

Priest River Watershed Group
Steering Committee Meeting
July 11, 2024
3:30-6:30pm
West Bonner Library



Members Present:

Allan Songstad, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon
Amy Anderson, Selkirk Conservation Association
Betty Gardner, Priest River
Eric Johnson, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon
Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited
Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League
Jeremy Patterson, Fishing Guides on the Priest River*
John Quinn Hurst, Selkirk Conservation Association*
Kyle Maki, Idaho Wildlife Association & Sportsmen Conservation*

Mike Lithgow, Kalispel Tribe
Pam Duquette, Priest River
Paul Sieracki, Inland Empire Task Force (Environmental)
Sean Stash, Boating on Priest River

Facilitators:

Hannah Anderson, Lead Facilitator
Tracy Ortiz, Facilitation Support

**Indicates a proxy member*

Meeting Goals:

- Reivew fundamentals of collaboration to improve processes for deliberation
- Review and update Strategic Plan
- Determine next steps for Strategic Plan
- Review Housekeeping Items

Meeting Minutes

Welcome and Overview

Hannah Anderson, Facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and goals for the day.

Collaborative Fundamentals

The facilitator conducted a quick recap of the fundamentals of collaboration. The PRWG has been together for over a year and in that time has collectively learned a great deal about the watershed, each other, and is now approaching the adoption of their first Strategic Plan. The intention of this review is to help the group reflect on how their expectations may have changed since joining, re-identify their mutual interests and commitment to the important work of the PRWG, and to determine how they can re-focus and re-align to prepare for effective collaborative work.

The recap of collaboration fundamentals went as follows:

- Why collaborate? The PRWG was convened to be a collaborative group. Processes for collaboration are described in the PRWG protocols and enacted through award of grant monies.

Using a collaborative process will continue to demonstrate the group's good intentions and to build agency support for the work PRWG undertakes.

- What does it mean to be a collaborative? The group reviewed "What it is" vs "What it is Not"
- What makes a successful collaborative?
 - Appeals to the bigger picture / broader audience through recommendations that consider mutual interests
 - Creates social networks of influence and action through building relationships, and having patience to establish trust
 - Learns and adapts to change while building social resilience, by keeping a long-term vision, using flexibility, and establishing consistency and legitimacy with external parties
 - Requires honest participation, and every member willingly committing to the collaborative process
- Steering Committee Role and Expectations

Discussion

- The group discussed the possibility of stakeholders bringing personal motivations into the PRWG's decision making process. They acknowledged that and with everyone having strong points of view, it raises the question of how they will work together in this setting.
- The group discussed at length the concept of interest vs. positional based negotiation.
 - When the PRWG was initially formed, steering committee members agreed to set aside our own individual positions, in pursuit of mutual interests.
 - One member noted they felt the purpose of the PRWG is to promote positive outcomes and to set aside individual positions in favor of shared interests.
- The question was raised whether we can commit to the collaboration.
- The group discussed how the purposed of their work is fundamentally not to focus on a single issue but is addressing a bigger picture that it the watershed's health and restoration.
 - One member emphasized that the group needs to be careful not to fixate on individual elements of the Strategic Plan or Work Plans, as it would create obstacles for the ultimate goal of completing the Restoration Plan. Restoration alternatives are not one-time solutions; there is considerable work to be done before implementing any restoration plan, so the Strategic Plan can remain more general at this stage, without fear that any one interest is being accentuated or dismissed.
 - The group discussed the importance of trust among everyone to advance their shared goal of the restoration effort.

