

Western Straits Conservation Planning

Minutes of Meeting 4, May 11, 2011, Port Angeles Library, 9-11 am

Focus: (1) Discussion of important off channel habitat associated with those large river floodplains and other streams discussed last month, (2) Discussion of fish use data in prioritization process, and (3) discussion of nearshore next steps.

Attendance: Michele d’Hemecourt (NOLT), Mike Haggerty (consultant), Eric Carlsen (NOPL), Cindy Kelly (Dry Creek), Karolyn and John Burdick (Pysht landowners), Coleman Byrnes (Salt Creek landowner, conservation easement donor), Peter Vanderhoof (Salt Creek landowner), Josey Paul (East Twin landowner, conservation easement donor), Don Hamerquist and Janeen Porter (Pysht landowners)

Discussion:

Introduction of the overall process from Michele, who then gave the floor to Mike.

Last meeting focused on large river floodplains, and today we’ll be discussing important off channel habitat associated with those large river floodplains and other streams.

Continuation of discussion of large river floodplain:

Large river floodplain habitat types defined as the channel networks where the bankful edge of the channels can be remotely defined by LiDAR and FEMA data. Also, species presence is part of the definition. If it cannot be defined remotely, they are not shown.

Concern from the stakeholders present about the systems that are NOT considered within the definition large river floodplain. Mike’s response was that if it could not be defined remotely, or reflected in the fish data (meeting the definition of a “viable population”, not anecdotal information), there is no support for inclusion.

- Why not the Lyre River (Josey Paul)?
- Why not East and West Twin (John Burdick)?
- How will anecdotal fish data be incorporated (Peter Vanderhoof)? Mike feels that the data needs to be more “solid”.
- Josey Paul cited information from biologists to support fish populations that should include these rivers in the definition of large river floodplain. He also argued that the definitions of viable populations are “sufficiently muddy”, and he argued that population size is a vital component of recovery.
- Peter Vanderhoof suggested that it would behoove us to note in the plan where stocks were potentially present, and also mention potential habitat usage. This information should be available. Mike Haggerty suggested that Peter and Josey review the draft WRIA 19 Recovery Plan and provide their comments. That Plan is what Mike is using to guide the presence absence data used in this plan.
- Josey Paul feels that the key species is coho, but Mike argued that the dominant species is chum based on data through 2001. Chum outnumber coho. Josey agreed with this historically, but right now there is far more coho. Mike noted that there has been a decline in chum salmon, but

escapement has not been surveyed, and he agreed that coho populations are the “healthiest” in WRIA 19.

- Josey does not feel chum populations will be restored until we improve Forest Practices. And there are not enough Chinook to restore. So that leaves us with coho and steelhead. There are few pinks and sockeye left. Coho is the one with the best chance of recovery. Mike sees that this could be another approach, save the strongest population.
- Mike and Michele: Use of fish data is obviously very important to stakeholders. There will be more time for this later in the presentation.

There are 24 floodplain channel segments, including 494 acres of stream channel within the Sekiu, Hoko, Clallam and Pysht River watersheds. Channel segments were defined based on gradient, confinement and tributary confluences using SSHIPA channel classifications.

Large river floodplain features: Mike started with the approach used in the Clallam River Watershed Assessment and modified the approach by including all floodplain features. All land/area within the floodplain was classified as feature type. Mike shows an example of the Clallam River.

Riparian conditions will be defined by a number of designations shown on the slide including Un-impaired or slightly impaired, conifer large dense (CLD), mixed large dense (MLD), and beach forest deposits (BFD).

Floodplain feature types were discussed.

1. Streams: This was defined and examples of stream sizes and its value for fish were shown.
 - Eric asked why streams are defined as Type 1 and 2, and suggested that’s antiquated. Mike explained how problematic the data could be, but he’s using the best available data to define size of streams.
 - Don Hamerquist asked about whether, if fish were shown to be present, streams would be reclassified. For example, the wetlands across from the M&R headquarters has fish in it, but it’s possibly loggable. It was just recently logged under the current rules.
 - Eric and Peter continued the discussion of typing of streams.
2. Wetlands: This was defined and examples of different classifications shown.
 - Forested wetlands will have a very broad approach to its definition. Some are mostly dry, some have no definable channels, etc.
3. Forested Areas: This was defined and examples were shown
4. Un-forested areas: This was defined and examples were shown.
 - Eric suggested calling it Non-Forested, and Don suggested De-Forested. Non-Forested was the preference.

Subtypes of the 4 floodplain feature types were shown on a map.

- Eric asked about how the maps would be shown in the plan and suggested keeping them clean and simple, even if it means showing multiple maps.

Mike explained how habitat values were assigned to the floodplain features.

- Peter asked if the Values would be modified with fish usage. Mike explained that the variables are independent. Best habitat with best riparian conditions are independent, but related.

Prioritization

- Josey sees amount of fine sediment as the key indicator of good habitat. Too much sediment has led to the decline of salmonids. Mike has not seen any data to show this.
- Josey feels we need to go where the problem is. What areas are really key for fish. We should more heavily weigh conservation of areas that are highly used by fish.
- Janeen agrees with protecting the best, but she also agrees with Josey. What habitat are fish using? Might not be prime.
- Mike showed an example of how coho salmon redds per mile was used to calculate coho spawning scalar. There is enough data to do this for Chinook as well, but not other species. This table will be sent out the group, as requested.
- Don would like some informal meetings about how the info can be extended beyond the scope of this project. Michele will send Mike's contact information out, and let people know they are welcome to meet with Mike in small groups.

Peter and Coleman commented that Mike is doing a great job.

Discuss next meeting, move to the 8th due to a TRG scheduling conflict. Agenda will likely include starting to discuss prioritization, a summary of habitat classification, and a review of Recovery Plan Approach.

Adjourned at 11:30.