

Trout Creek Basin

Sponsor responses to ISRP proposal comments

2021-2 review

Prepared for:



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and

ISRP heading comment – ODFW response

Sponsor agrees that the project name needs to be changed to better describe project components and actions. A name change for this project was attempted several years ago. Unfortunately, the die has been cast, and when the project name was changed it threw several people into confusion from both ODFW and BPA. Given the immediate confusion we reverted the original project name.

ISRP heading comment – JCSWCD response

Past restoration and planned restorations actions are summarized in the “Long Range Action Plan and Past Accomplishments” (LARP) document linked in this proposal. The totality of project restoration in Trout Creek is significant and possibly the most comprehensive, percentage wise, for any watershed in Oregon. Details of actions are described in detail under each priority sub basin in the LRAP.

SMART Objectives.

ISRP comment to ODFW

Development of SMART objectives (see proposal instructions) describing desired outcomes is needed to evaluate restoration project/treatment effectiveness. Although there are quantitative measures describing expected accomplishments, there also need to be time frames for expected completion of the activities. Also, although there are some well-written objectives for expected outcomes for some individual restoration activities, there is no consistent process described for their development to cover the full range of restoration treatments. It might be useful to develop template objectives for various activity types and develop specific quantitative measures for individual projects. Examples could include: “Within 10 years of planting achieve ___% canopy cover of riparian vegetation and at least ___%. Stream surface shading.” Also, objectives could be developed using the web based NVDI “greenness index.” It may be useful to develop these for use at the priority watershed scale.

ISRP comment to Jefferson County SWCD

The proponents should provide SMART objectives (see proposal instructions) at the project or reach scale. Although there are some well-written objectives for expected outcomes from various individual restoration projects included in annual reports and appendices, the main body of the proposal does not include them. It might be useful to develop template objectives for various activity types and to develop quantitative measures based on individual projects. Examples could include, “Within 10 years of planting achieve ___% canopy cover of riparian vegetation and at least ___%. stream surface shading. Also, it may be useful to develop these for use at the priority watershed scale.

Combined ODFW and JCSWCD response

Both Projects will incorporate NVDI remote sensing into annual reporting. Projects will revisit restoration project sites at a five-year intervals to show the changes in the NVDI index and determine if the project site is progressing toward desired outcomes. Both Projects will continue to explore the inclusion of additional remote sensing applications as they become available. Based on the LRAP the project goal for this review period is to reconnect 2.1miles of stream to 14 acres of floodplain and increase fish passage at 2 sites. In project areas where the NVDI is below the 0.3 the goal will be to increase the NVDI above the productivity threshold of 0.3 at 10 years post construction.

Monitoring summary

ISRP comment to ODFW

A summary of planned monitoring and evaluation activities for the time period covered by the proposal. Also, please provide a description and time frame for the evaluation and reporting of this information.

ODFW response

ODFW monitoring is limited to population status and trend monitoring and these activities are outlined in the current contract statement of work. Reporting of this information will remain in annual reports with a timeline for this reporting specified in the annual BPA contract.

ISRP comment to SWCD

The proponents should provide a brief summary of planned monitoring and evaluation activities for the time period covered by the proposal. Given the anticipated reductions in funding, description of a base-level program for effectiveness/trend monitoring would be helpful. Also, provide a time frame for the annual evaluation and reporting of M&E data and information.

SWCD response

The Jefferson County SWCD does not conduct Action Effectiveness monitoring. SWCD does conduct implementation monitoring (i.e. monitoring LWD structures). Reporting of implementation monitoring will remain in annual reports with a timeline for this reporting specified in the annual BPA contract (no change).

Synthesis

ISRP comment to ODFW

A synthesis and summary of key findings from past monitoring and evaluation efforts. This would include a retrospective look on the prioritization and implementation of various restoration treatments, their effectiveness at meeting desired fish and habitat outcomes, key lessons learned, and a summary of resulting future actions to improve program performance. The proponents are encouraged to present the response of the Trout Creek system in terms of habitat forming processes and fish production. For example, how reliant is the Trout Creek system on site-by-site fixes? Are the projects done-to-date large enough and linked enough to promote sustainable habitat in the Trout Creek system? What influence has the project had on carrying capacity of native salmonids and steelhead smolt production?

The synthesis has been requested in various forms for the last two ISRP reviews but has not been provided. There is a long history of monitoring activities but a very limited statistical analysis (e.g., trend analysis) and summary of important findings. Given the long history of this project, the synthesis will directly benefit the project and will be of value to other projects well beyond the immediate project area.

ISRP comment to SWCD

The proponents should develop a synthesis and summary of key findings from past monitoring and evaluation efforts. This would include a retrospective look on the prioritization and implementation of various restoration treatments, their effectiveness at meeting desired fish and habitat outcomes, key lessons learned, and a summary of resulting future actions to improve program performance. The proponents are encouraged to present the response of the Trout Creek system in terms of habitat forming processes and fish production. For example, how reliant is the Trout Creek system on site-by-site fixes? Are the projects done-to-date large enough and linked enough to promote sustainable habitat in the Trout Creek system? What influence has the project had on carrying capacity of native salmonids and steelhead smolt production?

A synthesis for this has been requested in various forms for the last two ISRP reviews but has not been provided. There is a long history of monitoring activities but a very limited statistical evaluation and summary of important findings. Given the long history of this project, the synthesis will directly benefit this project and will be of value to other projects well beyond the immediate project area. The ISRP is available for future discussion on the synthesis and would like to review the finished report.

Combined ODFW and JCSWCD response:

A synthesis of the past restoration actions and a qualitative and quantitative summary analysis is provided in the *Trout Creek Long Range Action Plan and Past accomplishments* with restoration actions summarized by prioritized watershed. This document also shows restoration actions that could be called “site by site fixes”, but also describes the larger, reach scale, restoration projects that sponsors have worked to develop. These reach scale restoration projects address limiting factors and restore stream processes and have included stream channel reconstruction/realignment and floodplain reconnection. To date, reach scale projects have been implemented on 20% (over 13 miles) of degraded fish bearing stream reaches. Additional restoration actions, such as riparian enclosure fencing (over 100 miles maintained), push up dam removal, irrigation efficiency improvements, have been jointly conducted in additional areas as needed (summarized in the LRAP).

The additional questions posed by the ISRP such as, “Are the projects done-to-date large enough and linked enough to promote sustainable habitat in the Trout Creek system?”, and “What influence has the project had on carrying capacity of native salmonids and steelhead smolt production?” are questions that are open for debate. However, project sponsors feel they have provided ample qualitative evidence to support the hypothesis that the projects do have a positive influence on carrying capacity for target species and have linked restoration actions to high quality habitat. However, climatic changes coupled with an unrelenting extreme drought have blunted fish population increases in response to the improvements in stream and riparian conditions achieved to date. It could be debated that the low point in the cyclic nature of fishery populations has been raised and the current carrying capacity and native salmonid production is higher than if historic habitat conditions were in place and overlaid with the current hydrology pattern. Annual monitoring data will be incorporated into the Trout Creek Long Range Action Plan and Past accomplishments and updated as data become available. Sponsors will incorporate the use of remote sensing (NVDI) platforms to increase the long-range analysis of restoration work.