

Reaching Consensus on Numerical Goals for Salmon and Steelhead Management: A Case Study of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force

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Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force(2017-2020)



Source: Phase 1 Report of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee. May 2019.

Convenors: NOAA Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC)

Facilitation: Kearns and West

Membership: 28 members

Interests represented:

- Columbia Basin tribes
- States (ID, OR, WA, MT)
- Commercial fishing
- Recreational fishing
- Conservationists
- Agriculture
- Hydropower
- River transportation
- Ports
- Local recovery groups



Partnership members at work. Credit: Kearns and West

Source: Phase 2 Report of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee. October 2020.

Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force(2017-2020)

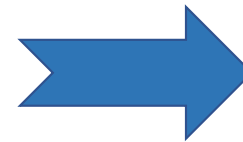
Phase 1: 2017 – 2019

Built a common understanding of “the need to increase salmon abundance and of the needs of the communities and ecosystems that depend on salmon.”

- Vision for the Columbia Basin
- Qualitative goals
- Provisional quantitative goals

Phase 2: 2019 – 2020

- Adopted goals for 27 stocks of salmon and steelhead
 - *Naturally produced salmon and steelhead: Increase from current 400,000 adults on annual average to 3.6 million adults*
 - *Combination of natural and hatchery fish: Increase from current 2.3 million to roughly 8.0 million fish on average annually*
- Explored pathways for achieving the goals (scenario building)



Carrying the ball forward

- Formation of the Columbia Basin Collaborative
- Led by the four states

Examining how the CBPTF worked: Case study approach

Focus

What about the process supported the development of the vision and goals?

What lessons have we learned that can apply to other large-scale conservation efforts?

Data collection methods

- Review of the CB Partnership's meeting minutes and reports (2020)
- 25 semi-structured interviews (2021-2022)

Interviewees

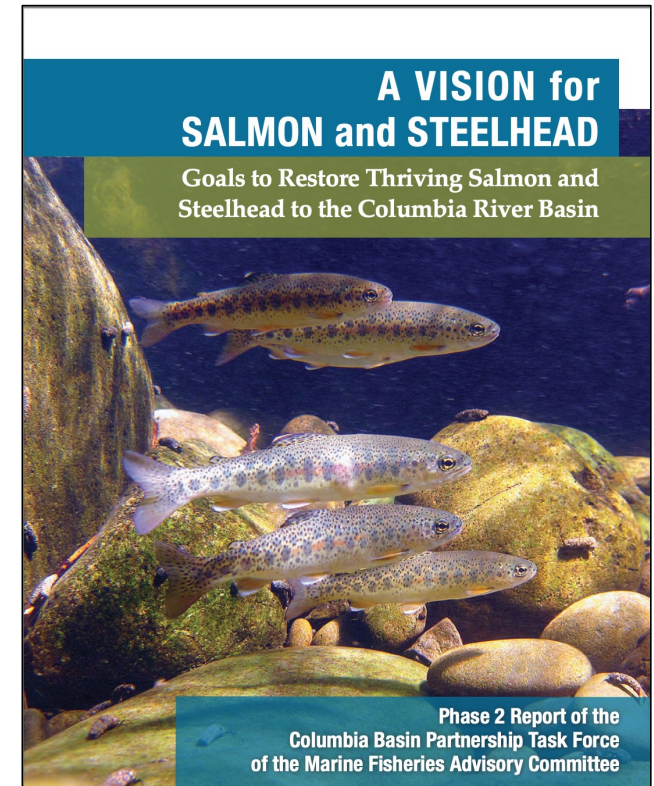
- Task Force members (19)
- NOAA-Fisheries convening team (3)
- Technical experts (2)
- Facilitator (1)

Major themes covered in interviews

- Motivation for participation
- The collaborative process
- Membership/structure
- Information and perspective sharing
- Consensus-building
- Evolution of trust levels
- Impact on Basin-wide capacity to collaborate

Emerging themes from the CBPTF case study

- 1) Reaching agreement on numerical goals for salmon and steelhead recovery was a major step forward.
- 2) Good facilitation by a neutral third-party was critical to this successful outcome.
- 3) Repeated constructive interactions, in formal and informal settings, built trust and positive relationships.
- 4) Creating opportunities for members to develop shared understandings of scientific and local knowledge about salmon enabled agreement on numerical goals.
- 5) Leadership capable of making tough decisions about the trade-offs is needed to achieve the numerical goals.



Motivation for Task Force: Ecological urgency/decades of litigation



Source: Columbia River Basin Federal Caucus. www.salmonrecovery.gov. [Accessed 29 April 2022]



Challenge: Social, ecological, and economic complexity

15 federally recognized tribal nations in US portion;
4 intertribal organizations; 7 states



Source: Barbier, N. 2013. Conflicting stakes and governance relating to the co-management of salmon in the Columbia river basin (U.S.A.). *Vertigo - la revue électronique en sciences de l'environnement* [En ligne], 13 (3). URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/vertigo/14586> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/vertigo.14586> [Accessed 29 April 2022]

59 dams in US portion: Federal, state, private, municipal, public utility districts



Source: Kmusser, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Situation assessment: Laying the groundwork for a successful collaborative process

Commissioned by: NOAA Fisheries in 2010; completed 2012

Conducted by:

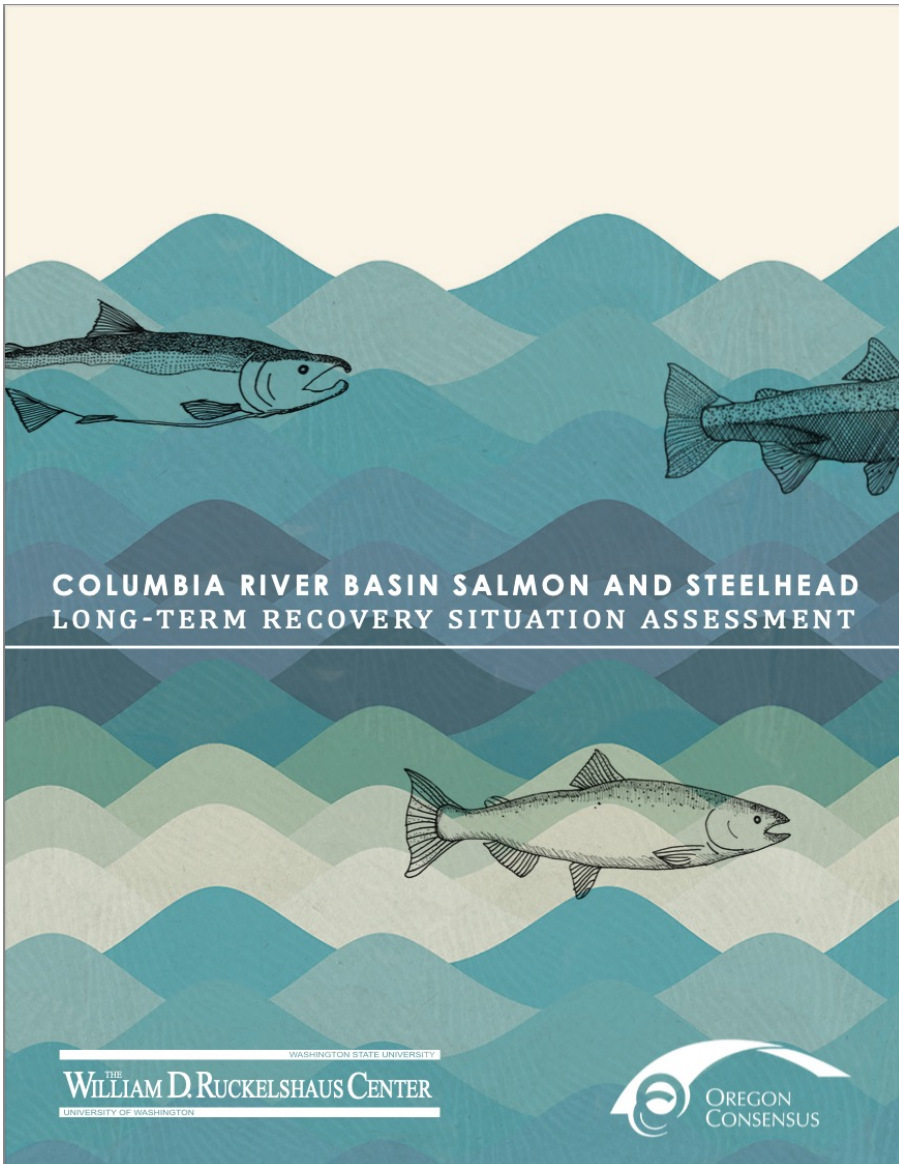
Oregon Consensus and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (2010-2012)

Purpose: “to explore regional views about how best to approach comprehensive, long-term salmon and steelhead recovery in the Basin.”

Approach: 206 semi-structured interviews with individuals knowledgeable about, engaged in, or concerned for salmon recovery planning in the Columbia Basin

Recommendations:

- Need action at multiple levels and across multiple jurisdictions
- Need common goals for salmon and steelhead recovery
- Need shared definition of success



Key elements contributing to success: Leadership and membership

Significant and consistent leadership and support

- NOAA Fisheries' roles: convenor (perceived as relatively neutral), funder, technical support
- NOAA chair present at all but one meeting
- NOAA supported involvement of stakeholders lacking resources

Membership

- Diversity of interests engaged
 - Selected individuals with knowledge of and active engagement in salmon recovery
 - Selected individuals with track record of being willing to work collaboratively
- Sovereigns (tribes and states) and stakeholders had equal voice in discussions –
 - But learning about tribal rights, knowledge, and perspectives was emphasized during the collaborative meetings

Key elements contributing to success: Facilitation and activities

Collaboration process

- Professional facilitation
- Emphasis on transparency, learning, trust-building
 - Developing a common understanding of salmon/steelhead and hydrology (science and local knowledge)
 - Learning about others' values and perspectives
 - Rotated meeting sites; two-day meetings – informal interactions
 - Storytelling (perspectives/values)
 - Regular communication between representatives and constituents

Most interviewees said they now understand better where others are coming from and feel comfortable picking up the phone and calling individuals who they previously would not have engaged with.

Challenges of the CBPTF process

- Trade-off between ensuring diversity of stakeholders represented and having too many members for process to work well
- Tension over whether to involve federal “action” agencies and fears that they would dominate the process
- Tension between vision and goals development and making decisions about implementation: some members disappointed that didn’t end up with action plans for moving forward with recovery

Key take-away from the CBPTF case study

- Reaching consensus on visions and goals was hard.
- The task for the Columbia Basin Collaborative, which emerged from the CBPTF process, will be even more challenging as sovereigns and stakeholders seek to identify which actions to prioritize.
- Lessons learned from the CBPTF process about what enables successful collaboration may be able to help overcome some of those challenges.

Next steps in our research

May-June: Complete analysis and write up of results

Mid-July: Report and fact sheet ready for distribution

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Thank you!

