



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Joint Fish Screens & Passage Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Salem, OR

Teams Virtual Meeting

Friday – December 5, 2025 @ 0800 to ~1230 hrs.

Members	Representing	Present	Absent
Fish Passage Task Force			
Kelly Moore	Fishing and Conservation	x	
Denise Hoffert (<i>Chair</i>)	Fishing and Conservation	x	
Jim Harbeck	Fishing and Conservation	x	
Steve Albertelli	Water Users	x	
April Snell	Water Users	x	
Fred Messerle	Water Users	x	
Alix Danielsen	Public-At-Large	x	
Ted Labbe	Public-At-Large	x	
Tom Iverson	Public-At-Large	x	
Fish Screening Task Force			
Darin Olson	Agriculture	x	
Robert Durham	Agriculture	x	
Kristin Bishop (<i>Chair</i>)	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x	
Judith Barkstedt	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x	
William Freeland	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x	
Alexis Vaivoda	Public-At-Large	x	

ODFW Staff in Attendance*:

Mac Barr, Fish Passage Coordinator
 Katherine Nordholm, Fish Screen and Passage Coordinator
 Sharon Crowley, Assistant Fish Passage Coordinator
 Kregg Smith, Senior Policy Analyst
 Kevin Rybacki, ODFW-ODOT Assistant Liaison
 Edward Hughes, Fish Habitat Restoration Biologist/WOSRP
 Christopher Claire, Coos-Coquille Watershed Habitat Protection Biologist
 Pete Baki, ODFW-ODOT Liaison
 Joel Watts, ODFW Fish Passage Engineer
 Scott Janssen, ODFW Fish Passage Engineer
 Christopher Trill, Umpqua Assistant District Fish Biologist
 Benjamin Campbell, Klamath/Malheur Watershed District Hydropower Coordinator

Members of the Public in Attendance*:

Cash Chesselet, ODOT
 Allen Gillette, ODOT
 Sabrina McNeely, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians
 Caley Sowers, Coos Soil and Water Conservation District

Annie Merrill, Pew Charitable Trusts
Alex Uber, WDFW

*Attended virtually, *additional members of the public may have joined virtually throughout the meeting.*

Meeting Agenda

Call to Order Joint Fish Screening and Fish Passage Task Force Meeting

Chair Hoffert called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

Review & Approve Joint Task Force Meeting Agenda (*Chair Hoffert and Chair Bishop*)

Chair Hoffert asked if questions or changes were needed to the draft agenda for the Joint Fish Screening and Fish Passage Task Force meeting.

Motion: Hoffert moved to approve the Joint Task Force meeting agenda. Iverson seconded the motion. The Fish Passage Task Force voted to approve. All nine members in attendance voted to approve. Motion passed.

Motion: Durham moved to approve the Joint Task Force meeting agenda. Vaivoda seconded the motion. The Fish Screening Task Force voted to approve. All six members in attendance voted to approve. Motion passed.

Review & Approve October 16, 2025, Fish Passage Task Force Meeting Minutes and May 29, 2025, Fish Screening Task Force Meeting Minutes (*Chair Hoffert and Chair Bishop*)

Chair Hoffert asked if questions or changes were needed to the draft meeting minutes from the October Fish Passage Task Force meeting and May Fish Screening Task Force meeting.

Motion: Hoffert moved to approve the Fish Passage Task Force minutes. Albertelli seconded the motion. The Fish Passage Task Force voted to approve. All nine members in attendance voted to approve. Motion passed.

Motion: Freeman moved to approve the Fish Screening Task Force minutes. Durham seconded the motion. The Fish Screening Task Force voted to approve. All six members in attendance voted to approve. Motion passed.

ODFW Screens & Passage Program Updates (*Apke/Nordholm/Barr*)

Mac welcomed Jim Harbeck, representing Fishing and Conservation, and Alix Danielsen, representing Public-At-Large, to the Fish Passage Task Force and facilitated introductions. Jim introduced himself as a recently retired fish biologist for the Nez Perce Tribe and Joseph field office supervisor for 20 years. He has 30 years of experience working in NE Oregon in collaboration with the ODFW Enterprise district office and LaGrande research office. Jim said he is happy to be here and looks forward to meeting everyone in person in 2026. Alix introduced herself. She is a restoration ecologist at InterFluv, where she started 5 days ago, and was previously at the Hood River Watershed Group for 7 years. While at the HRWG, she oversaw restoration projects including passage and screening. Alix has also worked in the Clackamas basin watershed council and in agriculture prior to that. Alix says she enjoys working collaboratively with folks and appreciates the opportunity to be here and work with everyone. Mac thanked everyone who applied for the Task Force vacancies. He commented that Jim and Alix are filling big shoes and thanked Terry and Zak for their work on the Task Force.

