Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group
Meeting #2 Summary

Monday, March 21, 2022
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendees

Advisory Group Members

Robert "Bob" Kratzer	WA State Guides Association
Caleb Hitzfield	Caleb Hitzfield Fly Fishing
Chris Ringlee	Private angler
Geoff McMichael	Mainstem Fish Research, LLC
Jason Rolfe	The Flyfish Journal
Jessica Helsley	Wild Salmon Center
Jonathan Stumpf	Trout Unlimited
Lee Geist	Private angler
Luke Probasco	Private angler
Mara Zimmerman	Coast Salmon Partnership
Rich Simms	Wild Steelhead Coalition
Roy Morris	Retired fishing guide

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Staff

Toby Harbison	WDFW, Program Manager for Region 6
James Losee	WDFW
Eryn Couch	WDFW

Facilitation Team

Greer Maier	Triangle Associates, Facilitator
Olivia Smith	Triangle Associates, Facilitation Support

Meeting Materials

- March 21 YouTube Meeting Recording
- March 21 Meeting Agenda
- February 17 Meeting Summary

Action Items

Action Items	*Who*
Finalize the Coastal Steelhead Charter and Ground Rules.	WDFW/ Triangle Associates
Draft a meeting summary and schedule next meeting.	Triangle Associates
Share management plans from other states with Advisory Group members.	WDFW/Triangle Associates

Review and provide edits in track changes or comment bubbles to the: • Draft Background Section • Draft Communications Section • Draft Status Classification Approach And then send a copy to Toby Harbison with initials in the file name to be saved on the SharePoint.	Advisory Group Members

Welcome and Introductions

James Losee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) welcomed meeting attendees and thanked everyone for joining. The facilitator, Greer Maier with Triangle Associates (Triangle), gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and objectives. Hearing no changes to the agenda Olivia Smith, Triangle Associates led a roll call and had each Advisory Group member share their first steelhead related memory.

Process Updates

Review Process

Toby Harbison, WDFW, provided the group with an overview of the Coastal Steelhead Plan review process. She noted that as sections are developed and sent for review, the best way to provide feedback is to email her copies of the review documents with comments included and saved with reviewer initials. Comments will be reviewed and saved to a folder on the project SharePoint for all to access. Toby then explained the meeting process for the remainder of the 2022 meetings:

- ***Pre-Meeting:*** Ahead of the meeting, WDFW (via Triangle email), will send materials for Advisory Group members to read and prepare for the upcoming meeting. Comments are not needed on the pre-meeting materials, but they are intended to be used for preparation for the upcoming meeting.

- ***Meeting:*** At the meeting, WDFW will review comments from previous homework assignments and give an overview of the upcoming "homework" topic.

- ***Post-Meeting:*** Following the meeting, WDFW, will distribute homework materials for Advisory Group members to provide edits and comments by the next meeting.

Toby Harbison, WDFW, then gave an overview of a draft WDFW Steelhead 2022 Syllabus to help provide Advisory Group members with a guide of upcoming work.

Charter and Ground Rules

Greer Maier, facilitator, updated the group that comments had been received on the draft Charter and Group rules document and Triangle and WDFW have drafted a final version based on this

input.

Scheduling
Greer Maier, facilitator, shared an update on scheduling, noting that the next meeting in April has been difficult to schedule and there has not been one day and time that works for this group. She encouraged Advisory Group members to revisit the Doodle. The schedule notes an April and June meeting, but not one in May.

Outline Review
Toby Harbison, WDFW, then reviewed Advisory Group member comments to the Outline of the Coastal Steelhead Management Plan presented at the February 17, 2022, meeting. Toby noted several comments will likely be addressed when the group reviews the background section of the management plan.

- In response to a question about the extent to which the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan has been implemented in specific basins, Toby responded this will be addressed in basin specific parts of the document and noted some basin-specific objectives in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan have not been implemented yet but are a priority for WDFW.

- James Losse emphasized WDFW is using the objectives outlined in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan as the foundation for the Coastal Steelhead Plan and to reinforce unmet objectives. Toby added WDFW is referencing other state's coastal management plans and invited the group to share any specific ideas they may have as it relates to other regions management plans.

Questions and Discussion:
- There was a request for Toby Harbison to share the other state management plans WDFW is referencing.

- In response to a question about documenting ideas and suggestions that pertain to future work beyond the scope of this effort, Toby shared those would be documented but reminded the group to stay focused on what they need to accomplish as this document is large and under a strict timeline.

- Chris Ringlee suggested there needs to be a Straits steelhead group.

- Roy Morris expressed that he did not initially understand the goal of this group was to critique existing written proposals.

- James Losee commented the Coastal Steelhead Plan development is critical and under a tight timeline (due to the Legislature by December 2022) but can be the beginning of a much bigger endeavor to address coastal steelhead management.

Draft Communications Section
Eryn Couch, WDFW, gave a presentation on the draft Communications section of the Coastal Steelhead Plan noting the goal is to provide accurate information and increase opportunities for stakeholders to engage and participate. Eryn then gave an overview of media engagement tactics, online resources, social media, events, and public meetings included in the Coastal Steelhead Plan strategy (slides 4-14).

James acknowledged the emails from this Advisory Group about wanting to shorten the time spent discussing the Communications section and explained to the group the importance of communicating to the public and welcomed any feedback on how to improve.

