

TAG Evaluation Form Guidance

This form is used to provide consistency in evaluating projects, to generate discussion, and to provide guidance to TAG members on how to rank projects. The completed TAG Evaluation Forms are also provided to the Citizen Committee to inform them about how the TAG evaluated the proposals.

Guidance for Specific Questions:

1. **Biological Benefits:** The main criteria for evaluation used by the TAG for every project is how well the project implements actions identified in the regional recovery plan and contributes to meeting specific biological goals within the plan.
2. **Landowner Commitment:** In order for a project to be successful, the landowner has to fully support a project. The landowner should be involved in discussions regarding this project early in the planning process, and should be aware of, and willing to wait through, the grant administration process. The SRFB requires that the landowner sign a Landowner Acknowledgement form before an applicant can submit a grant for evaluation, and a signed commitment by the landowner before SRFB approves funding.
3. **Project Sequencing:** The TAG will consider whether sponsors are implementing projects in the correct order. A project should build upon and complement existing or future actions, and/or pave the way for additional habitat projects. Correctly sequencing and coordinating projects is an efficient use of limited resources and maximizes potential benefits. The proposal should complement and support local and state salmon recovery regulations and programs, including land use and development regulations, critical area ordinances, storm water management regulations, shoreline master plans, forest management regulations, etc.
4. **Reasonable Budget:** The proposed budget should be analyzed to determine if it is complete and the prices quoted are reasonable compared to similar projects. A budget can be too high or too low.
5. **Design Adequate for Goals:** Project design should be clearly described and based on proven methods. The design should match the goals outlined in the proposal, and meet standards established by WDFW. Innovative and experimental approaches should be considered if proven methods are not feasible, if the conditions they were designed for cannot be corrected through conventional methods, if the potential benefits exceed that of traditional designs, and/or if the benefit-to-cost ratio is high.
6. **Stewardship:** The SRFB requires a stewardship plan with the final documentation at the close of the project for acquisition and restoration projects on lands owned or controlled by the applicant. The proposal should include information on how the project will be maintained and monitored for at least 10 years.
7. **Other Strengths, Uncertainties, and/or Constraints:** A project should be reviewed to determine if there are any technical, legal, permitting, financial, or environmental constraints that could affect the outcome of the project.

8. **Acquisition Specific—Appraisal and Urgency:** An acquisition project should be reviewed, in addition to the relevant questions above, to determine a) if the sponsor has sufficiently documented landowner interest and agreement on property value (e.g., appraisal) and b) has the sponsor sufficiently documented clear and significant risk to the property if it is not protected.

The below elements of the TAG evaluation form are generally not utilized for evaluation purposes by the TAG. Rather, they are for the TAG to reach consensus and provide expert information to the Citizen Committee for use in their evaluations.

1. **ESA Liability:** The Endangered Species Act prohibits unauthorized ‘take’ of a listed species, which includes both killing or harming individuals of a species and altering habitat. Community members whose actions may create a ‘take’ face potential legal liability. Specific projects may either alleviate liability (e.g., when a new fish screen prevents fish from dying in an irrigation system) or increase liability (e.g., when a project allows a species to access new areas where take is likely). Any ways in which a project may decrease or increase legal liabilities for specific community members should be assessed (note that simply supporting general recovery of a species does not count as reducing liability).
2. **Other Wildlife:** Proposals for funding by the SRFB must target ESA-listed salmonid species and/or other anadromous fish species. However, there are times when a project has benefit to other fish and wildlife. The TAG should identify any significant positive or negative impacts to other wildlife.

APPENDIX G: SARM Matrix Guidance

Introduction

Projects proposed for SRFB funding in the Yakima basin are evaluated by the TAG using several tools including the Salmon Recovery Model (the matrix). The matrix was developed in 2004 for use by the TAG and has been revised several times. The TAG considers a standard list of questions about each project and provides the answers using a standardized numeric score. The matrix then calculates a total score for each project.

