



## Minutes of the January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting

**Approved 4/1/2026**

Location: The meeting was held at the Recovery Board Office at 1200 Chesterly Drive, Suite 280, in Yakima WA with an option for virtual attendance via Zoom.

Participation:

*Directors present:* Adam Fyall (Benton County, Chair), Richard Bloom (West Richland, Vice Chair/Treasurer), Nancy Lillquist (Ellensburg, Secretary; virtual), Amanda McKinney (Yakima County; virtual), Troy Havens (Yakima County), Steve Becken (Prosser), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Julie Schilling (Union Gap), Delano Palmer (Ellensburg; virtual), Juliet Potrykus (Yakima), Geoff Sherer (City of Roslyn, virtual)

*Public present:* Dave Brown, Daniel Tiliano (City of Yakima)

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

There was no pre-meeting workshop.

### **BUSINESS MEETING**

*Meeting called to order 2:01 pm.*

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

Alex and Adam welcomed Board members to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. Juliet Potrykus and Daniel Tiliano introduced themselves; Juliet is an incoming Board member from the Yakima City Council, and Daniel Tiliano is a potential incoming Board alternate and the new City of Yakima Water/Irrigation Division Manager.

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

The review of the Annual Financial Statement and IRS 990 Form will be delayed until the April 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting; Alex shared that he is working with Abby Bailey to have the final draft ready for circulation to the Board of Directors in March.

The Board reviewed the agenda and November Board meeting minutes. Alex also noted that the January Executive Committee notes are available for review.

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A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the agenda and minutes for the November Board meeting as presented. *The motion passed with the support of all present.*

### **3) Updates**

This month, the Board packet was shared with the Board via Sharepoint for the first time. Alex requested feedback on this method. The board confirmed they hadn't had any issues.

#### Staffing Update:

Alex shared that Amber Knox has been hired as the new Operations Manager and she will start on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Amber has a strong background both running nonprofits and working in grant-making foundations; staff and the Board are excited for her to start. Alex expressed appreciation for Sarah Elliott at Shorett Communications for help with the hiring process. Bridget Wood will be ending 's last day her temporary part-time position in February; both staff and the Board expressed thanks to her for helping us through this transition.

#### Water and Fish Updates:

Alex gave a water supply update. The Yakima Basin experienced an atmospheric river in December and the reservoirs are now far above average and already have passed the last year's June peak reservoir levels. Alex pointed out that this doesn't mean we're out of the woods; 2015, a major drought year, also started with full reservoirs. However, we have a good chance of a normal water supply year; the snowpack is still building and we won't be able to judge the snowpack and prospects for the year until mid-winter at the earliest. Alex pointed out that the Upper Yakima reservoirs are running behind the Naches watershed reservoirs in reservoir refill and snowpack, and this can be expected for years to come, as the watersheds that feed the Upper Yakima reservoirs are lower elevation and relatively small compared reservoir capacity, and hence more impacted by warmer winter conditions.

Alex gave a fish update: It was a good year for summer chinook and lamprey; an improved year for steelhead, a mediocre year for spring and fall chinook and coho; and a poor year for sockeye.

#### Upcoming Events:

Alex highlighted some upcoming events: the Populus riparian Symposium Feb 26-27 in Wenatchee; Cowiche Canyon/YVC Talks Feb 24, Mar 3 at the Kaminski Conference Center in Yakima; and Mid-Columbia Winter Talks in Jan-Mar (virtual).

Alex shared that WSDOT is soliciting input for prioritization of stormwater retrofit projects that address flow control and/or treatment to improve water quality. Tatiana Dreisbach is the contact for this work in Eastern WA and there is an active web survey that can be used to provide input; Alex will send a link after the meeting.

#### Project Updates:

Alex shared that the Bateman Island Causeway has officially been breached. Removal is expected to be completed in March; he noted that folks should hold the date for the April 24<sup>th</sup> celebration to be hosted

by the Yakama Nation. The Board discussed public reception to the project and whether there are any recreation mitigation efforts that could be pursued to offset the impact on recreational opportunities on the island.

Alex shared updates on the Gold Creek project. Phase 1 (instream restoration) is expected to be completed in 2026. Phase 2 (filling Gold Creek Pond) is in the planning phase. Phase 3 (revegetation and regrading) will come later. Kittitas Conservation Trust has identified a potential alternate source for fill that would bring costs down by a few million dollars; otherwise the plan is to source fill out of the bottom of Lake Keechelus. Alex highlighted that the Board will continue to hear about this project over the next few years as KCT progresses through these phases.

