



**Steering Committee Meeting (Virtual)**

**Tuesday, May 9, 2023 1:30 – 4 pm**

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## MEETING NOTES

***Attendance:***

*Eric Booton, Trout Unlimited (TU)*

*Erika Ammann, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)*

*Margaret Stern, Susitna River Coalition*

*Jessica Speed, TU*

*Ted Eischeid, Mat-Su Borough/National Fish Habitat Partnership Board*

*Matt LaCroix, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

*Jeremy Thatcher, NOAA*

*Aaron Prussion, TU*

*Laurie Stuart, Tyonek Tribal Conservation District*

*Trent Liebich, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

*Michael Mazzacavallo, Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

**Facilitator:** Margaret Stern **Notetaker:** Eric Booton

Approve March, 2022 Steering Committee Meeting Notes (5 min) *\*March notes*

*Edits: Remove notes specific to project reviews by the Steering Committee – in particular, conversations where SC members left the room due to conflicts of interest.*

*Action: Jessica update notes*

### **Partnership Business**

- National Fish Habitat Partnership project funding
  - Update on status of FY23 funded projects and FY24 projects under review by NFHP Board (Trent Liebich and Jessica Speed) (5 min)

*We annually compete for National Fish Habitat Partnership funds to cover much of the cost of the coordinator position and some basic operations, as well as funding local salmon habitat projects that meet the goals of the Strategic Action Plan.*

FY23

- *Trent: We received the funding. Trent plans to get emails out to recipients this week to guide them in how to get the money into their accounts.*
- *Jessica: we had 4 projects funded - MSB fish passage, TTCD Elodea & AWC surveys, UAA stream temperature and Partnership coordination & outreach.*

*Action: Trent contact FY23 funding recipients to get cooperative agreement process going. Cc Jessica/reach out if Partnership coordinator can be of assistance.*

- *Review of FY24 NFHP project funding process – what went well and what can be improved for FY25? (Jessica Speed) (25 min) \*FY24 RFP Process for NFHP Funding Materials*

*Jessica: Being reviewed now by the board for recommendation to Department of Interior.*

*Feedback from the last funding process:*

- *Reminder: make sure that conversations where SC members leave the room due to conflicts of interest are not captured in the notes shared to the full SC or posted on the website.*
- *Jessica reviewed timeline for Partnership RFP timeline & process.*
- *Feedback for improvements:*
  - *Laurie – Need to define tribal entities & the scoring for them*
    - *Are we intending for there to be such a heavy weight on those who can provide match and then favoring large projects that are likely to get funded as it is?*
  - *Michael – if we are going to change priority objectives, we should do so sooner rather than later. In the past we waited until it was too late to alter. Suggested having a deadline during the September meeting so that we can announce at the Symposium.*
    - *It would be great to have more definition of what is expected as monitoring.*
  - *Eric – suggestions for more clarity around what outreach plan is expected for applicants and scoring them.*
  - *Jessica – uploading into the NFHP database was a big project.*

*Actions:*

- *Laurie willing to draft a letter to the tribal liaison on the NFHP board regarding suggestions and challenges for tribal entities.*
- *Dedicate July or September Steering Committee meeting to discuss and review RFP - Preference for July*
- *Updates and Insights on National Fish Habitat Partnership Board and Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission Activity (Ted Eischeid, National Fish Habitat Partnership Board member/Mat-Su Borough) (10 min)*

*NFHP Board Update – Alaska partnerships had a good update call this morning. Ted has some suggestions for the partnerships to provide feedback to applicants as to why or why not they received the funding requested. Would like to see more staff support for FHP's.*

- *Suggested the Partnership draft a letter and request it to be included in the June 13th NFHP board meeting to highlight concerns and create the opportunity for the board to discuss and address. Note that Ted will not be in attendance.*
  - *Board is working on NFHP priorities for FY25.*
  - *Ted is determining whether or not he will apply to remain on the NFHP board.*
- *Status of Mat-Su Borough Riparian Set-back Ordinance (Ted Eischeid) (20 min)*

*End of last year two Assembly Members submitted a draft ordinance to repeal the MSB riparian setback ordinance. Was reviewed by the Planning Commission & Fish & Wildlife Commission. Both Commissions rejected the ordinance and the Assembly Members who had originally submitted it, pulled it. The Borough was requested to re-draft the ordinance with the suggestions provided by the commissions.*