Generally, higher scoring projects should provide greater benefits to target fish populations than lower scoring projects. However, the matrix tool is not precise enough for small differences in final scores to be strong indicators of meaningful differences in project quality. Further, the matrix does not consider all factors which may be relevant to ranking proposed projects. *Therefore, matrix scores are only a starting point for the TAG to rank projects.* Adjustments to the preliminary rankings based on matrix scores should be expected and the rationale for final rankings will be documented by the TAG.

Typically, proposals are only scored once using the SARM matrix. If they are resubmitted in a subsequent grant round, the previous scores will be used to rank them. Scores will only be reviewed if committee members identify the need to review and update them based on changed information.

General Instructions

Reviewers start by identifying the priority species in the area affected by the project. They then consider a series of questions about how the proposed project would change *current* habitat conditions and distributions of priority species, rather than potential future conditions. The TAG also determines if the proposed project is on the TAG's previously adopted list of Focus Projects. Finally, the TAG assigns each project weighting factors based on their assessment of the amount and quality of habitat affected, certainty of success, benefit to cost, and sustainability.

The TAG assigns the project scores for each line in the matrix and scores can range from zero up to the full points indicated. Scores should be assigned in increments of 0.5 points for the Priority Species section and the habitat elements (questions 1a through 6c). For question 7, projects are assigned full points if they are on the TAG Focus Project List, and zero points otherwise. The weighting factors are scored in different increments depending on the project type and factor being scored.

Project Categories

To answer the habitat questions, a project is usually assigned to one of three categories: 1) protection projects, 2) restoration implementation projects, and 3) assessment and design-only projects. However, in some cases, protection projects may be combined with other project types. For example, an applicant may propose to acquire and restore a property as one SRFB project.

For each habitat component in the SARM matrix, a project should be scored in the questions specific to its project type unless it is a combined category project. For example, if a project is scored under 4a (protection benefit for rearing habitat), it should not typically be scored under 4b and 4c (restoration and

assessment/design benefits). However, a combination project including property acquisition and restoration of the property could be scored under both 4a and 4b. (In most of these cases, the project would not score full points for habitat protection because parcels requiring restoration are presumably not fully functioning.)

Protection projects ensure that currently functioning habitat is not degraded in the future. Typically, protection projects propose purchasing land, water, and/or development rights (via conservation easements) in order to assure that future management of the land focuses on maintaining its habitat value. Protection of high-quality habitat that is at high risk of degradation is the highest priority for protection projects. A project that protects an area of high-quality priority habitat from imminent development should receive the maximum score, while a project that protects lower value habitat from less likely degradation (e.g., where existing zoning, access, and regulation make development highly unlikely) should receive a lower score.

Restoration projects propose to undertake activities that will significantly improve habitat conditions in the affected reach. Some key restoration actions for our basin include passage and screening, instream flow, floodplain connectivity, and physical habitat restoration.

Assessment projects collect and analyze information in order to identify and recommend future actions. Assessment projects should focus on priority reaches and assess how best to address significant limiting factors. Assessment projects need to show that information gathered by the project will fill a key data gap and will likely lead to a future protection or restoration project with significant fisheries benefit.

Design projects fund design work but do not include funding for actual construction. They are typically a first step in a phased approach to project funding. Assessment and design projects should be scored using the assessment questions, but based on the expected benefits of implementing the assessed or designed actions.

Stewardship projects and other project types that are not well-suited for evaluation through the SARM matrix will be *evaluated using the TAG evaluation form only*.

Guidance for Specific Questions

PRIORITY SPECIES – Priority species are identified in the matrix and include anadromous salmonids and bull trout. The TAG assigns points for species that are within the area affected by the proposed project.

Species scores will range from 0.0 to 4.0 based on established species priorities and the expected benefit of the project for key life stages. Most species have a maximum score of 1 point. Spring Chinook have a maximum score of 2 points. Federally listed species have a maximum score of 4 points.