Katherine welcomed and congratulated Jim and Alix on their appointment to the Fish Passage Task Force. Katherine is actively recruiting for vacancies on the Fish Screening Task Force and has begun interviewing to fill the seat Greg Harris vacated. Fish Screening Task Force appointments are approved by the Commission. Katherine acknowledged and thanked Chair Kristin Bishop for her service. This is her last year on the Task Force and we would like to thank her in person soon. Kristin's position on Task Force will need to be filled, and Mac shared the pool of Fish Passage Task Force applicants. Katherine

will reach out to them to see if they are interested in serving on the Fish Screening Task Force. Katherine hopes to have two roles filled early in 2026.

Mac reminded all Task Force members they can submit a travel expense detail form to be reimbursed for personal vehicle mileage and gas for transportation to and from meetings, and for meals. Please contact Mac if you need help completing this form.

Mac provided an update on current litigation. A court ruling was issued related to the Oregon Administrative Rules pertaining to Wallowa Lake. ODFW is reviewing the ruling and discussing it with legal counsel. The ruling will involve significant work for the Fish Screening and Passage Program in the near future and may involve the Task Force in 2026. There is no update on the Winchester Dam litigation.

ODFW Fish Passage Task Force Vice Chair Selection (*FPTF Members only*)

Chair Hoffert asked if any Task Force members would like to nominate someone for the position of Vice Chair. Hearing no nominations, it was announced Steve Albertelli previously expressed interest in the position.

Motion: Chair Hoffert motioned to elect Albertelli to serve as Vice Chair. Labbe seconded the motion. The Fish Passage Task Force voted to approve. All nine members in attendance voted to approve. Motion passed.

Chair Hoffert welcomed Steve to the leadership team and looks forward to working together. Mac and Katherine thanked Steve, and Katherine reminded the Fish Screening Task Force that they will need to nominate a new Chair and Vice Chair in 2026. Anyone interested in either position can contact Katherine.

Set ODFW Screens & Passage Task Force 2026 Meeting Dates (*All*)

Chair Hoffert and Mac facilitated setting 2026 meeting dates for the Fish Passage Task Force. Mac suggested visiting the Willamette dams during the third quarter, a suggestion from last year. Kelly suggested visiting Fall Creek Dam and Cougar Dam, and Denise expressed interest in visiting the structures with dewatering plans to discuss the unintended ecological, social, cultural, and economic consequences of these actions. Mac will contact Greg Taylor with the US Army Corps of Engineers and look at places to host the meeting.

2026 Fish Passage Task Force meetings will be:

March 11 (Wed) – virtual meeting

May 6 & 7 (Wed-Thurs) – in person & joint with Screens TF, Hood River/The Dalles

October 8 & 9 (Thurs-Fri) – in person, Willamette Valley TBD

December 9 (Wed) – virtual and as needed

Katherine facilitated setting the 2026 meeting dates for the Fish Screens Task Force. She and Alexis have started coordinating a second quarter meeting and site visits in the Hood River area. Katherine would like to revisit Klamath Falls in the third quarter to discuss and visit screen projects in the basin after the return of Chinook and Steelhead. A fourth quarter meeting will be scheduled if needed.

2026 Fish Screens Task Force meetings will be:

April 2 (Thurs) – virtual meeting

May 6 & 7 (Wed-Thurs) – in person & joint with Passage TF, Hood River/The Dalles

October 13 & 14 (Tues-Wed) – in person, Klamath Falls

Discuss Task Force Biennium Priorities & 2026 Work Plan (All)

Mac requested Task Force members consider topics at the forefront that the agency should focus on in 2026. ODFW Fish Division biennium priorities are in development, but the Fish Screening and Passage Program priorities include moving forward on tide gates, ongoing screens maintenance, and “telling our story”. This outreach is a way for the program to show the value of providing passage and screening, including the ecological, economic, and societal benefits overall, while showcasing our successes. This is something the program is currently working on.

Bill Freeland asked who we envision to be our main audience. Mac replied that the audience could include the Legislature, so they see value in the program, and the public at large. Are people aware this program exists and the value it provides? Bill would like to see more outreach to the public because they are a little more nonplussed these days and wondered if there is something we can home in to program-wise that Task Force members can participate in with that.

