



Middle Hoh Resiliency Steering Committee Final Meeting Summary

Friday, December 17, 2021 1:04 PM – 2:27 PM O
Virtual meeting (internet or phone)

Welcome/Introductions

In attendance: Tim Abbe (Natural Systems Design [NSD]), Raena Anderson (10,000 Years Institute), Rebekah Brooks (Rebekah Brooks Contracting), Eric Carlsen (Citizen), Garrett Dalan (The Nature Conservancy), John Davis (Federal Highways Administration), Mike Ericsson (NSD), Jean Fletcher (Hoh River Property Owner), Anna Geffre (North Pacific Coast Lead Entity [NPCLE] Coordinator), Luke Kelly (Trout Unlimited), Roger Oakes (Hoh River Trust), Tami Pokorny (Jefferson County), Theresa Powell (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Jill Silver (10,000 Years Institute)

Agenda Changes/Additions

None

Approval of the October 29, 2021 and November 19, 2021 Draft Meeting Summaries

The summaries were approved by consensus.

Announcements/Comments

None

Old Business

None

New Business

Storm/Flood Impacts Discussion

Raena Anderson displayed photos from recent flooding on the Hoh River. The Ranger Fee Station was flooded in for several days. Aerial photos from Hoh Lots and the middle channel island show erosion around the island and surrounding area, and that the Red Cabin porch was lost to the river; the cabin is in great danger of being swept downriver. At Wayne Johnson's property, the whole upper area was flooded; extra sediment and debris was accumulated, including wood racking. Trees at Fletcher Ranch have fallen in the river, and the bank is being significantly eroded. Fletcher Island is accumulating large wood. Pasture loss is being estimated through GPS and aerial photos. Pole Creek Bar has lost sediment and large woody debris. Raena reported spawning steelhead in the channel. At Schmidt Bar, a lot of trees have been lost. The Upper Elk Creek floodplain is building up a bar at the south end, with more water flowing along the northern edge. The Hoh dolosse at MP 4 do not appear to have changed much,



but sediment and rocks have moved. The Tower Creek dolosse are accumulating woody debris. John Davis added that the contractor will be keeping an eye on the project site over the winter. He reported about 10 acres lost near the Ranger Station; rip rap was installed as an emergency response to prevent loss of access to the road. He showed photos near the Park entrance, where erosion has come to within two feet of the road. The Park Service closed the road and only allowed temporary access for residents.

Next Steps for Planning Process

Tami Pokorny announced that the Final Draft Plan will be released online next week and available for download. The designs will be held back until landowners can be consulted. There may be some changes to the habitat section, and an additional chapter on large wood. She is hoping for a public meeting for community outreach at some point. Tami thanked NSD and everyone who contributed to the Plan, including Jill Silver and Raena Anderson for their input to the Invasive Species chapter.

Presentation of Second Draft Resiliency and Action Plans

Mike Ericsson presented the Draft Middle Hoh River Resiliency and Action Plans. The Resiliency Plan layout includes an Introduction, Existing Conditions, Trends and Anticipated Changes, Desired Future Conditions, Local Capacity to Supply Restoration Needs, and Phase II Approach. The Action Plan is an appendix to the Resiliency Plan. Within the Resiliency Plan Introduction, there is a problem statement, plan assumptions and goals, an overview of the document, a recognition of the people involved, and a definition of resiliency. Existing Conditions looks at the landscape setting, geology and geomorphology, riparian and floodplain native forests, hydrology and hydraulics, and the main stem aquatic habitat. Trends and Anticipated Changes includes projections of climate change, sediment sources to the river, forests, and Jill Silver's chapter on invasive plant species. Desired Future Conditions defines the minimum footprint needed to maintain the existing habitat and develop a resiliency corridor. Luke Kelly contributed the chapter on Local Capacity to complete the restoration work. The last chapter makes recommendations for what to include in next steps for the Phase II Approach, such as the implementation of projects.

Mike gave a summary of the intent of the Resiliency Plan taken from the Introduction: To “[i]mprove resiliency of the Middle Hoh River valley by developing, prioritizing and implementing actions that are beneficial to the river’s ecosystem and community.” He emphasized the scientific foundation and collaborative efforts of the Plan.