The TAG will assign a score considering the project benefit for spawning, rearing, and migration for each species, or reduced human-caused mortality. To receive a maximum species score, there should be significant benefits for two of the three life stages, or a significant increase in survival or productivity. (For example, a passage project that has a goal of allowing access to significant spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead should receive a score of four; a screening project that reduces or eliminates known

mortality could receive a score of three; and an LWD project that only provides rearing habitat for steelhead should receive a score of two.)

INSTREAM FLOW AND HYDROGRAPH – Does the project directly and quantifiably benefit the hydrograph by increasing low flows or reducing unnaturally high flows?

1a – Application receives points if it directly improves the hydrograph via trust water program or other means, such as water conservation measures to reduce diversions. Reviewers should be able to quantify beneficial effects to the hydrograph (e.g., how many cfs will be trusted). This question is not intended to award points for projects that simply redirect instream water into side channels or improve floodplain connectivity, although such projects may have incidental effects on the hydrograph. For such a project to receive points, the applicant should quantify hydrograph benefits. In most cases, projects awarded points in 1a will also receive points for improving rearing habitat.

1b – Application receives points if the proposed assessment directly addresses instream flows. Assessments for side channel or floodplain projects with incidental hydrograph effects are not considered here unless such effects will be explicitly addressed and quantified.

WATER QUALITY – Water quality is a major limiting factor in the middle and lower mainstem Yakima River and portions of some tributaries. Temperature, suspended sediment, and agricultural chemicals in some flowing waters in the Yakima Basin have exceeded either water quality criteria or known tolerance thresholds for salmonid species.

Application receives most points for making substantial improvement to water quality. Some points may be awarded for incidental water quality benefits from other project types (e.g., riparian restoration that will provide shade in a temperature-limited stream). If nutrient enhancement is proposed as a project, it can be scored under Water Quality.

IN-CHANNEL HABITAT – For the purposes of the SARM, in-channel habitat is defined as the habitat below bank full width or OHWM. Quality in-channel habitat is a combination of cover, substrate, and hydraulics. Common in-channel restoration projects include construction on the bank or bed to improve cover, width/depth ratios, pool quantity and quality, and/or streambank condition.

Improvements to in-channel habitat can be awarded in question 3. Typical projects will score in only one of the sub-questions (a, b, or c) unless the project is a combination. For example, a proposal to acquire and restore a property could be awarded points in parts a and b of question 3.

3a – Protection of spawning and rearing habitat should be scored by considering both habitat value and the threat to the habitat that the proposed project will alleviate:

Habitat value is the current value of the area to the priority species and is a function of size, quality, use by priority species, importance of habitat type or location, etc. Habitat value is not historic value or potential value based on anticipated restoration.

Threat Reduction is the threat to the existing habitat that will be alleviated by the proposed project. The TAG should consider the nature and type of the threat, and likelihood that it will occur. For example, the likelihood of habitat impacts may increase from properties merely in a

UGA, to properties for sale, to properties with ongoing degradation. The TAG should also consider the effectiveness of the project in reducing the potential threat. For example, purchase may alleviate more of a threat than does acquiring an easement.

The following is an example of how Habitat Value and Threat Reduction can be considered together:

		Threat Reduction		
		Low	Med	High
Habitat Value	High	2	4	5
	Med	1	3	4
	Low	0	1	2

HABITAT ACCESS – Application receives points for removing or reducing physical and flow- or temperature- induced passage barriers. Examples include improving passage at culverts, dams, ladders, etc., or improving flows or temperature where they inhibit passage. Physical barriers preventing entrance to existing side channels are also included. Projects that correct partial barriers should generally receive a lower score than full barrier removals, unless the TAG identifies the barriers as addressing significant limiting factors in that watershed. This question is not intended to award points for side channel creation, levee setbacks, etc.

DIVERSION SCREENING – Application receives points for reducing injury or mortality of priority species from entrainment, impingement, and other diversion or screen-induced harm. Typical projects include screening currently unscreened diversions, improving poorly functioning or outdated screens, and removing or changing the location of diversions (e.g., converting an unscreened surface water diversion to a well).

