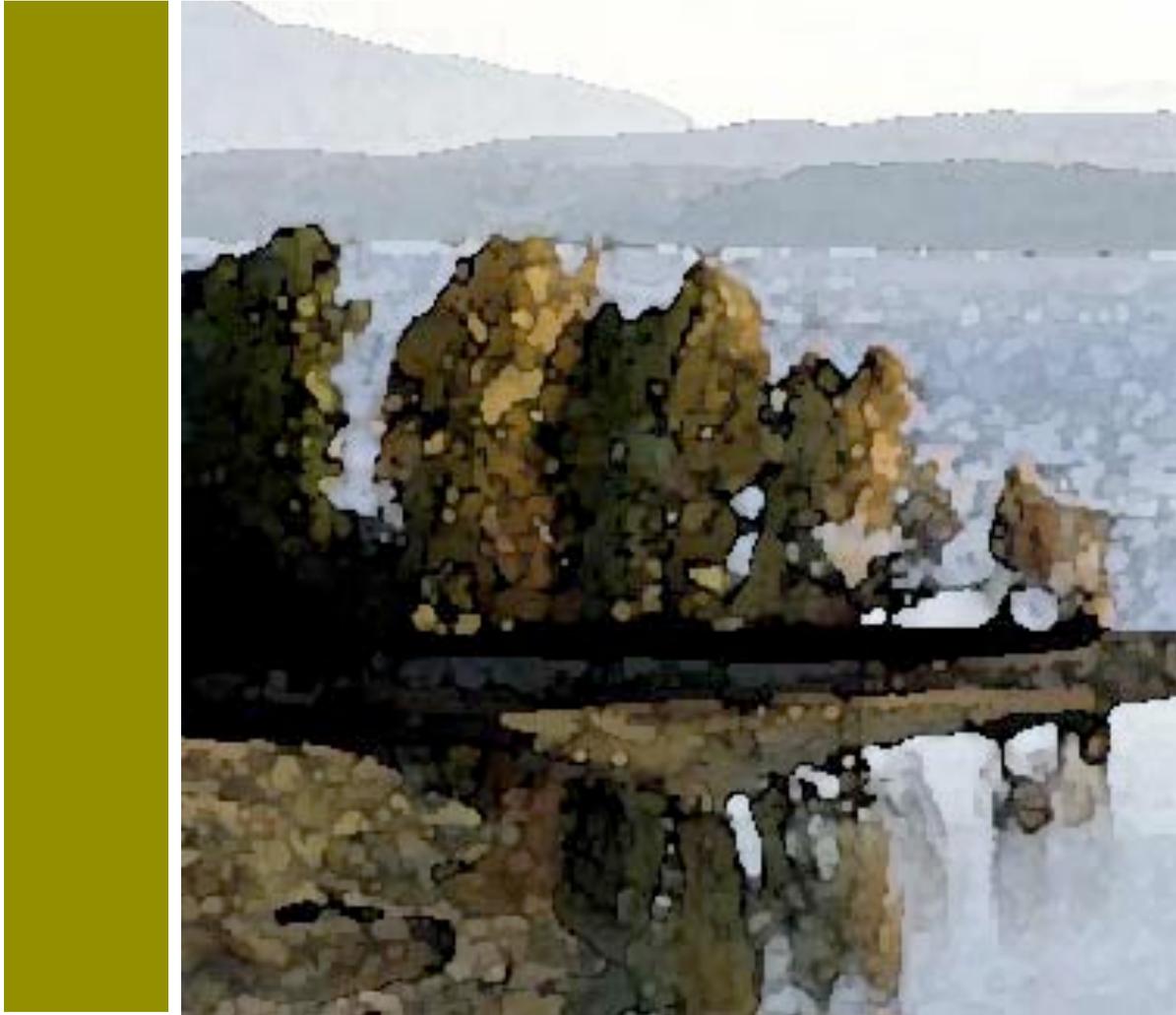


WHITEPAPER

March 2007



Northeastern Washington Regionalization Phase 1 – Scoping Summary

Prepared for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board
by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
and Ziji Creative Resources Inc.

Executive Summary

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board is encouraging “regionalization” in areas of the state that currently do not have regional organizations or Salmon Recovery Boards. As of early 2007, only the Coastal and the Northeast regions had not regionalized. At present, the Pend Oreille Lead Entity is the only lead entity in the northeast. Although anadromous fish were extirpated from northeast Washington as a result of the construction of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams (and were never present in some watersheds within the region), Columbia River bull trout, listed as threatened under the ESA in June 1998, are present in areas within the region.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife received Salmon Recovery Funding Board approval and funding in September and October 2006 to explore development of a regional organization in northeast Washington. The resulting Northeast Washington Regionalization project included two phases. Phase 1 consisted of core stakeholder scoping, and Phase 2 was designed to convene interested stakeholders to formally explore, and if feasible, develop a collaborative, stakeholder-driven northeast Washington regional organization. This paper summarizes the activities undertaken, stakeholder issues and opportunities and challenges identified as a result of the Phase 1 scoping activities.

Between November 2006 and February 2007 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and their contractor met with and/or interviewed an initial list of core stakeholders to gauge their level of interest in developing a collaborative, stakeholder-driven regional organization in northeast Washington, and to identify associated key issues, concerns, and opportunities and challenges. Stakeholders contacted in Phase 1 included county commissioners in Ferry, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties; the Colville Confederated Tribes, Coeur d’Alene, Kalispel, and Spokane tribes; the Pend Oreille Conservation District; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Idaho Office of Species Conservation.