Denise said she has lots of thoughts. This is something OWEB does, something she’s done, but will save the discussion for the next meeting. She said there is a lot of experience within the group to provide input on this topic. She would like to know what resources ODFW can put towards outreach; for example, graphic designers, people who can create story maps, people who can help pull data together on funding for different regions of the state.

Ted said it’s an exciting moment because of what’s happening in the Klamath and to spotlight fish returning to areas they haven’t been in a hundred years. We are also at the start of updating forest practice rules in a generation, and as part of that, we have resources to do fish passage higher up in the network on small streams in the forest setting. Ted suggested leading with success, then pivoting to lower in system and the emerging issue with tide gates. The agency needs to respond to the need that landowners are coming to us with.

Ted would like to see Oregon develop its own technical guidance defining passability at human-made structures. This would help property owners of artificial obstructions understand the types of partnerships needed to fix them. Washington state has done a tremendous amount of work providing technical guidance defining what is passable, at what flows, to what size of fish, and what species of fish. Oregon has piggybacked on Washington and federal agencies on this, yet we know there are deficiencies in these documents, particularly around non-salmonids, such as lamprey.

Fred agreed that it is great to take the story to the public. The more awareness the public has, the better, but the work we’re doing is not particularly a priority for the decision makers. Two years ago, the Task Force sent a request to the Governor’s office, ODFW leadership, and the Legislature and never received a response. How do we directly get connected with the decision makers to see issues we raise get on the agenda? How does the Task Force help the agency raise the profile of this work?

Bob suggested showcasing the success of fish screening in Wasco County and Jefferson County with support from local farmers and the conservation district to the Legislature, and stress that because the screening is 25-30 years old, continued maintenance is vital or the value put into this infrastructure will not last.

Denise concluded the brainstorming session, stating the Task Force will be ready in March to develop the work plan for the year and set an agenda. In the past, the Task Force has met outside these meetings in smaller work groups to dive into specific issues. If you have time, please consider working in these small groups, as these have worked very well for discreet tasks, such as Statewide Priority Barrier List.

Mac summarized the Passage Task Force ideas include telling our story, telling the tide gate story, and engaging with the decision makers. Katherine added that the Screens Task Force will come to the first 2026 meeting with some concepts about where we should focus, such as screening maintenance and telling our story.

Task Force Member Issues, Updates & Roundtable (All)

Task Force members shared updates related to their areas of representation.

- Bill Freeland shared that the Long Tom Watershed Council is doing a little more work with their habitat rehabilitation.
- Judith Barkstedt shared updates from federal agencies. NOAA Fisheries has lost 30% of its staff in the West Coast Region, including many supervisors and others with institutional knowledge. The agency is reorganizing staff and reprioritizing projects and executive orders. NOAA Fisheries WCR Guidelines for Stream Crossings and Grade Control were updated this year, and Jean Castillo hopes to publish it in early 2026. The US Forest Service is increasing timber sales in response to an executive order, and the Willamette National Forest is busy right now. Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulations are being changed to revert to the 2019 regulations. The changes need to be interpreted by lawyers and are currently open for public comment. Another federal effort is to rescind the roadless rule for the National Forests, which identified large sections of National Forests that have no roads. The NW Forest Plan and consultations are based on this rule and have a large effect on how the Forest Service operates. Work through NEPA would now allow roads to be built in areas where roads were previously not allowed. Currently, Forest Service projects that would normally close roads or restore land at the end of projects are being told to leave roads open. The NW Forest Plan amendment is moving forward, albeit slowly. Judith is working on the ARBO III update for USFS and BLM consultation for ESA coverage for restoration in Oregon. She is hoping it will be implemented by the next in-water work window and will include the new NMFS fish passage guidelines which increase culvert sizing. The changes from ARBO II to ARBO III are mainly wordsmithing and clarification for people implementing projects, and it may include changes to herbicide applications for aquatic restoration and invasive plant treatment.
- Alix shared the East Fork Irrigation District, the largest water district in the Hood River basin, is gearing up to replace their fish screen. The project has ODFW involvement and funding from the Private Forest Accord and ODFW. It will have a lot of ecological benefits in the East Fork subbasin. Katherine and Joel visited the project site Monday, 12/1, and talked to Alexis about a spring site visit with the Task Force.
- April offered that the Oregon Water Resources Congress may be of assistance conducting tours as they work with irrigation districts all over the state. Their conference was held this week in Hood River and some of April's thoughts include the importance of finding opportunities where we can work together, water users, conservation interests, and other entities, to find innovative and collaborative projects, like the East Fork Irrigation District fish screen. April thanked staff for the Coos Bay Task Force meeting, saying it was time well spent, and thinking about myriads of different types of passage issues – tide gates, dams, or what happens when dams are removed and fish return sooner than expected and there hasn't been the adequate investment in fish screening. There are challenges, but opportunities too. Incentives, rather than litigation, can be used with innovative partnerships with entities that don't always work together. We will face budget issues next year, but there is economic value associated with what has already been done and what needs to be done. It will be important to quantify what we can from fisheries to communities, all the benefits that will be able to help get more resources to the need.
- Kelly shared he has been retired 10 years, but prior to retirement, he was the West Region program manager with ODFW. In-between sessions, Shaun and Tom went before a Legislative

