Harney Basin Wetland Initiative All Partners Meeting

Summary Notes

Date: July 19, 2017 – 9:00 – 3:00, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Attending Meeting:

Action Items:

- Build up/expand progress monitoring framework matrix and send updates out for further review - Ryan and Robert of BEF
- Schedule Aquatic Health / Malheur Lake working group meeting – recommendation for funding – Brenda / Ben
- Schedule call to discuss strategy for OWRD issues for objective 2: Peter?

Introductions: Welcome everyone to the meeting, introductions around the room, no changes to the agenda.

OWEB & BEF Learning Project (Ryan and Robert)

Monitoring Framework: hopefully this can be a foundation for explaining the project to others as well as for internal communications and serve as a resource for learning and adaptive management. It has been transferred into a results chain that (hopefully) accurately represents our outcomes and path to get to the outcomes.

This is meant as a tool for us to review and evaluate how things are going and not intended as a review tool for OWEB. OWEB is trying to wrap their minds around these complex issues that are the FIP's. This is a way to communicate the complexity of our work to OWEB, and for our own clarity and transparency on how we are reaching our goals/outcomes.

Can be used as a living document that tracks changes and maps our path forward. Also, can be a communication for talking to monitoring folks.

Can be brought to board for 2 purposes, explaining each individual FIPs to the board, and explaining the overall FIP program to others (legislators/OWEB board).

Final product will hopefully be done in the fall (October). Final product will have the linkages between boxes, the contextual framework will be filled in.

Near term objective – get adequate results chain with all boxes filled in (everyone agrees it adequately describes our FIP project)

FIP Outcome 1:

Aquatic health subcommittee and Malheur lake working group meeting met in early July to bring what was previously two groups together.

Two groups were relying on one single person (who is no longer here) to bridge the gap between the two.

Plan to try to meet prior to next full HBWI meeting to continue the conversations about next steps (projects to fund)

There were conversations about social / economic models and what may be up for funding in the next cycle.

There were differing ideas of what funding can & should be used for. Next meeting will be discussing what James' project learns and incorporating what has been learned into what projects should be funded. The result of next meeting will hopefully be a recommendation for what projects should be funded next biennium.

There won't be another project for funding for outcome 1 till November.

James Pearson Carp Model Demonstration:

-Purpose was to advise what management of carp would be most effective/efficient.

3 objectives:
1: age based population model
2: avian predation model into the carp model
    CATE, DCCO, WHPE biggest fish eaters
3: population dynamics and alternative control options
    Egg electroshocking, juvenile trapping, commercial trapping

Success (level of carp that is ok) in the model is a biomass of carp less than 100 kg/ha.

Model looked into a combination of removal methods:

Commercial + juvenile trapping: cannot work

Egg shocking + juvenile trapping: cannot work

Commercial harvest + egg electroshocking: can work

Commercial harvest + egg electroshocking + juvenile trapping (all 3): works best (hit them at multiple life stages)

His model example says: commercial harvest & electroshocking at 70% each would get us below the 100 kg / ha threshold.

One important note is that at around 290 kg/ha water quality will start to improve: while complete recovery isn't seen at that level, some level of improvement should be observed. Could this be a target? A tipping point where things start to snowball?

If you can only have one removal method: commercial harvest

If you can have 2:

-commercial harvest + egg electroshocking

Q: (Chris) What will be the ideal lake depth or size that make management tools most effective? Is the lake size too big or too small to implement certain levers (controls)?

A: didn't have an answer to this question

Carp Model: (new things that haven't been done yet)

Objective 1: incorporate lake fluctuations into the model

What removal rates do we have to hit them at on low water years to hit our threshold goals? Potentially leave them alone on high water years, hit them on low water years? These are the kind of questions this will hopefully answer.

Objective 2: Carp ecosystem model

(Michael j. weber and Michael l. brown) effects of common carp on Aquatic ecosystems 80 year after "carp as a dominant". (suggested paper)

Shown visual of conceptual ecosystem model (complex diagram)

Project will be looking at certain subsectors of the model: namely (carp dynamics, wind fetch, turbidity)

We can use model to answer questions like:

What drives turbidity?

What will it take to clear the water?

How long will the water stay clear?

Will that time be sufficient to promote aquatic vegetation growth?

Dr. Tamara Wood's (USGS) work: 'A Predictive Model for Light in the Water Column of Malheur Lake'

Levers (controls) that have been discussed for investigating with the model are:

-carp control

-wind break

-lake subdivision

Ideas for other control methods are welcomed and needed, need some innovative thinking.

Knowing Nitrogen/Phosphorous levels in the system would be informative and will be addressed with this project as water samples are also taken each week along with the data that is being collected electronically with water testing equipment.

Brenda/James about the 'why didn't you do it when the water was low question'. Just weren't prepared at the time and you can't do anything about last summer, but you can prepare for the

future.

Zola: I think we shouldn't go straight to the method, but rather start with the outcomes we want to not put sidewalls on our ideas. (e.g. reduce juvenile survival / reduce adult numbers rather than juvenile trapping or commercial harvest)

Outcome 2: Maintain and enhancing flood meadows

- Tyler II – off the table due to water rights litigation / water resources requested we not due that project.
- Ultimately looking to replace the structures that are effecting the most amount of acres & in the most strategic location

Discussion on OWRD requests and how to address this situation and holdup:

OWRD requested locking structure which makes landowners uncomfortable. What does that locking structure look like? Who is in charge of pulling boards on high water events, etc?

We are also looking into secondary (in field) structures, but there are certain benchmark numbers we are aiming for. There will be some small ones, but we need a Tyler II replacement asap.

Landowner Outreach Discussion – Esther Lev, The Wetlands Conservancy

Took 12 people on tour of Malheur (through wetlands conservancy)

Land Trust / Landowner meetings: with Esther Lev, Dan Nichols, Gary Marshall

Is there a need? Is there an interest for a land trust here?

General mindset of people were that wet meadows were great and none should be lost. So, how do we keep wet meadows around in perpetuity?

They were then asked if there were money attached to saving wet meadows who would you trust to take money from? Government? Others?

When someone is giving you money there are always strings attached, what strings could you tolerate?

There are some tax benefits to easements, some with families entertained the idea of an easement that wanted to pass land down to their children.

Easements are a deep subject that needs to be explored more.

Zola: questions to esther

- If you were the easement holder, what would you need the easement to do? What would you want?
- Start to compare the list of landowner wants / needs with who all of the potential easement holders might be in the area to see which easement holder might be the best fit.
    - It may be different easement holders for different purposes (sage grouse, wetlands, cows, whatever it may be)

There are 6 potential land trust holders.

Gary Ivey: Maybe smaller / shorter land use agreements for forage areas (idea of paying people for bird use days, etc.)

Chris: There is a desire for RCPP money to stay in Oregon. Potential funding source?

Esther: Optimistically done with land trust conversations by end of August.

We need to establish a vision for wet meadows into the future (get landowners on board)
Then maybe it will be easier to have a discussion about land trusts if everyone agrees on a common vision about wet meadows

FIP Outcome 3 – Outreach and communication to solve complex problems

Funding (match)

Project Implementation
Overview of basin-wide baseline monitoring activities:
Project looking to establish current extent of carp off refuge in Silver Creek and Silvies drainages.
Collecting fish assemblage data, water clarity, water quality parameters, and physical aquatic habitat (vegetation and stream attribute).
Dan Nichols: with respect to landowners you need to be respectful and realize that they may be sticking their necks out on the line.
Peter: Lets not speak for other agencies (with respect to water quality in particular)

Commercial fishing:
Proved the difficulties of capturing carp.