Some of the central issues and concerns identified by stakeholders in Phase 1 included:

- **Questions about the accuracy of bull trout habitat range and population estimates in northeast Washington.** Many stakeholders expressed doubts regarding the presence of bull trout populations or suitable habitat in substantial portions of the northeast region.
- **Need and value of a regional organization in northeast Washington.** Some stakeholders were skeptical of the need for, or value of, a regional organization. Some saw value in using a regional organization to foster research to establish conclusively what the current range of bull trout populations are – and then, based on that information, determine the appropriate scale of a regional organization. Others felt regionalization offered a distinct opportunity to contribute in concrete ways to bull trout recovery.
- **Reactions to the concept of regionalization.** A number of stakeholders did not like the concept of regionalization in and of itself. They expressed concern that regionalization would create additional levels of bureaucracy, contribute to a loss of local control, and would waste taxpayer money on unnecessary planning and coordination rather than specific on-the-ground recovery efforts. Many people expressed concerns about the potential scale of time and resource commitments. Others pointed to the potential for development of improved, and new, working relationships among fish and wildlife managers, local government and other stakeholders; the potential to leverage additional funding to implement on-the-ground projects; and the long-term value of enhancing coordination throughout the region.
- **Relative influence of northeast Washington regional organization.** Some stakeholders wondered about the level of commitment in the rest of the state to funding bull trout recovery in northeast Washington. They worried that the northeast Washington region might invest time and resources – and the good will of citizens – in building a regional organization, only to find that funding for northeast Washington was not a priority relative to salmon recovery in the rest of the state. Some pointed to the value of a regional organization in increasing understanding in the rest of the state about unique resources and conditions in northeast Washington.
- **Organizational considerations.** All the stakeholders emphasized the importance of efficiency of effort and accountability to taxpayers. Ideas about the geographic range and scope of the potential regional organization varied widely. Some people felt it should deal only with bull trout, others felt a broader focus

should include other native fish species such as westslope cutthroat trout. Many commented on the importance of starting with a limited focus, and then if appropriate, building upon that. Opinions about the geographic scale included, among others, limiting the region to the bull trout core area identified in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service draft recovery plan, or expanding the region to include all of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service northeast Washington bull trout recovery unit and portions of the Clark Fork recovery unit in Idaho.

- **Regional and local capacity.** Some people expressed concern about the capacity of the region (funding and human resources) to support a regional organization. They noted the challenge of trying to address and coordinate around the diverse range of ecosystems, human communities, and fish populations, and threats that exist in northeast Washington. Others pointed to the logistical challenges of convening a regional organization in such a potentially large geographic area.
- **Endangered Species Act perceptions.** A number of stakeholders were concerned that participation in a regional organization might increase the risk of negative Endangered Species Act impacts to their local communities. Among some individuals the fear of potential negative economic impacts to northeast Washington's rural communities and diminishment of private property rights, loomed large. Some were frustrated by the apparent lack of clear, quantifiable objectives and benchmarks for recovery of anadromous salmon populations and feared the same would prove true for bull trout populations. Others saw significant opportunities to proactively contribute to recovery of listed species, and to foster citizen participation in doing so. Some individuals believed northeast Washington's rural communities could derive significant economic benefits as a result of successful habitat recovery actions.

The level of enthusiasm for the development of a northeast Washington regional organization varied among the stakeholders contacted during Phase 1, but could generally be described as spanning a range from mildly enthusiastic, through lukewarm, to moderately hostile.

Opportunities identified by stakeholders included: the chance to enhance and expand efforts to contribute to bull trout recovery, provide stewardship of the resources, acquire better data and information, provide education about salmonid recovery to the local communities, educate the rest of the state about northeast Washington, improve and enhance coordination among stakeholders, increase funding and potentially leverage additional complimentary funding sources, and build on previous successes.

Challenges identified by stakeholders included: doubts regarding the presence of bull trout in much of the region; skepticism about the value of regionalization; questions about whether regionalization is the appropriate approach for northeast Washington, and if it is, the challenge of identifying the right scale and scope; the time commitment required to pull it off; regional education needs regarding salmonid recovery; negative perceptions related to ESA; and regional funding and capacity issues.

All but one of the stakeholders contacted in Phase 1 have agreed to participate in at least one formal face-to-face stakeholder meeting in late April or early May 2007 (pending approval to release funding for Phase 2) to further explore regionalization. Although it is likely that a number of the stakeholders interviewed as part of the Phase 1 scoping may ultimately choose not to join a northeast Washington regional organization, it is important that all core stakeholders be given an opportunity to meet together before choosing to formally opt in or out of the development of a regional organization. Additional stakeholders will also be invited to participate in Phase 2.

The appropriate scale, focus, and composition of a northeast Washington regional organization will need to be defined and formalized by those stakeholders that express an interest and willingness to commit and engage during Phase 2 – and beyond.

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Acronyms

CCT	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
CDAT	Coeur d’Alene Tribe
ESA	Endangered Species Act
IAC	Inter-agency Committee for Outdoor Recreation
KT	Kalispel Tribe
GSRO	Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Department of Commerce)
OSC	Office of Species Conservation
POLE	Pend Oreille Lead Entity
SRFB	Salmon Recovery Funding Board
STOI	Spokane Tribe of Indians
USFS	United States Forest Service (Department of Agriculture)
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of Interior)
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

1 Context

1.1 Background

Beginning in 1998, in response to numerous listings of salmonid species including bull trout, the Washington State Legislature enacted a comprehensive suite of legislation designed to empower and encourage citizens at the community level to engage in salmonid recovery through collaborative, locally driven recovery planning and habitat conservation and restoration actions.

The Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO) and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) were created as part of this legislation to help oversee and implement Washington’s locally focused approach to salmonid recovery.

Under the Washington salmonid recovery model, recovery efforts are coordinated at the watershed level through the Lead Entity program. Recovery efforts are also coordinated at the regional scale under the umbrella of Salmon Recovery Regions.

In recent years the SRFB has encouraged “regionalization” in areas of the state that do not currently have regional organizations or Salmon Recovery Boards.



Columbia River and Klamath River populations of bull trout were listed as threatened under the ESA on June 10, 1998

Only the Coastal and the Northeast regions had not regionalized as of early 2007.

Northeast Washington Salmon Recovery Region

The Northeast Salmon Recovery Region includes portions of Ferry, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Spokane counties. It also overlaps ceded lands of the Confederated Colville Tribes, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, Kalispel Tribe, and the Spokane Tribe.

The region includes Lower Lake Roosevelt (WRIA 53), Lower Spokane (WRIA 54), Middle Lake Roosevelt (WRIA 58), Kettle (WRIA 60), Upper Lake Roosevelt (WRIA 61), and Pend Oreille (WRIA 62).

Major rivers include the Columbia, Colville, Kettle, Pend Oreille, San Poil, and Spokane.

Anadromous salmon are extirpated from northeast Washington above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. Populations of Columbia River bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present in the northeast Washington region.

USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan

Columbia River and Klamath River populations of bull trout were listed as threatened under the ESA on June 10, 1998.

In November 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a draft bull trout recovery plan for public comment. Since bull trout are widely distributed over a very large area, the USFWS recovery plan identified 27 distinct bull trout recovery units. The USFWS draft recovery plan includes separate chapters for the different recovery units.

