



YAKIMA BASIN  
FISH AND WILDLIFE  
RECOVERY BOARD

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

1200 Chesterly Drive, Suite 280, Yakima WA with virtual attendance option via Zoom

*Directors present:* Richard Bloom (West Richland, Vice Chair/Treasurer), Steve Becken (Prosser), Troy Havens (Yakima County), Mike Shane (City of Yakima), Delano Palmer (Ellensburg), Julie Schilling (Union Gap), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation; virtual), Arden Thompson (Kittitas County; virtual)

*Public present:* Scott McFarland (DNR SE Region Manager), Skippy Shaw (The Nature Conservancy; virtual), Kas Guillozet (Bonneville Environmental Foundation; virtual), Dave Brown, Jeff Bond (City of Yakima; virtual), Connor Thompson (Trout Unlimited; virtual)

*Staff present:* Alex Conley (Executive Director), Cheyne Mayer (Lead Entity Coordinator, minutes)

### PRE-BOARD MEETING WORKSHOP

*Workshop started 12:25pm.*

#### **Discussion of DNR Forest Fire Resilience Program with Scott McFarland, DNR SE Region Manager**

Attendees introduced themselves. Alex gave a brief introduction to the YBFWRB to Scott. Scott introduced himself and shared his work history.

Scott gave an overview of the DNR's Forest Resilience Program, highlighting work completed in the Yakima Basin to implement HB 1168 and the concept of managing firesheds in ways that reduce the severity and size of fires. The group discussed prescribed burning and expressed interest in more in-depth discussion on prescribed fire programs and their challenges in the future. Brandon asked how Industrial Fire Protection Levels are set and Brandon and Scott agreed to follow-up together in more detail. Scott shared that funding for the program has been cut back from the level envisioned in HB 1168; the Board discussed the value of funding proactive work when fighting a large fire can run \$1-2 million/day.

*Skippy, Kas, and Connor joined the meeting virtually.*

#### **Update on partner advocacy for the Resilience Program by Skippy Shaw, The Nature Conservancy**

Skippy shared TNC will convene a wildfire resilience lobby day on Jan 29<sup>th</sup> and is preparing a one-pager highlighting the issues.



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Alex reminded the Board of Directors that it put support for HB 1168 in its letter to the governor earlier this month and the Board can bring some of the same talking points to Salmon Day advocacy. Alex will send the Board letter to Skippy.

Delano asked if cities are already being reached out to for support; Skippy is focused on sign-on letters. The sign-on letter has WASAC, fire chiefs, and specific counties. Skippy recommends referring to our letter to the governor if a city/jurisdiction wants to draft their own letter. The Board discussed.

Skippy shared that the TNC and Conservation NW are researching economic modelling to make clear what the savings are when you invest in wildfire resilience now. Richard noted that, as part of Comprehensive Plan updates, cities are being asked to answer what they're doing to address air quality; he emphasized that the primary regional air quality issues come from fires outside the cities' control, and that Forest Resilience work is critical to helping Cities meet air quality standards and should be a priority for funding.

*Jeff, Connor and Skippy left the meeting.*

### **Discussion of State & Federal Permit Reform with Kaz Guillozet, Bonneville Environmental Foundation**

*Dave joined the meeting.*

Kas gave a presentation on ongoing efforts to streamline permitting for habitat restoration and flood hazard reduction projects. Kas shared a three-part strategy:

1. Provide faster access to better info on where permits are in the process; proposal to create one-stop portal with permit tracking
2. Provide the expertise and capacity support needed to navigate complex permitting processes, with dedicated support for the HRPP program, a proposed Pre-Development Coordination Program, and the enabling of LOMR floodplain mapping and review within WA Ecology, rather than by Federal contractors
3. Fix the system by 1) Authorizing interagency coordination agreements that eliminate duplicative reviews for wetlands, F&W, floodplain, 2) Stopping risky development and incentivizing better growth that meets public demands for affordable, connected vibrant communities, and 3) Improving acquisition funding to support diverse ways to facilitate strategic land purchases for restoration and flood risk reduction

