

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



---

### **Members' Present**

Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited  
Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League  
Amy Anderson, Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
Allan Songstad, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon  
Hank Jones, Fishing Guides on the Priest River  
Sean Stash, Boating Access on Priest River  
Eric Johnson, Priest Lake Cabin Association  
Jon Quinn-Hurst, Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
Eric Berntsen, Kalispel Tribe

### **Non-Members & General Public**

Michelle Richman  
Bill Cresse  
Stan Miller  
Georgie Miller  
Rob Ryan  
Jim McCray  
Betty Gardner

### **Facilitators**

Hannah Anderson, The Langdon Group  
Tracy Ortiz, The Langdon Group

### **Goals:**

- Hear a presentation from IDWR on 2025 operations of the Outlet Dam.
- Collaborate to assign draft weights and rank descriptions to the PRWG Matrix prioritization criteria, to be applied with a focus on the East River.
- Review housekeeping and routine agenda items.

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **PRWG Steering Committee Meeting - Welcome and Overview**

Hannah welcomed the group and began introductions for the meeting. She reviewed the meeting ground rules, agenda, and goals for the meeting.

#### **Presentation on 2025 Operations of Outlet Dam at Priest Lake**

Michelle Richman, Northern Regional Manager, and Bill Cresse, Northern Region Safety of Dams Engineer, for the Idaho Dept. of Water Resources (IDWR) presented on the 2025 Operations of the Outlet Dam at Priest Lake.

*A copy and recording of the presentation can be found on the PRWG website.*

Michelle and Bill highlighted the following in their presentation:

- Success of the 2025 operations
- Data on the 2025 recreation season
  - From May 30<sup>th</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>
  - Shared CFS levels throughout the season

*PRWG Steering Committee meetings are open for public observation. To ensure efficiency of agenda items, discussion will be reserved for PRWG steering committee members with priority.*

- Evaluation of the recreation season
    - Function as planned
    - Sustained 200 Cfs or more
- Lake Operations – Fall Season Drawdown
  - Provided information on historic practices
  - Fall release best practices per the Priest River Basin Plan
    - Original announcement at 1,000 cfs
  - Listening to Stakeholder Feedback
    - Interest in docks and infrastructure
    - Floating debris
    - Safety issues
  - Revised Cap and Flow announced in September
    - Extended recreation on the lake by one week
- Benefits of the current drawdown method
  - 2 full weeks of high flow river recreation
  - Dam safety
  - More natural drawdown better mimic nature
  - Less extreme flow rater in priest river
  - Finished by Nov 2
- Best Practices
  - High summer flows
  - Cap flow during drawdown
  - Drawdown done by Nov 1
  - Winter lake level
- Stakeholder Feedback Loop
  - Listed the Key stakeholders
  - Operations – Feedback Loop
    - The 2025 Operations are the beginning of an interactive process. The process is a continuous feedback loop
    - Asses – Modify – plan – implement
    - Information is also shared with Idaho Department of Water Resources Board
- Best Practices- Monitoring
  - Inflow monitoring: tributary inflow measurements
    - Difficult to manage gate operations without knowledge of tributary inflow qualities and inflow timing
- Next Steps for IDWR
  - Continue to gather feedback
  - Share lessons learned

## **Q&A and Discussion**

The group was given about 15 minutes to ask Michelle and Bill questions regarding their presentation.

Discussion is recorded as follows:

- What is the difference between a staff gauge and pressure transducer?

*PRWG Steering Committee meetings are open for public observation. To ensure efficiency of agenda items, discussion will be reserved for PRWG steering committee members with priority.*

- Data from the staff gauge is used to help provide measurements for a pressure transducer.
- How long does it take to create a reliable flow measurement?
  - More than one season but IDWR will continue to track.
- How well in advance can you determine if IDWR can give an extra week of high lake levels, to extend recreation opportunity for boaters?
  - We have to go through a few processes to be able to accurately estimate each year.
- Could a high spring runoff damage docks?
  - Yes, it could.
- Where did the recommendation for 1,000cf come from?
  - It is a recommendation set by the Priest River Basin Plan.
- Are there any transducer in the upper priest?
  - Not yet due to financial constraints.
- IDWR takes multiple groups opinions and letters into consideration when making decisions. 10 comment letters were received this summer.
- Betty (Member of the public) shared a measuring stick which documented the height of the river throughout the season near her property. She shared her concerns on erosions of the banks because of the flow difference throughout the recreation season.
- PRWG members thanks IDWR for their consideration of stakeholder and public comments and expressed appreciation for their hard work.
- IDWR mentioned that they would pass on the feedback received by the PRWG to the ID Water Resources Board, mentioned that the Board would be interested in more direct feedback. This was identified as a potential opportunity for a future PRWG learning session.

The group took a 5-minute break to transition from the presentation to the workshop.

### **PRWG Matrix - Collaborative Discussion & Workshop**

Hannah reviewed the timeline of the matrix. She shared the high-level summary of the goals that should be accomplished between now, November 2025, and February 2026.

An adjustment to the timeline was suggested. The group asked to run a real project through matrix in December rather than in February. It was agreed by the group that Eric Berntsen would narrow down a list of projects related to the East River to bring to the meeting in December.

### Prioritization Criteria - Ranks

The group reviewed and refined draft Rank 1 through 3 descriptions. The group reviewed each of the comments made and agreed on the definitions provided for each rank. The group reviewed half of the prioritization criteria and then agreed to save the other half for the December meeting.

### **Housekeeping**

Hannah went over the few housekeeping items that were shared prior to the meeting.

- Sub-Committee & Task Force Updates
  - Education and Outreach
    - Meet in December and come up with plans to meet next spring

*PRWG Steering Committee meetings are open for public observation. To ensure efficiency of agenda items, discussion will be reserved for PRWG steering committee members with priority.*

- Grants and Funding
    - Identified grants before January
- Work Plan Check In
  - The group agreed to meet before the December meeting
- January Meeting Date
  - Moved to January 8<sup>th</sup> to avoid overlapping New Year's Day holiday
  - Tracy to update meeting invite

**6:30pm | Adjourn**