committee in an informational meeting to talk about the progress of salmon recovery. Kelly thinks that was impactful for the people listening. There is a [Native Fish Society article](#) supporting recovery and possibly supporting delisting of salmon. Kelley suggested that what Tom and Shaun presented to the Legislative committee could be expanded to include the Fish Screening and Passage Program and boiled down to a 15 to 20-minute presentation that would make the Legislature more aware of what we're up to.

- Ted offered a little case study of project he's been on the fringes of and shared links to the [Wild Rivers Land Trust](#) Bagley Creek restoration project and EPA [brownfield cleanup](#). It's a project on Bagley Creek, a principal tributary to the Elk River that had the largest habitat stronghold for Coho salmon in the watershed, and the project has a type of partnership April alluded to. A very small land trust managed to secure a large EPA grant to do voluntary cleanup at an old plywood mill. It has dioxins in the mill pond and there are fish passage barriers there as well. They are working on a plan to clean up the mill site and open a couple of miles of fish habitat in tributaries upstream. Ted helped build up the land trust over the last 5-6 years. It's exciting. It's a long way away from being remedied, but Ted shared the current information. We sometimes think in narrow buckets of work around fish passage or environmental cleanup or economic development, and this is a project that kind of hits all those issues in a relatively economically disadvantaged zone.
- Jim shared that he was hoping today to understand a little better the scope of work FPTF takes on and particularly in what is appropriate for outreach. Several years ago, Trout Unlimited helped produce Telling the Lostine Story, a story of fish passage successes and what was possible when fish managers, water users, nonprofits, and the local community collaborated and came together to fix the problem. In terms of what's appropriate, Jim has been thinking about what he can bring to table. He has legacy contacts in Eastern Oregon and asked what he should be doing regarding outreach before the next task force meeting. Mac said we're all ears to hear your story of the Lostine and the tools you can provide to help us. Yes, it's appropriate to talk to fish managers, water users, and the public, and to be a conduit to us. So yes, bring back those messages from your regions to bring perspective and help make our program better and improve the work ODFW does, the Fish Screening and Passage Program does, and ultimately, the resources and Oregonians alike.
- Tom introduced himself as a representative for the Public-At-Large and currently works for Yakima Nation, primarily on mainstem Columbia hydropower and mitigation funding through BPA for off-site mitigation. The NW Power and Conservation Council is a four-state body that oversees Bonneville Power Administration and their funding, and we got a lot of funding in the state of Oregon for passage and screens from the BPA. The NW Power and Conservation Council is updating their fish and wildlife program. They do so every five years, and they will be releasing a draft for 60-day review on December 16th. We are trying to get a stronger commitment for operations and maintenance funding in this program because BPA has historically level-funded projects, meaning the budget has stayed same over the years, resulting in less money to spend given inflation and cost of living increases. We will be looking at this closely. We might be able to help the Department and local watershed groups with the funding as we expect to see federal funding decrease over the next few years. Tom has started doing a little lobbying in Washington D.C. looking for federal appropriations for salmon recovery in the Columbia River. He shared that they are trying to figure out how to get the message across to a federal government that does not appreciate science or the environment. It's going to be a tricky path, but we'll get through it like we always have.
- Steve introduced himself to the new members. He is on the Fish Passage Task Force and represents Water Users. He works for PacifiCorp and has an office in Medford.
- Darin introduced himself as a Fish Screens Task Force member representing farmers in the Willamette Valley. He suggested it would be nice to create a one-page fact sheet about how

many products are implemented and how money is being spent. Funding could be pulled back very easily, and we need solid facts to put in front of people to show the bang for the dollar. Denise contributed that OWEB does fact sheets by county and describes investments in those locations. OWEB works statewide but focuses locally. The message resonates very well. If ODFW can break down where investments have been made across the state by county, it could be very useful. Darin said he is willing to volunteer time to help ODFW with this.