The Northeast Washington Recovery Unit is covered in Chapter 23 of the USFWS draft plan. This recovery unit encompasses the mainstem Columbia River and all tributaries above Chief Joseph Dam up to the Canadian border, Spokane River and its tributaries up to Post Falls Dam, and the Pend Oreille River and its tributaries from the Canadian border upstream to Albeni Falls Dam (USFWS 2002).

For the purposes of recovery, the USFWS has determined that a “core area” represents the closest approximation of a biologically functioning unit.

Core areas consist of habitat that could supply all the necessary elements for every life stage of bull trout (e.g., spawning, rearing, migratory, and adults), *AND* have one or more populations of bull trout. The USFWS uses core areas as the basic units on which to gauge recovery within a recovery unit (USFWS 2002).

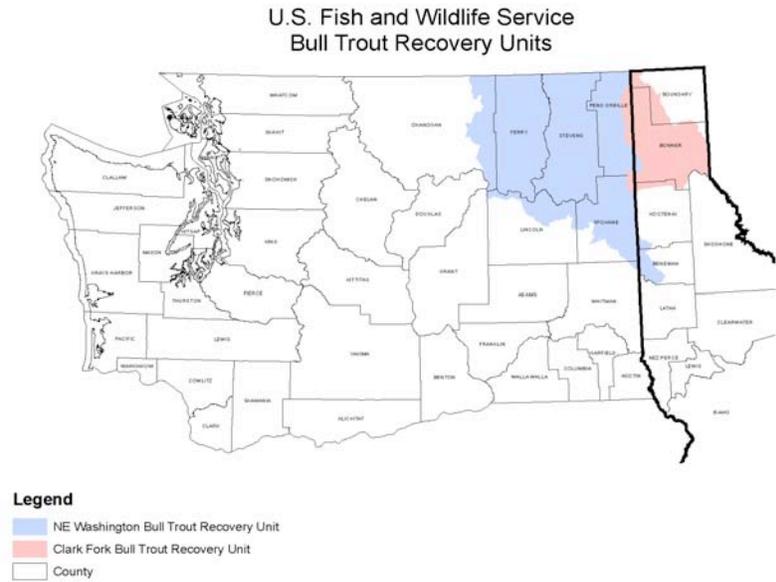
The USFWS identified one core area within the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit – this is the Pend Oreille core area.

In April 2004, the USFWS initiated a five-year status review to ascertain whether bull trout currently has the appropriate level of protection under the ESA.

In September 2005, the USFWS designated critical habitat for bull trout, including tributaries in Pend Oreille and Stevens counties.

Pend Oreille Lead Entity

The Pend Oreille Lead Entity (Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team) was established in 2000. Initiating governments include the Kalispel Tribe, Pend Oreille County, and the City of Newport.



The geographic focus of the Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team is WRIA 62, located in the farthest corner of northeast Washington.

The Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team is currently the only lead entity in the Northeast Washington Salmon Recovery Region.

In September 2005, the Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team completed their, *Strategy for Protection and Improvement of Native Salmonid Habitat in the Pend Oreille Watershed, Washington Water Resource Inventory Area 62*. The strategy is designed to address bull trout (listed threatened under the

Endangered Species Act), westslope cutthroat trout (designated as a “species of concern” by the USFWS), and pygmy white fish (identified as a “sensitive” species by WDFW) (POSRT 2005).

Since the lead entity’s formation, 16 Pend Oreille Salmon Recovery Team sponsored projects have been funded and implemented for a total of \$3,513,070 in SRFB and matching funds.





The SRFB is encouraging a regionalized approach in all of Washington's Salmon Recovery Regions

1.2 Project History

The following section presents an abbreviated chronology of the northeast Washington regionalization project history.

April 2006

The SRFB encourages Pend Oreille Lead Entity to pursue regionalization in the Northeast Washington Region.

June 2006

Staff from the Pend Oreille Lead Entity, WDFW, USFWS, Inter-Agency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC), GSRO, and the Kalispel Tribe meet to review a northeast Washington approach to regionalization.

At this time, Pend Oreille Lead Entity declines to take the lead in pursuing regionalization. WDFW commits to develop a project work proposal and budget to explore regionalization.

The SRFB directs WDFW to coordinate with Coastal Region lead entities that are also exploring regionalization.

June to July 2006

WDFW solicits and receives letters of support for their regionalization project proposal from northeast Washington county commissioners, tribes, the USFWS, and Idaho's Office of Species Conservation.

July 2006

WDFW staff and Coastal Region coordinate on development of project scopes of work, budgets, and presentations to SRFB for each regionalization effort.

September 2006

WDFW submits northeast Washington regionalization proposal to SRFB. The proposal is

outlined as two phases. The SRFB approves funding for the proposal, but specifies that funding for Phase 2 will be released pending a report back on Phase 1.

1.3 Project Overview

The goal of the Northeast Washington Regionalization project is to explore, and if possible, further the development of a collaborative, stakeholder-driven northeast Washington regionalization effort.

Phase 1 was designed to scope interest and issues among key stakeholders relative to the proposed regionalization. Phase 1 activities included informational face-to-face meetings, telephone outreach and surveys, development of a PowerPoint, handouts and this white paper. Specific phase one deliverables included:

- Contract with consultant to assist WDFW and lead Phase 1 (and if approved) Phase 2 activities.
- Conduct preliminary outreach and education with core stakeholders regarding project timeline and deliverables, roles of GSRO and SRFB, the lead entity program and the regionalization concept. Develop outreach materials as necessary to support outreach.
- Coordinate with GSRO, SRFB, Council of Regions, and Coastal Region.
- Identify stakeholder perceptions, key issues, and opportunities and/or challenges associated with regionalization.
- Identify core northeast Washington stakeholders that are willing to move into formal Phase 2 dialog regarding regionalization in the area.
- Identify expanded stakeholder group that should be included in broader dialog if Phase 2 moves forward.

Pending the outcome of Phase 1, Phase 2 will consist of formal meetings with stakeholders, expansion of stakeholders as appropriate, and initiation of collaborative activities to further advance development and definition of a northeast Washington regional organization.

1.4 Phase 1 Activity Summary

The following section provides a chronological outline of the activities accomplished during Phase 1.

November 2006

WDFW contracts with Ziji Creative Resources Inc. to assist in Phase 1 scoping activities. Contractor meets with WDFW staff to review deliverables, identify content of outreach materials, plan scoping, etc. Contractor and WDFW staff initiate outreach to northeast Washington county commissioners, tribes, Idaho Office of Species Conservation, and USFWS. Outreach activities include letters, phone calls, and emails. WDFW staff coordinate with GSRO and attend SRFB meeting.

