**Quarterly Implementation Team Meeting Summary**

**Date:** June 25, 2020

**Time:** 10 AM – 2PM

**Attendees:** Sean Hayes (NMFS NEFSC), Dan McCaw (PIN), Carl Wilson (Maine DMR) , Lowell Whitney (U.S.FWS, Acting for Sherry White), Dan Tierney (NMFS), Peter Lamothe (USFWS), Julie Crocker (NMFS), Meredith Bartron (USFWS), Anna Harris (USFWS), Ernie Atkinson (Maine DMR), Sean Ledwin (Maine DMR), Paul Christman (Maine DMR), Dan Kircheis (NMFS)

Guests: Oliver Cox (USFWS; Broodstock ad hoc committee chair)

 Susan Goodwin[[1]](#footnote-1) (Facilitator for the Merrymeeting Bay SHRU)

Item 1: Broodstock Ad Hoc Committee - Update

A Broodstock ad hoc committee has been formed to identify contingency measures that may be necessary to ensure the safety of staff in light of the COVID 19 epidemic, and ensure the safety of salmon when implementing any contingency measure. The committee has considered three scenarios for the collection of searun broodstock at Milford dam and has submitted a draft report to the implementation team for their review. The committee has just begun discussions on parr broodstock collections. Oliver Cox provided a summary of the committee’s work to date.

The group noted a series of emails sent over the past week regarding concerns about broodstock collection at the Milford Dam during elevated river water temperatures and risk to fish health. Brookfield staff raised concerns about impacts to adult Atlantic salmon if they were held in holding tanks and transported to Craig Brook when water temperatures in the river exceeded standard operating procedures for fish handling. Oliver clarified that there were miscommunications that led to these concerns and that the committee is not making any recommendations to collect broodstock outside of existing SOPs, including SOPs related to water temperature.

Item 2: CMS End of Year Evaluation

In September 2019 the Management Board committed to a one year pilot of the Collaborative Management Strategy (CMS) followed by an end of year evaluation of its performance in attaining the goals of improved vertical and horizontal communication, and improved decision making. Despite there being some disruptions to the CMS process because of COVID 19 we continue to be on track to fulfilling all of the agreed upon commitments within the CMS plan. That being said, IT members all agreed that more time is needed to complete all of the tasks for the year and to determine whether or not the new structure is truly working and can be sustainable beyond pilot implementation. Therefore, the IT has agreed to extend the pilot period by 6 months (June 2021); the IT will continue to discuss ways to obtain meaningful feedback on an interim basis and is considering a survey for Fall 2020. The IT will also continue to discuss planning for a comprehensive performance evaluation to inform a robust evaluation of the pilot.

Item 3: Standing/Ad Hoc Committee Process:

The purpose of Ad Hoc Committees is to provide information and guidance to the Implementation Team and/or the SHRU teams that they need to make informed decisions. The purpose of standing committees is to fulfill a reoccurring need within the program that cuts across all SHRUs in order to accomplish the goals of the program and/or the CMS. The Implementation Team discussed whether there needs to be boundaries around setting up committees.

Potential Concerns:

* Tying up too many resources/over committing staff time to more meetings
* Creating more work
* Creating unnecessary formal process for every inter-agency (inclusive of tribal) collaboration when a formal process is not necessary

Potential Benefits:

* Provides for transparency of activities
* Identifies individuals across agencies and among partners that have shared responsibilities
* Provides for communications and reporting across agencies and with the Implementation Team

The Implementation Team agreed to set aside the August IT meeting for a dedicated discussion of ad hoc and standing committees.

The IT also discussed the proposal for an outreach/communications standing team that was submitted to the management board. A representative from the group that drafted the proposal will be asked to attend the August IT meeting to discuss potential outreach and communication needs to further inform the IT’s consideration of this proposal.

Item 4: Sharing of Meeting Notes

Staff members and external partners have asked to see the meeting notes from the Implementation Team to gain insight as to topics that are being addressed. The goal of the CMS has been to increase communications and transparency across agencies and with our partners. The Implementation Team agreed that sharing a meeting summary would help fulfill this obligation can be shared with everyone and made available through the Atlanticsalmonrestoration.org website. The team noted that there may be sensitive or pre-decisional discussions at some IT meetings and that care would be taken when meeting summaries were prepared to avoid sharing information that was not appropriate or ready for public consumption.

Item 5: Proposal Review Process

Over the last year we have had two instances where external partners have submitted proposals for review. This has provided the Implementation Team the opportunity to review how this process is working and to inform the development of guidance for future reviews. The IT discussed how to ensure that the process is efficient and facilitates timely decision making while also ensuring that appropriate technical, policy, and resource-needs/impacts, are addressed. The existing draft document outlining the proposal review process will be updated and circulated for further review to ensure it is clear and easily understandable and identifies the necessary components for a proposal as well as the required steps of the review and anticipated feedback/outcomes for each review stage.

Item 6: 5-Year Plans

Each of the SHRU Teams is expected to develop a 5 year plan by the end of September using the template in Appendix 9 of the CMS document. Each team is given autonomy in respect to the process for completing their 5 year plans. All of the SHRU chairs agreed that the September deadline will be a really tough deadline to meet, but they also all agreed that maintaining the deadline is important given that a delay would likely push the completion of the plans out to 2021 given busy workloads. Everyone agreed that it is most important to get a working draft done recognizing that these are intended to be living documents that can be edited and revised as needed. The SHRU team chairs also noted that although the template provides guidance on the basic elements that there are elements that are not included in the template that would make the workplans much more effective. The Implementation Team has agreed to talk about the missing elements in greater detail during the July IT meeting and identify which ones to incorporate into the template.

Item 7: Smolt Requests

Atlantic salmon smolts are frequently requested to conduct research as well as to evaluate the performance of fishways at hydro-electric dams. As part of the annual smolt allocation process, the USFWS sets aside 5000 smolts annually for research and assessment purposes at no cost to the project proponent. It remains unresolved as to how to address smolt requests that exceed 5000 smolts as such requests would require a reallocation of existing resources (e.g., a change in stocking strategy) or new resources to raise additional smolts. A recent request from Brookfield is for 100,000 smolts to evaluate upstream passage at the Weldon Dam on the Penobscot River in anticipation of a study that is expected to be required by their pending new FERC license, which has yet to be issued. It is anticipated that more requests for large numbers of smolts will be made in the future to evaluate upstream passage of dams in the Union and other river systems in the GOM DPS. A clear path to deal with these requests has not yet been identified. The implementation Team has agreed to form an ad hoc committee that identifies options to address such requests as well as any associated benefits/risks to the program associated with those options. The specific charge for the committee will be under development during the summer of 2020.

Item 8: Next Meeting/Meeting Frequency

The IT’s normal meeting schedule is for quarterly in-person meetings. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting the region in March 2020, the IT has been meeting by phone bi-weekly; this has provided an opportunity for increased interagency and tribal coordination and communication on issues that have emerged during the pandemic response. The IT agreed to continue to supplement the meeting schedule with conference calls in July and August, 2020. At the September 2020 quarterly meeting the IT will revisit the need for more frequent conference calls.

1. Susan is a professional facilitator, mediator, trainer for the U.S. Department of Interior and is facilitating the development of the Merrymeeting Bay work plan per the request of the MMB coordinating committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)