



Hood River
WATERSHED GROUP

Hood River Watershed Group

*"...to sustain & improve the
Hood River Watershed through
education, cooperation, & stewardship"*

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Watershed Group Members Present

Chuck Gehling	Cindy Thieman	Alix Danielsen	Heather Hendrixson	Megan Saunders
Nate Ulrich	Rick Ragan	Dick Iverson	Holly Coccoli	Pollyanna Lind
Scott Sublette	Diana Burman	Lauretta Burman	Sam Doak	Brian Nakamura
Matthew Barmann	John Schaefer	Chuti Fiedler	Marion Fox	Jordan Kim
Ben Clemens	Shay Way	Jeff Jolley	Jim Wells	Curt Welsh
Mark Zanmiller	John Buckley	Aaron Jackson	Rod French	Hiroaki Arakawa
Micah Lampman	Dan Roix			

** This meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom.

Welcome and Introductions

At 6:05pm, Chuck Gehling welcomed everyone to the September meeting and started a round of introductions. There were 32 people in attendance.

Cindy provided some background information about Pacific lamprey in the Hood River Watershed, including the return of lamprey to the watershed after the removal of the Powerdale Dam. Cindy then introduced the speaker, Ben Clemens.

Monthly Informational Presentation

Benjamin Clemens, Statewide Lamprey Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, presented on the *The Wondrous Lives of Pacific Lamprey – A Story of Complexity, Diversity, & Adaptability*.

There are 40 species of lamprey and they have been around for almost 400 million years. They have changed very little over this time period and have survived four global mass extinctions. There are ten species in Oregon alone, most of which live in the Klamath Basin.

Lamprey are a very important cultural species to Pacific Northwest tribes, and tribes have been the leaders in protecting and restoring lamprey. Lamprey populations have declined due to multiple limiting factors including river impoundment, snag removal, dewatering, passage barriers, degraded habitats, and poor water quality. Pacific lamprey and Western River lamprey are anadromous, and Western Brook and Pacific Brook lamprey are freshwater. All four of these species are listed as “sensitive”. In 1932, 500,000 lamprey were harvested and in 1995, 29,000 were harvested. Simplification of waterways are impacting harvest levels over time.

Pacific lamprey are the largest lamprey in Oregon and the most widely distributed. Ben reviewed their life stages – larvae, juvenile (parasitic), and spawning adult. They spawn in the spring and then die, contributing marine derived nutrients to streams. Pacific lamprey prey on 32 species and have 41 documented predators; they provide 2-3 times the calories compared to other prey species. During migration, their body size can decrease by 30%. The larvae release pheromones that attract adults back to freshwater. It is possible that river disruptions may be interfering with pheromones and impacting the return of adults.

Ben reviewed several research studies he has been involved in, including one that was conducted in the Willamette Basin, where large amounts of lamprey were found in rock revetments, boulders, logs, and even bridge pillars. He also shared a video of Pacific and Western Brook lamprey spawning in the Clatskanie River.

Ben explained habitat differences for lamprey. Type 1 habitat is depositional and is primary habitat for larval lamprey that burrow in the sand and filter feed. Most larval lamprey are found in off-channel habitats (this has likely impacted lamprey numbers as rivers and streams have been channelized and off-channel habitat has decreased).

Ben reviewed current management efforts to restore lamprey populations. These efforts are happening on many levels, led by tribes, then federal and state agencies. Efforts include outreach and education (partnering with tribes and CRITFC, short courses with PNW universities, Oregon Zoo lamprey exhibit), lamprey ramps for obstacle passage (at Bonneville Dam and other places), culvert retrofits, habitat restoration (biologists are still determining what is best for Pacific lamprey, but they do know that there is a connection to process based restoration and large woody debris), publications like “Best Management Guidelines for Native Lampreys During In-Stream Work”, and working with tribal colleagues for tracking and distribution information.

“The lamprey is our elder.” Elmer Crow, Nez Pierce

Questions:

Holly – what is the latest on screening challenges from water withdrawals?

The most up to date information is in the in-water work guidelines.

Cindy – in the HR Basin lamprey are returning and are being found in screw traps and other sampling, and they seem to be staying for quite a while in the basin. Juvenile steelhead are also around for an extended period of time, and Cindy wondered if there is potential that there would be a connection between increasing lamprey numbers and steelhead success (as a food source). Ben thought this could be the case. Hiro Arakawa has done a predation lab study and noted that sturgeon did predate, but small mouth bass, pike, and salmon did not eat larval lamprey.

– What ecosystem services do lamprey provide in the Hood River Watershed? Water quality? Aeration? Ben explained that lamprey provide marine-derived nutrients and aeration and assist in recycling nutrients and improving water quality. Some of Ben’s research has shown that they are a big food source for upland species and gravel relocation during spawning may increase macroinvertebrate numbers.

Hiro – what is suitable habitat in river mouth for migrating lamprey?

Ben did not know for sure but noted that a tagging study is needed to track where they go and at what time.

** This presentation was recorded and can be found at: <https://hoodriverwatershed.org/watch-the-wondrous-lives-of-pacific-lamprey-by-ben-clemens/>

Review and Approval of Last Meeting Minutes

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

Old Business

Eastside Lateral Pipeline Project updates

Cindy provided an update on the Eastside Lateral project, which includes replacing six miles of open canal with high-density polyethylene pipe, installing pressure reducing valves, and installing new connections for 10 sub-laterals and 51 individual turnouts. The design for the project is complete and funding from CTWS (\$410,000) and NRCS (\$1.3 million) has been secured for Phase I implementation this fall/winter. The OWEB grant

submitted in the fall for \$600,000 was approved for funding, as well as an additional \$2.25 million through NRCS. The \$2 million OWRD grant that the Watershed Group submitted in May was recommended for funding (1 of 3 out of a total of 12 to be recommended); the commission will make a final decision on funding in November. In the meantime, contracting and surveying for the project are on-going.