December 2006

Contractor, in coordination with WDFW, develops informational materials including PowerPoint presentation, flyer and scoping survey. WDFW staff, regional WDFW Director John Andrews, and GSRO representative, Steve Martin, meet face-to-face on December 10 with county commissioners from Ferry, Lincoln, Okanogan, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties to give a PowerPoint presentation, answer questions, and distribute supporting informational materials. Phone and email outreach to northeast Washington tribes and county commissioners continues.

Contractor begins conducting telephone scoping surveys with stakeholders. WDFW continues coordination efforts with SRFB, GSRO, and Council of Regions.

January 2007

Contractor and WDFW staff meet face-to-face with tribal representatives January 16, to give a PowerPoint presentation, answer questions, and distribute supporting informational materials. Phone and email outreach to tribes and county commissioners continues. Contractor continues stakeholder scoping interviews with county commissioners, tribes, Idaho's Office of Species Conservation, Pend Oreille Conservation District, and USFWS.

February 2007

Contractor completes stakeholder-scoping interviews. February 12, WDFW meets with Pend Oreille Conservation District, and Pend Oreille county commissioners face-to-face to discuss regionalization. February 21, contractor meets with WDFW staff to discuss recommendations and next steps. Contractor develops draft white paper for review by WDFW. Phase 2 white paper finalized and submitted by contractor on February 28.

March 2007

WDFW staff presents results of Phase 1 activities and Phase 2 recommendation to SRFB. Copies of White Paper are distributed to individuals who participated in the Phase 1 scoping and other interested stakeholders including the Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team.



The northeast Washington regionalization project has two phases. Phase 1 consisted of stakeholder scoping. Phase 2 will include formal dialog with stakeholders to further explore the possible development of a regional organization.

2 Issue Overview

The following section presents an overview of issues that surfaced in face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews, or casual conversations with northeast Washington county commissioners, tribal representatives, the Idaho Office of Species Conservation, Pend Oreille Conservation District, and the USFWS.

This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive summary of all comments or opinions – its purpose is to provide an abbreviated overview of the types of concerns and considerations that were identified in the Phase 1 scoping effort.

2.1 Populations and Habitat Range

A fundamental issue for a number of individuals was the actual range of bull trout habitat and the status of populations in northeast Washington. General comments included:

Questions about bull trout habitat range and populations

Many stakeholders indicated doubts that bull trout populations were present in much of the proposed northeast Washington Region outside of the Pend Oreille core area.

A number of individuals suggested there was a need for additional, and more conclusive, research to better delineate the range of current bull trout populations.

Many people also suggested that the streams in substantial portions of the northeast Washington region were too warm to support bull trout populations.

One fish doesn't equal a population

Some stakeholders noted the evidence provided by USFWS and others for historical populations and bull trout habitat range in northeast Washington is largely anecdotal.

Moreover, estimates of the current habitat range are sometimes based on the observation of only a single fish over the course of many years.

Natural versus hatchery fish

There were questions among some stakeholders about the source of bull trout that had been included in previous observations. Could they be stray hatchery fish from Canada? A number of individuals noted the importance of clarifying whether prior fish observations were of indigenous or hatchery fish.

Core versus marginal habitat

A number of individuals mentioned the importance of focusing resources on places where bull trout are known to be present, in particular, on habitat that has been identified as “core habitat” by the USFWS. They questioned the value of spending limited resources on more marginal habitat.

2.2 Why a Regional Organization?

Stakeholders expressed a range of opinions about the need for a regional organization. Those comments included:

No bull trout, no need to participate

A number of the individuals questioned the need for, or value of, a northeast Washington regional organization.

Many stakeholders do not believe that bull trout are present in much of the area in question, and therefore

“We need better data about the range of bull trout habitat and populations in northeast Washington.”



don't see a real reason to participate in a regional organization – or a need for such an organization.

Determine range of bull trout

Some individuals commented that the only reason they could see to participate in a regional organization would be to determine “once and for all” what the range of bull trout habitat is.

Do the parts really fit together?

Many individuals expressed doubts about the practicality and utility of trying to condense the complex concerns, interests, communities and ecosystems that make up the northeast Washington region into a single organization.

Some individuals were concerned that regionalization would force them to collaborate on things that the different stakeholders simply do not agree on – and maybe never will.

Contribute to recovery

Other stakeholders emphasized the importance of a regional approach to recovery. They felt that recovery efforts needed to take place at an ecosystem scale and that a regional organization would support that.

Others noted bull trout recovery was unlikely to occur on a county-by-county basis, and that recovery required a coordinated regional effort.

Respond to SRFB priority and request

Some stakeholders were concerned (and the outreach materials developed for the Phase 1 effort did emphasize this point) that the SRFB has made regionalization throughout the state a priority. There is a sense that failure to regionalize in northeast Washington would result in declining or stagnant funding to the region, or in the worst case elimination of funding for bull trout recovery.

Some individuals felt that failure to attempt regionalization would reflect poorly on those currently undertaking bull trout recovery efforts in the region.

Increase coordination and cooperation

Some individuals saw regionalization as an opportunity to contribute positively to habitat restoration efforts by providing enhanced opportunities for coordination among local stakeholders and contributing to development of long-term relationships.

“We don’t need to create some huge blundering regional organization, it would be better to spend money on directed on-the-ground projects intended to achieve a specific benchmark.”



2.3 Regionalization as a Concept

A number of stakeholders had reactions to the concept of regionalization itself. These included:

Additional level of bureaucracy

Some people were worried that regionalization would in essence create another level of government that is not accountable to citizens.

One individual commented, “We don’t need to create some huge blundering regional organization, it would be better to spend money on directed on-the-ground projects intended to achieve a specific benchmark.”

Loss of local control

Individuals also expressed concerns that local issues, projects, or priorities would be lost in a larger regional organization.

Participation of non-residents in the regional organization was another area of concern. In particular, some individuals were concerned that city residents and/or representatives of special interest groups who might participate from outside of the immediate communities, do not understand what it is like to live in rural areas and do not have an adequate comprehension or regard for the economic realities and needs of rural residents.

Will a regional organization provide concrete benefits?

Many individuals questioned whether a regional organization would provide concrete benefits to habitats, fish, or people in the region.

