and partnership coordination. In past year’s we’ve received mid-level scores of 2. This year we hope to receive a final score of 3. Thanks to all who helped with the application. We should hear results by May, with funding distributed in summer.

- BOF Upper Cook Inlet comment letter and testimony
 - Discussion and decision

We submitted a letter and Jessica testified about the Partnership role and habitat work in the Mat-Su Borough for the last Upper Cook Inlet BOF meeting in 2014. The next meeting will be February 23-March 8 at the Anchorage Sheraton. Individuals will have 3 minutes to speak. This is a good opportunity to create awareness of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership.

We decided to send the 12 page Progress Report with a brief, 1 page cover letter introducing it, and for Jessica to testify using the cover letter. The intent is to tell the BOF about who we are, our salmon habitat priorities, and what we do. Jessica will coordinate mailing 25 hard copies of the Progress Report so it can be distributed in color.

- Process improvements for evaluating project proposals for NFHP funds
 - Discussion

We need to assure our recommended projects match Mat-Su Salmon Partnership and National Partnership priorities. We may need to re-prioritize each year, to take into account new information, such as when new updates became available last year on how fast and far elodea can spread if left untreated.

A work group will convene in the next couple weeks to evaluate the scoring criteria and RFP process. They will also consider priorities for the upcoming year. They will share recommendations for approval at the next Steering Committee Meeting in March. The work group includes Jon, Trent, Tracy, Christy, Jessica, and Frankie.

Elodea Rapid Response

Discussion of the need for a program to rapidly respond to elodea outbreaks grew out of the discussion of increasing prioritization for an elodea treatment proposal, and from the Outreach Committee. Some barriers to addressing Elodea are funding, legislative support, permitting treatment, and education. An environmental assessment is required to use the herbicide fluridone to treat it, but federal and state permits can be expedited. Representative Bill Seaton introduced a bill to address it, but it did not go through. Amy will get a copy for us. It was suggested that we support a rapid response program with the legislature.

The Partnership may need to increase its engagement in Elodea eradication and prevention efforts. We would work more with agencies and others to address elodea. ADNR, ADF&G, and USFWS all address elodea. Heather Stewart – Lescanec is the ADNR elodea lead and gave a presentation on it at the Symposium. ADF&G addresses elodea with pike because they spawn and populations increase in elodea invaded habitat. Tammy Davis oversees the ADF&G invasive species program. FWS addresses elodea with a statewide pool of funds and must prioritize allocation around the state. Maybe funding from other sources could be used in Mat-Su. John Morton has been instrumental with FWS, and Kenai Watershed Forum and Partnership have been proactive and successful with elodea there.

The Outreach Committee and Jessica will contact ADNR lead Heather Lescanec to see how the Partnership can best support this effort and if she would like us to convene a group of relevant parties including agencies. The Committee approved the outreach team to move forward on this issue. Jessica will provide an update at our next meeting.

Committee Updates

- Symposium Planning - 2016 Symposium was another successful event. Planning for 2017 will begin in February. Trent and Amy volunteered to join this year's planning committee.

- Outreach(Jessica)

The Outreach Committee met this morning. They are deciding their top priorities in 2017 to focus on. Some annual activities include the Symposium - our biggest annual outreach effort. They also have the site tour, Progress Report, etc. They feel some conservation challenges such as Elodea could use more outreach support and in some instances, partnership support. Elodea may become a higher priority. The outreach priorities overall mirror conservation priorities defined by the Partnership.

A booth is being planned at the Mat-Su Sportsman Show March 24-26. The Alaska Center will also have a booth there advocating their Stand for Salmon Campaign and the Title 16 proposal. They have plenty of volunteers and could help staff our booth if needed. Arni volunteered for both booths.

Jessica, Trent, and Katrina Liebich, USFWS Fisheries Outreach Coordinator in Alaska visited Cabela's and we can collaborate with them. (Katrina is Trent's wife, who just won the top USFWS outreach award – the Sense of Wonder Award. Congratulations and thanks to Katrina, who continues to be an incredible support to all Alaska Fish Habitat Partnerships.) Cabela's has a grant opportunity, and it might be used to fund the Symposium, training or elodea assistance. There is no due date for applications, but sooner is better to be in line as funding becomes available.

- **Science and Data**

A current priority of this committee is to develop about 3 index watersheds which have more studies on them to compare changes over time. Jeff Davis is collecting known data on watersheds across the basin to assist in determining index watersheds for the Mat-Su. They have reviewed documents and a draft.

At-Large Seat Applicants

Jessica invited the three other applicants to participate in other partnership capacities. All have expressed interest. One participated in the Outreach meeting, and is now on a work committee. Jessica will continue to follow-up and invite them all to the Steering Committee meetings.

General Partner updates (all or any attendees)

The Eagle River Chamber of Commerce invited a presentation on the old Eklutna River dam removal for Eklutna, Inc. CEO Curtis McQueen to arrange.

Upcoming Events:

- Webinar on the 2015 National Fish Habitat Assessment 9:30am- 12:00pm Friday, January 13

This is about the assessment of the status of fish habitat done across the country every 5 years. It was done as a book in 2010 and online in 2015. Jessica will forward us the webinar call-in information.

Next meeting:

- Tuesday March 14th 1:30-4pm

Facilitator: Frankie

Notetaker: Christy