

**North Fork John Day Watershed Council
Board of Directors
Independent Review of:
John Day River: Watershed Restoration Strategy**

4/19/16

Review of:

John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

The North Fork John Day Watershed Council (NFJDWC) is grateful to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs for developing the CTWS Restoration Strategy, for trying to build a document that serves a purpose for many residents in the John Day Basin and for being dedicated to the resources of that basin. NFJDWC also extends gratitude to the Tribes and the NW Power Council for their willingness to seek the best possible document through the current public comment process. In commitment to that goal of developing the best possible product, the following critique is shared:

This review is undertaken with the understanding that the stated John Day Basin Strategies of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWS) represent the policies, approaches, and anticipated tactics of one entity (CTWS) advancing its solitary mission. This review recognizes that many organizations develop strategies based upon an independent vision, and those strategies serve as a foundational guide for an organization's development, investment, and program concentration. This Watershed Restoration Strategy is similar in that respect. It guides one exclusive entity clearly and directly toward its mission.

However, one crucial difference must be considered. In this instance, many of the Plan's consequential, underlying impacts affect broad communities, economies and ecosystems. Many of those impacts remain unaddressed in the Plan. An incongruity results from the plan's simultaneous incorporation of a singular entity's vision infused upon lands and values of external private, state, and federal interests. It is this dual influence that lays weight to the Strategy's review in a public forum, obliging the reader and stakeholders to evaluate the plan and its identified priorities through a broad lens of potential outcomes.

As a result of these broad impacts, it is imperative that the plan ultimately seeks balance in its strategies and outcomes. In order for the management of natural resources in the John Day Basin to approach ecologic equilibrium together with social equity, the strategies and associated supports of any planning document will necessarily address all landowners and all resource elements fairly.

Specific Comments:

In preparation of the Document, the CTWS commenced a degree of effort to collect input from a select segment of stakeholders. How this input was ultimately integrated into the plan is somewhat unclear in the final printing. While a list of contributors is included, a description of the process for including stakeholder suggestions would strengthen the validity of the priorities.

Suggestion: Include a greater complement of private stakeholders by extending the opportunity and process for input. Currently, 9 landowners are listed as contributors. In a basin of 8,100 square miles and a population of nearly 11,000 thousand people, the number nine is a statistically insignificant sample.

The Independent Science Review Panel found the following key issues that remain unclear and require an additional response: “project prioritization and coordination, public and partner support, monitoring and evaluation plans, adaptive management, and the incorporation of anticipated climate change impacts into the project prioritization process” and this review finds parallels.

Preface:

The Preface states, “*This Strategy is written for John Day Basin landowners, Tribal partners, and potential funders to proactively identify and fund projects that protect, manage, and restore fish habitat.*” Two concerns are apparent in this statement: 1. To write a document ‘for’ others based upon limited input, is highly assuming. 2. If ‘fish habitat’ is the sole objective, then the plan should limit its scope to that which restores fish habitat. This comprehensive statement of purpose excludes any values of private landowners. While they are mentioned several times later in the document, the exclusion from the foundational statement implies a secondary level of interest.

Suggestions: 1. Define the Strategic Plan as a guiding document for the single entity to which it belongs. 2. Align the Strategy’s actions with its objective(s).

The Preface additionally contains the following bullet point: “Incorporate stakeholder priorities to ensure benefits for landowners and fish habitat.” The statement infers some unclear degree of connection, or perhaps contrast, between ‘landowners’ and ‘fish habitat.’ Are there any additional desired beneficiaries besides the two mentioned: landowners and fish habitat? And more importantly, the identification of ‘stakeholder priorities’ would indicate that a full complement of stakeholders (including landowners) was surveyed.

Suggestion: Perform a statistically valid survey of all landowners and utilize the input from those landowners fully and accurately if the document is actually intended as a product ‘for’ others.

The next bullet states the plan’s intent to, “Communicate the mutual ‘common ground’ benefits of restoration work.” While benefits from restoration are often mutual to more than one beneficiary, those beneficiaries are ambiguous here, and should be identified. And, more critically, it is important to consider that ‘common ground’ is an often, elusive and vague concept, a condition that cannot be automatically assumed.