- *Will be introduced on May 15<sup>th</sup> with the MSB Planning Commission, and hearing will be June 5<sup>th</sup> with the Planning Commission.*
  - *New draft maintains 75-foot setback for streams & rivers. Maintains it for lakes but allows you to build within the 75-foot setback if it's not closer than 25 feet, and engineer sign-off on mitigation plan.*
  - *Will be before the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission at their May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.*
- *Filling Vacant Partnership Committee Seats and Roles (Jessica Speed) (20 min)*
    - *Steering Committee (local government and at-large)*

*We have 10 steering committee seats, and currently 2 vacant seats (Local Gov & at large seat).*

*Would be great to have an MSB representative. FWC could make a motion to recommend someone.*

*Action:*

- *Jessica – confirm Steering Committee support via email.*
- *Ted – With Steering Committee approval, update MSB FWC at their May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting and invite a motion to ask a Commission member to serve.*
  - *Outreach Committee – did not cover.*
  - *Science and Data Committee chair application – did not cover*

**Stream Quantification Tool: An Introduction and Potential Utility for Mat-Su, Matthew LaCroix, U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (15 min)\*** [Brochure](#), intro [video](#)

- *A stream quantification tool was generated for interior Alaska, and one is being created for the Arctic Coastal Plain and one will be created for the Cook Inlet basin.*
- *Basically, an excel spreadsheet developed to quantify functional change at the reach scale.*
- *Can help determine efficacy of restoration projects and help prioritize projects.*
- *The tool helps create a common language for agencies & stakeholder groups to communicate restoration & mitigation.*
- *Factors five functional categories of the stream function pyramid*
- *There was a suggestion to host a conversation regarding a Mat-Su SQT at the Symposium*

- Jessica shared part of an email from Matt Varner re: the SQT tool:

*A regional SQT would really benefit the Mat-Su since it would serve as the basis for determining Clean Water Act (CWA) 404 mitigation requirements for proposed development projects. Having a tool helps to ensure that impacts to aquatic habitats are fully acknowledged and either avoided or compensated for. In the absence of an SQT, impact assessments can be based on qualitative data and professional judgement which are more easily influenced by other socio-political factors. Bringing together diverse stakeholders around the idea of an SQT could help build consistency around habitat assessment methods and provide benefits well beyond CWA mitigation requirements. Some resources available to help shed light on the concept of an SQT include a [brochure](#) and a intro [video](#). Folks that want to take a deeper dive could also look at the Interior Alaska SQT (link to [tool](#) and [user manual](#)).*

### **Committee Updates (15 min)**

- Science and Data (Jessica)
  - *Hasn't met since last meeting*
- Outreach (Theo or Eric)
  - *Plants for Salmon riparian planting day June 3<sup>rd</sup> - <https://www.facebook.com/events/963850331292694>*
  - *Need to determine a location for a summer site tour – please share if you have a suggestion.*
- Symposium (Jessica)
  - *A couple planning meetings have been hosted*
  - *Save the date: Nov 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> for 2023 Mat-Su Salmon Symposium. Note: this is a Monday and a Tuesday.*
- Capacity and Development (Jessica)
  - *Has met with Laurie & Nelli Williams (TU), and received support from Michelle Beadle (TU)*
  - *Will apply for upcoming BLM funding opportunity.*
- Other adhoc committee updates
  - *Hosting Mat-Su Regional Fish Passage Meetings (Michael Mazzacavallo)*
    - *Initial meeting hosted in December*
    - *Feed- back to host additional meetings*
    - *follow up meeting hosted in April to review funding opportunities on horizon and develop a regional strategy for tackling projects.*
  - *Science to Conservation Outcomes (Jessica)*
    - *No updates*

*\*Find written committee updates below agenda.*

### **Other Updates (25 min)**

- National updates
- Statewide or regional
  - **Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Symposium (Jessica)**
    - *Kenai Symposium was very well done. A great science to policy panel discussion where was a suggestion to considering creating a government liaison (person or committee) to help FHP's stay apprised of policy decisions and therefore be able to offer science information to support informed decision making by community leaders.*

