

Floodplains Reimagined Program Tribal Ad Hoc Group Meeting Summary Notes

MEETING DATE:	February 02, 2022, 10:00-11:00 am PST
MEETING OBJECTIVES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share tribal experiences, successes, and lessons learned from similar collaborative programs. • Collect input on objectives and measurable deliverables.

Attendees:

Tom Elliot, Yakama Nation Fisheries	Julie Rentner, River Partners
Brady Kent, Yakama Nation	Lewis Bair, RD (Reclamation District) 108
Kyle McHenry, Mechoopda Tribe	Kayla Kelly-Slatten, Kearns & West
Sarah Morgan, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation	Maria Bone, Kearns & West

Key Topics and Perspectives:

Floodplains Reimagined Program Overview:

- Kayla Kelly-Slatten, Kearns & West provided an overview of the Program and reiterated the purpose of the meeting. She expressed an interest in learning more about prior project experiences, lessons learned, and measurable deliverables.

Learning from Experiences:

- Tom Elliot and Brady Kent, Yakama Nation presented on the Yakama Nation Floodplain Restoration on Toppenish Creek and initiated the Yakama Basin Integrated Plan and discussion.
 - Orientation to Yakima Basin: a historical and geological review of the Yakima Basin floodplains.
 - Yakama Usual and Accustomed Use Area, Ceded Lands, and Reservation.
 - The Yakama People lived in the Columbia River Basin since Time Immemorial.
 - ✓ Yakama Treaty of 1855 - <https://www.yakama.com/about/treaty/>
 - Yakima Basin Floodplains: Wapatu Floodplains, incredibly important to the Yakama tribe.
 - Toppenish Creek Floodplain
 - ✓ Background - https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/happened/it-happened-here-u-s-army-yakama-nation-warriors-clash-in-battle-of-toppenish-creek/article_0c1b1d93-aa0f-5c17-a94a-937cd6714bf2.html
 - ✓ Background - <https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/toppenish-creek-yakima-river-oxbows>
 - Toppenish Creek Overview:
 - Lower Toppenish Creek Overview- This area contains multiple land uses. Not all land is owned by the tribe. Mixed ownership with private landowners. This is the area that the Yakama is presently working on restoring.

- Pre-European: Lower Toppenish Creek (pre-1700 AD, +300 years ago)- before beaver removal. The beavers helped maintain water in swamps during dry periods.
- 1950s: Lower Toppenish Creek- after Marion Drain Installed (1950 AD, 55 years ago), the old channels dried out, fewer beavers, and river levels and routes changed. The installation of the drain caused incalculable damage to the natural processes of the region.
- Irrigation System dominates the landscape.
- Goal: Restore cultural, fishery, wildlife, and water resources of the Lower Toppenish Creek.
- Toppenish Creek Corridor Plan:
 - Toppenish Corridor Plan Principles:
 - ✓ Guided by Tribal values and goals
 - ✓ Holistic: cultural and natural resources, landscape scale
 - ✓ Multi-disciplinary: cultural, fisheries, wildlife, engineering, water resources
 - ✓ Long-term and adaptive, based on stewardship approach
 - ✓ Strong partnerships with Federal, State, and other entities
 - Toppenish Creek Corridor Plan-Selected Actions:
 - ✓ Recharge the Toppenish Fan
 - ✓ Restore the drained wetlands
 - ✓ Restore the dead reach
 - ✓ Rebuild the Unite 2 Diversion Dam
 - ✓ Reroute canal spills away from Simcoe Creek
 - ✓ Reroute irrigation drainage away from creeks
 - ✓ Minimize waste, leakage and return flow on Unit 2
 - ✓ Divert lower Marion Drain directly to the Status Area
 - ✓ Raise the water surface up upper Marion Drain
 - ✓ Restore channelized and entrenched reaches
- Semi-intact Floodplain = Restoration Potential
- Fisheries Restoration for Tribal Utilization
- Wetlands Restoration
- The Return of the Waptu: <https://youtu.be/LNnR3w3NOWI>
 - Restoration success story.
 - The goal is to bring back resources for the tribal people to use.
- Tom Elliot explained that the 1.4-million-acre Reservation has both Treaty Irrigation Rights and Treaty Water Rights. He clarified that the 10 million Acres of Ceded Lands in Central Washington releases an ownership claim to the government while retaining the right and ability to practice traditional methods. The Court views Ceded Lands as “public lands.” The goal is that resources be managed by the tribal people.