Suggestion: The phrase, common ground, should be defined and measurable for this context. While it is discussed vaguely, later in the document, the mention here needs definition.

In the Preface, a promise is made to update and revisit the Strategy. This is a commendable commitment of the authors, and one that should provide ample opportunity for further input over an indefinite time period.

Strategy Vision:

The 'Purpose of the Strategy' at the top of page 1, very clearly singles out tribal benefits, disregarding benefits to other people in the John Day Basin. That would be fine if it remained consistent and clear throughout the document. The description then goes on to repeat the language that the Strategy is 'for' others. The Strategy needs to be clear in its purpose rather than altering purposes throughout the document as the incentives for different purposes change.

Suggestion: The Strategy should clarify whether it is a CTWS Strategy or whether it is written 'for' others, and follow through the entirety of the document according to the chosen approach.

One item of particular concern is that the document seeks to lead non-CTWS funders in defining priorities for those funders, as if the CTWS priorities were universal to all funders: "This Strategy will also ensure funders that their investments are spent on best-available projects given its (sic) location, type, restoration potential, ecosystem processes, species affected, and landowner needs."

A basic premise of the Strategy seems to be that this Strategy should direct the priorities for broad funding in the John Day Basin. If funding priorities are designed around the mission of a single entity, then that entity has essentially written a comprehensive funding plan for itself. Again the ambiguity arises: Is it the funding emphasis, or the stated fish habitat objective that is the actual, underlying goal of the Strategy?

Suggestion: CTWS should commit to a Strategy that is about CTWS and for CTWS. The Strategy should avoid making assumptions about other entities, particularly any that are not represented by the document. (Landowners should be defining landowner priorities independently of this single-entity strategy. Funders should define funder priorities independently of this single-entity strategy.)

If a single entity is defining broad funding priorities based upon their own vision and criteria, then that entity should excuse itself from accepting the influenced funding. This would present good will toward defining and balancing the 'common ground' stated in the Strategy's Preface.

Strategy Goals:

Is the graphic in this section intended to have a spatial value? If so, do the largest layers represent the highest values? Or, do the outer wraps supersede the inner?

Suggestion: Add clarifying text to the graphic.

Here, the document states that the Strategy is built upon "existing data." There is no indication that the "existing data" includes any stakeholder input. Later in the Paper, it is stated that a lot of the criteria are based upon judgment. Data is

quantitative, judgment is qualitative and the distinction in the decision process needs to be stated clearly.

Suggestion: Collect more stakeholder input and define exactly how it is incorporated.

Strategy Objectives:

Here, the Document states that the, “*goals are the purpose*” but the goals on page 2 do not align with the stated purpose on page 1. This is an important inconsistency.

Suggestion: The Strategy needs a defining purpose that is consistent throughout the document. Whether it is fish, or dollars, or partners, or some combination of those, it should be stated clearly and then there should be no deviation from that focus.

Every one of the “Strategy Objectives” on page 3, is a ‘Process Objective.’ It would be extremely helpful to the reader and to resource managers in the Basin, to see some ‘Outcome Objectives.’ By setting only process objectives, it is only possible to perform ‘process evaluation.’ What the Basin really needs is ‘output evaluation’ and that opportunity is entirely lacking from the plan’s stated objectives. This gap is perhaps the greatest oversight in the plan. (Additionally, the objectives do not align with the actions indicated later in the plan.)

Suggestion: Spend time to clearly articulate the objectives so that they are associated with the clear goals and purpose as well as the actions. It might be helpful for the CTWS to engage the services of an Evaluation Expert who would be able to help the authors to articulate the desired outcomes.

The statement, “*The social and economic needs of the communities can be managed in harmony with the ecological needs of the basin and biota,*” is an opinion. While it is likely true in some instances, places, and times, it needs to be supported with evidence. The next sentence, “*This program can assist in finding management solutions,*” really needs some definition including: what program, whose management, where, why, and when.

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs:

No comments

Tribes’ John Day Program History:

No comments

Stakeholders:

No comments

Common Ground:

The Strategy lays out a positive theoretical ideal, but little concrete action to produce mutually beneficial outcomes.