- Kristin introduced herself to the group as a member of the Fish Screens Task Force, representing all things fishing. It was a great fishing season. The summer was great, and it was nice to have options like Buoy 10 for more than hatchery fish. Coho has a great run and big fish, and she is looking forward to winter steelhead. Kristin reminded everyone to be careful on ladders when cleaning gutters to avoid injuries and stay safe.
- Fred introduced himself as a Fish Passage Task Force member representing Water Users and lives in Coos Bay, where his family ranches and grazes cattle below sea level, grows trees and logs, and is the district manager for the Beaver Slough Drainage District and is involved in two other drainage districts. He shared he's grateful for the Task Force meeting in Coos Bay in October and for two good days looking at tide gates. He said some of the local people appreciated direct contact with the Agency. Fred explained the Task Force is not going to resolve the tide gate issues by themselves. It's much bigger and much more complex than that, but we can make case that this is a systematic failure as far as how we're approaching this and what we're able to get done on the ground. What needs to get down on the ground and everything from here on up are almost two different worlds. From the landowner's perspective, the system and everybody involved in it, in Fred's opinion, customer service is not a priority. On the ground, you're going to have to approach it from either an incentive or regulatory standpoint, and both of those methods are basically broken right now. The process is so onerous and complex, landowners are taking care of business with what they can, and in a lot of cases, no best practices are being followed, and it is certainly not getting us where we need to be. A regulatory process is adversarial and there are no incentives for landowners to participate because of the complexity and time involved. It takes years to receive permitting and then finally get implemented. Fred provided three key points we need to understand. 1. On the coast, watershed councils have done bulk on the groundwork with restoration and tide gates, and they are in real trouble. They're depended on grant funding streams, and that's not a good business model. Those resources are going to become less and less. It is a big concern about how watershed councils will survive or if the model will change to be able to implement restoration projects. 2. The possibility of delisting coastal coho appears to be viable now and needs to become a higher priority. If delisted, it will free up resources to go back on ground and decrease the complexity of the system. Fred asks that the Task Force consider supporting and advocating for delisting. 3. We have a local situation where watershed councils need to qualify for Focused Investment Partnerships with OWEB, but the NGO that developed the templates for the strategic action plans have biased them to manage for native fish abundance and not include hatchery fish, which is something the Coquille Indian Tribe cannot support. The native and hatchery fish issue is a huge problem at every level including policy making. Fred said that while he doesn't have the answers, he is willing to stay with conversation. Denise added that watershed councils were created to bring together all the voices to find common ground and move forward.
- Alexis introduced herself as a representative of the Public-At-Large on the Fish Screens Task Force and the manager of the Farmers Irrigation District in Hood River, where she has been working for 1.5 years, focused on projects within the district and irrigation. Alexis described how many different layers of knowledge, connections, and permitting there can be when starting fish screening and passage projects and would love to hear Alix's perspective on the role of a watershed group. Alix contributed that watershed groups are worth tapping into because they are a non-regulatory resource with people who are willing to collaborate. Alix will meet outside this

meeting to discuss the Gate Creek Fish Screen. She added that the Warm Springs Trib and their fisheries manager are fully involved in the work happening in the Hood River basin and are strong partners.

- Bob has been working on fish screens for 30 years. His drainage district is close enough to screen shop in The Dalles that the screen shop staff will help take care of things when needed. They had a screen rebuilt a year ago that was first installed in 1995. Katherine found some money to have it fenced, and they would like to add a kiosk to explain what the fish screen is because it is located at the entrance to a large Forest Service campground. The conservation district is very active and helps coordinate with the watershed councils, recently with pesticide and fertilizer work in orchards and cleaning up some areas. This summer, the creek went dry for a couple of days, but he did not hear of any fish kills. The water master works well with the farmers in the district. There are listed salmon and steelhead in the streams, as well as lamprey. Bob shared how we need to look at the whole picture. What may be good for lamprey may not be best for salmon or steelhead and vice versa.
- Denise introduced herself as a member of the Fish Passage Task Force representing Fishing & Conservation. She has been with Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) since 2021 and prior to that worked with watershed councils and other nonprofits on fish passage projects, specializing in small dam removal. The Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) will open the next solicitation at the January 2026 board meeting. They will be discussing raising the funding caps and the impact of inflation on restoration projects. The cap was \$4 million a biennium, and they will discuss potentially raising it to \$5 million for each of next 3 biennium. Denise reminded everyone there are several OWEB funded FIPs that support habitat for native fish; John Day Basin Partnership, Hood River Basin Partnership, Clackamas Basin Partnership, Warner Basin Partnership, and three partnerships on the coast: Mid-Coast, Coastal Estuaries, and Coos Bay. OWEB's long-term investments support the resources, capacity, and partnerships to get work done on the ground, and recognize there is a greater funding need than there are funds available. OWEB's budget is not increasing commensurate with inflation. The FIP program brings folks together to leverage their resources, to match funds, to look at landscape scale, and to think of the bigger picture. Denise provided the perspective that extraction of wealth through our resources (agriculture, tree farming, fishing) is billions of dollars, while work in restoration is only around \$100 million from one state agency. More funding is needed, so they are thinking about how to responsibly leverage the available resources.

