



## Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board – March 2025 Meeting Summary

**Date:** March 18, 2025

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting

### Summary: Formal Actions / Decisions

Board Decisions:	Formal Action
January 2025 Meeting Notes	Approved
Derby Canyon Orchards Cost Increase Request	Approved
Derby Creek BNSF Crossing Cost Increase Request	Approved
Whiskey Creek Barriers RM 1.5-1.7 Cost Increase Request	Approved
CID at Coleman Creek Fish Screening & Passage Cost Increase Request	Approved
Gilliam Creek Fish Passage Prelim Design Cost Increase Request	Not Approved

### Summary: Follow-up Items and Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
<b>Legislative Update: Fish Passage Work Session</b>	Chair Jameson; Axel Swanson, WA Association of Counties; and Carl Schroeder, Association of Cities, will meet with the Local Government Committee to discuss fish passage and will update the Board at the April 2024 meeting.
<b>Fish Passage Strategy – Optimization Model Development</b>	WDFW staff have identified possible challenges to running the model due to the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) layer. Staff will determine the next steps based on available funding from the legislature for the Decision Support Package.
<b>Policy Subcommittee Update: Minimum QHA Score</b>	Staff will incorporate the Board's feedback into the Manual 22 update, including defining the process for projects that fall below the minimum score, and present it to the Policy Subcommittee for discussion and review. The final decision on the Manual 22 update will be made by the Board in August.
<b>Funding Status Updates (Ongoing)</b>	RCO staff will continue to work with project sponsors on the 23-25 to award funding based on the funds made available by the CCA
<b>2027-2029 Grant Round (Long-term)</b>	The Board will discuss updates to the next grant round RFP based on topics identified by Board and staff.

## **Welcome/Introductions/Agenda Review:**

Triangle Associates (Triangle) facilitator, Kate Galambos, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Chair Thomas Jameson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), welcomed attendees to the virtual meeting

Megan Euclide, Triangle, facilitated introductions with Board members and staff. A quorum was present.

## **Old Business:**

Kate reviewed the summary notes from the January 21st, 2025, meeting and highlighted decisions and action items.

***Decision:** Approval of January 21, 2025 Meeting Summary*

*Chair Jameson made a motion to approve the January meeting summary. Erik Neatherlin seconded the motion. With no objections, the January meeting summary was approved.*

**Public Comment:** None

## **Policy Subcommittee Update: Minimum Project Score -Kaylee Kautz, WDFW; John Foltz, RCO; Policy Subcommittee**

*The purpose of Kaylee and John's presentation was to provide an update to the Board and request direction for further subcommittee discussion; there was no required Board decision.*

John Foltz, RCO, provided an overview of the Board's request of the Policy Subcommittee to conduct a review of eligibility requirements and opportunities to ensure the Board is funding the best projects for fish. John summarized key discussions from the Policy Subcommittee meetings on February 5 and February 18. These discussions included the consideration of a minimum funding line and its impact on project exclusion. The goal of enacting a minimum score is to exclude projects that have minimal benefit for fish. John noted that the staff and the Policy Subcommittee are requesting direction from the Board at this time; the final decision will be made at the August Board meeting with the updated Manual 22.

Kaylee Kautz, WDFW, explained how the Quality Habitat Assessment (QHA) score system, which the Technical Review Team (TRT) uses already, could be used as a tool to implement a minimum standard. The QHA score is based on habitat opened (in meters) multiplied by a habitat quality modifier (%). The Policy Subcommittee directed staff to make a recommendation for the appropriate minimum QHA score based on past project scores.

Kaylee explained how the staff determined their recommended score of 300 with example project scenarios. She also noted that the minimum score can be refined and adjusted if necessary.

John gave a high level take away summary and outlined:

- All projects undergo a QHA survey. The minimum score of 300 can be adjusted, and sponsors can estimate their scores before applying or request WDFW staff assistance.

- The Board is being asked to confirm whether they are aligned with the current approach and if further discussion is needed about flexibility on the minimum score.

