

Washington Fish Passage Prioritization Strategy HYBRID Forums

FINAL SUMMARY

Locations & Participant Summaries

Seattle Forum – 9/18/24

TAF Bethaday Community Learning Space
605 SW 108th St.
Seattle, WA 98146

In-person: 5 Participants

Online: 88 Participants

Wenatchee Forum – 10/2/24

Confluence Technology Center
285 Technology Center Way
Wenatchee, WA 98801

In-person: 9 Participants

Online: 66 Participants

Summary and Themes

Fish Passage Prioritization Strategy Presentation

Both forums opened with an introduction to the project by the project team. This presentation included background and context for the development of the Fish Passage Prioritization Strategy, a review of the outreach and engagement conducted throughout its development, and a detailed overview of the Draft Strategy. Participants had opportunities throughout each meeting to ask questions and provide feedback on the topics covered by the project team.

Project team members in attendance at one or both forums included: Jane Atha (WDFW), Thomas Jameson (WDFW), Phil Roni (Cramer Fish Sciences), Hilary Wilkinson (Triangle Associates), Kate Galambos (Triangle Associates), and Cole Dill-De Sa (Triangle Associates).

See below themes derived that emerged from questions asked at both forums. Note that WDFW maintains a list of Frequently Asked Questions on its [project webpage](#); this will be updated to reflect questions posed in the forums.

Habitat Connectivity for Fish Species: Several comments about how the strategy addresses issues of habitat connectivity were made; specifically lateral connectivity related to fish passage barriers.

Example Questions & Comments:

- How is lateral connectivity considered in the plan?
- How are latitudinal barriers considered?
- Did the statistics you shared about opened habitat include stranded barriers?
- Is juvenile downstream passage considered? This can be an important bottleneck for entire populations.
- How do you consider habitat upstream of a barrier where some of the upstream habitat is currently blocked and might or might not become available in the future?



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Regional/Statewide Coordination and Strategy Funding: Numerous comments were made regarding how the strategy will be coordinated between the State and regional recovery groups. Additionally, several questions and comments were made about how regional priorities and statewide priorities relate to each other, as well as the potential impact on funding for regions without listed species.

Example Questions and Comments:

- Do the statewide priorities come out of the optimization approach, or will the state adopt what comes out of the regional prioritization as their priorities for funding if it follows the necessary criteria?
- Who will coordinate the strategy and funding mechanisms? A major issue is lack of coordination between funding organizations.
- How do you get from a basin priority to a statewide priority?
- Recognizing that locally based funding decisions are made on more than just a barrier's modeled score, how will this information be used in a funding decision?

Data Availability & Quality: Numerous questions regarding data quality, consistency and availability across the state were asked; specifically, how/whether the strategy would address it.

Example Questions and Comments:

- How can we deal with the inconsistency of data quality across the state?
- Given that data availability and quality has been a known challenge to barrier removal efforts and has also been identified as such by this strategy, how does the strategy address this challenge and provide guidance to overcome it?

Strategy Development, Engagement, and Project Specifics: Participants asked for clarification regarding the focus of the strategy and noted concerns about unintended consequences of prioritizing certain areas over others due to its design.

Example Questions and Comments:

- How extensive was Tribal engagement?
- Will regions that do not have listed species lose funding because of the strategy?
- What type of strategy does DNR use in its Family Forest Fish Passage Program that was highlighted?
- Will the strategy cover barriers in the WSDOT culvert case injunction?



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World Café Facilitated Activity

The project team facilitated an activity designed to allow participants to provide direct input and feedback on four priority questions related to finalizing the strategy. The questions include:

1. Are there data/criteria that need to be available regionally and statewide?
2. What resources would be valuable for you/your organization to implement relevant elements of the strategy?
3. What recommendations do you have for implementation?
4. What regional fisheries data or criteria could be incorporated?

The team facilitated an in-person and an online “world café,” asking participants to take turns responding to the questions above in small groups or individually online via the Mural application. A summary of response themes broken down by each question can be found below.

Q1: Are there data/criteria that need to be available regionally and statewide?

