

Members Present

Amy Anderson, Selkirk Conservation
Allan Songstad, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon*
Cathy Gidley, Trout Unlimited, Proxy
Caitlynn Emby, Idaho Conservation League,
Proxy
Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited
Eric Berntsen, Kalispel Tribe, Proxy
Eric Johnson, Priest Lake Cabin Association*
Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League
Kyle Maki, Idaho Wildlife Federation*
Sean Stash, Boating Access on Priest River

Technical Experts

Rob Ryan, IDFG
Bailey Fence, IDFG
Colton Finch, IDL

Members of the Public

David Westen
Susan Drumheller

Facilitators

Hannah Anderson, Lead Facilitator
Tracy Ortiz, Facilitation Support

Meeting Goals:

- Use the Matrix to evaluate and score Restoration Opportunities.
- Identify projects in 2026.
- Discuss 2026 PRWG Work Plan.
- Review housekeeping and routine agenda items.

Meeting Minutes

PRWG Steering Committee Meeting - Welcome and Overview

Hannah welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and the goals for the meeting.

PRWG Matrix - Score Restoration Opportunities

Hannah reviewed the optimistic timeline for creation of the matrix, explaining the goal to complete the matrix during this meeting to identify projects that could be included in the 2026 PRWG Work Plan. She provided a recap of the work completed during the January meeting and the items left to be completed. Each member received a copy of the draft matrix with the January work incorporated, and reviewed the weights assigned.

The group continued the process of running projects provided by Eric Berntsen, Kalispel Tribe, Proxy, through the matrix. Through thorough discussions the group was able to refine criteria in the matrix.

Below is a high-level summary of the discussion the group held regarding refinement and addition to the matrix:

RO-3

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- Criteria # 5 Benefits to Aquatic Species
 - The group discussed the potential of including in a specific category for “benefit to brook trout.” Almost all projects do include brook trout and including it would be necessary to help consider the need.
 - At this time the group decided to move on from the conversation and not to include a specific need for brook trout in the conversation.
- Criteria #6
 - A member of the group mentioned that currently criteria #6 as it is worded it does not address invasive species.
 - The group agreed that at this time they did not need to mention invasive species as it is addressed in other criteria.
- Criteria #12 Invasive Species Presence
 - The group discussed rewording the ranks to include a rank zero category: “Invasive species present but project will maintain the status quo”
- The group agreed that the goal of the matrix was to build credibility.

Because of time constraints there was time to run only one project through the matrix. The group agreed to move on from the matrix to the next topic on the agenda. At the March meeting, the group will continue to run projects through the matrix.

Project Identification for 2026

Eric Berntsen shared information on a potential project for a local landowner, David Westen. This project was initially introduced at the January meeting where the group got to meet David and talk a bit about the potential of collaborating. Eric, Hank Jones, and Sean Stash shared their visit to the project site, where they were able to walk the area. Erik shared that this project would require stabilization of approximately 300 feet. To complete this they would need large equipment and some funding from outside sources. The group agreed to discuss this project more as the group gathered more information and to possibly connect David to an agency.

Cathy explained there was another potential project opportunity for 2026 – a private landowner project south of Coolin. Cathy provided aerial images of the project site. This is a wetland restoration project along Lee Creek off the side ditch. The project was identified as a good educational opportunity for school groups and the community. The project goal is to restore functionality to the historic wetland encouraging plant growth, wildlife habitat, and water retention in the landscape which aims to contribute later season, cold water inflow to Priest Lake. The ask of the group would be low and easy to accomplish, and would include volunteering time to plant vegetation, build beaver dam analogues (BDAs) and spread awareness of the project.

2026 Work Plan

Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited, introduced the group’s work plan for 2025. She explained that the Work Plan Task Force group, comprised of Erin, Hank, Kyle, and Sean, met and discussed the goals and potential

avenues for project identification. The group discussed the 2026 Work Plan draft and through thorough discussion the group was able to refine the work plan and add additional criteria to the work plan.

Below is a high-level summary of the discussion the group held regarding the refinement and addition to the work plan.

- **Objective 3** Work with Trout Unlimited to identify desired map layers and develop them.
- **Objective 5** Currently not a priority but the group may return to in the future.
- **Objective 6** The group is more concerned about high uses areas.
- **Objectives 7 and 8** Include the wording of Lower Priest River to remain consistent
- **Objective 11** will include the lake owners for mailers
- **Objective 23** projects will be added to mapping layers as their identified
- **ADDED Objective 33** Establish a feedback loop for IDWR consistent communication.
- **ADDED Objective 34** Support and facilitate regular interagency meetings
 - Similar to panel discussion that the group hosts. It would be beneficial for the group to have opportunities for agencies to come together and share their plans for the year.

An updated Work Plan can be found attached to the meeting minutes. With this addition the group agreed to vote on adoption of the Work Plan in March.

Housekeeping

- Sub-Committee & Task Force Updates
 - Education and Outreach
 - Survey development: Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League shared the survey the outreach committee had been working on and asked the group for their comments. After a brief conversation Jennifer agreed to adjust some of the language of the survey and then bring it back to the group.
 - Mailers: Jennifer shared that the mailers are ready to go out but the outreach committee did need some help adding the necessary postage and stickers to them. She asked for the group to let her know if they would be interested.
 - Tabling at events: the group discussed the appropriateness of being able to host PRWG materials at the tables of other groups/organizations in lieu of having their own table.
 - Some felt that it was okay to do this considering group members could represent both groups but there were some concerns that it may not be appropriate and could falsely align PRWG with independent interests.
 - The conversation was tabled and agreed to be discussed further as events come up.

Adjourn

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