Commented [JL1]: Lets continue using full names throughout. I don't want to be very formal and use only last names but I think it helps for clarity to include last names.

Measuring Success Through Indigenous Science- objectives and metrics:

- Brady Kent gave a verbal presentation regarding success measures and objectives. Before beginning, he asked the group if anyone had any questions.
 - Julie Rentner asked Brady Kent what fish access looks like in their specified planes.
 - Tom stated that it is complicated. They have found that Chinook benefits the most from natural conditions. Chinook managed in static ponds do not have a good survival rate and die when the ponds are drained. Steelhead have been shown to have difficulty surviving downstream. The artificially managed floodplains kill fish.

Further data is needed to understand swales, exits, in channels so fish have a place to go during different seasons.

- Kayla Kelly-Slatten directed a few process questions to Tom Elliot and Brady Kent. She asked how this process was adaptive and if there was a timeline, if any checks had been put into the plan, and what the process is for an adaptive structure.
 - Tom Elliot explained that the plan had been under development for many years but was finally passed by the Council and by Reclamation two years ago. He explained the funding, partnerships, planning, and timeline as follows:
 - Funding - Received support from Bonneville Power and via 638 Contracts that provide funding for the tribes in a 5-year package (background on 638 - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg2203.pdf#page=1>).
 - Timeline - This funding timeline allows the tribe to have time to plan and to be adaptive. Time horizons for funding need to be flexible and long term. Funding must be accessible for longer time periods than 1–2-year grants.
 - Partnerships - The Yakama Nation is interested in exploring collaborative work with Water Resources.
 - Plan - He explained that long-term plan as 1) Perpetual stewardship, 2) Stable funding. The plan is to establish simple methods for the data collection monitoring plan. If the fish start to die, they would like to know why and then be able to apply solutions.
- Brady Kent provided a presentation on the Integrative Basin Plan, and its seven elements.
 - Seven Elements:
 1. Water market reallocation
 - Farmers have been using this tool to trade water for years.
 2. Structural and operational changes
 3. Enhance water systems and conservation
 - Tighten up water systems for tribes. Increase lease rates for the tribes.
 4. Habitat/Watershed protection
 - Fish, wildlife, floodplain restoration, etc.
 - Nelson Dam is being replaced and instilling a new system.
 5. Ground water storage
 - Finding new methods for storage, by pumping and injecting water into the ground.
 6. Surface water storage
 7. Reservoir fish passage
- The Yakama Reservation is on the Ceded lands and that the tribe is interested in any projects that are happening in the area. Irrigation Rights are tied to the Treaty.
- The plan is multi-objective and managing floodplains is just one tool to address a much larger problem.
- Water is no longer confined to one area and retaining water has become a larger effort. Old irrigation systems have assisted in addressing the growing water problem.
- Multiple uses
 - Identify easy objectives people can “buy in on,” while scoping for stakeholders. Find agreeable levels like slowing down water, keeping it in the system longer may aid the Program to identify additional partnerships.

Commented [JL2]: Can you please break this out into sub-bullets for easier skimming?

The group discussed lessons learned and the applicability to the Californian landscape:

Collaboration

- Recommendations for keeping people at the table and additional partners.
 - Important to get the environmental community involved.
 - Example on how Washington State bought a portion of the forest and has thus kept the American Rivers safeguarded.
 - USFS has proven to be helpful. USFS is typically not involved in water projects, which initially caused some miscommunications, but has now surpassed these issues and is collaborating effectively. The relationship with USFS is critical because the head waters are located within their authority.
 - NMFS has provided input and guidance in addition to being involved in the permitting process.

Staffing

- Recommends identifying full-time personnel.
- The affiliated Yakama Integrated Basin project involved multiple full-time staff who were devoted to the project and its goals.
- If full-time staff cannot be allocated, perhaps some type of tribal panel with representatives from different tribes can share duties and responsibilities.

Goals and Feasibility

- The Yakama Integrated Basin Plan includes tribal goals.
- Persistently working on a goal over an extended period made it feasible.

Applicability to CA landscape

- Kyle McHenry said that the tribal landscape is different in California. He is happy to see what tribes can accomplish when they take the lead.
- Lewis Bair stated that the Yakama project success is inspiring. He stated his openness to growing the partnership and his willingness to work with the present tribes in the future. He extended an invitation for further collaboration and acknowledged that a bigger collaboration outside of the Floodplains Reimagined Program may be needed.

Adjourned.