The Board discussed permitting and permitting reform challenges. FEMA is under a lot of change, with the director resigning yesterday and many changes to the program proposed. Kas emphasized that BEF and partners are zeroing in on some solutions that are going to make a difference for permitting efficiency, and that the work runs parallel to efforts to streamline permitting for energy projects at the state level. Kas noted that while it is uncertain if any permit streamlining proposals will be submitted this legislative session, the primary focus is on developing a robust package for 2027. The group noted



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the need to engage with agricultural constituencies, and Dave Brown noted that YBIP is a great vehicle for doing so.

*Arden joined the meeting virtually.*

*Pre-meeting workshop adjourned 2:10.*

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

*Meeting called to order 2:15pm.*

### **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Alex and Richard welcomed Board members to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

### **2) Agenda and Review of Minutes**

The Board reviewed the agenda and September Board meeting minutes.

MOTION to approve the agenda and minutes for the September Board meeting as presented, seconded.  
*The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

### **3) Updates**

Alex shared that Bridget Wood's last day as Operations Manager was the end of last week; he expressed his gratitude for her time at the Recovery Board. He noted that Bridget will be staying on in a temporary part-time position to help handle some essential functions like billings and help train her replacement; the Board expressed appreciation for her willingness to help us through this transition.

Alex gave a water supply update. The reservoirs are starting from nearly their lowest ever, but fall precipitation has been strong and total storage is currently significantly higher than it was this time last year. We won't be able to judge the snowpack and prospects for next year until mid-winter at the earliest.

Alex gave fish update: It was a good year for summer chinook, as 1,000 made it past Prosser, but unfortunately only 56 sockeye made it into the Yakima and past Prosser. The steelhead run is still building, and at 780, is off to a reasonable start. Fall Chinook and Coho runs are low and/or late. BT redd counts are up a bit in most areas this year. 300+ lamprey, compared to used to be 5-15.

Alex gave updates on Bateman Island. Army Corps has gone to contract, marina was bought by state and has been removed. City of Richland working to remove island from their park lease, would go back to Corps. No current discussions about restoring foot access. Richard brought up that Kennewick and Pasco's water intakes are downstream from the causeway and that the Cities will be watching impact of all the sediment that has been impounded behind the causeway.



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Alex shared Recovery Program updates, noting that 1) the Bull Trout Working Group met yesterday; 2) staff are working with WDFW on updating fish passage and distribution data and finalizing fish prioritization work for FBRB grant program; 3) Alex and partners are building out Yakipedia including finalizing a standardized geographic framework; and 4) the monitoring committee is developing a list of knowledge gaps and potential monitoring actions to address them. Alex shared Upcoming Recovery Program Priorities. The SRFB will be meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup> and Alex is planning to attend in person to give a presentation on the status of recovery actions in the Yakima Basin.

Cheyne highlighted the Mid-Columbia Fisheries raffle underway and committed to sending out further information.

#### **4) Public Comment**

No public comment was received.

#### **5) Correspondence**

Alex highlighted the sent letters in the correspondence packet; no further discussion was requested. The group then reviewed the draft December letter to members and discussed how and when to send it out. The letter will be sent out as paper copies to mayors or city managers in December with digital copies to follow in early January.

MOTION to approve delegating signing the letter as presented to the Board Chair, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

#### **6) Operations Transition**

Alex reviewed the operations manager transition process and asked if the Board had any feedback on what the executive committee had proposed for the job description and hiring process. Sarah Elliott has been hired to assist with locating candidates. The hope is to interview in January with a start date in late January or February. The Board discussed the flexibility of the position to be full time or part time, and noted the potential need to prorate benefits for under 30 hours per week. Alex shared that Sarah recommended raising the advertised wage scale to attract more qualified candidates; the group supported the proposed pay range and deferred further decisions on hours, pay and proration of benefits to the executive committee. Alex asked for support and advice on advertising the vacancy.