Others felt that developing regional organization would help give the region more clout particularly in terms of leveraging funding to get on-the-ground habitat work done.

Jobs program for outsiders

At least one individual expressed frustration that “these types of big collaborative efforts are just jobs programs for people from outside the area, who do not live in our community and who will not contribute to our local economy.”

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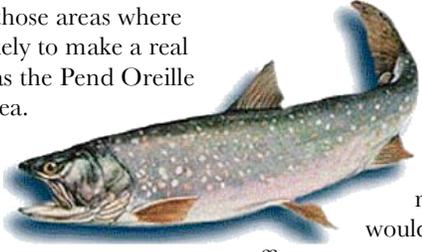
A concern expressed by some individuals was the “top down” nature of the regionalization effort. They noted that the regionalization proposal and overall Washington approach to salmonid recovery, was a process that had been initiated by the Governor and agencies, not by the local citizens.

They felt Salmon Recovery Boards or regional organizations were being presented as a local approach since they involved local citizens, but that in reality they were designed to meet the needs and objectives of the Governor’s office and agencies.

Taxpayer accountability

Some stakeholders commented that building a regional organization just to “make people feel good” was a waste of taxpayer money. They felt that taxpayer funds would be better used directly in those areas where they are most likely to make a real difference such as the Pend Oreille core recovery area.

Other’s while not expressing a specific negative view of the regionalization concept, were still concerned that a regional organization must be able to maintain a high level of taxpayer accountability and must strive to deliver the “best bang for the buck.”



quite challenging, and at times more than a little frustrating, in the long run they felt it generally yields improved relationships and trust.

Representatives of the tribes and the counties both expressed interest in working with each other and noted that one of the positive aspects of the proposed regional organization would be that it might offer an opportunity for them to get to know each other better.

Enhanced effectiveness and coordination

Some people felt collaboration offered the opportunity to enhance effectiveness of conservation and restoration activities through improved coordination, including potential coordination across the state line with Idaho.

Citizen involvement and buy-in

Other’s pointed to the value of actively collaborating with citizens to involve them in on-the-ground salmonid conservation and recovery actions. Some individuals noted the role that effective collaboration plays in contributing to community education about salmonid recovery. One individual commented that bull trout recovery would never succeed without the active participation and buy-in of citizens.

2.5 Concerns about Collaboration

Some stakeholders expressed a sense of weariness and skepticism regarding collaboration. Comments included:

Feel good exercise

A number of individuals felt that collaborative efforts are often a “feel good” exercise that does not yield tangible results (e.g., provides little direct benefit to fish or habitat) and is designed to meet government “check-offs” for public involvement.

Sincerity of collaboration

Some people expressed doubts about the sincerity of many collaborative efforts and articulated a level of distrust and frustration related to the whole collaborative approach.

They felt that agencies and special interest groups often have a specific agendas and desired outcomes that the collaborative efforts are designed to achieve. Towards this end, they perceived collaborative processes as not really designed to foster legitimate input from local citizens and government but rather to accomplish an agency objective.

Some felt that “so-called” collaborative processes do not always produce results that reflect local input or are consistent local needs, opinions, values and desires.

Time commitment

A number of stakeholders were apprehensive about the sheer amount of time and effort required to build an effective collaborative regional organization.

For example, one individual commented, “I have a real sense of trepidation about getting involved in yet another big collaborative effort that takes up lots of time and doesn’t accomplish anything.”

2.4 Benefits of Collaboration

The northeast Washington regionalization approach was presented to stakeholders in Phase 1 as designed to foster a collaborative, stakeholder-driven regional organization. In response, stakeholders expressed a variety of opinions regarding collaborative efforts in general. Many individuals expressed support for collaboration efforts including:

Improved working relationships

A number of people acknowledged that while collaboration can be

Many individuals acknowledged that while collaboration can be quite challenging, and at times more than a little frustrating, in the long run they felt it generally yields improved relationships and trust.

2.6 Relative Influence of Northeast Washington Regional Organization

Another concern expressed by some stakeholders was whether a northeast Washington regional organization would be taken seriously by the SRFB and other regional organizations in the state. Specific issues included:

Is there a commitment to support a Northeast Washington Region?

A number of individuals were concerned about the long-term commitment of the SRFB to recovery of bull trout populations. One individual asked, “If we go to all the trouble of building this regional organization, will the SRFB actually provide adequate and stable funding to support the region and the work that needs to be done?”

More influence at statewide scale

Some stakeholders felt that a viable northeast Washington regional organization would help the region to have more influence at the statewide scale and that successful regional collaboration would help to ensure funding from the SRFB.

One individual noted, “If the group is effective, it can have much greater influence at larger scale.”

Transboundary coordination

Some stakeholders also commented that including Idaho (e.g., Idaho’s Office of Species Conservation and Idaho Fish and Game) in development a northeast Washington regional organization could help to improve coordination across the state boundary and might ultimately help leverage funding from Idaho for habitat work in Idaho that would compliment and enhance the efforts

“If we go to all the trouble of building this regional organization, will the SRFB actually provide adequate and stable funding to support the region and the work that needs to be done?”

occurring on the Washington side of the border. They thought opportunities for coordination with Canada might be worth pursuing at some point in the future also.

2.7 Organizational Considerations

Stakeholders commented on a number of issues related to their fears and hopes regarding organizational structure and processes if a northeast Washington regional organization were formed. Some of the issues identified include:

Balance and equity

Many individuals commented on the need to establish a “level playing field” where different types of expertise and knowledge are treated fairly and equally.

Many stakeholders also noted the importance of ensuring that all participants are treated with respect. One individual stated, “We don’t have to agree, but all the players need to be willing to listen to each other and seriously consider each other’s points of view.”

Others expressed fears that no matter how the organization was structured, the process would be unfairly tilted towards special interest groups and agencies.

Get ‘er done!

All stakeholders shared a strong desire that any regional organization be effective and efficient in its use of time and resources.

One individual commented that the Cable Guy’s trademark phrase, “Get ‘er done!” would be the ideal motto for a regional group, but also





“We don’t have to agree, but all the players need to be willing to listen to each other and seriously consider each other’s points of view.”

expressed doubt that this was achievable.

Some individuals noted that if the group is not organized well and is not effective there is potential to do more harm than good – and in the worse case to damage previously effective relationships.

On other hand, they noted if it is effective, the organization could help foster new and beneficial relationships.

Balancing participation and efficiency

Some stakeholders, in acknowledging the challenge of balancing broad participation and organizational effectiveness, noted that it would be important not to open up a “free for all where all you do is argue.”

