**CMS IT Meeting Summary Notes:**

**September 17, 2020**

**9 AM – 1 PM**

**Webinar**

**Attendees:** Peter Lamothe, Carl Wilson (10 – 1), Dan McCaw (9:30 – 1), Julie Crocker, Sherry White, Dan Tierney, Lowell Whitney, Meredith Bartron, Anna Harris, Sean Ledwin, Rory Saunders (filling in for Ernie Atkinson), Jen Noll (9:30 – 10; filling in for Paul Christman), Dan Kircheis

**SHRU Team 5 year Plan Updates:**

Meredith, Anna, Rory, Sean L. and Jen N. gave SHRU team progress updates on their development of the 5 year work plans. All SHRUs have held meetings with stakeholders and are near completion of their draft work plans.

NEXT STEPS:

* The IT agreed that the SHRU teams should complete their draft work plans by the end of September and allow their stakeholders the opportunity to review their plans (if they haven’t done so already) in advance to sending the plans up to the IT.
* Concurrent to the plans being sent to stakeholders, the SHRU teams should also send their draft plans to the other SHRU team chairs and the administrative coordinator (Dan Kircheis) for consistency and completeness review.
* The IT agreed that the draft work plans should be delivered up to the implementation team’s administrative coordinator for review by the management board by NOVEMBER 2nd.
* Each Management Board member is responsible for preparing agency/tribe comments on each work plan. They will include other agency staff in that review as necessary.
* Julie Crocker will arrange a meeting of the Management Board and plus 1s in mid-November (depending on scheduling) to review and discuss the agency comments on the work plans and determine next steps needed to bring the work plans to completion.

Guidelines for the Management Board Review:

* The management board should focus their review of the work plans in respect to consistency with program goals for the recovery and restoration of Atlantic salmon and their habitats/ecosystem as well as allocation of agency resources necessary for their implementation. Any action where sufficient resources are not available should not be removed from the work plans, but rather should be identified as not having the appropriate resources to implement that action.
* The management board should discuss next steps and expectations of the SHRU teams moving forward.

**Consideration of New Standing Committees:**

Overall, folks felt that the process for standing up committees has worked well so far. Committees provide an opportunity for other staff beyond the IT to engage in the process. That said, there remains concern over what types of activity rises up to the level of needing a committee and which ones don’t. There are also concerns regarding workload and resource availability that is associated with having committees and ensuring that committees are working towards clear deliverables.

NEXT STEPS:

* The IT agreed that anyone within the agencies can propose an ad hoc or standing committee. The proposals should follow the template identified in the CMS document.
* The management board and plus ones will review committee proposals and make a determination as to whether a committee is warranted after careful review of the proposal and discussion with the proponent and in consideration of the value of adding the committee to the CMS and workload/staffing realities. Consideration of how any committee overlaps with the work of the SHRU teams or other existing committees will be taken into account.
* If they believe a committee is warranted, the management board and plus ones will write the charge for the committee using the template in the CMS document. This will include identification and timeline for deliverables and identification of committee members and chair.

Outreach Committee Proposal:

* The general feeling is that there is reasonable justification for an outreach and communications committee
* Julie Crocker will develop a draft charge, including deliverables and timeline, using the information that has been provided, and will circulate it among the Implementation Team for their review.

Database Committee Proposal:

* Sean Ledwin agreed to work with his staff to develop a draft charge, including deliverables and timeline, for the database committee considering the information the Justin Stevens shared with the Implementation Team during the August meeting.

**Study fish ad hoc Committee:**

Peter Lamothe summarized the recommendation of the study fish ad hoc report. The report details three options for providing fish to Brookfield to conduct upstream studies of adults at the Weldon Dam and associated costs.