FLOODPLAIN CONNECTIVITY/RIPARIAN CONDITION – These questions score projects that maintain and improve floodplain connectivity and riparian conditions. Functional floodplains and riparian zones allow water and sediment to move through the ecosystem naturally (often improving in-stream habitat) and allow fish to access an array of productive habitats at various flows. Typical projects include removing or modifying levees or bank armor, reconnecting or constructing side channels or off-channel areas, adding cover, planting native vegetation, managing invasive species, and/or controlling livestock, vehicles, and foot traffic.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT – The TAG has developed the TAG Focus Project List to help focus SRFB resources on projects that represent the most immediate needs of priority species that can be reasonably achieved as SRFB projects. Project application receives 10 points if it is on the most recent TAG Focus Project List. If not on the list, zero points are awarded.

WEIGHTING FACTORS (WF) – These elements are a very important part of the TAG evaluation and involve many factors. In addition to the scores assigned, there should be a clear explanation supporting the scores of WF 2, 3, and 4 in the TAG Evaluation meeting notes so that the Citizen Committee, applicants, and others have a clear understanding of what factors affected the TAG weighting.

WF 1: QUALITY AND QUANTITY – This WF uses a simple matrix based on how much habitat a project benefits (<1 mile, 1 to 3 miles and >3 miles) and what the current quality of that habitat is (High, Medium, or Low) to assign a multiplier ranging from 1.0 to 2.0. See the scoring chart below:

		Quantity		
		<1 mile	1 to 3 miles	>3 miles
Quality	High	1.4	1.8	2.0
	Med	1.2	1.6	1.8
	Low	1.0	1.2	1.4

Projects that implement fixes to point source fish mortality should default to being given a “medium” score of 1.6. However, if the TAG thinks this wouldn’t capture the full biological benefits of a project, the TAG can rank it qualitatively.

WF 2: CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS – Projects are weighted based on the likelihood that they can ultimately deliver habitat benefits (identified in earlier matrix questions) given the known and unknown barriers to success. This WF is a combination of the likelihood that the project will be successfully implemented and the likelihood that it will deliver biological benefits. The following table is an example of how the two elements of certainty of success can be considered together to derive WF 2, which is a multiplier ranging from 0.0 to 1.0. The specific questions to consider are listed below.

		Certainty of biological benefits		
		Low	Med	High
Certainty of successful implementation	High	0.6	0.8	1.0
	Med	0.3	0.6	0.8
	Low	0.0	0.3	0.6

Considerations are different for each project type:

Construction projects:

- *Certainty of successful implementation:* Does the proponent have the wherewithal to successfully construct the project as proposed, given challenges (e.g., site complexity, administrative, political, property ownership)?
- *Certainty of biological benefits:* If constructed as proposed, what is the likelihood that the biological benefits identified in habitat questions 1-7 would be realized?

Design Projects:

- *Certainty of successful implementation:* Does the proponent have clear goals, and a solid understanding of and ability to overcome all of the challenges involved in designing a feasible

project? More complex environments, complex designs, and unproven designs generally have a lower certainty of success. Design projects that will require coordination of multiple disciplines, or have sponsors that do not understand the required disciplines, generally have a lower certainty of success.

- *Certainty of biological benefits:* Are there clear and specific biological goals for the design that would yield the biological benefits identified in habitat questions 1-7? What is the likelihood that a design can achieve the biological goals?

Assessment projects:

- *Certainty of successful implementation:* How likely is the assessment to identify potential future projects that would be feasible given physical, administrative, and political constraints? Would potential future projects identified by the assessment be achievable at a reasonable cost?
- *Certainty of biological benefits:* What is the importance of the assessment to planning future restoration (i.e., will the information provided in the assessment have a significant impact on future restoration decisions)? How likely is the assessment to identify potential future projects that would achieve the biological benefits identified above?