Stakeholders who have been involved in similar efforts pointed to the importance of seeking out commonalities rather than focusing on differences. They also noted that the group’s efficiency could be enhanced by paying attention to lessons learned from those who’ve been through this before e.g., other salmon recovery boards and lead entities.

Importance of education

Education of all participants was also identified as important, especially making sure that all participants have a clear understanding of what the process is, how it works, what the various roles and responsibilities are,

and what the expectations of the regional organization are.

A number of individuals pointed to the need for investing time at the outset getting everyone “up to speed.”

Administrative support

Some individuals also noted the need for reliable and consistent administrative support to enhance the effectiveness of a regional organization and to ensure consistency in its efforts.

Decision-making processes

Many stakeholders spoke to the importance of having a clear and equitable decision-making process. Some people noted their preference for consensus processes. Others expressed distaste for consensus-based processes.

A number of individuals noted that consensus become far more difficult as the size, scope, and number of interests encompassed by the organization increases. Some individuals also noted that a northeast Washington regional organization would include a wide variety of communities and ecosystems, which would substantially complicate the range and variety of decisions a group would have to make and would thus make consensus on projects far more difficult.

A number of people also commented that it would be important to clarify roles and responsibilities of various

committees and levels of participation in decision-making early in the process.

2.8 Scope and Geographic Boundaries

Comments regarding scope (e.g., issues addressed by a regional organization) and geographic boundaries of a potential regional organization included:

Scope and focus

Most stakeholders felt that if a northeast Washington regional organization were formed it should start with a very limited scope and only expand, if and when, the organization had established itself as an effective mechanism for collaborative efforts and bull trout recovery.

Most agreed a northeast Washington regional organization should initially limit its focus to bull trout. Others were receptive to expanding the focus to include some other native fish species (e.g., westslope cutthroat trout, and pygmy whitefish).

Some people thought it would eventually be important to talk about water and flow (e.g., flow averaging).

However, other individuals felt strongly that a regional organization should not engage in any efforts extending beyond native fish.

Geographic boundaries

Some people felt that the geographic scope of the northeast Washington area should not be expanded beyond the current core bull trout area in the Pend Oreille watershed.

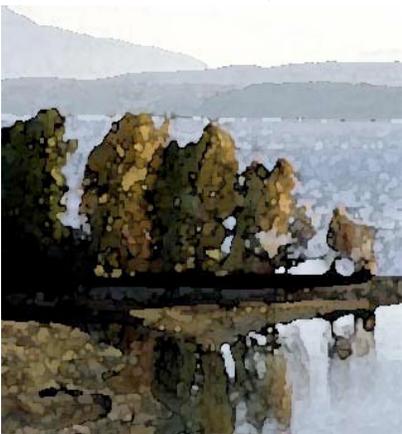
Other individuals suggested that limited funding be made available to determine “once and for all” what the range of bull trout habitat is, and once that is determined, the regional organization boundaries should match the actual boundaries of that range.

Yet other stakeholders believed using the USFWS bull trout recovery unit as the basic organizational area would be appropriate.

Inclusion of Idaho

A number of individuals noted the value of inclusion of Idaho as an “ex-officio” member. Representatives from Idaho Office of Species Conservation, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game expressed interest in participating in, or coordinating with, a northeast Washington regional organization.

Some of the individuals currently working in Pend Oreille watershed noted that in their view, coordination with Idaho had more immediate, or at least obvious ecological benefit (e.g., direct relevance in terms of bull trout habitat connectivity), than with



some other areas in the region that may have more marginal habitat.

Challenges related to size and variability of region

Some individuals expressed concern over breadth of ecosystems within the SRFB identified Northeast Washington Salmon Recovery Region (or the USFWS bull trout recovery area). They asked, “Are there technical experts who have broad enough expertise to adequately cover such a diverse range of ecosystems?”

Some people also felt that a single lead entity could not adequately serve the needs of the entire region.

2.9 Regional and Local Capacity

Funding issues

A few individuals raised concerns about the availability of funding to participate in the development of a regional organization. They noted that the amount of travel and time necessary to participate would place a significant burden on some organizations and on private citizens and felt that if additional participation funding were not made available some stakeholders would not be able to participate.

Some stakeholders also noted that if a regional organization does get up and running – but there is no commitment from the state level to provide adequate funding for the region as a whole – there is a risk of a loss of credibility with stakeholders.

Human capacity

Another concern raised by some individuals was the human resources capacity of the region. They pointed to the relatively small rural population and noted that the same individuals are called upon to attend

“How do you get citizens to buy into this idea of regionalization if it takes the process even father away from them?”

many meetings, and participate in multiple processes and events.

Elected officials also have very significant existing obligations that make it difficult to participate in additional processes and meetings.

Some people commented that the geographic size of the region could be a real disincentive to participate. Some individuals wondered if people on the west side of the state fully understood the challenges of winter travel in northeast Washington.

Relevance of regional concerns to local citizens and communities

Another concern was how to recruit and retain citizens and stakeholders from throughout the region to participate in a regional organization that to a large extent may deal with issues and habitat that is not directly relevant to them. One person asked, “How do you get citizens to buy into this idea of regionalization if it takes the process even father away from them?”

2.10 Endangered Species Act

Some of the stakeholder comments expressed fears, frustration, and distrust regarding the ESA. Concerns included:

How many fish does it take to recover a species?

Some people felt that the USFWS bull trout recovery plan lacked quantifiable recovery goals and objectives. They asked, “How many fish does it take to recover bull trout?”

Some people felt participation in a regional organization would offer local communities an opportunity to have a more active role in influencing and controlling the impacts of the ESA within their communities.

Some individuals observed that benchmarks for anadromous salmon recovery in other parts of the state were a moving target, and that it seemed like you never actually got to recovery. One individual commented, that without specific benchmarks and a commitment to abide by those benchmarks, “there is a perception that salmon recovery is a sinkhole for taxpayer money that will never end.”

On the other hand, a number of stakeholders felt a regional organization would offer an opportunity to increase implementation of habitat projects

and thus to contribute towards measurable progress in recovery of bull trout.

Not all stakeholders shared the view that there were not measurable recovery benchmarks in the draft USFWS bull trout recovery plan.

Loss of private property rights

Another fear shared by a number of stakeholders was the potential loss of private property rights. One individual described the ESA as a “steam roller that’s been coming down on us for some time and that is rolling over private citizens in the name of saving species.”

