

ODFW Beaver Management Work Group

Thursday, February 24th, 2-4pm PT

Zoom Meeting - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM1Th_RM-w8

Work Group Members:

- Jill Zarnowitz, ODFW Commission
- *Mary Wahl (alternate), ODFW Commission*
- Wayne Elmore, Full Stream Consulting/retired BLM
- Chris Jordan, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries
- Ernie Niemi, Natural Resource Economics
- Jefferson Jacobs, Oregon Natural Desert Association
- Danielle Moser, Oregon Wild
- Brian Posewitz, Humane Voters Oregon
- Scott Beckstead, Center for a Humane Economy
- Leland Brown, Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society
- *Michael O'Casey (alternate for Leland Brown), Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society*
- Stan Steele, Oregon Trappers Association
- Amy Patrick, Oregon Hunters Association
- Lauren Smith, Oregon Farm Bureau
- Josh Chapman, US Forest Service
- Darren Bollen, Bureau of Land Management
- Shannon Hurn, ODFW Deputy Director
- *Kevin Blakely (alternate for Shannon Hurn), ODFW Deputy Administrator*
- Tom Stahl, ODFW Fish Biologist
- *Matt Strickland (alternate for Tom Stahl), ODFW*
- Derek Broman, ODFW Wildlife Biologist

Absent:

- Becky Hatfield-Hyde, ODFW Commission
- Drenda Howatt, Association of Oregon Counties
- Robert Beschta, Oregon State University
- Michelle Tate, ODFW

Facilitation Team:

- Jamie Damon, Kearns & West
- Samantha Meysohn, Kearns & West

Welcome, Agenda Review, Introductions, and Updates

Jamie Damon, Kearns & West, opened the meeting and welcomed the Work Group Members. Jamie shared an overview of the agenda and meeting guidelines.

Breakout Room Discussion

Jamie introduced the session by sharing three questions to focus the small group discussions to reflect on the draft BMWG report:

1. What are your general impressions?
2. Which areas would you like to refine and/or strengthen?

3. Which areas do we need more discussion as a group?

The work group members were sent to six breakout rooms with three to four participants in each. The groups discussed for 30 minutes and a notetaker was designated to report out for each of the groups.

Group Discussion

Jamie welcomed back the participants and invited the notetakers from each group to report out the recommendations. Samantha Meysohn, KW, captured notes on [a virtual whiteboard](#). The following reflections were documented:

Overall General Impressions

- Many expressed appreciation for having a draft document available for all to discuss
- A few people mentioned that the format of the report was distracting from the content of the recommendations
- A few work group members noted that recommendations went beyond the scope of federal lands
- The recommendations vary in granularity and level of detail
- Some are unclear about where the ideas included in the recommendations came from – full work group, sub-group, affinity group conversations, etc.

Areas to refine/strengthen

Conceptually/structurally

- Several groups talked about how the objectives in the report need to be clearly defined and should be clear about how objectives would be met, including timing
- Several groups articulated that the report needs to be clear on ODFW authorities, and the ability to accomplish objectives
- Several groups stated that recommendations need to be actionable and appropriate to lead to changes in conditions on the ground
- One group noted that the recommendations need a feedback process to ensure that actions are meeting the stated objectives.
- The format sequencing needs to be clearer and more sequential
- The objectives listed on page 10 need to be strengthened
- The Federal partners and ODFW staff need to review the report and determine what is feasible and relevant for beaver and beaver habitat management.

Language to add

- Work group members requested the following ideas be added:
 - A greater sense of urgency around climate change, the biodiversity crisis, drought, etc.
 - The Precautionary Principle needs to be explicitly stated
 - More language is needed around collaboration to achieve ecosystem management objectives
 - Language needs to be strengthened to provide clear research directives around limiting factors and other areas
 - An implementation plan needs to be developed including time frames

- More specific characteristics of the beaver modified floodplain landscapes including the habitat conditions, vegetation, etc.
- More information around the level of public engagement
- More information in the report, especially on the economic benefits and ecosystem services of beaver.
- Beavers should be valued for their own sake and managed humanely

Language to strengthen

- Several work group members shared that an emphasis on holistic management should be elevated, moving away from single species management and managing for more benefits in context of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity
- A work group member suggested that a description of limiting factors should include predator management and disease management, as well
 - Another work group member encouraged people to bring forward data to support statements that predation and disease are impacting beaver dam building behavior.
- A work group member noted that defining limiting factors would also be helpful since all factors would need to be addressed to support increasing beaver dam building behaviors.
- A work group member noted that increasing food and dam building resources for beaver should be included.
- Several groups mentioned that the trapping closures recommendations should be included as well as greater specificity on scale and duration.
- A work group member wanted to know how the proposed harvest modifications compare to other states.
- The harvest management options should reflect feasible trapping practices
- One work group member noted that it is not possible to selectively trap male beavers only, and that the report writers did not demonstrate a clear understanding of trapping practices
 - The idea behind the recommendation is that trapping could be modified rather than closed completely
- A work group member asked for more emphasis on relocation as a restoration tool to be included.
- One work group member noted that these are state agency recommendations, and the report should support how the agencies can better interface with habitat management processes managed by Federal Partners on federal lands.
- A work group member noted that the report could more clearly articulate the proposed changes to manage beaver populations as well as ecosystem services.