Standout themes from respondent responses:

- Statewide availability of data types including specifics on barrier details, upstream habitat information, and more comprehensive fish distribution data, particularly for lamprey and within unnamed tributaries.
- Standardized and up-to-date databases, especially for fish distribution and barrier mapping.
- Improved data-sharing mechanisms and consistent use of data layers across state agencies and recovery groups. Calls for streamlining data sharing, QA/QC, and improving WDFW culvert mapping tools and passability scores.

Examples:

- The data for barriers from different agencies needs to be consolidated into one area. Different agencies house their culvert work in different places, it would be nice as someone who works in replacing culverts, to have all the data in one place would be incredibly helpful.
- Don't forget the lamprey.
- Length of upstream habitat (species specific) AND length of upstream stream miles are not the same thing.
- I think that the barrier data is quite spotty, some quite old, and lots that has not been field verified in years.



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Q2: What resources would be valuable for you/your organization to implement relevant elements of the strategy?

Standout themes from respondent responses:

- Financial support for activities such as barrier removal for private landowners, data collection, and design/construction of projects. Additionally, funding for climate planning, outreach, and education initiatives would be valuable.
- Access to technical expertise, particularly with GIS software and RFP support.
- Support with private landowner outreach, advocacy and outreach materials, and engagement with elected officials. Additionally, streamlining permitting, feasibility assessments, and incentives for private barrier removal would significantly support implementation.

Examples:

- Send money to support boots-on-the-ground data collection. There is generally enough information available on the importance of the fish barriers in recovery implementation.
- GIS expertise to help develop and implement tool that can be re-run in the future by someone without GIS expertise.
- Resources on how to plan for climate-mediated shifts in hydrology.
- Strategy / best practices for landowner outreach to survey stream crossings for submission to programs like FFFPP. It's hard to get people on board, especially as a government agency.

Q3: What recommendations do you have for implementation?

Standout themes from respondent responses:

- Increase funding for acquisition and private landowner programs with sustained support over multiple biennia. Allocate additional personnel for project management and on-the-ground validation of the Fish Passage Data Sharing Initiative (FPDSI).
- Collaborate with local jurisdictions, Tribes, recovery groups, private landowners, and other interested parties to engage in the decision-making processes going forward. Prioritize public involvement and work to incentivize private culvert corrections
- Streamline permitting and acquisition processes for private culvert replacements and require climate-adapted culvert sizing. Align training with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) and promote interdisciplinary planning across stakeholder groups.



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Examples:

- Dedicated FTE within permitting agencies to ensure staff are assigned to high priority projects (e.g. Army Corps, County etc.) WSDOT has their own FTEs within Army Corps, for example to expedite their projects through the permit process. Smaller entities do not enjoy this and get stuck in the backlog.
- While the legislature may want to maximize habitat at the state level, this could inadvertently favor some treaty obligations over others until salmon are doing better across the state. Suggest an initial implementation period and commit to adaptively managing within two biennia to check for unintended consequences.
- Consult with other organizations who are conduct barrier assessments and removals (such as Trout Unlimited).
- Develop education material for the public so private citizens/landowners can have easy access to info on the importance of barrier correction projects.
- Streamline permitting.

Q4: What regional fisheries data or criteria could be incorporated?

Standout themes from respondent responses:

- Incorporate data on habitat potential, carrying capacity, and stream resiliency, including assessments of limiting factors such as downstream dams, predation, and water temperature. Conduct basin-by-basin assessments of salmon and steelhead vulnerability vis-a-vis projected impacts of climate change.
- Incorporate all fish life stages in data collection with tribal involvement.
- Incorporate hydro mapping, project data on planned barrier corrections, and updated data on spawning areas. Coordination between state/local agencies and recovery groups to align fish passage programs with WDFW draft strategy and prioritize areas with strong fish runs and good habitat quality.

Examples:

- Fish Mapping, biological observations, e-DNA.
- Information on known fish use by life history.
- A mechanism to rank projects by current/future habitat suitability. Forested with suitable riparian verses urban with increasing development.



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- Other limiting factors (e.g., downstream dams, predation, water temperature, lack of critical life stage habitat) that may reduce the expected benefits from barrier removals. (multiple comments).
- Climate projections.