Board members discussed the Policy Subcommittee recommendation, key discussion points included:

- Staff confirmed that project sponsors can request staff assistance to estimate a project QHA score prior to submitting their application.
- Staff confirmed that project cost is not a factor when determining the QHA score.
- The Board emphasized the importance of ensuring public funds are used appropriately and that the QHA score is objective and repeatable.
- The Board identified a need to clarify the process for projects that do not meet the minimum requirement and highlighted the need for flexibility.
- There was general Board support for the 300 minimum and a call for a formalized process to handle projects below the score.
- Some Board members noted that this scoring system should integrate with the WDFW Statewide Fish Passage Prioritization Strategy.

***Path(s) Forward:***

- The Board supports setting a minimum score of 300.
- Staff will incorporate the Board's feedback into the Manual 22 update, including defining the process for projects that fall below the minimum score, and present it to the Policy Subcommittee for discussion and review.
- The final decision on the Manual 22 update will be made by the Board in August.

**Update: Relevant Legislative Topics – Chair Jameson, WDFW; Board Members**

Chair Jameson provided a brief legislative update, noting that more details on the House budget will be available by early next week, with the final budget expected in April and a compromise budget anticipated in May. Additionally, Chair Jameson, Axel Swanson (WA Association of Counties); and Carl Schroeder (Association of Cities), will be participating in a Fish Passage Work Session with the Local Governments Committee later this month.

***Path Forward:*** Chair Jameson; Axel Swanson, WA Association of Counties; and Carl Schroeder, Association of Cities, will meet with the Local Government Committee for a Work Session on Fish Passage and will update the Board at the April meeting.

**Funding Status Update -John Foltz, RCO**

John provided an update to the Board on the status of available funds.

John provided an update to the Board on the status of available funds, including the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding. Delays in working with sponsors have occurred because the project budgets are now several years old, resulting in the need for cost increases. The Cost Increase Subcommittee and TRT are working together on project design changes while ensuring that sponsors meet fish passage requirements.

RCO staff confirmed that funds can now be commingled, allowing for more flexibility. CCA funding can be used for funding cost increase requests that have already received capital funds. The Board flexibility with how use funds and can apply CCA funds to fund cost increase requests for projects that are higher on the list (not just those that are below project 70).

Projects 32-102 on the 23-25 list are eligible for CCA funds. John has not reached out to project sponsors for 101 and 102 due to the size of the requests. John will reach out to these sponsors once he has finished working with sponsors higher on the list.

**Path Forward:** John will continue to work with project sponsors on the 23-25 to award funding based on the funds made available by the CCA

### **Cost Increase Requests, John Foltz, RCO**

John Foltz provided an overview of five cost increase requests along with the recommendations from the Cost Increase Subcommittee. Due to the increased volume of requests based on dispersal of the CCA funds, the Cost Increase Subcommittee met three times since the last Board meeting: February 12, 18, and March 12. John noted that the Board has sufficient funding available to approve all five Cost Increase Requests.

1. **21-1553 Derby Canyon Orchards**
  - a. Sponsor: Chelan County Natural Resource Department
  - b. Requested Cost Increase: \$467,925
  - c. This project is related to the Derby Creek BNSF project listed below and is planned by the sponsor to be completed in conjunction. The subcommittee recommended to approve this increase (CCA funds).
2. **21-1511 Derby Creek BNSF Crossing**
  - a. Sponsor: Chelan County Natural Resource Department
  - b. Requested Cost Increase: \$441,150
  - c. Project increase is due to inflation. Subcommittee recommended to approve
3. **21-1530 Whiskey Creek Barriers RM 1.5-1.7**
  - a. Sponsor: Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
  - b. Requested cost increase: \$247,388
  - c. The project's cost has increased due to inflation, project complexity, and project management needs. A companion project with the county requires design and build funds, and preliminary designs are already in place. The project is seeking to waive the \$500,000 grant request limit for projects without preliminary design. The subcommittee and technical review team discussed the project's extended timeline and are comfortable with the waiver based on the project's extended timeframe.
4. **20-1692 CID at Coleman Creek Fish Screening & Passage**
  - a. Sponsor: Kittitas County Conservation District
  - b. Requested cost increase: \$510,893
  - c. The Subcommittee – recommended to approve