Protection projects:

- *Certainty of successful implementation:* Degree of real estate interests secured, future property management, and likelihood of a sale actually closing.
 - What degree of real estate interests are being secured? From highest to lowest certainty: fee simple; deed restriction; easement held by government agency; easement held by private entity.
 - How will the property be managed into the future? Will there be regular inspections and a commitment to maintain (garbage, weeds, trespass)?
 - Stage of agreement – From highest to lowest certainty: option agreement; purchase and sale agreement; appraisal completed and reviewed by seller; written correspondence discussing price; SRFB acknowledgement letter only.
 - Type of seller – From highest to lowest certainty: government agency; individual with high motivation to sell; small business; corporation (higher for bank-owned properties); individual with low motivation to sell; estate; unresolved estate or high potential for unresolved estate.
 - Grant applicant – From highest to lowest certainty: government agency with real estate professionals and real estate policies; established real estate/land trust with a history of purchases of this type; government agency w/o in-house real estate professionals; new or young land trust with little experience; other private organizations.
 - Complexity of sale – From highest to lowest certainty: fee simple entire parcel with no other uses on parcel; deed restriction/easement over a portion of parcel; fee simple with

boundary line adjustment or subdivision required; fee simple with conformance to will or other testamentary document to divide property or proceeds from sale.

- *Certainty of biological benefits:* Will the habitat elements be protected into the future?
 - From highest to lowest certainty: will be used solely for habitat with no other developed access; passive recreational uses allowed/encouraged; passive recreational uses allowed/encouraged with high intensity uses/urban areas adjacent.
 - From highest to lowest certainty: property is surrounded by other properties already legally devoted to SRFB purposes and long-term management plan in place; property is surrounded by other properties currently zoned for and managed for compatible purposes; property surrounded by/adjacent to properties incompatible and zoned with SRFB purposes.
 - Other things to consider – risks posed by channel migration; risks posed by adjacent invasive species; risks posed by adjacent grazing practices; and other risks that would expose the habitat to potential degradation.

WF 3: BENEFIT-TO-COST – Is the proposed cost of the project reasonable with respect to the expected biological outcomes? This WF is a qualitative evaluation of the biological benefit of the project compared to the cost to SRFB and is not intended to require quantification of biological benefits. This WF is a multiplier ranging from 0.5 to 1.5, with average projects scoring a 1, projects with a poor benefit-to-cost ratio scoring lower, and projects with a great benefit-to-cost ratio scoring higher.

If a score other than 1.0 is assigned by the TAG, there should be an explanation in the TAG meeting notes.

Note: WF 3 is not intended to evaluate if the proposed budget is a fair estimate of the work to be done. Although this is important, this topic should be addressed in the TAG evaluation form and not in the matrix.

WF 4: LONGEVITY OF BENEFIT – This WF considers the ability of the project to provide benefits in the long-term and if the project will need additional resources for its benefits to persist. This WF is a multiplier ranging from 0.5 to 1.5, with average projects scoring a 1, projects with below-average longevity scoring lower, and projects with above-average longevity scoring higher.

- Will the projected benefits persist in the long term? For example:
 - Higher score if ecosystem processes (e.g., hydrology, sediment) will reinforce and sustain the benefits of the project, and lower score if the project merely changes conditions that may revert to a degraded status over time. (Another way to think about this would be: is the project addressing the cause or only a symptom?)
 - Protection of investment – when relevant (e.g., riparian planting), higher score if the project is on land managed by a public entity or land trust and dedicated to natural resource

preservation, and lower score for other public land or private land protected by conservation easement, and fewest points for private land with no conservation easement.

- Will the project need additional input of resources in the long-term, and what happens if those resources are not forthcoming? For example:
 - For riparian planting, will the project fail without a long-term commitment to weed management that has not been identified, committed to, and budgeted?
 - For a diversion, screen, or similar project, how much do the anticipated benefits depend on proper operation, and is the operation on ‘autopilot’, or is there a high susceptibility to human error (e.g., not opening a headgate at the right time, etc.)? Also consider likelihood of proper maintenance and biological risk if maintenance does not occur.