- *Kenai Borough does not have an equivalent to the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission. There is some interest and active exploration into the potential to create a counterpart in the Kenai Borough.*
- *There was a lot of interest for a Cook Inlet wide, Symposium. As brought up by Erin Larson of UAA at our March meeting.*
- Alaska Fish Habitat Partnerships meeting
  - *Group discussed ideas to share feedback with the NFHP Board regarding the RFP and reports that go to the NFHP Board and in turn, determine FHP funding for coordination as well as local area projects.*
  - *Alaska FHP's will meet and consider continued improvements to updated shared [website](#) and outreach materials (rack card and brochure) identified in the consultant created communications audit report.*
  - *There is an upcoming multistate grant funding opportunity coordinated by NFHP staff. AKFHP's will meet and also discuss as part of possible continued share communications materials.*
- Partner updates (*did not capture in notes*)

### Upcoming Events:

- 2023 ADF&G Streambank Rehabilitation Mat-Su Workshop May 16 and 17<sup>th</sup>. [df.dsf.streambankrehab@alaska.gov](mailto:df.dsf.streambankrehab@alaska.gov) .
- Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Advisory Board work session, 10-12pm May 17, 2023 MSB Building, Palmer.
- Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting, 4-6pm, May 18th, 2023, MSB Building, Palmer with virtual option.
- Montana Creek community riparian restoration day, 10-2 pm June 3rd, 2023
- Alaska Invasive Species Partnership monthly meeting, 9am June 7th.
- Introduction to River Forms and Processes Workshop, June 12-15 in Palmer/Sutton area contact Andrea at [aljames@chickaloon-nsn.gov](mailto:aljames@chickaloon-nsn.gov)
- Mat-Su Elodea Task Force Big Lake Bioblitz, July 18th, 2023

### Next meeting:

- **Tuesday, July 11th 1:30-4pm. In-person/virtual hybrid.**

*Note this is listed as hybrid. FYI, Jessica will not be able to attend in-person.*

**Facilitator:** Michael Mazzacavallo

**Notetaker:** Trent Liebich

*Trent confirmed note-taking.*

*Jessica will double check and update facilitator list and get back with Michael.*

### Committee Updates (*find list of committee members [here](#)*)

- Science and Data
  - Committee did not meet in interim. Next scheduled meeting is September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1-3pm.
  - There was one volunteer for the two co-chair seats (Laura Pevan of Chickaloon Village Traditional Council) on the Science and Data Committee. The Science and Data Committee is supportive of this chair nomination. The Steering Committee needs to review and approve or deny this nomination from the Science and Data

Committee. Laura largely offered to assist with meeting facilitation and general committee support.

- Outreach
  - Continued planning occurring for collaborative riparian planting day on Montana Crk/Yoder Rd., Talkeetna. Planning team partners include SRC, USFWS, ADFG, Knik Tribe, TU, Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District and Mat-Su Borough. Trout Unlimited submitted a funding proposal (NOAA Rec Fish) to support restoration work there.
  - Shared an outreach booth with Susitna River Coalition at Talkeetna Earth Day celebration that highlighted area non-profits.
  - We are recruiting for additional outreach committee members. If there is someone in your organization who would be interested and a good fit, please reach out.
  - Participating on Mat-Su Elodea Task Force who is planning a Big Lake Bioblitz for July 18<sup>th</sup> to educate and conduct surveys at Big Lake.
  - Please share updates for list-serve with Jessica for posting.
- Capacity and Development updates
  - Met with Nelli Williams and separately, Laurie Stuart to brainstorm fundraising strategies. Will apply for BLM funds to support Partnership outreach, operations and general capacity in May.
  - Michelle Beadle of TU has been helping with communications 5 hours per week, in April. This may or may not continue into the summer.
  - Jeremy Thatcher/NOAA intern will be helping with summer site tour and Symposium, as well as some outreach. He is also interested in additional field work opportunities. Please reach out to him at [jeremy.thatcher@noaa.gov](mailto:jeremy.thatcher@noaa.gov) if you have field work opportunities.
- Symposium Planning
  - An expanded committee has held two Symposium planning meeting in, 2023.
  - Committee is recommending Monday and Tuesday, November 13th and 14th, at Palmer Depot for 2023 Symposium.
  - Please save-the-date to host an in-person Steering Committee meeting on Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### Initiatives/Adhoc committees:

- Convening Mat-Su Regional Fish Passage Partners
  - Hosted a Mat-Su regional fish passage meeting on April 28th, 9-11am. 21 attendees from nine organizations including three tribes.
  - Planning committee will convene in May for follow-up and identification of next steps. The intention at this time, is to host these meetings quarterly.
- Science to Conservation Outcomes
  - Did not meet. Hoping to meet in May to reconvene and work toward next steps outlined in the workplan.