**Decision:** Approve 21-1553 Derby Canyon Orchards, 21-1511 Derby Creek BNSF Crossing, 21-1530 Whiskey Creek Barriers RM 1.5-1.7, and 20-1692 CID at Coleman Creek Fish Screening & Passage and waive the \$500,000 grant request limit

Steve Manlow made a motion to approve all four cost increase requests as they appeared on screen for the 21-1553 Derby Canyon Orchards, 21-1511 Derby Creek BNSF Crossing, 21-1530 Whiskey Creek Barriers RM 1.5-1.7, and 20-1692 CID at Coleman Creek Fish Screening & Passage and wave the \$500,000 grant request limit for projects without preliminary design for the 21-1530 Whiskey Creek Barriers RM 1.5-1.7 request based on the Cost Increase Subcommittee recommendations to the Board. Chair Jameson seconded the motion. The motion was passed with no objections.

**5. 21-1502 Gilliam Creek Fish Passage Prelim Design**

- a. Sponsor: City of Tukwila
- b. Requested cost increase: \$2,555,619
- c. The subcommittee had extensive discussions, with the TRT providing detailed information. The next step is to continue working on the TRT's decision. The subcommittee recommended not approving the cost increase, citing concerns that the project is too large, has too many unresolved questions, and seems to be shifting into a different project. However, they recommended waiving the policy requirement for a final design, allowing the sponsor to use existing funds to pursue a preliminary design instead.

***Decision:*** To not approve Gilliam Creek Fish Passage Prelim Design Cost Increase Request. Approve waiver for policy requirement of producing a final design to allow the sponsor to use existing funds to pursue preliminary design.

Steve Manlow made a motion for the Board to waive policy requirement of producing a final design to allow the sponsor to use existing funds to pursue preliminary design and not approve Cost Increase Request. Chairman Jameson seconded the motion.

**Fish Passage Strategy Update, Chair Jameson, WDFW**

Chairman Jameson gave a brief update on the status of the Fish Passage Strategy:

- Jane Atha had her final day as the Fish Passage Strategist for WDFW on March 5<sup>th</sup>; she has taken a new position as the Executive Director of the Coast Salmon Partnership.
- WDFW is awaiting the status of the Decision Support Package funding request Jane submitted in November. Based on the status of funding, WDFW will consider filling the Fish Passage Strategist position.
- WDFW staff have been working with a part-time GIS contractor to run the optimization model on a pilot watershed (Stillaguamish River watershed). The results of the pilot identified inaccuracies in the NHD layer, leading to inaccuracies in the results of the optimization model.

***Path Forward:*** WDFW will consider the next steps for implementation of the model based on available funding from the Decision Support Package and will provide an update to the Board in April.

**Upcoming Opportunities for Engagement, Chair Jameson, WDFW**

Chair Jameson gave an overview of recent engagement including the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) Action Agenda Fish Passage Barriers workshop hosted by WDFW on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Tom noted that PSP

is now analyzing the feedback from the workshop and incorporating it into the 2026-2030 PSP Action Agenda.

**Next Meeting:** The next FBRB meeting is scheduled for April 15<sup>th</sup>, to be held virtually.

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

## ATTENDANCE

### Board Members/Alternates:

Jeannie Abbott, GSRO	Steve Manlow, Council of Regions
Axel Swanson, WA Association of Counties	Susan Eugenis, Cowlitz County
Erik Neatherlin, GSRO	Thomas Jameson, WDFW
John Box, Colville Confederated Tribes	Susan Kanzler, WSDOT
Kaylee Kautz, WDFW	Steve Martin, Council of Regions

### WDFW, RCO Staff and Triangle Facilitation Team:

Adam Fleming, WDFW	Alice Rubin, RCO
Casey Costello, WDFW	Christy Rains, RCO
Daniel Coffman, WDFW	David Collins, WDFW
Joel Ingram, WDFW	John Foltz, RCO
Josh Lambert, RCO	Melissa Erkel, WDFW
Molly Bogaard, WDFW	Samuel Harris, WDFW

### Others observing:

Evan Lewis	Brett Swift	Bryan Maloney
Curtis Anderson	Daniel Howe	Kevin Long
Gretchen Glaub	Gregg Dunphy	Jessica Helsley
Rachel Ainslie	Brett DeMond	