Operations Outsourcing-- Alex asked for input on identifying ways to outsource key roles depending on the hiring pool for the operations manager. Julie suggested that Alex reach out to Abby Bailey about operations outsourcing; Alex asked for others to share any ideas they have on potential outsourcing options.

#### **7) Board Logistics**



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Alex shared that he is working with Ecology to finalize the **Bull Trout Funding Agreement**. MOTION to approve delegating approval of finalizing the \$90k 2-year Bull Trout Work Group agreement with the Department of Ecology for our Board bull trout work to the Board Chair, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Alex shared that as soon as the terms of the Ecology agreement are finalized, we will need to update our **MOA with Mid-Columbia Fisheries for Aimee's time supporting the Bull Trout Work Group**. The terms will be identical to our existing agreement except for the dates and the inclusion of a budget tiered to the Ecology agreement budget. MOTION to delegate signature of the proposed agreement to the Board Chair, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Alex shared updates about the Naches Forest Partnership. The Board discussed the proposed \$10k **contract with DNR's Building Forest Partnerships Program** included in the meeting packet. MOTION to approve the \$10,000 contract as presented, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Alex shared that we have promising indications that we may receive a **National Forest Foundation grant to support the Naches Forest Partnership**, which would potentially be ready for approval prior to the next Board meeting. MOTION to delegate approval of the National Forest Foundation grant of up to \$30,000 to the executive committee, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Alex gave a brief **financial update** and welcomed questions about the quarterly report in the packet. The group briefly discussed the Board's new Paid Time Off Billing system and the future need to address the potential liability created by Alex's unreimbursed sick leave.

Alex shared that due to Bridget's departure, the executive committee and he had agreed to defer some logistical items including the Communication Plan and Policy Manual updates.

Alex requested input on the next Board meeting's location and workshop focus. The Board had no issue with holding the meeting at the Recovery Board office; visiting Bateman Island was suggested but deferred for a Spring Board meeting.

Alex called the board's attention to planning for the 2026 August annual meeting. The Board discussed potential locations including the Yakama Nation, Yakima County or Ellensburg. The goal is to decide at the January Board meeting. Alex committed to following up with Brandon about the potential to hold the 2026 Annual Meeting on the Yakama Nation reservation prior to pursuing other options.

## **8) Lead Entity Program Updates**

Cheyne gave a report on the recently completed site tours to Yakima River RM 89.5 and Taneum Creek and reviewed the status of selected funded projects.



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Cheyne shared that FBRB and Floodplains by Design grant rounds are open and reviewed which applications we are expecting. He emphasized that we can offer support letters if any of the board members' orgs are thinking of submitting.

Cheyne gave an update on TAG recruitment and reminded the Board about CC recruitment. The Board asked clarifying questions. Richard has one recruit for Benton County, Delano has one for Kittitas County.

Cheyne shared the results of the grant round review meeting and what items the Board should expect to vote on in January.

Cheyne reported that we are expecting another Targeted Investments grant round in 2026, TBD at the Dec SRFB meeting. Alex shared a letter staff are planning on submitting to the SRFB once the updated RCO memo on TI is finalized and asked for input. No board members voiced disagreement with allowing staff to finalize the letter. Alex requested specific input on a section of the letter regarding whether this is a good time to pursue a TI grant round; the Board was in support.

*Dave left the meeting.*

### **9) Legislative Outreach Plans**

Alex gave updates on plans for legislative outreach and the group discussed how to finalize our letter to legislators ahead of the next legislative session.

MOTION to approve the letter to legislators pending confirmation from Board of Directors members over email, seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Members were invited to join the legislative outreach committee and Alex shared the group's plan to add an additional day of advocacy the day before Salmon Day and asked for any volunteers to join the trip. Adam, Richard and Julie are already signed up. Delano and Troy are interested in joining.

Alex shared the draft one-pager WSC put together for Salmon Day.

### **10) Other Items**

The Board thanked Mike Shane for his service; he will be retiring prior to the next Board meeting in January.

*Meeting adjourned 4:13pm.*

*Minutes taken by Cheyne Mayer*