Troy shared that the SF Tieton channel excavation project has been delayed due to the atmospheric river causing Rimrock Reservoir to rise much faster than expected and inundate the project site. Remobilization (getting equipment back on the site) is expected in August. Yakima County is working to fill the funding gaps caused by this delay. The road will remain closed until late fall 2027.

The Board briefly discussed that habitat restoration and levee setback projects in the Naches watershed funded by Floodplains by Design, SRFB and others since the 1996 floods have really paid off, resulting in reduced impacts from recent flooding in the Yakima Basin compared to past floods of similar size.

#### Recovery Program Updates:

Alex shared an update on the Bull Trout Working Group. The Bull Trout Action Plan is now 75% updated. Aimee and Alex are also making good progress on the bull trout actions data database. They are also working on coordinating temperature data collection and analysis; technology has improved every year and analyzing data has become much easier.

Alex also noted that:

- 1) The Naches Forest Partnership met Jan 15<sup>th</sup>.
- 2) Alex is working with Benton CD to support the Water Stargrass coalition.
- 3) Alex gave presentations to the SRFB on Dec 9<sup>th</sup> and FBRB Jan 20<sup>t</sup>.
- 4) The Monitoring Committee continues to work on developing the Knowledge Gaps List.
- 5) Alex and Cheyne continue to make steady progress on fish barrier prioritization and data cleanup.

Alex gave a quick introduction to Yakipedia for Juliet and Daniel and noted that goals include preserving institutional knowledge and serving as a hub to find and record information.

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

Dave shared that during the atmospheric river, the river flowed 5-6 ft lower than before the Nelson Dam project.

#### **5) Correspondence**

Alex gave an overview of Sent Letters. 1) The Board submitted a letter to SRFB in early December as input on the development of the 2026 Targeted Investments grant round; Cheyne will report on TI during the Lead Entity report. 2) The Board sent letters to all Yakima Basin legislators earlier this January and received a detailed response from Senator Boehnke's office. 3) The Board sent a letter to its member governments in December and got several responses regarding member contact information, appointments and requests for presentations from the Board.

Alex reviewed proposed letters to discuss/approve. Input to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council on their proposed Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment is due March 2<sup>nd</sup>. They have a hearing in Yakima on Feb 4<sup>th</sup>; staff will prepare comments work closely with YN/Brandon. Alex asked whether/how the Board wants to review any Board input before submission. *The Board authorized staff to send out letters under Alex's signature so long as it is coordinated with the Yakama Nation.*

Alex shared that we expected to have a letter supporting HB 1168 (Forest Resilience) by now to sign onto, as the Board had expressed interest in at the November Board meeting. This letter has not yet been received. Alex asked whether/how to approve Board sign on to such a letter in between board meetings. *The Board requested for the letter to be made available for the whole Board to review for a few days before being submitted with the Board Chair's signature.*

Alex shared that FBRB project support letters are due by next Monday, but the final drafts are not yet completed. He asked whether/how the Board wants to review these letters. *The Board was okay with the letters being reviewed by Adam and submitted with his signature without additional full board review.*

## **6) Board Logistics**

### Financial Updates:

Alex gave a brief financial update and welcomed questions about the quarterly report in the packet. Alex highlighted that he has chatted with Amber about financial management in preparation for her onboarding. Alex shared that QuickBooks online has been disappointing and has greatly complicated the payroll process, and we are considering moving to a payroll service, Gusto.

### Board Agreements:

Alex reviewed recently and soon-to-be completed funding agreements; agreements with the DNR, Mid-Columbia Fisheries and National Forest Foundation are complete and a new agreements with the Department of Ecology for 2026-27 bull trout program funding is awaiting final signatures. The Board of Directors discussed two upcoming agreements:

1. A to-be-drafted amendment to our agreement with Katie Strahl for facilitation and coordination of the Naches Forest Partnership; staff proposed that the Board delegate approval of this amendment to the Executive Committee so it can be completed prior to April 1<sup>st</sup>. *The Board made a motion to delegate approval to the Executive Committee.*

2. A proposed agreement with the Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council for additional funding for the Naches Forest Partnership. *Staff hopes to have this ready for Board approval at the April 1 meeting.*

Alex noted that next steps for the Policy Update process and Communication Plan update were deferred until the new operations manager is in place to run the processes.

#### Board Membership:

The Yakima City Council has appointed Juliet Potrykus as the new Yakima County representative to fill Daniel Herrera's Board seat.

