

Priest River Watershed Group
Steering Committee Meeting
August 7, 2025
4:30-6:30pm
West Bonner Library



Present Members

Eric Bernsten, Kalispel Tribe
Eric Johnson, Priest Lake Cabin Association
Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited
Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League
Jon Quinn-Hurst, Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Amy Anderson, Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Kyle Maki, Idaho Wildlife Federation

Cathy Gidley, Trout Unlimited
Sean Stash, Boating Access on Priest River
Allan Songstad, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon
Todd Higgens, IDEQ

Facilitators

Hannah Anderson, Lead Facilitator
Tracy Ortiz, Facilitation Support

Goals:

- Collaborate to develop preliminary PRWG matrix (matrix design, criteria, weights) to be applied with a focus on the East River.
- Learn from the Kalispel Tribe's process to make progress towards fulfilling goal of creating Restoration Plan as outlined in the PRWG Strategic Plan.
- Review housekeeping and routine agenda items.

Meeting Minutes

PRWG Steering Committee Meeting - Welcome and Overview

Hannah Anderson, Facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and goals for the day. She introduced the structure of the meeting. Hannah explained that the purpose of this meeting was to begin the process of creating the PRWG Project Matrix.

Creating the Kalispel Tribe's Matrix – Recap, Eric Berntsen

Eric Bernsten of the Kalispel Tribe provided a brief recap of the Kalispel Tribe Matrix that he presented on in July. For a full recap of the July meeting and Eric Bernsten presentation, see July meeting notes.

Lessons Learned

Eric shared lessons learned and recommendations for the group to consider as they make their own matrix.

- The matrix has been used in the Pack River in Idaho and LeClerc, Ruby, Cedar, Mill, Middle, and Cee Cee Ah Creeks in Washington
- Stakeholder groups have previously decided not to modify the criteria or weight
- The matrix has helped the Tribe identify the projects that have the most “bang for the buck”

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Matrix Creation Process Review

Hannah shared the *Matrix Equation* that will be used to calculate the project score. She explained that the group would work together to build this matrix based on what they identified as priority and then assign weights to each of those priorities. The eventual goal of the matrix is to add values that can be run through the matrix's equation to create a fast and efficient way to process and identify projects.

The equation: **SUM(Weight x Rank for all PC Values) = Project Score**

Definitions of variables

PC = Prioritization Criteria | A label to identify each criteria

Weight = How much importance or priority is applied to the PC

Rank = Scale used to measure or describe the status of the PC in the project area

PC Value = Weight x Rank

Workshop Exercise

Hannah explained the process of the exercise and encouraged the group to jump into this hands-on. to better understand the components, and encouraged the group to ask questions through-out the process.

TLG prepopulated a variety of *Prioritization Criteria (PC)* options for the group to review and possibly use. The priority criteria were pulled from other matrices that serve similar geographical locations. The group was also encouraged to come up with other criteria that should be included.

TLG noted and created a spreadsheet as the group discussed and tentatively agreed on possible prioritization criteria options that would be included in their matrix. Below is a list of the priority criteria that the group tentatively agreed upon, and a brief description of each of the priority criteria.

Risk	What is the certainty of success
Physical Barriers	Are there any main channel barriers, is there connectivity with main channel, Will this improve access quality of cold water refugia, Will this improve access of summer rearing habitat
Species to Benefit	
Proximity to High Priority	How relevant is the project to the group goals (Low=1 - High=5)
Reach Prioritization Score	
Past Land Use Impacts	Are there significant impacts/constraints because of land use on or around the area
Number of Process Implements Addressed	Is flood plain connectivity being addressed, What are the number of included actions, Habitat Actions from Beachie's; LWM
Risk to Infrastructure	Are there significant impacts to surrounding infrastructure.

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Site Access Constraints	Constructability, landowner resistance or acceptance, poor access
Impact to Priest River	
Invasive Species Presence	
Cost	

Next steps

Due to time restrictions, the group paused the workshop at the completion of identifying prioritization criteria. TLG proposed creating a survey for the group to take and rank each of the prioritization criteria individually; with the understanding that the group would then discuss average scores of each prioritization criteria.

Action items:

- TLG to create and distribute a survey of the Prioritization Criteria to the PRWG, then calculate average scores
- PRWG members will provide their feedback on the Prioritization Criteria via survey
- During the September meeting the group will discuss Prioritization Criteria average ranks and comments

Housekeeping

- Education and Outreach
 - Communication Plan: The group voted on the adoption of the Communication Plan with the understanding that this is a living document. The group voted unanimously (8 votes) to adopt the Plan.
 - PRWG Brochure: The group voted unanimously (8 votes) on the adoption of the brochure.
 - Spokesperson Role: The Education and Outreach committee shared that they would like to have Erin Plue and Mike Lithgow officially represent the PRWG as the spokespeople. The group agreed that this was appropriate and could be amended if needed. The committee also clarified the role of spokespeople.
 - Presentation for spreading community awareness, to be re-addressed at a future date
- ITD Project
 - Erin Plue of Trout unlimited shared the updates on ITD projects that would affect passage under the bridge. This is an opportunity to share concerns and thoughts with ITD.
- PRWG Membership Structure
 - The groups discussed possible membership structure and other organizations that could be included within the PRWG.
 - Motorized Vehicles
 - Those who represent landowners on Priest River
- The next meeting is scheduled for September 4th

Adjourn

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