**Steering Committee Meeting**

**Division of Agriculture**

**1800 Glenn Highway, Palmer**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2014 1:30 – 4 pm**

**Minutes**

**Facilitator:** Bill Rice **Notetaker**: Arni Thomson

Attendance:

Liz Robinson, Envision Mat-Su

Frankie Barker, MSB

Arni Thomson, Alaska Salmon Alliance

Jessica Speed, TNC

Jessica Winnestaffer, Chickaloon

Corinne Smith, TNC

Bill Rice, USFWS

Absent:

Roger Harding, ADFG

Eric Rothwell, NOAA

Jeff Davis, ARRI

Draft minutes form January 14th to be sent out once more for final review by Jessica and completion by Corinne.

**Partnership Business**

Board of Fisheries Meeting (Jessica S.)

* Salmon Partnership submitted letter to BOF; 250 public commenters; quite an experience
* Board of Fish took no significant actions to protect habitat, although it is a mandate under the Sustainable Fish Policy.
* Preliminary discussion of ADFG Dean Hughes Habitat Research priorities plan, it has been updated. Frankie to distribute it to Partnership.

Strategic Action Plan Update (Corinne)

* Corinne distributed the final version of the Executive Summary of the Strategic Action Plan.
* The revision of the plan is now complete and posted on the Partnership website.
* Corinne is open to hearing feedback from the committee on the action plan review process.
* Tremendous amount of work that went into the revision, and it necessitated close collaboration.
* The Mat-Su Plan is likely the most detailed and thorough plan of the Alaska Partnerships.
* New strategies were added as a result of membership survey feedback: large scale resource development, coal and hydro power; climate change and motorized off road vehicles, pike was modified to include invasive plant species.
* Some of the history of the first plan compared to the update was discussed for the benefit of the new committee members.

Committee Decision Making – Consensus (Jeff)

* This was tabled until the next meeting when Jeff is available for discussion.

Partnership RFP Process – see proposal attached (Bill Rice)

* The RFP process was discussed (attached). The Steering Committee approved the revised RFP Review Process for implementation and evaluation over the 2014 funding cycle.
* Timeframe issues for soliciting and reviewing proposals before database deadlines in the Service are a major concern and Bill will be talking with the Service’s regional office about pushing back deadlines to input proposals into their national database.
* USFWS is hopeful that they can set a date for announcement of the date they will publish notice of call for RFPs.
* Bill proposed that RFPs could be submitted in early September. 30 day submission deadline with review to occur in October and November. These timelines will be further discussed by the scoring criteria subcommittee (Jessica S., Bill, Eric and Liz) before the next committee meeting in May and a timeline proposed for steering committee approval.
* The scoring criteria subcommittee will meet and review and revise the scoring process for ranking RFPs, with a proposed scoring system for the May meeting.

Jessica will send out an announcement/advisory notice to Mat-Su Partners that NFHP will be announcing an RFP this summer 2014.

Budget review and discussion:

* Basic allocation of $75,000 is likely from USFWS.
* Review of budget. Conference funding with FWService funds is now very complicated and restrictive, recommendation that these funds be found from other sources.
* Discussion of increasing travel allocation for other related meaningful conferences,

for the Coordinator and possibly committee members.

* Next meeting will share Partnership income and expenses.

**National NFHP** (Jessica, David)

* NFHP FWS Funding Application

18 Partnerships in the nation, all of them submitted applications. David Wigglesworth oversees Alaska Region. Applications closed Feb. 28th. The funding application requires a tremendous amount of work on the part of USFWS, Partnership coordinator and some Steering Committee members.

SE Partnership is now formally recognized but not recognized for funding.

By May first, Mat-Su SHP should know about funding.

* Mat-Su Involvement in Restoring America’s Estuaries Conference – November, 2014, Washington, DC.