A MOTION to approve Juliet Potrykus' membership on the YBFWRB Board of Directors representing the City of Yakima was made and seconded. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.* The Board welcomed Juliet.

Matt Brown, Yakima City Mayor, has also been appointed by the City Council as a Board alternate. Alex shared that he and Juliet will be discussing with the Yakima City Manager whether Danial Tiliano will also serve as an alternate for her seat; historically we have had a Water/Irrigation Division rep serve as the seat's alternate.

*Delano joined the meeting virtually.*

#### Meeting Planning:

Alex shared the current agenda for the April 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting. The Board confirmed the earlier start time (10 or 11am) for a tour of Yakima River delta projects and discussed the Bateman Island visit logistics. Adam shared that he has invited some salmon recovery colleagues to the visit. Alex gave an opportunity for input on the May 20<sup>th</sup> Board meeting plans. Alex shared that Brandon Rogers has confirmed that the Yakama Nation would like to work with us to hold the August 5<sup>th</sup> 2026 Annual Meeting on the Yakama Nation reservation. The Board briefly discussed options for Yakama Nation project sites to visit.

## **7) Lead Entity Program Updates**

#### Funded Project Updates:

Cheyne gave an update on previously funded projects that have closed complete and a couple that were granted time extensions. The Board asked questions.

#### 2026 Grant Program Updates:

Cheyne shared the three grant programs that will be having a grant round this year. For the regular SRFB grant round, it's looking encouraging that status quo amounts of federal PCSRF funding will come through. The riparian grant round will only have ~\$200k, but larger projects can be submitted if they are

also eligible for the regular SRFB grant round and can fund the difference in cost using regular SRFB funds.

The SRFB has also decided to move forward with a 2026 Targeted Investments grant round. Cheyne gave a brief overview of the recommendations we made in our Dec letter to the SRFB; some were incorporated into the 2026 TI policy, others not, but staff are pleased about the improvements. Cheyne shared some prospective TI projects that we are tracking and explained that this year we can only submit the top 2 to the statewide competition, so the grant round is likely to be competitive this year. Cheyne also shared that staff are working to secure funding for the 2024 Ahtanum Village Restoration TI project, and there is a chance, if PCSRF and the Governor's RCO budget are funded in full, that it could be funded this session.

Cheyne gave an opportunity for the Board to ask questions about the proposed 2026 SRFB grant round schedule, SRFB RFP, and Lead Entity Manual. He explained that the Introductory Glossary appendix of the LE Manual isn't quite ready and so wasn't included in the packet, but staff plan to complete it before releasing the RFP. The Board asked clarifying questions and were okay with staff adding the glossary to the final draft of the 2026 LE Manual without further review.

A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the SRFB calendar as presented. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the SRFB RFP as presented. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the LE Manual as presented with the addition of the final version of the glossary. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

#### Committee Recruitment:

Cheyne shared TAG recruitment updates. The TAG is down to 9 members but staff will be working to recruit 3 more by the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. The CC has 4 seats to fill. Delano has a recruit for Kittitas County, Troy has a recruit for Yakima County. Another candidate has also submitted their interest statement for the Yakima County seat. The Kittitas County and Yakima County Board members deferred nominating a candidate to fill their respective seats until the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Cheyne will follow up with them by mid-March. There are two nominations for the Benton County seats, recruited by Richard and approved by the other Benton County Board members; Richard introduced the nominations. The Board discussed.

A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the nomination of Brent Gerry to the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board Citizen Committee. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the nomination of Jim Fry, Jr to the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board Citizen Committee. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Cheyne gave a brief update on other grant rounds. There are six Fish Barrier Removal Board projects and we are submitting letters of support for each. We are not aware of any Floodplains by Design projects being submitted by partners in the Yakima Basin this year; Alex emphasized this is not a concern, but

rather an indication that sponsors are already busy implementing previously funded projects. The Department of Ecology Streamflow grant round is open and Board members are encouraged to spread the word.

### **8) Legislative Outreach Program**

Alex shared updates on plans for Salmon Day Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>. Adam, Richard, Julie, and Troy will be joining Alex and Cheyne in Olympia. Our discussions will be guided by the local talking points in our January letter to legislators and by the WSC Salmon Day talking points. Julie and Cheyne have been working to set up meetings. Julie has successfully scheduled a half-hour group meeting with all Yakima Basin senators.

The group briefly discussed pending legislation but did not highlight any additions to Board talking points.

*Meeting adjourned 4:05pm.*

*Minutes taken by Cheyne Mayer*