Areas to remove/refine

- One work group member expressed concern about language regarding private landowners
- A work group member expressed concern over the use of Beaver Dam Analogs as a tool because there are other agencies and forums working on this issue, especially in Eastern Oregon.
 - Jamie encouraged work group members to craft language to acknowledge the work happening in other forums
- One work group member suggested that increasing capacity and support for ODFW staff could be a recommendation but adding a new position at ODFW would require a different process

Areas for more discussion

- Several work group members mentioned that the specificity and level of detail needs to be determined
 - Where does ODFW expertise take over?
- The report currently captures the low-hanging fruit, but does not cover topics that are more contentious
- How will areas of disagreement be captured and documented within the group?
- What considerations are needed for the beaver coordinator position within ODFW?
- Can the group agree on a statement around the humane treatment of animals?
- A few work group members asked what it would take to have the default status on federal lands be closed to trapping unless ODFW can demonstrate no negative impacts to ecosystem services.
- A work group member noted it would be helpful to identify what levers can be pulled to support this work
- A work group member thinks it would be helpful to understand if and how the Beaver Management Work Group is involved in the future.

The group reviewed the virtual whiteboard and discussed the following:

The group discussed if the report should include guiding principles for management or recommendations. Some work group members see the report and are worried that it will be turned into rule. Others see that the recommendations are not powerful enough because they do not guarantee implementation. The commission is looking for recommendations rather than principles to help inform management direction and is interested to see ideas that look at watershed level management in the context of climate change. The recommendations will help the commission reflect on how ODFW does business. A work group member reminded the group about the [guiding questions](#) from the ODFW Commissioners for the work group.

Several work group members discussed holistic management and how that relates to ODFW management practices. A work group member noted that ODFW does a good job managing the wildlife, and holistic management would look at how species interact with other species and with people, taking an ecosystem approach, would be beneficial to management. Holistic management should focus on how to get more benefits on the landscape in the context of climate change, water issues, and the biodiversity crisis. Many work group members would like ODFW move towards landscape management, and away from single species management. Holistic management would not preclude hunting, trapping, and fishing. A work group member shared that the mule deer initiative is an example of ODFW moving away from single species viewpoint and moving towards management at a broader scope and scale. A work group member noted that holistic management for beaver should also include predator and disease management, and the group has not talked about that much yet. Another work group member noted that the direction given to ODFW is to manage for a single species, but the outcomes can have holistic impacts on habitat, other wildlife species, economics, etc. The work group should think about management as more than having a single lever for change. Another group member emphasized that the work group should be focused on ecosystem services and improving benefits for all Oregonians.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Jamie confirmed next steps for continuing to refine the report. KW will share a simple draft of the recommendations without the background, context, photos, or figures. The work group members

agreed it would be helpful to share track change edits and comments on the report. Jamie encouraged everyone to propose language to help address areas of concern. KW will not hold affinity group meetings, since individuals will share input on the report via track changes. The group agreed to share feedback by March 11th. Several work group members expressed interest in meeting in person and having a longer meeting in March. Jamie said that KW will follow-up with work group members about these ideas. Jamie noted that the work group is still aiming to present at the April Commission meeting, but that may be too tight on timing to finalize a report in that time. KW will follow-up with the commissioners about timing.

Jamie summarized the action items below:

Action Items from 2/24

- All: Please complete this brief survey to share feedback on the meeting, as well as your availability to meet in person and for a longer time at our next BWG meeting on March 23, by **end of day Friday, 3/4**. Please let us know if you need more time or assistance to complete the survey.
- All: Please review the "Simple Draft" of the recommendations document and provide track changes edits by end of day Friday, 3/11. Please see more direction below.
- KW: Check-in with ODFW Commissioners on timing for BMWG report to the commission

Chat log:

14:15:37 From Samantha Meysohn, KW (she/her) to Everyone:

- What are your general impressions?
- Which areas would you like to refine and/or strengthen?
- Which areas do we need more discussion as a group?

16:10:15 From Amy Patrick to Everyone:

And we have not defined how and who will do the presenting

Written response

The following emails were forwarded to the work group as a continuation of the group discussion and were requested to be entered into the meeting record:

From: Stan Steele <riverrunguide@yahoo.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2022 10:52 PM

Subject: Opportunity to Respond!

Jamie Damon,

Beaver Management Work Group Facilitator

Kerns and West,

Near the end of today's Beaver Management Work Group meeting a statement was made that **it is up to the trappers to provide data and scientific research that supports** ODFW's current regulated beaver harvest management program. It is the position of the Oregon Trappers Association that ODFW's current beaver harvest

management program and applicable administrative rules are in compliance with Oregon Revised Statute, ORS 496.012, Oregon's Wildlife Management Policy.

