



## June 10, 2021 - Meeting Notes

45 Participants in attendance

Goals: Create list of priorities the whole collaborative can support

- Series of field trips alternating with meetings to keep people informed

Presenter: [Wes Keller](#)

Notes:

- Habitat restoration in this area occurring for many years
- Recently, Bonneville Power Administration funded watershed restoration in Little Salmon River
  - How do we collaborate with all stakeholders to make valuable restoration projects?
- BoR Water Smart grant funding a collaborative (facilitator, notetaker, meeting space and supplies) over a 2 year period. But can not be used for on the ground restoration
- End goal: Identify specific restoration projects agreed upon by the collaborative to create action items

Area of interest separated into upper and lower assessment units for this watershed because of differences in water quality, temperature, land use, and fish habitat

- Upper assessment unit has 58% private land ownership. Phosphorus, E. Coli can affect lower unit
- Lower assessment unit - 75% is in federal ownership: Nez Perce, Payette National Forest, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area
  - High elevation cold water stream protection
  - 3 ESA fish species: threatened - bull trout, chinook salmon, and steelhead
    - Critical habitat for these species needed to support a healthy population
  - Highway 95 constricted the river system
  - Tried to allow structures to allow for fish passages to grant access to meadows
  - Little Salmon Falls are a passage barrier for fish.

Questions:

Garret Visser - Idaho Wildlife Federation: What is watershed restoration in this instance?

A: We're not sure yet. We're here to learn about the watershed to then develop plans balanced with uses

Sandy Dryden: How did you invite private landowners?

Mostly word of mouth and personal contacts on who we thought may be interested.

Advocating for today's participants to share this collaborative information with others they think may be interested.

[The Mountain's Wisdom: Lessons From An Enduring Collaborative](#), password: blmntc

Discussion from video:

- Mutual trust and respect necessary among all participants to find collaborative

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Dean Dryden: How is the collaborative different from other local and state groups who are working on conservation projects in the area?

- Wes: There was a Watershed Advisory Group from several years past. We're hoping that people from the WAG can tell us where they left off to learn and further the work that 's been done in the past. We're missing the collaborative information and experience sharing to progress projects. Build on previous information and identify new stakeholders.
- Dean: Concern - in proposal water quality is addressed by discussing too many cattle in the watershed in an unfavorable view. What do you want to do that would impact my way of life and living?
- Wes: Certain areas are overgrazed and contribute to E. Coli. The solution is what we're here for. Private property owners are not required to be here but by doing so, we can all create a healthier watershed for many types of uses.
- Dean: 5 other landowners started fencing off riparian areas 20 years ago. When I first heard about the collaborative, I didn't understand the need for it. Through the TMDLs and WAG, riparian projects have already been underway and seemingly successful.
- Wes: We can bring to the table additional resources and connect with others to make it easier to access

Commissioner Viki Purdy: Their ranch has been working on this issue previously, and the overgrazing comment is very concerning. Same comment made on logging. Biggest problem is poor forest service management. Needs to be more logging. Conservation is better served by increased management.

- Wes: Yes, all solutions need to be presented to understand whole picture and create the most useful recommendations at the end of this collaborative
- Viki: \$100,000 federal grant for water projects already in the process. Environmental groups consistently sue and prevent projects from going forth. Hot springs are also an issue. I want to make sure we're not addressing the wrong problems.

Dean Dryden: Mentioned that Little Salmon Falls are a problem for the anadromous fish. Understood that they want to do some modification to it. What is the status of that?

- Wes: Water temperatures are currently at lethal levels for the chinook salmon. Want the fish to be able to get back to traditional spawning grounds, although it is recognized this many years down the line.
- Dean: proposed to get more water in the rivers but that will directly take it from private land owners. There are a lot of negatives that will impact us if the falls are removed.

Group Discussion on Connections to the Little Salmon River

What is your connection to the river/watershed?

**Dean Dryden:**

Fourth generation private rancher in the area. Has been completing watershed improvements on his property for over 20 years successful. Hesitant about this collaborative because it may restrict water access.

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## [Marcie Carter \(Nez Perce Tribe perspective\)](#)

Our people originally occupied this area that incorporated Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. Little Salmon is a part of Treaty of 1865 gave rights to hunt, fish, and gather. Looking to manage resources with people of Idaho and restore them to the original state as much as possible. Historic knowledge of the areas where villages along the river were able to use the fish. Want to continue exercising those rights laid out from the original treaty.

## [Craig Utter \(Payette Land Trust Perspective\)](#)

Works to conserve the rural heritage of west central Idaho region. Works with private landowners and agricultural entities collaboratively to keep resource heritage alive. Active in four counties on a wide range of private land conservation easements including the payette river basin initiative to create conservation easements. Have a few easements from Riggins to New Meadows. Hope to be a resource for agriculturists and conservationists.

