



Minutes of the April 1, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting

Approved May 27, 2026

Location: The meeting was held at the Ben Franklin Transit, 1000 Columbia Park Trail 99352 in Richland, 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), Amanda McKinney (Yakima County; in person and virtual), Troy Havens (Yakima County, virtual), Steve Becken (Prosser), Audrey Scott (Yakama Nation, Virtual), Delano Palmer (Ellensburg; virtual)

Public present: Keaton Curtis, (Klickitat Lead Entity Coordinator), Julie Schilling (Union Gap), Kevin Scribner (Salmon-Safe)

Staff present: Alex Conley (Executive Director), Amber Knox (Operations Manager, minutes), Cheyne Mayer (Lead Entity Coordinator)

LOWER YAKIMA TOUR

Prior to the meeting the Board of Directors and guests took a tour of the Bateman Island Causeway Removal, the Amon Creek Temperature Refugia Project and water stargrass harvesting equipment stored at Benton County Weed Control.

PRE-BOARD MEETING LUNCH and WORKSHOP

Workshop started at 12:40 pm following a pizza lunch.

Discussion of partner salmon recovery work with Keaton Curtice, Klickitat County Economic Development Specialist and Lead Entity coordinator

Keaton introduced himself and gave an overview of the Klickitat Lead Entity area, the types of projects being done and their lead entity process. He discussed how the Klickitat Lead Entity coordinates with the Yakima Recovery Board on splitting the shared Mid-C allocation and other tasks, noting the desire to work together in the future to allow monitoring spending to be awarded to Klickitat Lead Entity projects.

Salmon-Safe Program Presentation by Kevin Scribner, Walla Walla Agriculture Outreach/Federal Policy/Special Projects Director

Kevin Scribner introduced himself and the Salmon-Safe program. He reviewed the range of Salmon-Safe certification programs for everything from farms to parks and urban development, highlighting those of potential interest to local governments like Board members. He emphasized that Salmon-Safe is an example of a voluntary, incentive-based approach that can help create a clean water culture that

supports salmon recovery. Finally he noted that Congress is working to reauthorize the EPA's Columbia River Toxics program.

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. Amber Knox introduced herself and thanked the board for the opportunity to engage in this work as Operations Manager.

2) Agenda and Review of Minutes

The Board reviewed the current agenda and January Board meeting minutes.

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

3) Updates

Alex gave a water supply update. The reservoirs are almost all full, snowpack has gained, and groundwater moisture is high. While junior irrigators will be prorated, there should be a bit more water than in recent years. The current spring freshets mean good early season outmigration conditions for fish; how conditions hold up later in the season will depend on how long the snowmelt lasts and how much groundwater helps maintain summer flows. In general, we did not experience a lack of moisture this winter; it's just not stored in the snowpack.

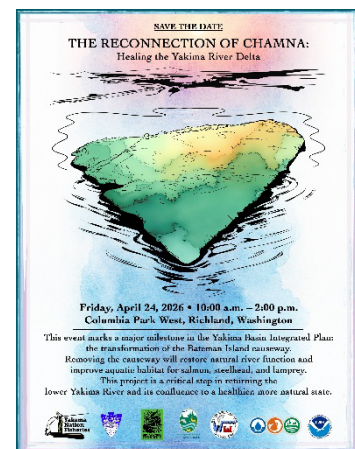
Alex gave fish update, noting that the steelhead run to date is improving considerably from the lows seen over the last 5 years.

The Reconnection of Chamna: Healing the Yakima River Delta

Yakama Nation Fisheries, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District, and Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group invite us to celebrate the removal of the Bateman Island causeway. Please feel free to share this invitation with your friends and colleagues – this is a public event.

Date: Friday, April 24, 2026, 10 am to 2 pm

Location: Columbia Park West, Richland, WA (across from the REACH Museum)



Alex noted that the Populus Symposium happened in late February (its 9th year). Half the crowd was there for the first time, which fits well with the symposium's emphasis on practical advice for riparian restoration practitioners. The Board was active in establishing the workshop and continues to serve on the planning team and host the Populus website.

Finally, Alex reviewed Recovery Program activities with a focus on the Lower Yakima, including 1) staff support of the Water Stargrass Coalition; 3) staff participation in the Lower Yakima Working Group and Lower Yakima 10-year plan development, and ongoing work to develop Yakipedia Pages for the lower Yakima. He noted that the 2010 Lower Yakima Assessment the Board helped complete is still helping guide project identification and prioritization.

Alex noted that he will be presenting to the Prosser city council on May 26. He Presented to the Ellensburg city council in February; he always welcomes invitations to speak to municipalities and public groups.

4) Public Comment

No public comment was received.

5) Correspondence

Alex highlighted sent project support letters in the correspondence packet; no further discussion was requested. The group then reviewed the recently received letters from the City of Union Gap and lawyers representing Red Hawk Ranch in Thorp.

a. Union Gap removal of Julie Schilling from Board of Directors

The Board discussed the City of Union Gap's censure of Council Member Schilling and their removal of her from her position on our Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors expressed regret at her removal from the Board of directors, noting her strong support of the Board's work over the years. Staff noted that Jared Iverson from the City of Selah is her designated alternate, and that he would step in to fill her seat. Julie expressed that she still wants to volunteer with the Board in an unofficial capacity and participate in the outreach efforts. Board members expressed support for her ongoing engagement if she was not voting with the Board of Directors or representing the City of Selah.