As the Oregon Trapper's Association's representative on the work group, I raised my hand to respond and due to time constraints was told by the facilitator that there was not time for me to respond!

The Oregon Trappers Association respectfully requests that all sides of controversial statements be given adequate time to factually respond. We fully understand that meeting agenda/timelines need to be adhered to, but also do not feel that responses should be stifled just to make sure a meeting ends on time.

OTA's brief verbal response, if allowed, would have been:

The statement that attempts to shift the burden of proof to defend the state's current beaver harvest management program onto the shoulders of regulatory compliant trappers from the anti-trapping activists seeking a scientifically unsupported, landscape scale regulatory change is disingenuous at best. However, with that being said, ODFW's fisheries and wildlife biologists have on several occasions during previous meeting presentations told the work group that data and past and present stream surveys do not support the hypothesis that Oregon's current regulated beaver trapping/harvest program is negatively impacting beaver colony expansion, dam building activities, beaver population persistence/abundance, the efficacy of federal lands habitat restoration projects or wild salmonid recovery efforts.

The Oregon Trappers Association respectfully requests that the above response be added to the record of today's meeting.

Stan Steele, Oregon Trappers Association

Beaver Management Work Group

From: Ernie Niemi <ernie.niemi@nreconomics.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 7:08 PM

Subject: Response to Opportunity to Respond

Dear Jamie and Sam,

I am responding to your decision [2/25/2022 email from Sam] to distribute to all Working Group members an email from Stan Steele. In it, he states that, when you terminated our last work group meeting because of time constraints, he feels he was unfairly not allowed to offer comments. He requests "that all sides of controversial statements be given adequate time to respond", and then expresses his comments in writing. So, in effect, you extended the meeting to allow Stan to express his comments to the full Working Group and enter them into the record for the meeting.

If I had heard Stan's comments in the meeting, I would have immediately raised my hand to offer the comments I express below. Now that you have allowed him to offer his comments in writing, after the

meeting ended, I now respectfully request that you afford me the same courtesy and allow me to respond. Please forward this email to all members of the Working Group and enter it into the record for the meeting.

I am concerned that after 11 meetings of the work group, Stan would continue to see those of us who disagree with him as “anti-trapping activists” and is dismissive of differing opinions. We have agreed to work together for outcomes that benefit beaver, beaver habitat, and the people of Oregon. I see no evidence of work group members advancing “scientifically unsupported landscape scale regulatory change” and instead see the group working hard to broaden their thinking to consider a wide range of management approaches including addressing climate change, data collection and improving habitat.

I encourage Stan and those from the trapping community to bring forward data into our report to support their assertion that beaver harvest does not negatively impact beaver population. If the data are not available, then our report should include that the trapping community will participate in helping to provide this information. The risks to Oregonians from the climate and biodiversity crises are too immediate and too high for any group to engage in activities that might increase the risks and then claim they have no obligation to actively participate in gathering data to assess their claim.

I would like our report to reflect the diversity of opinions in the work group as well as be reflective of and responsive to the broader public, many of whom - including Commissioners – question the role and extent of beaver harvest considering our climate change crisis.

I believe work group members, have adhered to the facilitators’ request that they leave their baggage at the door and participated in the discussions in good faith and with mutual respect. I have not seen any member call for actions not supported by scientific evidence.

I am also concerned about the statement that the work group should accept information provided by ODFW at face value, as a comprehensive and accurate description of reality. Professional literature warns of the propensity for regulatory agencies to focus on those they regulate rather than the citizenry at large and we need to be alert to this. I have shared with ODFW information and questions regarding the economic importance of ecosystem services supported by beaver and the benefit to all Oregonians on several occasions and have received no acknowledgment or reply. I question trappers' and ODFW’s assertion that continued regulated harvest has little or no economic impact. That statement could not be more incorrect. It reflects either a misunderstanding of, or a disregard for, the concepts associated with ecosystem services and the extensive literature regarding the economic importance of economic services supported by beaver. Any killing of beaver that would affect these ecosystem services would have an economic impact.

The work group report should recommend that the Commission and Oregonians not rely solely on ODFW for information that pertains to the assessment of the likely net economic benefits of beaver-management actions and seek external expertise from scientists and other knowledgeable experts.

I request that my comments be provided to all Group members and entered into the record.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the working group.

Ernie

Parking Lot:

- Follow-up question for future meeting: Does the USFS monitoring data speak to improved habitat for riparian areas? Is there a dataset on improved conditions for beaver? If those data sets don't exist, perhaps the Beaver Management Work Group could work together to understand that information to target recommendations in management plans specific to beaver.
- Request to have studies done to answer the effects of the trapping closures on federal lands before the group makes management recommendations.
- Need to understand Wildlife Services interplay with the permitting process.
- Interest in exploring incentives rather than only focusing on regulatory management options.