



Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board – July 2024 Meeting Summary

Date: July 16, 2024

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

Location: Virtual Meeting

Summary: Formal Actions / Decisions

Item	Formal Action
Board Decision: Meeting notes from May 2024.	Approved
Future Decision (August): Approval of the 2025-2027 Ranked Project List.	Pending
Future Decision (August): Cost increases for Padden Creek and Carpenter Creek.	Pending

Summary: Follow-up Items and Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
Fish Passage Strategy Subcommittee(s)	A Fish Passage Strategy Subcommittee will be formed in August or September 2024 to discuss and provide feedback on Fish Passage Strategy implementation.
Funding Status Updates (Ongoing)	WDFW and RCO will keep the Board updated on the status of returned funds. A decision on whether to 1) retain funds for cost increases or 2) advance funds to alternate down the ranked project list is anticipated this fall.
Fish Passage Strategy Input (Long-term)	Additional engagement opportunities for the Board to review and provide input on the Fish Passage Strategy will be available once a draft is released this fall.
Match Modernization (On Hold)	The Board will continue to monitor the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)'s implementation of match modernization and consider updating the Board match requirements for future grant rounds.

Welcome/Introductions/Agenda Review: Triangle Associates (Triangle) facilitator, Joy Juelson, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Chair Thomas Jameson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), welcomed attendees. Alex Sweetser, Triangle, facilitated introductions with Board members and staff. A quorum was present.

Public Comment: None

Old Business: The notes for the FBRB June 2024 meetings were reviewed by the facilitator. A motion to approve the summary was made by Erik Neatherlin, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO), and seconded by Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities (AWC). The motion was approved with no objections.

Fish Passage Strategy Presentation:

Jane Atha, WDFW, presented on the Fish Passage Strategy (Strategy) outlining the Strategy's purpose, legislative expectations, and the process to develop the Strategy (see [meeting handout](#) pgs. 1-23).

Phil Roni, Cramer Fish Sciences (Cramer), then provided a detailed overview of the draft Strategy (see [meeting handout](#) pgs. 24-31). The Strategy recommends two approaches for prioritizing barrier removals: 1) scoring and ranking and 2) mathematical optimization. The Strategy is a hybrid approach, which combines these two methods. Phil reviewed both approaches, the recommended criteria for each, and how these concepts can be integrated into prioritization methods used by regional groups.

Kai Ross, Cramer, gave a detailed primer on mathematical optimization (see [meeting handout](#) pgs. 37-48). He explained that optimization seeks to maximize an objective function, such as the amount of habitat opened by removing barriers, based on the parameters of the model and within a set of constraints.

Hilary Wilkinson, Triangle, concluded the presentation by reviewing the input process timeline (see [meeting handout](#) pgs. 36). She noted tribal outreach is ongoing, and there will be another opportunity for the Board and salmon recovery organizations to provide input in September 2024. WDFW will likely ask the following questions:

- Any input on proposed hybrid approach?
- Any input on draft list of proposed criteria?
- Any insights regarding implementation of Strategy and what is needed?

Board Questions and Discussion

- When asked by Steve Manlow, Council of Regions, if there will be opportunities for WDFW to update the agency's barrier inventory data, Jane Atha explained that WDFW is on a parallel track to fund and support updating the inventory and assessment of barriers already within WDFW's database. She emphasized that the statewide optimization model will not be a prescriptive list of barriers, but instead can be used to identify high priority areas within watersheds to focus future inventory work. Chair Jameson reiterated that optimization could be used to identify priority areas within watersheds for the agency's limited inventory and assessment staff to focus their work on. Additionally, the agency can work with local organizations to assess the status of barriers in those priority areas. He noted that as part of the Culvert Case Injunction, barrier assessment data was determined to be outdated after 10 years, which means there is a strong need to reevaluate barriers in WDFW's database. Steve noted the Regions are standing ready to bring local knowledge to help with data verification.
- In response to a question from Carl Schroeder about whether Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)'s barrier removal schedule could be incorporated into the optimization model, Kai explained that near-term removals could be incorporated into the connectivity component of the optimization model. This means barriers slated for removal would not count against connectivity when assessing upstream barriers.
- When asked by Carl if the optimization model could be designed around cost or percentage of connectivity, Kai said these factors could be incorporated into the objective function (i.e., goal) of the optimization model. Phil noted many optimization models are based on costs. However, there are sensitivities around putting a price on salmon recovery, so the model was designed to focus on ecological outcomes. As Regions gain more experience with the optimization model, they could adapt it at the regional level to be more focused on costs.
- When asked by Erik Neatherlin about using the model for technical versus policy decisions, Phil explained this optimization model was designed to produce technical results, which could then be used to inform policy decisions. The state can maintain the statewide optimization model while

Regions can use it at the regional level to focus on their own regional priorities. Jane reiterated that WDFW leadership wanted the optimization model to avoid policy components, such as costs. However, there is flexibility with the model and questions about calibration or verifying data at the local level need to be addressed. The second phase of Strategy development will involve outreach with the FBRB and key partners to fill out those policy pieces.