Questions and Discussion:

- Bob Kratzer thanked WDFW for the presentation and improved communications in recent months but shared there is still room for improvement as many people still did not hear about the closure of the steelhead season. Bob suggested creating a communication checklist for emergency closures to align audiences with the same message and provide everyone with rationale behind the decision to close the season.

- Roy Morris explained the small communities and local newspapers on the coast are valuable resources for spreading information.

- Jess Helsley agreed communications at WDFW have improved in recent months. He believes the communications document needs to highlight data gaps as part of the legislative report. Roy Morris agreed with Jess that the quality of research is tied to the funding and helps inform legislative requests.

- Jonathan Stumpf agreed communications at WDFW have improved but recommended going into more detail with fewer blog posts instead of covering several topics at a high level.

- Rich Simms commented WDFW should be clearer and direct with how the agency is coordinating with Tribal fisheries.

- Bob Kratzer suggested the group would benefit from some background on where the proviso came from. He agreed to connect with James Losee and James McBride, legislative lead, to determine what would be useful and the appropriate way to get the group that information.

Introduce and Discuss Status Classification Approach
Toby Harbison, WDFW, then gave an introductory presentation on the "status classification approach" including five interconnected subject areas (monitoring & evaluation, fisheries regulations, hatchery operations, habitat, and socio-economics) (slides 15-23).

Questions and Discussion:

- In response to a question from Jason Rolfe about how monitoring and evaluation is prioritized, Toby Harbison explained there are limitations to where efforts can be concentrated and proposed that filling data gaps in areas where the wild steelhead population is not doing well should be the higher priority.

- A comment was made that monitoring and evaluation can also help identify populations doing well, James Losee responded WDFW is not ignoring areas with higher abundance but is scaling the monitoring and evaluation appropriately based on available creel data across geographic areas.

- Bob Kratzer commented the Quillayute River was closed last year due to lack of monitoring and evaluation even though the river was above escapement, and that monitoring resources need to also be covering systems that are below escapement.

- Geoff McMichael commented the labels on slide 21 of "conservation focus, transitional, and maintenance" are confusing because they don't refer to the status of the fish. He recommended changing them to "well below escapement," "at escapement," and "above escapement" or "healthy," "fair," and "sick." James Losee explained the amount of monitoring could shift how things are categorized. Toby Harbison added the degree of certainty decreases and possibility of opening a fishery increases with increased in-season monitoring and evaluation and suggested relabeling this as the "Regime Classification" instead of "Status Classification" because it relates to management.

- Mara Zimmerman agreed with the confusion behind the status classification table (slide 21) and commented the goal should not be for steelhead runs to be at escapement. Mara suggested adding a fourth column for "healthy" with a buffer to indicate when fisheries are implemented. Toby Harbison responded the three labels were based on the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan objectives to align policies with that plan. A fourth column could be further discussed.

- Jonathan Stumpf commented in agreement with Mara Zimmerman that managing to escapement is not a good enough goal and was the approach that led to current management problems. He stated that staying within the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan has not worked. James Losee responded the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan has not worked in some cases or perhaps consistently but has not completely failed. It is a guide for WDFW to get on track with meeting objectives.

- Chris Ringlee agreed with Jonathan and expressed concern with an approach that has not worked for the last several years.

- In response to a question from Lee Geist about why monitoring capacity is limited and why anglers are not being utilized as a resource in the field, James Losee responded monitoring can sometimes be limited by funding and there will be an opportunity to

discuss creative ways to monitor.

- Roy Morris agreed with Lee that WDFW may need to expand their approach to monitoring if funding is a limiting factor as there are creative ways to meet this need.

- Geoff McMichael commented they would like to see limited entry considered in pre-season planning for all recreational opportunities.

- In response to a question if the Health, Equity, Assessment, Toolkit (HEAT) will be provided to Advisory Group Members, WDFW responded yes it can be shared.

- In response to a question about if information habitat quality by each river system will be available (ex. Sol Duc is at 85% of habitat with 15% to improve), Toby Harbison responded WDFW is working with other entities to consolidate information to provide a holistic understanding of existing conditions and future goals.

- Caleb Hitzfield asked if WDFW could outline what kind of changes the Advisory Group can actually make within the constraints of the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan.

- Rich Simms commented the focus has always been on escapement goals instead of trying to build abundance and diversity of the resource.

- Roy Morris agreed with Rich and commented how steelhead are an ecosystem indicator that a wider group beyond anglers cares about.

Wrap Up and Next Steps
The Facilitator thanked the Advisory Group members for their engagement and thoughtful questions. A meeting date for April will be chosen based on results of the Doodle poll and a meeting invite will be sent out by next week.

Public Comments:

- Ravae/Aaron O'Leary expressed concerns with the status classification approach and wondered if there is a baseline of monitoring and evaluation being planned that hasn't happened in the past where lower priority is not as much of a concern. It was noted the current season abundance levels and hatchery planning will have impacts well into the future.

- Ty Wyatt read the group the first paragraph of the Coastal Steelhead Management Plan to remind the group of the intention of the Advisory Group.
- Justin mentioned we need funding for data/scale samples/genetic testing/more monitoring and commented WDFW should implement something in the coastal region with everyone who'd love to help.

- Robert Smiley shared we need to take a holistic approach and understand that everyone wants to see steelhead be successful. Most avid anglers are willing to do what is necessary to ensure native steelhead are around for future generations. Need to look at all resources

available- guides/anglers/comanagers/everyone.

The meeting officially adjourned at 6:10 p.m. PST.