In mentioning the matrix early in the document, please add a referral note as to its place in the document.

Environmental Setting:

The Environmental Setting primarily narrates the geology, and makes brief mention of the climate, precipitation, and a cursory mention of vegetation.

Suggestion: It would be helpful to mention other aspects of the environment including wildlife, the human environment, and a more complete discussion of both the natural and developed vegetation. Given the emphasis of the plan on human values, a fair and complete description of the human environment would set a clear foundation for the strategies and provide a basis in the 'common ground benefits' for the reader.

John Day River Basin:

Major Towns' populations are given, but the Strategy is primarily about rural areas. What is the rural population of the basin? How is it distributed? The human aspect of the J.D. River Basin leads this section but is limited to a page of charts and figures providing average data which, due to the variable terrain, likely has a very high standard deviation. Then the associated narrative speaks to fish use and history followed by a section labeled 'demographics,' which only discusses past population conditions or what is missing for current economic prosperity. The current demographics are limited and interpose county numbers that are mixed inside and outside of the Basin. How do the population figures correlate to fish habitat? Somehow the graphics on agriculture, population, and climate juxtaposed with the fish lifecycle narrative is incongruous.

Suggestion: Change the economic percentage figures into hard numbers. They will be more informative to the reader. Separate this into two sections, each with strong data and narrative.

Fundamental Principles:

Climate Change is mentioned on page 17 with a guarantee to re-evaluate and update the restoration needs and priorities as conditions change, but how is this mechanism worked into the Strategy and funding concept? Where is the process for re-evaluating?

The Restoration Approach states a primary focus on the "principles of process based restoration." This needs definition where it is introduced on page 18. "Principles" indicate commonly accepted standards. "Process based" can mean the natural processes or the resulting action processes. The statement needs clarification.

Fish Use and Life History is well described.

Restoration Potential clearly indicates the process and results for the geographic priorities and limiting factors. Both are dependent, at the finite scale, upon science personnel judgment rather than upon quantitative data.

Suggestion: The CTWS works to collect the fine-scale quantitative data to support the predetermined direction and momentum of strategies.

Restoration Actions as well as restoration potential seem to be based in a system of judgment, in lieu of data.

The chart on page 25 is the only real "Strategy" in the document. It clearly defines priorities relating the limiting factors and the Restoration Actions. This would be a great starting place for linking the fish habitat purpose of the Strategy to the many other underlying purposes of the Strategy including the purposes of: Common Ground, Funds Distribution, Funds Acquisition, etc.

Evaluation of Proposed Restoration Actions:

The statement, "The underlying model for the scoring matrix is to strategically select projects based on their ability to address fish needs that will increase restoration efficiency and effectiveness," should add verbiage to the effect of, "for the sole purpose of the supporting the Priorities of the CTWS." Every entity and individual has different priorities and various strategies to achieve those priorities. It is extremely presumptive for this plan to inform any goals, motives, or objectives beyond those of the Tribes.

Evaluation of Proposed Restoration Actions: This is a clearly thought out set of funding criteria. Since they are proposed by, and limited to the needs and desires of CTWS, they should inform only the projects funded by CTWS and not other entities. Also, the last paragraph on page 26 mentions that each project will be tagged with a benefit/cost ratio. This is an important tool, one that should play a critical role in the scoring criteria. It is hoped that this includes CTWS projects on CTWS lands as well as those on private landowners. What principles and criteria will inform the economic analysis? Where is it formalized in the matrix?

Process Based Restoration (p. 26) – The "normative rates" should be defined quantitatively. What is the baseline that CTWS seeks as normal?

While the landowners' values are mentioned frequently in the narrative, the snapshot from the scoring matrix on p. 26 has no cells that quantify landowner values.

The Relative Scoring Weight by Category table on page 27, needs some explanation and definition. Is this chart a sample, or is it a standard? How were the percentages determined?

Basin Priorities for Landowners: This is an extensive chart of preferences that was determined with the input of only 9 landowners and must otherwise have depended upon the input of restoration organizations in the basin. It seems that the restoration organizations are being used as a surrogate for the landowners and this is inappropriate. (The same system is being protracted to the current OWEB Focused Investment Group, which is without landowner representation.) Unless a landowner provides written authorization for an organization to represent that landowner, then there should be no assumption of representation.