Some individuals were worried that participating in a regional organization would increase the potential for negative ESA impacts to their communities.

Other people felt that participation in a regional organization would offer local communities an opportunity to play a more active role in influencing and controlling the impacts of the ESA within their communities.

Disregard for needs of rural communities

Some stakeholders explained that local citizens in rural areas increasingly feel like their communities are being designated as places where local people can’t live or recreate anymore as a result of environmental regulations including the ESA.

2.11 Economic Impacts

In addition to the concerns about taxpayer accountability noted earlier, a number of individuals mentioned the potential negative or positive impacts of regionalization and associated bull trout recovery efforts on the economies of their communities. These included:

Negative economic impacts

A number of people voiced concerns about the potential negative impacts of ESA regulations and environmental special interest agendas on the economic health of their communities. One individual described it as a clash between “citizen’s rights to economic development versus habitat restoration.”

Positive economic impacts

Other people expressed the opinion that over the long-term, collaborative habitat restoration actions and conservation efforts would contribute to the economic health of the local communities.

Some individuals pointed specifically to the benefits of increased tourism, sportsmen, and associated businesses that have been seen in other communities where habitat restoration actions for salmon and other species have occurred.

2.12 Good Science and Technical Experts

Stakeholders commented on the importance of good science and the quality, diversity, and participation of technical experts. Specific concerns included:

Good science

A number of individuals emphasized the importance of using “good science.” Individuals commented that science should not be used to present or support a biased approach and that fair consideration should be given to all scientifically valid points of view.

Technical experts

Some people noted that technical expertise should come from multiple sources and should include a broad array of experts from different disciplines.



“Talking about salmon recovery without talking about the contribution of the blocked area is leaving out a big piece of the salmon recovery puzzle.”

Some individuals also spoke to the importance of technical committees being comprised primarily of biologists and other appropriate scientific disciplines and noted that technical committees should not include citizens without technical expertise.

2.13 Competing Management Priorities

A number of individuals commented on potential conflicts between agency and tribal management objectives and bull trout recovery.

Native resident fish versus non-native sport fish

A number of individuals noted that citizens don’t necessarily want to replace species that are considered desirable sport fish (e.g., brook trout and walleye) in favor of bull trout, which many sportsmen consider a “trash fish.”

Other’s pointed to the inherent management conflicts for WDFW in terms of keeping sportsmen happy versus restoring native fish, or for

some of the tribes, in terms of mitigating for the lost regional anadromous fisheries with introductions of warm water species.

2.14 Impacts to Pend Oreille Lead Entity

In addition to the broader issues related to regionalization, there were a number of concerns that relate specifically to the potential impacts of northeast Washington regionalization to the existing Pend Oreille Lead Entity.

Representatives of the Lead Entity expressed their willingness to fully explore the concept of regionalization and to participate if it seemed like the most beneficial approach for the region. However, they also identified some specific concerns. These included:

Potential for loss of funding

Individuals were concerned that funding to the Pend Oreille Lead Entity might decrease if regionalization does not go forward. A number of the Pend Oreille Lead Entity participants noted that the

Lead Entity has already seen their funding decrease over recent years.

Some Pend Oreille stakeholders expressed concern that development of a regional organization would result in additional competition for already limited funding within the Northeast Washington Region.

Other concerns included potential loss of the Pend Oreille Lead Entity coordinator position if regionalization were to occur, and lack of funding to support additional coordination responsibilities, or attend additional meetings, above and beyond what the Lead Entity is already doing.

Loss of local control

For some of the Pend Oreille Lead Entity participants there is an added concern about loss of local control, e.g., funding priorities might shift to Lake Roosevelt or the Columbia River when a larger regional organization is making decisions about projects.

There is also a concern that funding research to determine the range of bull trout populations might be

identified as a higher priority in a regional organization, than completion of on-the-ground projects in the Pend Oreille bull trout core habitat.

Some people worried that the outcome of regionalization could be less direct on-the-ground benefit to ESA listed bull trout in the short term.

Repetition of effort

Some individuals who have participated in the Pend Oreille Lead Entity efforts also expressed concerns about having to “do it all over again.” They remarked that they have already gone through the growing and development pains of building an organization, and they’ve completed their habitat restoration strategy and are in the project implementation mode.

Citizen’s investment in Pend Oreille Lead Entity

Another concern is that local Pend Oreille County citizens and others stakeholders have invested a lot of time and effort in the Pend Oreille Lead Entity.

A few individuals asked, “What happens to that effort? Will the citizens have to start all over again?”

2.15 Unique Region

Finally, a number of stakeholders emphasized the relative uniqueness of the northeast Washington region relative to the rest of the state.

Anadromous fish extirpated

Anadromous salmon have been extirpated from all areas above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams (the blocked area). One individual noted, “Talking about salmon recovery

without talking about the contribution of the blocked area is leaving out a big piece of the salmon recovery puzzle.”

Rural characteristics

Another consideration brought up by many stakeholders is the relatively rural nature of the area in comparison to much of western Washington.

Equity

Some individuals pointed out that a great deal of money is being spent to do salmon recovery in the rest of the state but relatively little is invested in the northeast portion of the state for bull trout.



3 Opportunities and Challenges

The following section summarizes some of the potential opportunities and challenges identified in the Phase 1 face-to-face meetings, informal conversations, and formal interviews with stakeholders.

3.1 Opportunities

Bull trout recovery – Contribute to recovery of bull trout by identifying and completing on-the-ground habitat projects.

Stewardship – Provide stewardship of the natural and human resources in the Northwestern Washington Region.

Information – Acquire more accurate data about the current range of bull trout habitats, and the status of local populations. Review local threats to bull trout recovery.

Education – Provide education to all stakeholders about bull trout, other native fish species, recovery and conservation efforts, the relative adaptability of species, etc. Gain new technical expertise and information. Learn more about each other (i.e., different stakeholders and communities in the region). Provide mentoring opportunities for participants to learn from the experiences and successes of other similar regional organizations.

Coordination – Opportunity for enhanced coordination within the region. Opportunity to build new working relationships and trust among different interest groups. There is also an opportunity to coordinate with neighbors in Idaho and possibly Canada.

Funding – Opportunity to leverage additional funding to complete habitat projects in the region or at minimum, stabilize existing funding.

Build on success – Opportunity to learn from and build on the successes of other regional organizations by incorporating lessons learned in years of salmonid recovery planning in other areas of the state. Also there is an opportunity to build on the prior successful efforts of the Pend Oreille Lead Entity.