Commitment to Collaboration

As an exercise in building trust, and showing good-faith commitment to collaboration, each member of the group took a turn verbally stating their commitments to the collaborative process, and to collaborating with each other. Discussion was as follows:

- Some members of the group admitted that while they may have trouble totally trusting, they are committed to building trust through the collaborative process
- For many groups, representing their community is of utmost importance
- It is assumed that collaborative decisions must adhere to legal standards

- It was noted that repeated breaches of protocols (including the newly assumed expectation for a collaborative process and environment) should result in members being asked to step down from their position on the steering committee

Strategic Plan Review and Revision

Background: In follow up to June's steering committee meeting, and by the direction of the PRWG, a task force was assembled (Sean Stash and Jon Quinn Hurst) to incorporate the edits, comments and discussion had by the steering committee following the technical expert panel. The task force provided an updated version of the draft Strategic Plan to the group ahead of the July meeting. Steering committee members were asked to prepare for the July meeting by reviewing the task force's updated version of the plan, and to come prepared to provide any final comments or edits to be discussed in-person, collaboratively.

Review Process: The task force provided a quick description of their editing process generally, as well as an example of how they handled more nuanced edits as they worked through the groups' comments on the Plan. Using a "clean" version of the document, the Facilitator led the group through each section of the Plan. Steering committee members were provided a printed copy to work from, and the facilitator shared the document on the projected screen for live editing. Members of the PRWG provided their final thoughts, edits, comments, or suggested revisions and the group worked collaboratively to incorporate those comments satisfactorily.

Discussion

- The task force mentioned that some comments were unclear, so they were left as they were, with the hope that clarity could be discussed in the meeting.
- One steering committee member suggested that an image on the front cover would be nice, and the group agreed that more photos throughout would be preferable. A group photo should be taken soon.
- The group discussed whether there was a need to define what "connection" means in the third bullet point, under the "Who We Are, What We Do" section. Ultimately, it was decided that the third bullet is implied to mean cultural/social connection, as the prior two bullets are addressing the technical aspects of the PRWG's work.

Next Steps

- Acting as a task force, Erin volunteered to add in appropriate time frames for goals as they need to coincide with the schedule of grant funding opportunities.
- Once timeframes are incorporated, the Plan will be sent to the PRWG for a final review, and members will be asked to provide a general indication of their approval for the plan, to assess how close the document is to being adopted.
- Any remaining comments will be addressed before voting on whether to adopt the Plan at the August meeting.

Break

Housekeeping (General Discussion)

- Environmental Water Resources Projects, Grant Opportunity | Erin Plue
 - There is a significant financial opportunity of \$2.5 million available for implementation of projects related to Environmental Water Resources.
 - The PRWG now meets the qualifications for this grant.
 - Groups which are registered as a 501(c)(3) organization, qualify for up to \$5 million. This may be something for the PRWG to consider in future years.
 - One potential project that grant could be used for is improving fish passage at the dam on Priest Lake.
- Standards for Communication
 - Newsletters (Hank)
 - Website Correction (Paul)
- PRWG Protocol Violations and Rules of Conduct
 - Members felt that there were a number of protocol violations that have occurred since the group's forming.
 - The PRWG protocols are vague about how protocols violations should be handled, and the group feels that a clearer process should be established (via revision to the protocols) to aid them in enforcing mutually agreed upon rules of conduct.
 - The group discussed how it will be important for the process to include clear guidance for how to first determine if violations have occurred, and then what would occur after a number of violations are committed.
 - The group discussed that while a task force to determine revisions to the protocols may be most effective, it is more urgent that a process is developed. This topic will be added with priority to the August steering committee meeting agenda.
 - The group discussed how the process should address the following:
 - How do we determine violations have occurred
 - Is a "three strikes" rule appropriate?
 - Is there a timeline for "strikes" to be forgiven?
 - How are committee members removed?
 - Violations may be officially recorded by the facilitator, but should be brought before the entire group for review

Next steps

- August meeting agenda items will include:
 - Determine how to handle protocol violations and the process of member removal
 - Internal Vote on Strategic Plan
- The September meeting will have an educational component, followed by a public adoption of the Strategic Plan.
- TLG will send the Strategic Plan to be provisionally adopted (internally) and then ceremonially adopted in September