Debrief from Statewide Screens & Passage Program Meeting (*Nordholm*)

Katherine debriefed the Task Force members on the statewide Fish Screening and Passage Program meeting on the North Coast in November. The program used to have these meetings annually or semi-annually, but it has been at least 7 years since we've had a large FSPP meeting, and it was well received. Staff from the Enterprise screen shop, John Day screen shop, Central Point screen shop, The Dalles screen shop, and Salem headquarters convened for two days of presentations, discussions, and afternoon field visits. Presentation topics included fish screen and passage examples, new technologies, components, things that work, things that don't work, tricky projects, group feedback, passage criteria, screening criteria, Section 106 compliance and NOAA programmatic cultural compliance for fish screen projects, and the ODOT CRPA program and how it links to fish passage compensation dollars. This was important for shops who have projects funded with ODOT compensation funds. Katherine gave a big shout out to the Tillamook Estuary Partnership for the first day's site visits to tidal restoration projects and a tour of their native plant nursery. The plant nursery was very interesting, and we learned about the complicated work that goes into propagating plants for restoration work. The Salmon SuperHwy did a stellar job showing us tidal restoration and fish passage projects including Esther Cr tide gate. This site visit went over very well with screen shop staff, who started measuring things and talking about how to

fabricate tide gates. It was especially informative for people from Eastern Oregon who don't have a tide gate background. The next all-staff FSPP meeting is tentatively scheduled for spring 2027.

Update on Klamath Screening Prioritization (*Nordholm*)

Katherine provided an update on the Klamath basin screening prioritization. Development of the prioritization is on hold while waiting for delivery of Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) funds. However, we have already done an inventory of water rights, unscreened diversions, and known screens in the area.

Katherine shared some general updates on the Klamath basin, including an [OPB news article](#) about salmon returning to the basin, migrating upstream and exploring irrigation canals, highlighting how fish screens would help prevent this. This is a good news plus more work to do kind of story, and it has been interesting to see fish screens in the news! There is a need for fish screens, and we can use this as a jumping off point to tell our story in the Klamath. The Klamath basin continues to be a focus and priority of the Department. We have records of about 100 fish screens in the Klamath, which show some progress has been made. Another opportunity to tell our story will be at the upcoming [Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting](#) on Friday, December 12, where there will be a Klamath update at beginning of meeting. There are also 3 projects in the Klamath basin selected for a total of \$1.5 million in funding from Lottery Revenue Bond funds being administered by ODFW. These include a passage and screen project on Spencer Creek, a large tributary to the Klamath River, and a project to screen one turnout on the Ady Canal. There is potential federal funding from different directions allocated to the basin as well. Katherine estimated there will be less than 100 priority screens, but there are 100-500 unscreened diversions. Katherine anticipates progress to build as more screens are implemented, with smaller projects being faster to implement than larger ones.

Kregg Smith added that he's been doing a lot of work in the Klamath lately. We have a couple of federal grants from NOAA and BOR to look at the feasibility and alternatives at Keno Dam and fish screening in the Keno reach. They are currently working through the process of implementing the money for screening projects. Kregg said there is a working group of stakeholders and tribes looking to set up ways to meet and distribute information to the public. The main message around screening is that Chinook at looking for suitable spawning habitat, and it is a natural process to seek those areas. We expect over time there will be natural reproduction in areas with suitable habitat. Now, we are looking for people to observe the fish and report to the Department so we can create distribution map and aid in prioritization. It may be more feasible to screen turnouts of larger canals instead of entire canals, and we want to work with landowners willing to put screens on their diversions. Kregg said the Department has proposed several funding packages from the Legislature and suggested the Task Forces share any information they have with the Legislature to help inform them. There are a lot of salmon going into canals, but suckers and lamprey also use the canals, some of which are suitable habitat for those fish. But we don't want entrainment or entrapment in areas that are detrimental to fish.

