

Flathead Basin Commission Meeting
November 16, 2011
Pablo, Montana

Attendees: C. Cartwright, M. Reller, T. Smith, M. Volesky, J. Lamson, B. Sandman, S. Brueggeman, J. Dalsoglio, J. Metzmaker, J. Potter, R. Janssen, G. Mathieus, C. Miske, E. Hanson, E. Sexton, J. Taylor, T. Cox, C. Buffington, V. Sloan, K. Campbell-Rierson, B. Measure, R. Whiting, E. Gabrian, Linnaea Schrooer and other members of the public.

Introduction: Chas Cartwright, the FBC Chair opened the meeting with a discussion of the future of the FBC. Cartwright stated that a few FBC members have asked whether the FBC is still needed in light of the progress made on the transboundary effort. However, Cartwright voiced his support for the FBC, and explained that the FBC is needed just as much now as when it was first created as the transboundary issues related to the BC-MT MOU are outstanding, AIS continues to be a significant threat, water quality issues continue to need attention, and unforeseen issues are likely to arise in the future. Cartwright understood that a minority of members may believe that the mission of the FBC is complete, but based on conversations with the Governor's Office those folks should consider stepping down, in order to enable other interested folks to serve. In addition, Cartwright urged members to focus on what the Commission wants to accomplish, rather than focusing on distinctions between advisory versus operational roles, and to ensure that the FBC maintains the flexibility to accomplish its goals.

Action Items:

- September Meeting Minutes: Unanimously approved with the following change: under "strategic plan" section remove "will" and replace with "with"
- Strategic Plan: Unanimously approved with the following changes:
 - Update of ESA species
 - Inclusion of most recent Basin map
 - Add new preamble from C. Cartwright
 - Add a bullet: work with state and local government to address landscape level changes (and growth impacting water quality is incorporated into this landscape element).

A Draft Action Plan designed to implement the Strategic Plan will be prepared for discussion at the February meeting. The Action Plan will also incorporate the FBC water quality monitoring plan. The monitoring effort needs to be reassessed based on input from the FBC Monitoring Committee. In the last several years, the monitoring sites have fallen by 33% due to funding shortfalls. The Monitoring Committee will prioritize sites and funding, and evaluate options.

- Election of Vice Chair: Tom Smith unanimously elected. Smith stated that one essential requirement of the chair and vice chair is to be fair and that he would do his best to ensure that all voices are heard and considered.

- Video conferencing or call-in options: Members unanimously approve electronic means to participate in FBC meetings. Members clarified that electronic participation was not to be used in lieu of in person attendance, but was to be used for emergency situations (bad weather, out-of-state, etc.). J. Dalsoglio offered to host video conferences for Helena members. R. Janssen stated that the SKT College also has video capability. The DNRC and USFS offices in Kalispell also have such capacity for future meetings.
- FBC AIS Consultant: Proposal to hire an AIS consultant for one year beginning July 1, 2012 unanimously approved, pending review by DNRC to ensure that the position could not be construed legally as an employee. The consultant's scope of work will be designed to complement, not compete with a FWP R1 AIS Coordinator. The AIS consultant would continue his current contract with Lake County, and C. Miske would continue to seek funding to support the position.

Cartwright discussed the current vacancy on the Executive Committee, and suggested that the by-laws be amended to permit any FBC member to fill such vacancies when it is impossible to fill designated seats due to members permanently leaving the FBC.

FBC Updates: C. Miske stated that in addition to developing an Action Plan and Update of the Surface Water Quality Plan, her work will focus on AIS, transboundary MOU implementation, investigating how to move forward with the TMDL effort (without the modeling being completed); continuation of various educational projects (ie. reprint of Source Book), continuation of efforts with partnering groups such as the Clark Fork Task Force and the Crown Managers Partnership, and upgrading of the FBC web site.

Transboundary Update: Mike Volesky announced that BC had passed legislation for protection of the Canadian Flathead on November 14, 2011, and an event associated with the signing is expected. Cartwright noted that an IJC Watershed Board is being proposed as the mechanism by which to implement the MOU. Miske further explained that while the U.S. IJC Commissioners are supportive of the Watershed Board concept, it is unlikely that the B.C. Government would support the proposal. So it is likely that for the foreseeable future, the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC) would continue to be the lead entity charged with MOU implementation.