Holly asked about the NEPA process and status. Cindy explained that the public comment is over and now we are waiting for the DC NRCS office to sign off on the Environmental Assessment (EA).

Neal Creek Instream Habitat Phase 2 Design: OWEB Grant

Alix gave an update on the status of Neal Creek Phase I, which includes two sites – the Myer/Vogt site and the Coleman site. The OWEB TA grant for Phase I design that was submitted in October 2019 was awarded in July of this year. Design is underway – Bill Norris of Parr Excellence is leading the design, with collaboration from Mike Brunfelt from Interfluve (Bill and Mike did the topographic surveying and modeling for the design this past winter). The design should be complete within the next few months, and the project will be implemented next summer with funding from CTWS and the Pacific Power Blue Sky Habitat Fund.

As mentioned in February, the Watershed Group would like to pursue a second phase of restoration along Neal Creek above and below Thomsen Road Bridge. The group provided first consensus approval in February for Alix to submit an OWEB TA grant for this project design in April (match has been pledged from CTWS). The grant was submitted and Alix and Cindy will (virtually) meet with the OWEB Review Team on October 7th. *The group provided second consensus approval to submit an OWEB Technical Assistance grant for Neal Creek Phase II design.*

New Business

Exploring the potential for Watershed Group 501(c)3 status

Cindy introduced the potential for the Watershed Group to pursue 501c3 status, and reviewed the prospectus distributed with the meeting materials. Over the past 27+ years, the Watershed Group has expanded in scope and programming in collaboration with the District and other local, state, and federal partners. A need for additional growth and capacity is anticipated to successfully implement the watershed's 20-year Strategic Action Plan and the Watershed Group's Communications and Outreach Strategy. To support this growth, the Watershed Group would benefit from diversifying its fundraising opportunities, increasing its visibility in the community, and empowering its membership and leadership. This need has motivated some active Watershed Group members and staff to consider whether pursuing 501c3 status would be beneficial for the organization and the Watershed as a whole.

Dick asked where Watershed Group funding has come from to date. Cindy explained that the majority of WG funding has come from agencies like OWEB and OWRD, as well as partner funding from irrigation districts and CTWS.

Alix briefly reviewed the funding projections spreadsheet, explaining the foundation funding opportunities that require 501c3 status and other direct funding opportunities. The spreadsheet was developed with very conservative projection estimates and still shows significant possible gain for the Watershed Group.

Megan asked what projects would be funded with these additional funds. Alix explained that each grant included in the spreadsheet was aligned with project areas identified in the Strategic Action Plan.

Chuck noted that is not a current ask for consensus to pursue 501c3 status. Staff will continue with the research process and in time develop a proposal to present to the Watershed Group.

Megan asked about the best process to relay questions and comments. Questions and comments can be emailed to Cindy, Alix, and Chuck.

Reports and Announcements

Coordinator Report:

Cindy provided an Operations Committee meeting update. The group met on September 21st and reviewed the biennial work plan and updates, reviewed actuals for the FY20 budget and projected budget for FY21, discussed the opportunity for the Watershed Group to explore 501c3 status, and discussed upcoming Watershed Group presentation topics.

Cindy explained that the WG biennial self-evaluation may take place this fall and will likely be conducted via an online survey. Cindy requested ideas for trying to make the evaluation review fun (outdoor Halloween party?).

Project Manager Report:

In addition to 501c3 research, the Eastside Lateral OWRD grant and Allocation of Conserved Water application, and the Neal Creek project, Alix reported on the completion and launch of the new Watershed Group website and the completion of the DID Distribution Project. Alix has also been working on the CIG Pollinator Pipeline project – the first herbicide treatment happened this spring and the pipeline will be cleared of weed debris this fall after fire season. The plant grow-out order has been placed and after two more rounds of site maintenance, the pipeline will be seeded and planted next fall. This coming Monday, Alix will be collecting the nest traps that were installed along the pipeline in partnership with the OSU Pollinator Program that will provide a baseline understanding of pollinators that are present at the site prior to restoration.

Member Announcements:

Brian – EFID put out to bid the first phase of the Eastside Lateral project. They received 11 bids. Niklas had estimated a \$1 million project cost, and the winning bidder came in around \$850,000. The contractor is K&E Excavating. They plan to start in October/November after irrigation season.

Megan – FID has been working on the Kingsley Reservoir project. There have been some setbacks with Covid, fires, a wet June, etc. so the project may need to extend into next year.

Shay – it has been a slow season for lamprey surveying (they were shutdown from end of March to beginning of June and then again at the end of June). There has been no field work because of the shutdown. Numbers at Bonneville are very low so it is not a good year. Shay is hoping to get into Hood River in the next few weeks and may have numbers to share.

Chuck commented on how the meeting had gone well for our first virtual experience! Dick agreed and noted that these meetings open up the potential for speakers from further afield who don't have to travel.

Holly suggested planning for meetings every two months at least.

Summary of Consensus Items and Establishment of Next Meeting

Items that Received Second Consensus:

Approval to submit an OWEB Technical Assistance grant for Neal Creek Phase II design.

The next Hood River Watershed Group meeting date is October 27th, 2020.

Adjournment

Chuck thanked the group for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm.

Reported by Alix Danielsen.