PRWG Steering Committee Meeting
April 27, 2023
Priest River Public Library

Attendees: Erin Plue, Jennifer Ekstrom, Amy Anderson, Jon Quinn-Hurst, Allan Songstad, Hank Jones, Bill Neumayer, Sean Stash, Paul Sieracki, Mike Lithgow, Eric Berntsen, Jill Cobb, Betty Gardner, Pam Duquette, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt

Facilitator: Alexis Gibson

Next steps:
- Committee members will indicate their availability for meetings between May and July
- Members will review the revised draft protocols and provide their feedback for revisions

Agenda:
1. Welcome and review of gradients of agreement & ground rules
2. Logistics for summer meetings and Priest River float
3. Discussion: draft protocols
4. Next steps

1. **Welcome and review of gradients of agreement & ground rules**
   - The group reviewed the gradients of agreement which they will be using more moving forward.
     - Both thumbs up (full support) and thumbs to the side (agreement is OK) both constitute approval/support for moving forward, while thumbs down (concerns) and fist (block) are a no to move forward.
     - The gradients are just a tool for the committee to use and to inform the facilitator – the group can decide if weak support is enough to move forward or not.

2. **Logistics for summer meetings and Priest River float**
   - Informational sessions
     - Goal is to schedule four more educational sessions for the group, but we need agreement around what those will focus on and who will present.
       - Ideally there will be 2-3 speakers per theme
       - Informational sessions will be moving to the Senior Center to allow more in-person participation – webinar will be more of a backup with some ideas to improve sound quality
       - Erin will let the speakers know why we are inviting them and what topic the group would like them to speak to, but it will ultimately be up to the speaker to decide what information they present
     - After discussion of potential topics based on the earlier survey of which topics the group would like to learn more about, the committee agreed to sessions and requested speakers on the following:
       - Water quality
       - Water quantity

- ▪ Fisheries: historic and current
- ▪ Introduction to the major land managers in the area
- o In the future, the group is also interested in learning more about:
  - ▪ Land use, zoning, and the Comprehensive Plan
  - ▪ Recreation
  - ▪ Current restoration work in the Basin
  - ▪ Mechanisms for funding restoration work
  - ▪ Wildlife
- o The group discussed moving meeting times later (5-7pm) to allow more participants to attend if they aren't joining as part of their normal work load
- • Summer field trip:
  - o Interest in organizing a Steering Committee float trip in early July with participation from some of the Technical Team members to give everyone a chance to see the river and discuss conditions on the ground
    - ▪ Given everyone's schedules and the logistics of planning a float for such a large group, the committee decided to make this an informal event. Erin will select a date and committee members can decide if they are able to participate via their own transportation and water craft.
    - ▪ Goal will be to find a stretch of river that is accessible to everyone and has sufficient infrastructure for put in and takeout.
    - ▪ Some committee members expressed that private landowners on the Lower Priest River might have a negative reaction to a large group going down the river.
  - o The group will also try to organize an on-land field trip in late summer/early fall to visit points of interest along the river.

3. **Draft protocols discussion**
- • The committee reviewed the second version of their protocols document – this version included the purpose and principles developed at the last meeting and had been expanded to offer a full proposal.
  - o At the start of the discussion, there was mixed support (based on the gradients of agreement) for the draft protocols, with members showing weak support to full block.
- • The group discussed whether earlier feedback had been incorporated into the document and the process for reviewing/incorporating comments.
  - o A member expressed concern that the process of moving from version 1 of the protocols to version 2 hadn't incorporated their feedback, and the group discussed if they had reviewed the feedback on version 1.
  - o The facilitator shared that the goal with the one-text process is to identify underlying shared interests rather than trying to reconcile specific edits or requests.
    - ▪ The group discussed that there are other options for collectively developing a document, including reviewing and approving all comments rather than the facilitator making decisions about how to incorporate comments. For the meeting, the group chose to move forward in reviewing version 2 of the protocols.

- One of the main areas of comments from reviewers was around the principle: Take a holistic approach to the lake and river, seek to do no long-term irreparable harm to the system – including from unintended consequences – and weigh the risks and gains of actions.
  - The group discussed whether "long-term irreparable harm" was too vague, and specifically whether any harm was acceptable or if long-term harm in general would be acceptable if it wasn't irreparable. Some members felt that short-term harm could be inevitable if it included disturbance from restoration and that there needed to be room for those types of impacts.
    - The group ultimately moved to change the language to "long-term adverse impacts" as being more specific to the types of impacts they are concerned about.
  - There was also a discussion about whether "holistic" was the right term or was too vague. The committee member with the greatest concern around "holistic" advocated for including the definition of the term if it was going to be used, as well as for other key terms in the document.
  - The group also discussed if the language "taking a holistic approach to the lake and river" was too focused on the waterbodies rather than the landscape. The language was shifted to "improve the watersheds by taking a holistic approach to the lake and river…"
- Another area for discussion was the section on decision making:
  - In the "failure to reach consensus" section, the group discussed the language around what would happen if consensus was not reached.
    - Several members expressed concern that the proposed process would make it too easy for the group to advance/recommend projects that did not have the full support of the Steering Committee.
    - The group discussed if there should be different levels of consensus required for some projects – specifically, if full unanimity should be required for any recommendations involving Priest Lake. Many members felt that having different levels of consensus would make it difficult for the group to operate and expressed that collectively the group would want to seek the highest level of consensus possible for solutions that might be contentious to ensure that projects could be implemented.
    - Some members offered that a dissenting opinion would still be valuable to the agencies most likely to implement projects even if full consensus can't be achieved.
    - Another concern discussed was whether the language gave too much power to the group in the majority to decide how dissenting group members could express their opinions.
      - Removing the parenthetical about options was an acceptable action.
  - The group discussed the proposed language in the "support for the consensual agreement section":
    - In terms of support and advocating for the decision, some members were concerned that the language would require their organizations to invest resources to support and advocate for the group's decisions.

- The group also discussed the need for the language around "refraining from commenting negatively in public" if the decision was unanimous, and some members felt that this might be difficult to follow in one's private life or with organizational colleagues.
- The group agreed to streamline this section to "agree to support unanimous agreements or decisions" rather than requiring any specific actions to show support.
  - The group discussed if seeking agreement around the decision-making process should be put on hold until a later date once the Steering Committee has had a chance to get through the educational phase and get to know each other better.
    - The facilitator encouraged the group to try and reach agreement on this process sooner rather than later to avoid ending up in a situation where tensions are high because they need to decide on an important topic.
  - The group wanted to see a timeframe for members who missed a meeting to provide their support/disagreement with decisions. Several members offered 10 days as a standard timeline.
- The group discussed community engagement and specifically the principle to "Consider input from the broader public."
  - Some members wanted to see the language be stronger by "soliciting" public input. Others pointed out that "solicit" sounds like a requirement and could be interpreted as needing a specific level of outreach.
    - The current planned level of public engagement for the group is largely to share information out to the public through the website and email list, as well as the educational sessions.
- The protocol draft says that the Steering Committee meetings will be open to the public.
  - The committee members were open to having public at the meetings but expressed concerns around:
    - The level of public comment that would be accepted and how that would be included in the meetings
    - The need to clearly articulate how the public is being invited to participate
    - Sharing of agendas
    - Waiting to open the meetings until they have finalized the protocols

4. **Next steps**
- Based on the discussion and the comments received, the facilitator will revise the protocols and share version 3 of the document with the Steering Committee for review.