The scale of the planning varies from a HUC 5 level to a creatively selected definition of “major sub-basins” (defined in chapter 3). Consistency of scale would provide clarity.

Lower John Day River: Beautiful graphics. This is a thorough review of the Lower Basin CTWS interests. It is written at a pretty simplistic level including a lot of important topics. It’s interesting that the apparent audience seems to fluctuate between scientific and elementary.

There is a lot of emphasis here on opinion as defined by the methodology for establishing the RPB.

The Science Advisory Committee becomes an important component in this portion of the plan. Unfortunately, the Science Advisory Committee is limited to one scope of expertise: fish science, with the addition of a single landscape ecologist. Missing are the social scientists, forest sciences, climatologists, and others.

The Strategy, on page 37 explains that the ‘data’ is qualitative and simply a filter, but then goes on in the last paragraph to state that the graph is a summary of the presence of limiting factors. That sounds like it is empirical.

Suggestion: Be careful to continually qualify judgmental data for what it is.

Page 38 continues with an intonation of empirical data. The entire section is stated as fact.

Page 41 treats permanent protections very lightly. Permanent is forever, and that infers that the people creating the permanence anticipate no future changes. Given the long history of human error in natural resource management, the greatest benefit to long-term protection is likely to be the freedom to alter today’s management tomorrow. Permanent protections ultimately require a window into the future, or at the very least a long, slow review.

Beavers are given a lot of important coverage in the Lower John Day. This information is very textbook-like. It should be comprehensive over the entire John Day. In fact, a lot of the narrative is generic. Perhaps it would be easier to unify the purpose, goals, and mission if this document were written up for all the John Day in one section. This would eliminate some of the redundancy.

North Fork John Day: Again some nice maps and graphics are included. Good Meadow Restoration inclusion. Again the audience seems to change from science based to elementary, when the Strategy flows from fish to restoration procedures.

Middle Fork John Day: More nice graphics. The discussion of bass invasion is overly simple and needs information on the history, current state, habitat competition, etc., all written to a sophisticated audience. The Middle Fork story seems to, in part be written to justify extensive investments by CTWS.

The call out of “Land purchase and easement projects in order to protect the core cold water habitats in the upper sub-basin” infers that some land managers are considered more capable of protecting the resource than others, and this is, rightfully, likely to be met with antagonism in the Basin. Is it not true that any ‘management’ outlines a decision process directed toward best possible outcomes? Different priorities beget different decisions. And, diversity is the single most effective management principle. Logically, tying up lands under a single purpose

protocol limits future opportunity for diversity. We cannot see into the future to predict unanticipated disturbances and influences that could easily find future management decisions hindered by today's restrictive land decisions. Future needs may be different. Limiting tomorrow's decisions with today's actions is short sighted.

Reflection on ISRP comments:

Page 1: The comments suggest that, "The sponsor's work and that of other agencies appear parallel in approach, but coordination could be improved." Coordination is a key word here. Coordination indicates that everyone comes to the process with equitable standing. This is inconsistent with the past process and the approach taken in the prioritization is one of a single funds advisor serving many applicants. Suggestion: Perhaps, a more communal approach is applicable. Could the tribes establish a multi-party review (granted the Tribal values would still need to be utmost in the review).

Page 2: ISRP states, "Further clarification is needed on how others doing habitat restoration in the Basin will use the prioritization process described in the Strategy. Have other Basin partners agreed to use the scoring process to mesh their restoration activities with those funded by the Strategy to limit duplication of activities? If such agreements have been made, it would be useful to describe them in the Strategy." It is critical that a document developed by a single agency, not become the 'prioritization process' for other entities! Each funding organization must have its own priorities based upon its environment of people, resources, etc. to assure checks and balances that diverse needs are being met by diverse funders.

Page 3: "The exact purpose of the Strategy needs to be clearly articulated. Is it a Tribal strategy that will guide mainly Tribal efforts and funding or will it help focus, guide, and unify the habitat restoration efforts of many players across the John Day Basin?" The first sentence of this statement aligns with the comments made above. The second sentence is in direct conflict with the statements made above in this critique. It is important that this be the strategy of a single entity, neither leading nor directing others who's priorities are different and diverse.

