

Priest River Watershed Group
Steering Committee Meeting
January 23, 2025
3:30-6:30pm
West Bonner Library



Present Members

Allan Songstad, Stop the Priest Lake Siphon
Amy Anderson, Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Betty Gardner, Priest River
Cathy Gidley, Trout Unlimited*
Eric Bernsten, Kalispel Tribe
Erin Plue, Trout Unlimited
Hank Jones, Fishing Guides on the Priest River
Kyle Maki, Idaho Wildlife Federation &
Sportsmen Conservation
Jennifer Ekstrom, Idaho Conservation League
Mike Lithgow, Kalispel Tribe

Paul Sieracki, Inland Empire Task Force
(Environmental)
Sean Stash, Boating on Priest River

Facilitators

Hannah Anderson, Lead Facilitator
Tracy Ortiz, Facilitation Support

Public Attendees

Brad Smith, IPPLI
George Gehrig

Goals:

- Review updates from task forces and sub-committees; collaborate on next steps
- Review progress towards PRWG Strategic Plan
- Hear a presentation from IPPLI on proposals for Upper Priest River

Meeting Minutes

PRWG Steering Committee Meeting - Welcome and Overview

Hannah Anderson, Facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and goals for the day.

Strategic Plan Implementation: Sub-Committees and Task Forces Updates

The PRWG has established sub-committees and task forces to work on implementation of the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. Each of the sub-committees and task forces provided an update on their progress since the December meeting. The facilitator led the group through discussion as the steering committee provided feedback, as follows:

Grants and Funding (Sub-committee)

- The grants and funding calendar is regularly being updated with opportunities
 - The sub-committee asked for help/ ideas from group members to flush out specific funding needs, and encouraged steering committee members to add items to the shared spreadsheet, or send them directly to the sub-committee.

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- The group discussed various ways to help make the calendar more user-friendly. Regarding funding, it was suggested that a column (or columns) be added to indicate funding type (federal or non), funding focus or requirements, and whether a funding match is required.
- The steering committee agreed to create an email that will serve as the Grants and Funding point of contact. The email can be used to sign up for newsletters and various funding opportunity list-servs, and to apply for grants and funding opportunities.

Education and Outreach (Sub-committee)

- The education and outreach committee shared the draft Communication Plan, noting that it is a recent copy with more content added to flesh out some of the sections that were previously placeholders.
- The group reviewed the structure of the of communication draft plan via together and provided feedback:
 - Group members suggested specific target audiences to be added to the outreach list. The sub-committee recorded suggestions and requested for efficiency purposed that steering committee members access the document to add any additional audiences they would like included.
 - The group discussed considering starting social media channels, and the nuances and labor that would be involved in maintaining an active online presence.
 - The group considered creating an email sign-up box on the PRWG website for members of the public to receive updates, potentially in the form of a newsletter.
 - The group discussed developing a brochure for PRWG. A mailing list could be a helpful way to send the brochure with a survey for people who live around the river and lake to provide feedback and insight on use and identify community concerns.
 - There is currently budget for printed materials for projects like this in the PRWG grant. These funds could be used for printing, and/or to hire a consultant to design the brochure and outreach materials.

PRWG Processes and Protocols (Task Force)

- The process and protocols task force went over the updated Protocols document. Final feedback included:
 - To add in language to ensure that process and protocols document is reviewed annually.
 - The group discussed how to incorporate best practices for conflict resolution, in which individuals are encouraged to first seek to find resolution of issues with each other, and bring issues to the group for review if resolution cannot be found. The group confirmed that the protocols had language that represented that process sufficiently.
 - The group discussed how nominations for new board members would occur. It was agreed that potential new members should attend a minimum of 3 board meetings before nomination and appointment occurs.
 - A third category should be included to explain the process for nomination and appointment of proxies.
- The group proposed voting to approve and adopt the PRWG protocols document, with the above changes incorporated, at the February meeting.

