

# **Lead Entity Advisory Group (LEAG) Report**

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

May 3, 2007

prepared and submitted by LEAG Chair, Jeanette Dorner

Lead Entities are working across the state starting up their local processes for the 2007 SRFB round. Many of us came together to meet in April at our LEAG meeting in Yakima and this report summarizes some of the key discussions we had that day as well as other recent Lead Entity news.

## **A New Lead Entity and New Lead Entity Coordinators**

As we begin this round we have a brand new Lead Entity area: WRIA 20 is now its own Lead Entity with a new part-time coordinator, Theresa Powell. Theresa is working with Cheryl Baumann, the North Olympic Peninsula Lead Entity (NOPL) Coordinator, through this transitional time. This is the next step in the move to allow WRIA 20 to have a separate Lead Entity process coordinated with the Coastal region, while the remainder of NOPL is staying a part of the Puget Sound regional process.

We also have two new Lead Entity coordinators for existing Lead Entities: Joy Juelson is stepping into the coordinator position for Chelan County in the Upper Columbia. Joy has been participating in the Chelan County LE process for a number of years now and represented the LE on LEAG so she is not a new face to many of us. Becky Peterson is the new lead entity coordinator for WRIA 1.

## **Lead Entity day at the Legislature/Lead Entity Directories**

We had a successful day at Lead Entity Day at the Legislature on March 23. A big thank you to Lauri Vigue and Theresa Mitchell for organizing all of us and to Tim Smith for coming up with the idea. WDFW published a new directory for lead entities that helps us put a face to each of the lead entities across the state. Almost all the lead entities from across the state had displays and representatives at the event. There was a lot of good exchange of information where lead entities shared about the work that is happening within their area. Although we did have a fairly constant stream of visitors throughout the day, we did not have as many legislators as we had originally hoped would stop by. However, many lead entities contacted their legislators to invite them to the event and that was an opportunity for some information sharing and some lead entities visited their legislators during the day.

We had a brainstorming session at our recent LEAG meeting where some great ideas about how to improve the event if we do it again were discussed as well as other ways we can educate legislators about the work we are doing. One idea that many people liked was to designate a particular week in the year for all Lead Entities to organize an event,

such as a fieldtrip or a meeting with their citizen's committee to educate their local legislators about what is happening in their area.

### **New LEAG organization and structure**

We had a final review of our proposed new structure and decision making process for LEAG at our April LEAG meeting. The structure would allow for each lead entity to have one membership seat on LEAG and an Executive Committee structure for nine of the LEAG members that would be similar to the current LEAG membership model. Also LEAG would move to a fully consensus based decision making process using the consensus model (1-5) currently used by the Puget Sound Recovery Council.

We had a good discussion with some helpful suggestions to tighten up the proposal including ensuring that the Executive Committee had statewide representation by adding that no more than four members could be from one region and that the Coast, the Northeast, Puget Sound and the combined Columbia regions would all have the option of having at least one representative from their area.

We are sending out the revised version of the LEAG structure one last time to lead entities that weren't at the April meeting to make sure there isn't any serious concerns and we are also requesting review and approval from WDFW. Assuming that all goes smoothly we will begin implementing the new structure at our June meeting.

### **Project permitting streamlining**

Chris Drivdahl, GSRO, came to our April LEAG meeting and announced that the Limit 8 work she has been doing to streamline the federal permitting process for SRFB projects in approved Recovery Plan areas was now official. LEAG would like to thank Chris for all the work she put into making this happen and to all the people that worked with Chris to make it a reality. We are working with Chris and IAC to get the word out to project sponsors so they can take advantage of this great opportunity.

On the state permitting front – as LEAG Chair I have been talking about an idea to form a committee to look at how we might streamline the state permitting process for the last few SRFB meetings. This idea has been well received but I have not followed through and called a group of people together to get the process started. We talked about this at the last LEAG meeting and WDFW has volunteered to help the process get going by starting a committee of WDFW and lead entity folks that first looks at the state HPA process and how that might be streamlined for salmon habitat restoration projects. There was also a suggestion to send out a quick informal needs assessment survey to lead entities and project sponsors asking people to provide short comments on where they see the primary sticking points are in the state permitting process. We could then sort through the responses and see if there are some commonalities that we could form a working committee around addressing.

### **LEAG representation on the Governors Forum on Monitoring**

Despite repeated discussions LEAG has not yet successfully identified a replacement representative for the Governors Forum on Monitoring. This is not because LEAG and Lead Entities are not concerned about monitoring issues. It seems to be more a capacity issue that it is not a responsibility that any lead entity representative feels they have the time to commit to at this point. We are continuing to look for a way to have representation again.

### **Lead Entity capacity/funding/contracts**

We have as a major agenda item for our next LEAG meeting in June a discussion about Lead Entity Contracts that will be issued in July by WDFW for the new state biennium, and around that the larger discussion of lead entity's roles, expectations, capacity, and funding. There is a recognition among lead entities that our roles and expectations for what we do have developed and expanded dramatically since the inception of the lead entity program seven years ago. However our funding has remained static and our capacity has correspondingly diminished (as funding has not kept pace with cost of living adjustments to salary rates) over that same time period. There is a need for us to more clearly articulate to others what we are actually doing as lead entity coordinators and how that continues to be a substantial contribution to the development, funding, and implementation of high priority, strategic salmon habitat projects across the state. Stay tuned....we will have more to report on this topic after our July meeting.

### **Final words:**

- We appreciate the continued participation of the Council of Regions at our LEAG meetings and their requests for input on matters they are discussing.
- We greatly appreciate IAC's efforts, through Brian Abbott, to solicit lead entity input before the finalization of this year's Manual 18 and to work with lead entities to get everyone up to speed on the new version of PRISM.
- We had a good discussion with Neil Aaland regarding first thoughts on regional allocation discussions for next year's SRFB round (2008/Round 9). We will let him summarize what he has collected so far and weigh in later as needed.