3.2 Challenges

Why should we regionalize? – Many key stakeholders see no clearly compelling reason to participate at this time. The question of whether there are really bull trout and suitable bull trout habitat in large portions of the proposed regional area is a significant factor. The inherent benefits of participating are not clear to many stakeholders.

Time commitment – It will take time to establish a regional organization if stakeholders are willing to go forward. Is there regional patience to allow the group to form at the speed that it needs to for own internal reasons?

Education – Lack of familiarity with ESA, with the Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office and process, and with benefits that might be achieved through participation in the process.

Negative perceptions – Generalized fear of the ESA, the sense that regionalization is a top down effort, threats of reduced funding attached to the push for regionalization.

Geographic Scale – The scale and size of the proposed regional area could make coordination and development of a functional organization difficult. The variety of ecosystems and communities within the northeast Washington region poses both technical and coordination challenges.

Funding and capacity – Some of the stakeholders thought it would difficult to participate in development of a regional organization without some type of participation funding. The human capacity of the region may be stretched beyond capacity by the creation of yet another set of meetings and obligations.

4 Conclusion

The following section summarizes the assessment of the Phase 1 scoping and presents recommendations for the implementation of Phase 2.

4.1 Assessment

The level of enthusiasm for the development of a northeast Washington regional organization varied among the stakeholders contacted during Phase 1 – but could generally be described as spanning a range from mildly enthusiastic, through lukewarm, to moderately hostile. It is important to note, the stakeholders contacted during Phase 1 constitute an essential core stakeholder group but by no means represent the full range of stakeholders that would eventually be involved in a northeast Washington regional organization – if the organization were developed.

The Pend Oreille County commissioners agreed to further explore the regionalization concept in a formal meeting with other stakeholders but did express concerns about potential loss of funding to the Pend Oreille Lead Entity area, dilution of local control, and repetition of effort, among other things. The Lincoln County commissioners also agreed to participate in a meeting with other stakeholders to further explore the concept but made clear their doubts regarding the presence of bull trout populations in their county. The Stevens County commissioners were not inclined to participate in a regional organization at this time, but said they would be willing to attend at least one meeting to formally discuss the concept with other stakeholders. Ferry County declined to participate at this time. Initial outreach efforts to Okanogan and Spokane counties did not yield responses to the Phase 1 scoping.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Colville Confederated Tribes, Kalispel Tribe and Spokane Tribe all expressed cautious interest in further exploration of the regionalization concept and agreed to meet formally to discuss the concept with other stakeholders.

The Idaho's Office of Species Conservation expressed interest in the regionalization concept and committed to participate in future discussions with stakeholders.

The Pend Oreille Conservation District also expressed willingness to engage in any future formal stakeholder meetings regarding potential development of a northeast Washington regional organization, although they hoped there might be additional funding to assist with

additional costs (i.e., above and beyond their Lead Entity role) that would be incurred.

The USFWS was supportive of the regionalization concept and committed to participate in development of, and if appropriate, in ongoing meetings with a northeast Washington regional organization.



Phase 2 - Next Steps:

1. **Convene stakeholder meeting
April - May 2007**
 - a. **Identify stakeholder group willing to move forward to regionalization**
 - b. **Identify geographic range and scope of regional organization**
2. **Convene additional stakeholder meetings in 2007 (4-5 meetings)**
 - a. **Define goals and objectives**
 - b. **Define roles and responsibilities**
 - c. **Initiate organizational development (by-laws, decision making processes, etc.)**



It is important that all core stakeholders are given an opportunity to meet together before choosing to formally opt in or out of the development of a regional organization.

4.2 Recommendation - Phase 2

Enough stakeholders have indicated an interest in further exploration of the regionalization concept during the Phase 1 scoping to warrant moving to Phase 2 (pending SRFB approval to release Phase 2 funds).

Although it is likely that a number of the stakeholders interviewed as part of the Phase 1 scoping may ultimately choose not to join a northeast Washington regional organization, it is important that all core stakeholders are given an opportunity to meet together before choosing to formally opt in or out of the development of a regional organization. At this stage additional stakeholders will be invited to join the dialog.

If after this first formal meeting, or as the result of subsequent Phase 2 discussions, it becomes clear that there is not sufficient ongoing local support to justify continuing efforts to develop a northeast Washington regional organization, the effort will be immediately halted without expenditure of any additional funds.

4.3 Next steps

Stakeholder Meeting

The next step will be to convene a daylong Northeast Washington Region stakeholder meeting in late April or early May 2007.

The goals of the meeting will be to: 1) introduce stakeholders who were not included in the Phase 1 scoping to the regionalization concept; 2) to identify which stakeholders are willing to commit to participate in discussions towards the development of a collaborative, stakeholder-driven northeast Washington regional organization; and 3) begin dialog to define the appropriate scale and scope of a northeast Washington regional organization.

At minimum, invited stakeholders will include: interested citizens, county commissioners from the six regional counties, Colville Confederated Tribes, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Kalispel Tribe, Spokane Tribe, USFWS, WDFW, U.S. Forest Service, conservation districts, city governments from the regional area, Public Utility Districts, Irrigation Districts, Farm Bureau, non-governmental organizations, local industry, Idaho Office of Species Conservation, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Regional organization development

Additional meetings will be scheduled between May and December 2007 as appropriate to the stakeholder's level of commitment and availability.

The goals of subsequent meetings will include:

- Refine appropriate scope and scale of northeast Washington regional organization;
- Expand stakeholder group if necessary to ensure broad representation of interests;
- Define goals and objectives;
- Define roles and responsibilities;
- Initiate organizational development including development of by-laws, identification of decision-making processes, development of inter-local agreements, etc.; and
- Identify milestones and schedule for year two activities

White Paper - Phase 2

A white paper will be submitted to the SRFB December 31, 2007 presenting the activities, achievements, and recommendations stemming from the Phase 2 activities.

Citations

- Pend Oreille Salmonid Recovery Team. 2005. Strategy for protection and improvement of native salmonid habitat in the Pend Oreille Watershed, Washington, Water Resource Inventory Area 62. Pend Orielle, Washington.
- State of Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. 2006. State of Salmon in Watersheds. Olympia, Washington.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2002. Chapter 23, Northeast Washington Recovery Unit, Washington. 73 p. *In*: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) Draft Recovery Plan. Portland, Oregon.