E. Sexton added that the Canadian NGOs are seeking park expansion and elk management area, and have expressly opted not to support the IJC proposal. Sexton also noted that the MOU has broad language, so the scope of work under the MOU is still subject to discussion. However, currently the GNLCC is focusing on transboundary fisheries work – in particular west slope cutthroat trout, a high priority species on both sides of the border. Lastly, Sexton mentioned the federal Americas Great Outdoors (AGO) project, which has identified 6 pilot ecosystems for further attention. The crown of the continent has been identified in this pilot group, and may assist with MOU implementation efforts.

R. Janssen stated that the CSKT and Ktunaxa were also planning to meet to discuss MOU implementation.

Overview of the Columbia River Treaty Review: Matt Rea, US ACE and Bruce Measure Northwest Power and Conservation Council provided a brief overview of the 1964 Treaty and its key provisions related to power and flood control. Due to the fact that either party can terminate most Treaty provisions as early as 2024 with 10 years written notice, US ACE and BPA are conducting joint studies on behalf of the U.S. in collaboration with regional sovereigns and stakeholders to evaluate the benefits and costs associated with alternative Treaty futures. The purpose of the studies is to enable the U.S. to make informed decisions as to whether or not it is in the best interest of the U.S. to continue, terminate or seek renegotiation of the Treaty. Matt Rea summarized the work undertaken to date, including the Phase I Joint Technical Studies and the U.S. Supplemental Studies. He also discussed the work currently underway including the Corps Flood Risk Management Studies. Bruce Measure discussed the regional engagement effort with sovereigns and non-sovereign stakeholders, and noted that formal listening sessions would be held in Montana. Measure and Brian Lipscomb, CSKT, urged the FBC and the public to participate in the review process as the terms of the Treaty renegotiation would potentially impact Montana in very significant ways.

AIS update: Erik Hanson discussed the successes of the Flathead AIS program, and the challenges facing us for the 2012 field season. Successes included the CSKT AIS plan, the Flathead Workgroup Strategic Plan, the GNP AIS inspection program, Lake County's efforts related to quarantine facilities and serving as fiscal agent, education and outreach efforts in the basin, aquatic weed surveys, production of the car wash brochure, and the installation of highway inspection stations at Ronan (which ran from July – October) and Clearwater Junction (which ran from September-October). He discussed the recent infestations of Curly leaf pond weed at Eagle Bend yacht harbor and the Eurasian Water milfoil found in Beaver Lake, and the efforts being undertaken to combat these infestations. Hanson summarized the challenges facing the Basin including but not limited to the need for: rapid response planning and associated MOUs; programmatic Environmental Assessments (in the event that herbicides are required for AIS eradication/control); rulemaking to provide quarantine authority; a DOT notification system to identify commercially hauled high risk boats; and additional funding.

Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative: Yvette Converse, USFWS, provided an overview of the GNLCC, which is an alliance of conservation partners (federal, state, tribal and provincial) with common landscape conservation goals within the Great Northern geographic area (from northern British Columbia to Wyoming). Its goal is to coordinate, facilitate, promote and add value to large landscape conservation to build resource resilience in the face of climate change and other landscape level stressors. The GNLCC is currently taking the lead on the BC-MT MOU implementation, and the FBC and E. Sexton are working with Converse to assist with crafting a scope of work related to MOU implementation, as well as other aspects of MOU implementation.

VMP update: C. Miske introduced Josh Gubits from the Whitefish Lake Institute (WLI), explaining that the FBC Volunteer Monitoring Program was merged with the Whitefish to Eureka monitoring program. FBC and FWP provide the funding for a 2/3 FTE for Gubits, the Coordinator of the newly merged program. WLI provides the funding for the other 1/3 FTE which focuses on WLI projects. Gubits summarized the VMP efforts during 2012, including the lakes that participated, the protocols used and the types of data collected. A report summarizing the data will be provided in early 2012.

The next meeting will be held on February 15, 2012 in Kalispell.

Meeting adjourned.