NFHP would like a strong Fish Habitat Partnership presence at this conference and may be able to offer some travel assistance. NFHP is suggesting that FHP’s make a presentation at the Conference. We are working with other Alaska FHP’s and have submitted a tentative proposal to present on the successes and challenges of science assessments for FHP’s in Alaska. Also, the coastal fish habitat Partnerships have submitted a session proposal that will highlight the work of coastal FHP’s and how each works to address habitat issues in three main thematic areas: estuary protection and restoration, education and outreach, and science and data followed by a 45- minute panel discussion.

**Alaska FHPs**

* Joint-conference American Fisheries Society (AFS) and American Water Resources Association (AWRA) – October 20-24, 2014 in Juneau (Bill)
* Ideas for partnerships to get involved with include hosting 1-2 training sessions, 2-3 sessions, support for a plenary speaker or a short film festival. If the committee is interested, contact Debbie Hart with SE Partnership to get involved.
* Three sessions were put forward prior to their due date from partnership members; Hydrologic and Habitat Modeling and Characterization, Aquatic Habitat Restoration in Alaska, and Assessing Biotic and Abiotic Responses to Habitat Restoration.

**Committee Updates**

* Symposium Planning (Jessica)

The Symposium Planning Committee has met once in 2014 and will be meeting again the end of March.

We are looking to expand the committee with a number of expressions of interest to serve on the committee from 2013 evaluation forms.

November 18-19thare tentative dates at the Palmer Depot for 2014.

Outreach (Frankie)

* Have initial objectives and goals based on Strategic Action Plan and will be developing an Outreach Plan.

Science and Data (Bill)

* The focus right now of the committee is to provide science review of proposals;
* Committee is currently also requested to comment and track development of GIS strean mapping of Mat-Su Borough by TNC. For this activity, about 3 review periods will be performed with the first one active currently. The committee solicited Gillian from ADFG and Janet Curran from USGS to assist with the quality control reviews.
* This is how the committee will currently work, with the core being Doug McBride, Sam Ivy, Jeff Davis, Eric Rothwell and Bill Rice and soliciting other science expertise as needed to answer questions or tackle issues. Bill Rice provides the facilitation and oversees the committee.
* The focus of the committee is to provide the science and project merit review, not be a stepping stone for steering committee membership.
* A framework has been discussed but realistically could not be attempted until next winter unless someone volunteered to help do it.
* Bill Rice was awarded USF&W Field Biologist of the year 2013, for the national Fish Passage Program. Congratulations Bill!

**Upcoming Events:**

Joint-conference American Fisheries Society (AFS) and American Water Resources Association (AWRA) <http://www.afs-alaska.org/call-for-session-proposals>

**Next meeting: May 13, 2014** Facilitator: Eric Rothwell Notetaker: Roger Harding

**RFP Review Process**

Here is a proposal for how the review process will work for discussion and hopefully vote to move forward.

The Steering Committee will see all proposals submitted. There will be a stepwise review process:

* FWS receives all proposals and provides initial evaluation of them by summarizing in a 1 page review. The review components are:
	+ Evaluation per FWS and NHFP policy. Ones that do not meet these policies are flagged as not able to be funded. If a proposal is questioned as to whether it follows the Action Plan and RFP request, that is flagged for SDC and Steering Committee decision.
	+ FWS will inquire and ask obvious questions of proposers, document answers, highlight potential concerns or strengths of proposals. FWS has staff to do this, has been doing it unofficially in the past.
* All proposals and 1-page reviews go to SDC for evaluation. SDC gives a recommendation to fund, not fund, or fund with recommended changes (which are spelled out). These recommendations (each of which includes a paragraph or so of reasoning) are based on the merits of the proposal, the science or other need, adherence to the action plan, how well the results help inform other actions, etc. – basically the elements specified in the RFP and review criteria.
* All proposals and recommendations go to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes their decisions and prioritizes the projects for funding.
* FWS to follow up with proposers based on the prioritization and SDC committee (ie. if a project is prioritized highly with a recommendation to fund with certain changes).