## [Stacy LaFay- land owner and multi-generational New Meadows resident](#)

Have lived in the area for a long time. Personal connection and history with the area. Remembers being able to fish for white fish as a child but have not seen them in over 20 years in Goose Creek with reduced water quality and levels. Want to be a part of the solution to bring some of that water quality back.

## [Randy Fox \(Idaho Conservation League\)](#)

West Central Idaho Office just opened in McCall. Long history of working with coalitions to address issues such as improving water quality in the watershed. Worked in the Upper Blackfoot confluence area and Owyhees. Looking forward to find paths that “keep everyone whole”. This watershed is of particular importance to him because they found their new home in this area and have a strong tie to the watershed's health.

## [Leigh Bailey \(Payette Forest Hydrologist\)](#)

Hydrologist in the Payette most of her career. Very familiar with tributaries and how restoration projects have affected them. Her goal is to follow BMPs. Riggins to Meadows is a unique wetland complex. There are opportunities to improve fish habitat. Participated in the WAG a few years ago. Concern: bridge by forest service is being replaced. One of the issues is the flooding in Meadows Valley. Priority watersheds for fish in Boulder Creek with and attempting to put forward restoration projects but was stopped from a lawsuit.

## [Question: Phil Obendorf](#)

Would there be any grant money for pivot irrigation projects or a flood intensive irrigation that doesn't allow the water to return to the creek?

Wes: Been successful with grants for this and easements.

## [Holly Becker:](#)

Work on water system improvements and headgates in the Stanley area using a collaborative model that greatly improved the areas. Outdoor Idaho

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discussed improvements with headgates and new systems more favorable to fish but also was able to increase water in the system.

**Bill Lind:**

Familiar with the watershed from many collaboratives. Wants to protect ESA fish species to restore as much of native habitat as possible. Typically only work with federal agencies but these collaboratives allow for consensus with everyone in the area, especially private landowners. Not only looking to protect the fish but also help landowners improve their own water quality.

**Discussion on useful field trips**

- Upper watershed (water diversions, conservation easements)
- Fish passage barriers (falls on the Little Salmon)
- Lower watershed (Hazard, Rapid, Mud Creek)

**Notes:**

- Wes: Would like to take field trips to conservation easements, get with a water master, and mix of private and public lands. Lower watershed in Riggins, Hazard, below Round Valley.
- What considerations need to be made in regard to safety and transportation.
- Potential locations:
  - Little Salmon Falls
  - Randy Fox: Dean Dryden's property/ Not currently an option
  - Tim Farrell: maybe to locations that we think are impacting the water; hot springs water, city treatment facilities, rancher's runoff. Circle C canal, the reservoirs at Brundage and Goose Lake.
  - Michael Young: Round Valley Creek
  - Payette Land Trust has an easement around Rapid River/Salmon confluence area. Potential option but needs time to develop.
- Tana Kerby: Flooding in Meadows valley could be mitigated by a dam. Biggest threat are Zims hot springs to the Little Salmon. Believe the Nez Perce have a plan for this.
- Holly Becker: many ranches and public lands where water quality and quantity has been increased by improving the riparian areas.

**Discussion on useful presentations**

- Current water quality
- WAG results
- Fish distribution

**Notes:**

- Sandra Mitchell: DF development should be contacted (they were), can we get a copy of the TMDL? Available online at: <https://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/total-maximum-daily-loads/little-salmon-river-subbasin/>
- Water Masters, different irrigation methods, IDEQ trends, Idaho Fish and Game, generational land owners
- Sandy Dryden: Idaho Soil and Water Conservation and Adams SWCD

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## Discussion on how to incorporate missing stakeholders Who is not here?

- Idaho Department of Water Resources.
- Wilkes brothers: private landowners
- Natural Resource Conservation Service in Weiser, have done a lot of planned applications in the valley Charlie Velseca
- Sandy Dryden: Idaho Soil and Water Conservation and Adams SWCD
- Idaho department of water resources. Water districts in Meadows Valley, Twin Lakes, Brundage, Goose Lake and Goose Creek
- Department of Lands
- All recreationists/groups who use the public land
- Department of Lands

## Concerns:

- History of conflict between the agencies, tribe, and private landowners
- Need more people at the table with different viewpoints
- Worried of dam removal proposals that would negatively impact water users
- Is this type of collaborative repetitive to previous efforts made that did not reach desired outcomes?
- Cattle ranchers do not want to be under attack for grazing practices while following Best Management Practices
- More management in multiple sectors needs to be identified as potential solutions including timber harvesting and where hot springs enter the river.

## Action items:

- Create a list of who has already been contacted so everyone can see who has been invited to the table already and identify gaps. - Shared during the meeting.
- Continue reaching out to as many stakeholders as possible. - Done by everyone.
- Post meeting notes and recording to the website by June 22nd.