Within the Existing Conditions section, the Geology and Geomorphology Chapter addresses the delineation of the channel migration zone (CMZ), and identifies major sediment sources, which are defined by glacial forces that shaped the valley. Inherently unstable oceanic sediments are highly susceptible to landslides; this process is expected to continue, although there are things that can help or exacerbate it. Glacial sources were found to be the dominant source of sediment load. Sediment yield will increase as the glaciers continue to melt, but will eventually decrease as the glacier diminishes. Preparation for the aggradation and erosion periods will be built into the plan. The CMZ was delineated with historic data, LiDAR, geologic mapping, air photo analysis, field investigation, and local accounts. The Riparian and Floodplain Native Forests chapter illustrates local historic logging and resultant impacts. While there are a lot of young red alder floodplains, there are very few mature conifer floodplain forests left, and those that remain are being eroded. New trees do not have time to reestablish before the river reclaims the floodplains, leaving nothing to hold back the river or contribute to wood accumulation. The approach is to try to restore a natural sustainable ecosystem over the long term through the conservation and restoration of mature riparian forests. Hydrology and Hydraulics



looks at the flows of the river, and a two-dimensional model to assess stressors at different levels. Hydraulics were summarized by project reaches at one-year, ten-year, and hundred-year flows. A Main Stem Aquatic Habitat survey was conducted to establish baseline conditions on the main stem and perennial channels. Glides were the dominant type of channel, followed by riffles and pools. The Huelsdonk-South Fork reach had the highest number and frequency of pools. LWD was included in the survey.

The Trends and Anticipated Changes section is dominated by Climate Change, predicting more frequent and larger peak flow events, diminished and warmer low flows in the summer, and glacial recession altering the sediment load. Forests are expected to continue to convert to younger red alder dominant forests, with fewer mature conifer and mixed forest patches. Jill Silver presented on the Invasive Plant Species chapter. Invasive species thrive in disturbance zones and outcompete native plants, and are expected to continue to significantly impact the Hoh River. Construction and repair, visitors from out of the area, and home gardens all contribute to the introduction of invasive plants. Knotweed was the first species of focus on the Hoh River, and is still present after 19 years of work to control it. Scotch broom is now the largest threat. Control takes continuous surveys and response.

Mike moved on to the section on Desired Future Conditions, which identified the resiliency corridor: the minimum footprint along the river that is essential for sustaining future habitat. The Desired Future Conditions were separated into short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term actions, outlining an anticipated roadmap for goals, with the more feedback from the community the better.

Luke Kelly discussed his chapter on Local Capacity, which addresses how to approach restoration actions. It goes over the life cycle of a restoration project, the different expertise that could be required, and the volume of capacity required to succeed with such a robust Resiliency Plan.

Mike summarized the last chapter in the Resiliency Plan, which is the Phase II Approach. It outlines some of the things that came up during the Plan development that will bolster efforts. One of the key things is to establish a group of individuals who can coordinate among interested parties and carry out the purposes of the Plans. Other ideas include forming reach specific Action Plans and Lower Hoh River Resiliency and Action Plans, studying climate change impacts to sediment load and flows, conducting a comprehensive side-channel inventory that looks at an alternative to the Upper Hoh Road, and integrating a Recreation Plan into the larger vision.

Lastly, Mike gave an overview of the Draft Middle Hoh River Action Plan, which is an appendix to the Resiliency Plan. The broad layout includes an Introduction, Proposed Actions, Prioritization and Sequencing, and Conceptual Design Development. Proposed Actions involve interactions with landowners, improving education and outreach in the valley community to facilitate a shared vision for river access and recreation, and starting programs and options for landowners. Instream and floodplain restoration is also included to release conifers, thin and plant riparian forests, and manage invasive species. That approach will be coupled with instream and floodplain restoration for engineered log jams and large wood placement. Reach by reach opportunities include land acquisitions and easements, habitat protection, aquatic habitat and riparian restoration, and infrastructure setbacks or relocation. The chapter on Prioritization and Sequencing outlines a prioritization framework to protect the floodplain and CMZ, protect salmonid habitat, restore riparian forests and impaired processes, and enhance instream habitat. The Action Plan concludes with a chapter on Conceptual Design Development



Hoh River Resiliency Plan PHASE I

for future restoration projects. Mike pointed out that the Plan is a living document that will be added to and improved over time.

Anna Geffre thanked everyone involved. Tami Pokorny encouraged everyone to consider funding sources for project implementation.

Additional Projects Updates

None

Announcements/Comments

John Davis asked about the cost of a plan of this caliber. Tami Pokorny explained that the Washington Coastal Recreation and Resiliency Initiative grant was over three hundred thousand dollars, but that actual costs are not in yet.

Next Agenda

Friday, January 28, 1pm – 3:00 pm Remote Only; Tentative

Adjourn

The Meeting adjourned at 2:27 PM.

Meeting summary prepared by Rebekah Brooks (Rebekah Brooks Contracting).