

Penobscot River Science Steering Committee
March 11, 2008

Phone: Capone, Gillis, Banks, Snyder, Wilson, Saunders
Present: Larsen, Loftin, G. Zydlewski, A. Kelley, Elskus, Hart, Schmitt, Courtemanch, Aponte Clarke

1. Research and activity updates (all)

Framework review: CS distributed the revised list of potential reviewers, which is a long list which needs to be narrowed down. Science section review comes first, then send out to a second group for overall perspective. A description of the framework's background and purpose needs to accompany the document when it goes to reviewers. Those who are overcommitted could be asked to pass the review on to a post-doc or qualified student or colleague, perhaps even use the review as a discussion or seminar item.

Action item: CS will re-organize the list based on candidate reviewers for framework sections vs. entire document and solicit feedback before selecting 1-3 initial contacts.

Alice Kelley reports that the surficial geological mapping of Old Town, Veazie, Bangor quadrangles is wrapping up this spring. Mapping for next summer will move one quadrangle away from the river. The project is funded by USGS via Maine Geological Survey.

Gayle Zydlewski reports that sturgeon work will continue this spring, including a search for eggs (funded by TNC-NOAA), and summer. There is a new grad student on the project, in the dual biology/policy masters program in SMS.

Noah Snyder's NSF grant is underway, and LIDAR data came back this week (for Pleasant [Piscataquis] River). He and his students will be in the field this summer (likely July).

Cyndy Loftin will be starting a project with Joe Zydlewski and Ph.D. student Margaret Guyette, funded by NOAA, looking at experimental delivery (via fish carcasses or analogs) of marine derived nutrients (MDN) into streams, and tracing via stable isotope analysis. The team has not yet selected sample sites but they will be in the Penobscot basin.

Joe Zydlewski will begin acoustic tagging of striped bass in the river, using the same hydroacoustic array that detects sturgeon and salmon. The informal "Gulf of Maine Telemetry Group" will be placing receivers between the Kennebec and Narraguagus to detect nearshore movement of tagged species (in partnership with Gulf of Maine Research Institute).

2. Project update (George Aponte Clarke)

The Trust has achieved the first fundraising goal of \$25 million, raised from public and private and public sources), to purchase the dams and is working toward the goal of exercising the option by June 22. Within 30 days of exercise, the Trust will need to file permit applications with FERC (circa July 22). Based on that schedule and the provision of the Agreement, the Trust is likely to close on the dams (obtains title and license to dams) approximately one year later (July 2009). During the permit review period, the Trust anticipates the potential for additional work related to obtaining permits to arise. Dam removal is likely to begin around 2011-2012.

Kleinschmidt is preparing permit applications and has generated a draft environmental assessment; on March 17th Malone and MacBroom will be presenting conceptual engineering designs for removal of the two dams and the Howland bypass, which will be developed into preliminary designs that are submitted with the permit applications.

The Trust will need approval from agencies to construct the Howland bypass (and approval from the Town of Howland to use their land) prior to submitting permit applications. The Trust will also have to provide reasonable assurance of funding for the removals/bypass construction. Fundraising continues meanwhile.

The public scoping sessions in December produced mostly positive feedback -- comments will be addressed accordingly.

With regards to questions about Milford: the new fishway to be built at Milford is under the purview of PPL (and USFWS, who will have a prescription for restoration because it will be the first dam on the river). The likely project sequencing is to have the Milford lift up and running before Veazie is removed.

With regards to hydraulic modeling: Alex Haro and Woodlot Alt (now Stantech) are working as subconsultant to Malone & MacBroom to do hydraulic analysis of bypass.

3. Delineation and coordination of RCN and PRSSC roles.

The RCN "local networking" overlaps somewhat with PRSSC. While RCN has a diadromous species focus, which we needed to make this RCN different from Elwha, it does not exclude other aspects of the project nor the Penobscot specifically. RCN money (arrives in May) will fund Research Coordinator (K. Wilson) to handle science meetings and related products, and a part-time Information Coordinator responsible for planning meetings, data coordination, as well as money for the meetings and for grad students.

RCN plans a "stakeholder meeting" late fall '08, science meeting early '09, final meeting in 2013 (which means we need funding to sustain activity and interest beyond post-dam removal).

Some expressed concern about two things happening at once, and some people being pulled into both efforts. Can they be integrated? Some of the PRSSC roles cannot be filled by RCN, which has a very full and defined scope of work per NSF funding restrictions.

There was discussion of overlaps between PRSSC and RCN, and whether the PRSSC is the umbrella over RCN (RCN is a subset of PRSSC), or vice versa.

The consensus seemed to be that the two efforts play very different roles, and that the PRSSC should not be nested within RCN, but rather we need to find a way to link the two. GAC of the Trust indicated that as we move towards dam removal, the Trust feels it is critical that there is some entity that serves this liaison function between Trust and science community and provides a clearinghouse/networking function for a wide range of interested scientists and resource managers.

The group also agreed that during the RCN, perhaps the PRSSC would meet less often, w/ smaller ad hoc work groups coming together in between, and the group staying connected via a coordinator, newsletter, emails, etc. It was also suggested that perhaps the coordinator of the science steering committee (currently a quarter-time position) is also the information coordinator of the RCN (as proposed a half-time position), to maintain overlap and independence at the same time.

The PRSSC is made up of people who are familiar with the area, have a connection to the science beyond just fish. We don't want to lose that perspective as an advisory role, to make sure that the restoration and related science and research are done in a coordinated way that we learn from it.

NOAA sees the RCN as meeting many of their needs, but recognizes that it may be difficult for them to put people on both groups.

It was also suggested that perhaps RCN serves in lieu of a "fisheries subcommittee" of the PRSSC.

Conclusion: We need feedback on the roles and responsibilities checklist from those who are not here. PRSSC should continue, RCN PIs will examine their roles in light of this.

Action item: Provide feedback on the future of the PRSSC and RCN roles and responsibilities.

We will schedule a meeting for mid-June. Send CS your availability for June 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 20.