

# Hood River Watershed Group



“...to sustain & improve the  
Hood River Watershed through  
education, cooperation, & stewardship”

JANUARY 28, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

## **Watershed Group Members Present**

Chuck Gehling	Les Perkins	Cindy Thieman	Heather Hendrixson	Megan Saunders
Kate Conley	Jim Wells	Greg Short	Alix Danielsen	Doug Thiesies
Nate Ulrich	Denise Stetson	Sasha Kirchner	Phil Simpson	Alexander Ross
Craig DeHart	John Buckley	Dan Spatz	Lucius Caldwell	Gary Asbridge
Mike Oates				

## **Welcome and Introductions**

At 6:05pm, Chuck Gehling welcomed everyone to the January meeting and started a round of introductions. There were 21 people in attendance.

## **Review and Approval of Last Meeting Minutes**

Chuck asked if there were any corrections to the November minutes. No changes were noted, and the group approved the minutes.

## **Monthly Informational Presentation**

Cindy Thieman, Watershed Group Coordinator, presented draft elements of the *Hood River Watershed Strategic Action Plan*, which has been under development for the past two years. Cindy explained the overarching goal/outcome of the Action Plan, introduced the core partners in the Partnership, and explained funding sources for the plan (OWEB FIP funding, BPA Atlas Framework). Cindy then walked through the key elements of the plan, which include a conceptual model of strategies, actions, and desired ecological outcomes, and a prioritized list and map of proposed restoration projects. Other components include a Sustainability & Financial Plan, a Progress Monitoring Framework, and an Adaptive Management Plan.

Cindy walked through the Conceptual Model, explaining how identified limiting factors in the Basin drive the strategies, actions, and short/long-term outcomes included in the plan. Nate Ulrich noted the intersection of recreation and instream restoration work, specifically boating, and asked how this might be reflected in the plan. There is use on the West Fork and the Lower HR, but there is a lack of access on the Hood compared to rivers like the White Salmon. Les noted that several FCA staff members may be good contacts for the community. Cindy will follow up.

Heather Hendrixson noted a recent meeting with the County Planning Department and how a review of the stream overlay layer would be worthwhile. This is not currently included in the plan but perhaps should be.

Nate asked if there was a prioritization of the actions identified in the model. Cindy explained that the Partnership has prioritized parts of the model using the Atlas framework, which specifically prioritizes restoration project areas and projects. The Partnership is working with consultants to further prioritize the actions in the model that aren't covered by Atlas. There will also be a process to identify which project will be done/led by which partner.

Les noted that we should clarify the bypass reaches for hydro action in Conceptual Model (“Evaluate impacts of existing winter hydro diversions on [bypass reaches] channel maintaining flows and migration timing”).

Alix noted that for the water quality short-term outcomes, not all chemicals have aquatic life benchmarks or standards, so it would be challenging to measure this outcome for all chemicals detected in sampling.

Cindy then described the Atlas framework developed by BPA and the three components of the framework: ArcGIS Online Webmap, Restoration Prioritization Matrix, and developing Restoration Polygons. The nine sub-basins (approximately 6<sup>th</sup> Field HUCs) in the watershed were prioritized using a range of criteria, resulting in three tiers of projects. The top tier sub-basins are the Mainstem HR, the Lower West Fork, the Lower East Fork, and the Lower Middle Fork. Projects were identified within each sub-basin as individual polygons on the map. Polygons were then given a “total biological benefit score” derived from a variety of criteria in Atlas to prioritize project areas.

The Progress Monitoring Framework is in progress, which will identify a subset of outputs and outcomes that will be monitored to measure progress and adapt as needed. The Sustainability and Financial Plan will describe how the Partnership plans to implement and sustain the Action Plan.

The Action Plan will be complete in June and the Partnership is planning to apply for OWEB Focused-Investment Partnership Implementation funding, which if awarded would provide \$6-8 million over several biennia to implement a sub-set of the most high-priority projects in the plan.

## **Old Business**

### **HRWG Communications & Outreach Plan Update**

Alix walked the group through an outline of the HRWG Communications & Outreach Plan, with a focus on the goals of the plan, the key messages for communication, and the target audiences. Alix asked for feedback on the key messages, explaining that they are a starting point as they currently stand. The group discussed the key messages, with particular focus on the term “water users” and whether it included land users/managers. Doug Thiesies suggested “watershed users”, but Alix noted that not everyone knows what the term “watershed” means. The group agreed that the idea that we are all water users was good, and perhaps the wording can be tweaked into several different options (“we all use/depend on water...”, “we all live in a watershed...”). Megan Saunders suggested that key message #2 should specifically reference partnerships (“Hood River Watershed Group collaborates to accomplish...”).

The group reviewed the communications and outreach conceptual model specific to the Strategic Action Plan. Megan also questioned whether there was a risk to fundraising in terms of community perception. Heather suggested adding in opportunities to educate legislators about what we do in the watershed.

### **Feedback to DEQ on process/stakeholder engagement opportunity for developing new 303(d) listings**

Delayed until February due to time constraints.

## **New Business**

### **Officer & Operations Committee Elections**

Cindy explained that every year the HRWG elects the Chair and Vice Chair and three Operations Committee positions come up for election. Chuck Gehling is willing to continue to serve as Chair. Megan Saunders nominated John Buckley as Vice Chair. The group provided first consensus approval of Chuck Gehling as Chair and John Buckley as Vice-Chair. The three Operations Committee positions up for election include Phil Simpson (natural resources), Kate Conley (at-large), and Craig DeHart (irrigation district). All three were willing to serve another term and the group provided first consensus approval for this slate of candidates.

### **HRWG FY19 Budget Actuals**

Cindy passed out FY19 Budget Actuals and walked the group through the details. As of the end of 2019, the Watershed Group was ~\$10,000 in the black.

## **Reports and Announcements**

### **Coordinator Report:**

Cindy provided brief updates on the Bear Creek Fish Passage Design Contract, the EFID cultural resources survey work, and Evans Creek at Hutson Drive Fish Passage Project reporting.

### **Project Manager Report:**

Alix gave a brief update on current projects, including the progress of the Neal Creek Instream Habitat Restoration design and communication with new Neal Creek landowners, the progress of the DID Distribution Pipeline Project, the submission of an OWEB small grant for the Powerdale Corridor, and planning for the West Fork at Red Hill project.

Cindy provided brief OWEB grant funding updates for Neal Creek and the Eastside Lateral. Craig DeHart suggested going to the April OWEB board meeting to advocate for the ES Lateral project.

### **Member Announcements:**

John Buckley mentioned the East Fork Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment public meeting taking place January 29<sup>th</sup>. Farmers Conservation Alliance will present an overview of the plan and invite questions and comments from the public.

Greg mentioned the Trout Unlimited annual banquet and the RMEF banquet, both in February. More details to come.

## **Summary of Consensus Items and Establishment of Next Meeting**

*Items that Received First Consensus:* Chuck Gehling was elected as Chair. John Buckley was elected as Vice Chair. Committee positions for Phil Simpson, Kate Conley, and Craig DeHart were renewed.

*Items that Received Second Consensus:* None.

The next Hood River Watershed Group meeting will be February 25th, 2020 at the Hood River Fire Station.

## **Adjournment**

Chuck thanked the group for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Reported by Alix Danielsen.