Update on Fish Passage Guidance Document (*Barr*)

Mac provided an update on the status of a fish passage and screening guidance document. Producing a guidance document is on the program's list of priorities and work plan for 2026 and beyond. There is a draft guidance document from 2019 that the program may use to in developing a guidance document based on the new OARs. Task Force members requested a copy of the draft document. Mac also discussed improvements that can be made to the FSPP website to better tell our story and make shorter, easier to consume, project specific guidance documents more accessible. These concise guidance documents include beaver dam analogs (BDAs), beaver pond levelers and other coexistence devices, and environmental restoration weirs. An important consideration is the audience: engineers, restoration

practitioners, and the public. Mac explained how every fish passage project is different, the species needs are different, and the hydraulics are unique. Guidance is helpful, but we don't want it to be overly prescriptive because fish passage is not one size fits all. Ted confirmed the guidance document would be for multiple audiences, and that the public needs guidance for requesting a waiver or designing a project. Ted suggested introducing the 1st edition, updating it over time, and providing training for the community. He said partners with [Washington state](#) do training sessions, and he would be interested in being on a working group for this. Fred suggested the guidance document can be a living document and will be easier to keep current than going through the rule-making process. Denise inquired why the draft guidance document was set aside and whether the agency has the resources and staff to complete it. She also expressed concern about staff capacity to develop training and resources and provide ongoing training. If the agency is not ready to support this, then she is not in favor of it. Mac responded that we are resource limited. FSPP is a small program that does a lot and the draft guidance document likely lost steam due to workload capacity. As screening and passage coordinators, we provide guidance at a smaller scale.

Mac asked the Task Force what they view as priorities and how they rank these things. What can provide the biggest lift? What are capacity and funding levels? Funding is limited and the funding horizon is bleak, at least federally. Denise requested that 3 weeks prior to the March meeting, Mac provide the Task Force with a list of ideas and staff available to participate in these, and for Task Force members to think about what they can work on in subgroups with agency staff, and to add their thoughts spurred from conversation today.

Round Table Discussion of ODFW Tide Gate Initiative (*FPTF Members only*)

Mac provided a recap of the informational meeting and site visits in Coos Bay. The idea for this agenda item is to provide an opportunity for Task Force members to discuss tide gates, brainstorm, and exchange ideas. How can the agency better address tide gate issues in the state of Oregon knowing we have been here before with the OWEB Oregon Tide Gate Partnership, the tide gate inventory, pipe sizing tool, and other useful information. Recognizing funding is a limiting factor, is it possible to reduce the cost of tide gates? Can a standard design be used? Are there tide gates on public lands that aren't needed and can be completely removed? Would a prioritization of tide gates similar to the Statewide Priority Barrier List be useful if it included factors such as cost, political will, and how likely a tide gate is to be addressed? Mac then asked for thoughts. Topics discussed among Task Force members, Chris Claire, and Caley Sowers included:

Purpose & scale of tide gates:

The purpose and scale of tide gates are important considerations for a properly functioning water movement system behind the tide gate. The permitting and resources to develop and take advantage of the agricultural area behind a tide gate are critical. Water needs to move out, but MTR tide gates also need to move water into the area. Problems can be created if there are restrictions on the inside affecting how much water can move in either direction. The new tide gate systems are all about moving water at various times in the year. It is important for agriculture to seasonally move water out, but it is important for fish to move water inland during the winter, which does not come at the expense of the agriculture operation. In summary, there is dual use for the tide gate. A water management plan is critical for successful functioning of the tide gate. Chris shared a Google Earth image of Winter Lake to explain the interior network of canals, channels, and working lands. There are 42 interior tide gates with secondary individual parcel networks behind the bigger structure.

From an ecological viewpoint, tide gates on diversions and tidal channels are a habitat feature similar to screens on ditches. Tidal areas are the most productive zone, providing aquatic emergent habitats that

breed insects and arthropods for juvenile salmon. If fish can't get into these channels when they need to, they will have less body mass and a lower survival rate when they enter the ocean. There is a lot of potential for coastal salmon uplift with 98% of tide gates being the old style. Chris volunteered to provide more tours, even one-on-one, and to participate in tide gate working groups.

It is also important to remember that many tide gates are not related to agriculture but protect lowland infrastructure in cities.

Prioritization & tools:

Prioritization tools were developed a few years ago in partnership with The Nature Conservancy after the tide gate inventory. There is an Excel tool where you can enter different factors and weigh or modify factors. Chris Claire has a copy of this Excel tool which models ecological values and helps with cost packaging of projects. The tide gate tool was made to handle the simplest projects. Other projects are more complicated and need more engineering to meet criteria.