- Erik expressed concerns about people using the model without fully understanding it and generating spurious results or having a negative impression of the model's capabilities. He noted there are provisos from the legislature directing WDFW to work with regional recovery boards and local partners. He suggested the agency focus on engagement these groups as part of the next phase of Strategy development. Phil agreed and noted scoring and ranking is recommended at the regional level because it is more accessible and transparent.
- In response to a question from Carl if the model could account for downstream barriers on private property that would not be corrected, Phil and Kai agreed it could be coded in the model and identified as part of implementation through the incorporation of local knowledge. Chair Jameson and Gabrielle Stilwater, WDFW, noted WDFW has authority over barriers that are noncompliant and there is ongoing rulemaking that will inform how the agency seeks remedies for those barriers.

Path Forward: A Fish Passage Strategy Subcommittee will be formed in August or September 2024 to discuss and provide feedback on Fish Passage Strategy implementation.

Path Forward: Additional engagement opportunities to review and provide input on the Fish Passage Strategy will be available once a draft is released this fall.

Scoring and Ranking of 2025-2027 Projects

Kaylee Kautz, WDFW, presented an overview of the 2025-2027 Project List to help prepare the Board for a decision at the August Board meeting (see [meeting handout](#) pgs. 49-55). Her presentation included an overview of the grant round timeline, a summary of the requests, and a list of projects using alternative designs or other informational items for the Board's consideration. None of these items require a Board decision since all are eligible for funding. In total, there are 55 proposed projects requesting \$70.8m.

Board Questions and Discussion

- Steve Manlow expressed appreciation for WDFW identifying alternative designs up front and asked if the Board could coordinate with these sponsors to increase their funding request before finalizing the list to avoid potential cost increases in the future. For example, projects with alternative designs often need additional modeling. Kaylee noted that RCO and the Technical Review Team (TRT) had several checkpoints with sponsors to identify issues in advance. John Foltz, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), added that budgets are created with the best available information at the time of submittal, but there may be an opportunity to add contingency funds to the budget.
- The Board discussed the time sensitivities of approving the ranked 2025-2027 Project List. A decision needs to be made at the August Board meeting so RCO can submit the list to the Office of Financial Management. RCO and the TRT are scoring and ranking the 2025-2027 Project List and aim to provide the ranked list in early August – a few weeks before the next meeting.
- Board members were invited to schedule time with WDFW and RCO to look at the project list if they had any questions or concerns, especially around projects with higher costs relative to previous grant rounds. However, following the meeting, no members accepted this invitation.

Board Project Funding Updates:

Update on Projects Seeking or that have Successfully Obtained Federal Funding

John Foltz shared that the remaining \$50 million of Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) funds have been obligated to the list of projects the Board approved in April. Projects are completing their agreements to be funded through PROTECT and will be removed from the FBRB's funding list.

In September 2023, the Board submitted a bundle of nine FBRB projects requesting \$13.3 million to NOAA's federal grant program (see [NOAA grant page](#)). These projects were not funded, partly due to the large number of applications NOAA received this year.

Update on Status of Returned Funds and Future Board Discussion on the Cost Increase Funds

John Foltz shared that returned funds were used to fund down to project #61 on the 2023-2025 Project List (see [meeting handouts](#) pgs. 56-59). Additionally, he noted the Board set aside \$1.75 million of returned funds for cost increase requests and that \$600 thousand of that has been obligated to cost increase requests. As of this meeting, approximately \$4.8 million of Board funding is unobligated. RCO is holding off on allocating these funds to alternates on the 2023-2025 Project List while the newly funded projects get under agreement and while the Board decides on newly received cost increase requests.

In July, the Board received cost increase requests for the Padden Creek and Carpenter Creek projects. An initial Cost Increase Subcommittee meeting was held on July 10 and another meeting will be held in August to develop a formal recommendation for the Board to consider at the August Board meeting.

Chair Jameson noted that the Board received \$22.1 million of Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding for the 23-25 FBRB Project List as part of the 2024 Supplemental Budget. However, a measure to repeal the CCA is on the November 2024 ballot. Therefore, these funds will not be available until January 1, 2025 provided the CCA is not repealed.

Path Forward: WDFW and RCO will keep the Board updated on the status of returned funds. A decision on whether to retain funds for cost increases or advance funds to alternate down the ranked project list is anticipated this fall.

Future Decision (August): Approve the cost increases for Padden Creek and Carpenter Creek.

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

Next Meeting: Virtual Meeting on August 27, 2024.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members/Alternates:

April Magrane, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)	Erik Neatherlin, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO)
Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities (AWC)	Steve Manlow, Council of Regions
Chair Thomas Jameson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)	Susan Eugenis, Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC)
John Box, Colville Tribes	Tim Resseguie, Tim Resseguie Yakima Nation
Kaylee Kautz, WDFW	

WDFW, RCO Staff and Triangle Facilitation Team:

Adam Fleming, WDFW	Melissa Erkel, WDFW
Casey Costello, WDFW	Molly Borgaard, WDFW
Daniel Coffman, WDFW	Alice Rubin, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)
David Collins, WDFW	Christy Rains, RCO
Gabrielle Stilwater, WDFW	John Foltz, RCO
Jane Atha, WDFW	Alex Sweetser, Facilitation Support
Joel Ingram, WDFW	Joy Juelson, Facilitation Support

Guest Presenters:

Kai Ross, Cramer Fish Sciences	Hilary Wilkinson, Presenter/Presentation Support
Phil Roni, Cramer Fish Sciences	Kate Galambos, Presentation Support

Others observing:

Ali Fitzgerald	Cheryl Baumann	Kevin Long
Amelia Johnson	Daniel Howe	Heather Yu
Ashley Bagley	Jessica Helsley	Mike Reicher
Brett Swift		