Dan Tierney provided an update on the schedule to conduct the studies based on what is described in the pending FERC license and associated biological opinion. Although Brookfield has requested smolts for 2022, Brookfield must first make improvements to downstream passage at Weldon before any smolts are stocked for upstream studies. Given that these improvements are not scheduled until 2023, the first opportunity to stock smolt for upstream studies would not be until 2024. The relevant language from the August 2020 Biological Opinion is as follows:

*In order to maximize the likelihood of having adult salmon available for upstream effectiveness studies, FERC must require GLHA to coordinate with resource agencies to develop and implement a plan to stock uniquely marked Atlantic salmon upstream of the Mattaceunk Project annually for three years (to support up to three years of studies). Stocking should be implemented following the installation of the new 1” rack, which is expected by 2023. As such, stocking is anticipated to be needed in 2024-2026. These fish would then serve as a source of imprinted adult fish (i.e., fish homing to areas upstream of Weldon Dam) for up to three years of upstream effectiveness testing of the fishway and upstream fish passage monitoring. GLHA must submit a plan to NMFS and the U.S. FWS describing their proposal for this stocking; dependent on resource needs GLHA may be responsible for costs associated with raising fish, marking, and stocking these fish; we note that a stocking permit will be needed from the Maine DMR. GLHA must also work with the resources agencies to develop an alternative plan to be implemented in the event that hatchery resources are not available to support the proposed stocking in one or more years. In all cases, a stocking plan must be developed and submitted to NMFS, U.S. FWS, and Maine DMR at least one year prior to any planned stocking.*

NEXT STEPS:

* Peter will update the cost estimates in the report and circulate the report to the implementation team for a final review.
* If there are no concerns or objections to the options identified in the report, a meeting will be scheduled with Brookfield to present the acceptable options to them. Brookfield can then decide which of the options they would prefer for their study.
* The IT also discussed the idea that fish shall only be provided to Brookfield if they agree to accept the results of the study in advance. By the IT providing these options to Brookfield it would be a statement that the results that come from using these fish would be assumed to be reliable predictors of survival/delay of all salmon passing in the future.

**Website:**

In 2019 NOAA-Fisheries agreed to pay for the Atlanticsalmonrestoration.org website while other options were being considered that could fulfill the need for information and document sharing. Since no progress has been made to identify alternatives, NOAA-Fisheries has agreed to pay for the website for use in 2021.

Both the Downeast SHRU and the Penobscot SHRU stated that they either have plans to use the website for information and document sharing or are already doing so. Rory Saunders stated that there needs to be certainty about the future of the website if folks are going to be comfortable using it. If there isn’t certainty, then folks won’t use it.

NEXT STEPS:

* Maintaining the existing website and pursuing potential alternatives will be considered for integration into the potential Outreach Committee charge for the next year. In the meantime, NOAA-Fisheries has committed to keeping the website funded through December, 2021.

**End of the year review:**

In September 2019 the agencies agreed to a one year pilot of the new CMS followed by a review to evaluate its effectiveness. Everyone agrees that the review of the CMS needs to happen, although more time is needed to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the CMS process. Therefore we previously agreed to postpone the review of the CMS until June, 2021 following the completion of the second annual report.

NEXT STEPS:

* The Implementation Team agreed that outside assistance would be helpful in determining how best to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the CMS and how improvements could be incorporated.
* The IT is looking to schedule a meeting with staff from Maine Sea Grant that aided in the review of the framework in 2018. The goal of the meeting would be on the best way to conduct a review of the CMS at this stage in the process. Dan Kircheis will arrange for the meeting with the IT and the CMS.

**Performance Standards:**

Sean Ledwin presented his views on the need to develop performance standards for passage of alosines, eels, and lamprey at FERC projects. He is seeking assistance from the USFWS, PIN and NOAA-Fisheries to do so. He proposed the idea of setting up and ad hoc committee to do this, or to fold this assignment into the existing FERC Committee’s scope of work.

There was a lot of discussion in respect to the necessary steps needed to establish performance standards, how those standards would be used and applied, who is responsible for developing these standards, and whether using the CMS was the appropriate means to do so given that these standards would be for species other than salmon.

NEXT STEPS:

* Each agency agreed to having a next steps meeting to discuss this further, and would identify the appropriate staff to participate in this meeting.
* Sean Ledwin agreed to set up a meeting to discuss this further including the need for these performance standards and how they would be applied, the steps for developing these standards, and the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies. Julie agreed to discuss this further with her staff and identify the appropriate staff to participate. Anna has already committed staff time to participate in these discussions.

**Meeting Schedule:**

Everyone agreed that monthly IT meetings should continue for the time being. Those meetings will be held on the third Thursday of each month from 10 to 11.

2020 Monthly Meeting Schedule:

October 15, 10 AM – 11 AM

November 19, 10 AM – 11 AM

Next Quarterly Meeting:

December 10, 10 AM – 2 PM

1PM: Meeting adjourned