Costs & manufacturing:

Tide gates can cost millions of dollars. There is the cost of engineering, implementation, and maintenance. How can we bring down the cost to be more efficient? If tide gate systems are not designed well, they will be expensive failures. Business Oregon provided an excellent financial boost that helped the ranching community address tide gates. Through the Coho Strategic Plan, the Coos and Coquille basins looked at the highest priority tide gates locally and lined up projects in the area. The funding was easy to obtain, straightforward, and Coos County scooped up most of it. Planning and engineering for some projects was funded prior to the sunset of Business Oregon, but they have seen things move in the wrong direction, mainly on the federal side where it is now harder to use programmatic agreements for restoration. Caley has worked with NRCS to bring in some funding from the Farm Bill. The Tide Gate Conservation Strategy is now sunseting because there were not enough people involved. This is a result of misunderstanding tide gate projects. Tide gates are big slow behemoths that need a realistic target of ten years from start to finish. These are not short-term projects.

Manufacturing is a big issue right now and cannot be overemphasized. There is uncertainty around the retirement of Nehalem Marine Supply's owner, and practitioners are waiting for day all tide gate manufacturing goes on hold. Some of the FSPP screen shop personnel recently looked at tide gates and started talking about manufacturing tide gates and developing tide gate shops. Maybe a tide gate shop modeled on the fish screen shops would be able to bring down design and manufacturing costs. This will require funding and political capital to get the agency to move forward with this concept.

Permitting:

Permitting at the state and federal levels are complex and rotating staff at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has made the individual permit process very difficult. A critical consideration is the need for some division between small tide gates on a couple acres compared to large tides that include several hundred acres. We cannot reproduce a Winter Lake type project without a change in the permitting process. Continual permitting is also required for maintenance addressing things like sedimentation. Denise suggested rather than tackling permitting, a better strategy for this group is building an understanding of what is needed and identifying people who are invested in the permitting world. These are people better suited to building relationships among the permitting agencies than we are.

Outreach campaign:

Denise asked if anyone had thought about something like the Salmon SuperHwy akin for tide gates. Salmon SuperHwy has been highly successful with a barrier inventory, priority, outreach campaign, and a beautiful website. They went to Washington D.C. with Trout Unlimited to secure funds, and they've

had a core group of folks dedicated for years. She mentioned Kregg has also been successful at utilizing federal funds, and she asked if there is an NGO that can step into the role that Trout Unlimited had on the North Coast. Kregg said the tide gate conversation should be broader than ODFW and include NOAA, ODA, and other agencies. Mac agreed that Salmon SuperHwy has been very successful and this is a great idea to streamline and emulate. We don't want to reinvent the wheel, and largely, what we need is a coalition or group maybe modelled off Salmon SuperHwy that can leverage political capital.

Fred informed the Task Force that Senator Smith will [reintroduce the salmon credit bill](#) in the short session and encouraged everyone to look at it. It is a pilot program for the Coos and Coquille Rivers. The concept behind it is to let developers buy mitigation credits that would be set up. They pay double for it, and it funds a stipend that is tied back to the land. This concept might be bright spot to bring resources to bear on the restoration work at both agriculture and forest level.

Strategic planning:

Ted shared that we need to think strategically about how to package up the landscape to pay for work. Remove some tide gates, make others passable. He would hate to see fish passage dollars go to tide gate removal because there are limited resources. He prefers to focus funding on where engineering is needed. Ted suggested taking advantage of resources such as the blue carbon exchange for restoring full tidal exchange. There are national and international resource opportunities. The Nature Conservancy and Save Americas Estuaries lead this type of work. If we are chasing fish passage dollars, Ted encourages everyone to think about how we leverage blue carbon initiatives because there's opportunity there.

Kelly suggested waiting until after the midterm election to move forward on a Salmon SuperHwy type campaign and then make a big push. Talking about tide gate priority is not going to get us anywhere without the capital, so we need to get as many NGOs behind this as possible. Caley agreed it's time for a leader to collaborate and pull the NGOs together, and she suggested the state may be a good leader.

Denise thanked everyone for their contributions to this conversation, and Mac asked Task Force member to contact him if they have additional thoughts or ideas. Mac closed by providing hope that although this is not an easy issue and won't be solved overnight, with persistence and continued effort it can be solved.

Chair Hoffert adjourned the meeting at 12:25 PM.

Public Comments Received:

No public comments were received.