Page 3: "The Science TAC appears to be limited in its disciplinary and geographical representation. The ISRP believes it would be advantageous if additional members with expertise in geomorphology, watershed hydrology, riparian ecology, etc. were added to this TAC." Also missing from the technical advisory committee is the inclusion of social scientists and 'citizen scientists,' the latter also-known-as residents with wisdom of experience.

Conclusion:

This Strategy seems founded upon one entity's mission, but it deviates into a wide variety of topics revolving around funding, partnerships, and judgment of

ecologic condition. The overall document would be much stronger if it limited its purpose to advancement of the stated objective and if it sought to drive only the entity for which it is written and not others. Is the document attempting to be a strategy for CTWS, or is it trying to inform others including those who were not a part of its development?

The document is weakest in its Preface and early sections. Unfortunately, that is the most likely section to be read.

Too much weight is given to professional judgments within a single moment in time and place. The quantitative data needs to be collected. The true stakeholders need to be surveyed.

As the Strategy seeks to inform the work of external entities, it should also involve those same entities in the project evaluation process. Where a given item lands in the scoring matrix is a judgmental determination, and in keeping with the "for stakeholders" approach, that determination should be made with the consultation of a full compliment of stakeholders.

The plan puts a lot of emphasis on 'process' as it relates to restoration, but the same 'process' emphasis is lacking in the strategy development. Stakeholder identification is insufficient; development of goals and objectives is disjointed and weak; continuity is lacking in the translation of judgment to science, scale varies, species inclusivity varies (lamprey pretty much falls out of the document after the introduction), real inclusivity of landowners in the process of priority development and decision making is not present.

Suggestions: CTWS should produce a singular set of goals and objectives that address the vision of the CTWS for the sake of informing future CTWS actions and that refrain from directing the planning, funding, and priorities of other entities operating in the same region.

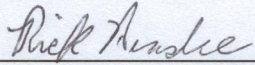
Revisit the goals, objectives, actions, and outcomes to create a connection from one to the next.

During the course of the last few years, CTWS has already become a controlling dominance in the funds distribution process throughout the John Day Basin. The CTWS program absorbs the OWEB state funds and then in turn uses its 'own' funds to help others with their projects. By doing this, the funding decisions, including the potential for alternate priorities, are wrested from other independent entities. CTWS accepts moneys from OWEB while sitting on the OWEB review committee. It has appointed itself into a pivotal role in OWEB FIP funds distribution process. All of these actions focused on control of the restoration dollars in the John Day Basin, minimize the credibility of this Strategy Document, leaving readers to inherently find discrepancies in the basic purpose and premises of the document.

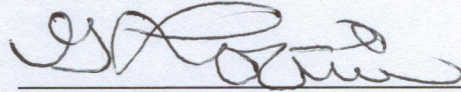
The Strategy needs to have a clearly defined focus and it needs to be written for the CTWS for their direction, alone. Other funders need to exercise their own power to identify and select priorities.

While the John Day River Watershed River Strategy has some good elements and some educational materials, it needs to provide an honest approach to the pursuits of the CTWS as a single entity with a self motivated mission.

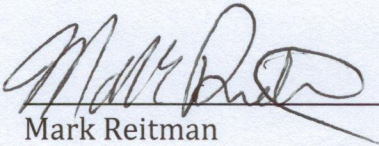
Respectfully Submitted by the North Fork John Day Board of Directors:



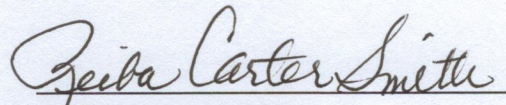
Rick Henslee, President



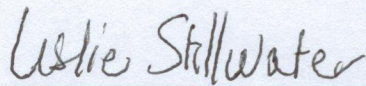
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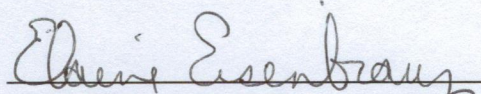
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