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Work Plan (Task Force)

- The Work Plan task force shared the updated Work Plan document, in an excel format. The task force explained that tasks are outlined to address the objectives indicated in the PRWG Strategic Plan. Steering Committee feedback included:
 - The group considered having a public version of the work plan that could be shared on the website. A non-editable pdf was agreed as an appropriate format for sharing.
 - The group will share the 2025 Work Plan as soon as it approved.
 - A column should be added to indicate whether NEPA would be required, and whether consultation services should be considered for each item.
 - As an annual document, the Work Plan should be revised every January to outline tasks for the calendar year.
 - The Task Force asked the full group to send additional comments to the task force prior to the February meeting.
 - Due to similarities, and to reduce redundancy, Objectives D-3 and A-3 should be paired together in the Work Plan.

Next Steps

Summarized action items to be completed before or at the February PRWG Steering committee meeting include:

- Process and Protocols (Task Force)
 - Documents to be finalized by next meeting (February)
 - Vote on adoption in February
- Grants and funding (Sub-committee)
 - Clean up document
 - Send any funding ideas to Amy
- Communication and outreach (Sub-committee)
 - Clean up document
 - Add in feedback
 - All members to revise and send feedback to Mike
 - Potentially vote on adoption in February
- Work Plan (Task Force)
 - Update and clean up document
 - Work through final details in February meeting
 - Vote on adoption in February

Strategic Plan – Progress Update

- The draft base map is now live on the PRWG website! An agenda item will be added to a future meeting to review an overview of the map's capabilities.
- Hannah went over the Strategic Plan timeline and shared that the group was right on track to reach their goals in a timely manner.

Housekeeping (general discussion)

- Georgetown Community Situation Assessment

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- The Situation Assessment Report, prepared by students from Georgetown University, was shared with the Steering Committee in the weeks prior to the January meeting. The group discussed the findings. The majority agreed that the findings and recommendations were in alignment with and supported the tasks the steering committee is undertaking, namely in regards to the Education and Outreach subcommittee and the Communication Plan that is being developed. The group discussed that due to the short timeframe of the assessment project, the interviewee list may not have comprehensively covered the spectrum of interests and perspectives that would have been ideal to include.
- Trout Unlimited Update(s)
 - Erin shared that the PRWG had been awarded an extension of the BOR grant, which they applied for in 2024, to now span for 3 years of funding.
 - Erin explained that due to some recent promotions in Trout Unlimited staff, the work that she and Cathy contribute to the PRWG Steering Committee may be shared more between them, but assured the group that they are committed and will both continue to serve on the Steering Committee and support the PRWG's mission.
- The December meeting minutes were approved unanimously.
- Kalispell Tribe Update
 - Eric B. provided a general Basin-wide update on the work being done and planned for 2025 by the Kalispell Tribe:
 - The Tribe is monitoring Hue's meadow
 - The Tribe is moving into phase 3 of Bismark Meadows construction
 - Submitting grants from NFWF to do landscape design
 - Goal to get more water and keep it from drying out
 - Bull trout recovery
 - The Tribe is currently putting together a list of projects on the East River

IPPLI Presentation, Brad Smith

Brad Smith provided a presentation on the Idaho Panhandle Public Lands Initiative (IPPLI), and the work the group has completed in the past year. The presentation provided information on the background of IPPLI, their mission, who is involved in the work, and their goals to improve the following: recreation, wildlife, forest health, consolidation of major forest land ownership, and working toward making land designations. Brad shared IPPLI's proposals for the Upper Priest River:

- Idaho Panhandle National Forest
 - Identify potential management Areas
 - Identify allowable uses
- Propose legislation in the future

Brad shared information with the group on how members of the PRWG and/or public could individually get involved collaborate between groups. The facilitator thanked Brad for his presentation and opened the floor to PRWG members to ask questions and discuss the presentation.

Adjourn

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