The Board of Directors reviewed the draft letter responding to the City of Union Gap and supported sending it under the Chair's signature.

b. Red Hawk Ranch correspondence/response regarding KCT project

The Board discussed the series of letters received from Red Hawk Ranch's lawyers, the Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) and the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) regarding KCT's Hutchinson Ranch Floodplain Conceptual Design project. After reviewing the issues and the letters, members noted that no action appeared to be requested of the Board, and that the requested information on how to secure information on the Board's grant program had already been shared by RCO. Members noted that it is unfortunate that the adjoining landowner is not willing to participate in a design process that could potentially identify mutually beneficial actions that could reduce his flood risk. **A motion was made and seconded to not send a reply to the letters. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.***

6) Review and Approval of FY2025 Financial Statement and 990 Tax Return

Abby Bailey, a CPA who specializes in small nonprofits, joined the meeting via zoom. She reviewed the draft 990 and FY 2025 Financial statement and Audit that she has prepared for the Board. She noted

that she had not identified any concerns to bring to the Board and reviewed the accounting standards used and the financial position of the Board. Alex noted that he would still like to complete a final review of the 990 prior to submission. A motion was made to approve the Financial Statement and 990 pending a final review by the Executive Director and an email review by the Board of Directors of any changes made in response to the staff review. The motion was seconded and approved with the support of all present.

7) Board Logistics

- a. **Amendment to MOA #9 with Mid-Columbia Fisheries for Aimee's time supporting the Bull Trout Work Group.** MOA #9 allows the Board to provide funding it receives from the Bureau of Land Management to Mid-Columbia Fisheries for restoration work completed on or near BLM lands in the Ringer Road area just above the Yakima River Canyon. The proposed amendment extends the contract end date, adds one task to the scope, and increases the budget to reallocate unspent YBFWRB money for staff time to on-the-ground project implementation. **A MOTION was made and seconded to approve the amendment to MOA #9 as presented. The motion was approved with the support of all present.**

- b. **Amendment to Board contract for Naches Forest Partnership coordination**

Alex reviewed the funding the Board has secured for the Naches Forest Partnership and presented the proposed amendment to the Board agreement with Katie Strahl to coordinate the group. The amendment would extend the agreement end date to June 30, 2026, and increase the not to exceed amount from \$15,000 to \$25,000. When anticipated funding is fully secured, staff will draft another amendment to extend this agreement through the end of 2027. Staff hope to have that completed prior to the May Board of Directors meeting.

A MOTION was made and seconded to extend the contract with Katie Strahl through June 30, 2026 and increase the amount not to exceed to \$25,000. The motion was approved with the support of all present; staff were directed to fix the typos in the draft presented to match the terms of the motion.

- c. **Update to Board Contributions to the Simple IRA Retirement Plan for Staff**

Alex gave a brief review of a recent IRS rule change increasing the maximum employer contribution to a Simple IRA retirement plan from 3 to 4%. He noted that the Executive Committee had proposed increasing the Board's contributions accordingly and implementing that change as part of the annual compensation adjustments for staff to be discussed in June (so that the 1% match increase can be considered part of the overall compensation adjustments for the new fiscal year).

A MOTION was made and seconded to increase IRA matching to 4% as part of regular staff performance reviews in June 2026, to take effect July 1, 2026. The motion was approved with the support of all present.

Alex requested input on the May 27 Board meeting and asked if tours should be part of most or all meetings. Recognizing that the May meeting will be work intensive, Nancy suggested that there be no tour this time and that we retain workshop time to draft schedule for next year to plan tours/project visits. The Board agreed to hold the meeting at the Recovery Board office; Alex asked

for topic suggestions/requests. Richard asked about a personnel policy update; Alex noted that policy updates will be Amber and Alex's next project, but that an RFP has not yet been released. A proposal for completing that will be presented at the May meeting. Members recommend developing a Board meeting schedule for next year in which we alternate between travel meetings with a short tour and meetings at the Board's office.

Alex called the board's attention to planning for the 2026 August annual meeting. The Yakama Nation will host us. Alex presented draft agenda including 2 tour sites. Alex and Adam requested board input on invitations and outreach. Staff will prepare a flyer for the annual meeting to include letters to legislators and the annual Board membership mailing in late May

Alex requested that members send any work plan, bylaw & policy revision proposals and award nominations prior to 4/30 Executive Committee meeting. Cheyne briefly reviewed the one proposed bylaw change received to date, which would reduce the mandated size of the Technical Advisory Group from 12-15 members to 10-12 members to reduce the recruitment challenges and ensure an effective group size for discussions.

8) Lead Entity Program Updates

a. Citizen Committee nominations

Benton, Kittitas, and Yakima seats are open.

Benton – no candidates at this time

Kittitas – one candidate: Joe Chanas. MOTION to approve Joe to the committee. *The motion was approved with the support of all present.*

Yakima – 3 candidates: Hilda Gonzalez, Luke Jackson, and Ahtziry Medina. Alex noted that bylaws allow elected officials on citizens committees so long as they are not on the board of directors simultaneously. MOTION to approve Luke to the committee. *The motion was approved with the support of all present*

b. Grant Round Update

Cheyne shared updates on the 2026 grant round.

10 applications are under consideration. In the regular SRFB grant round, 7 projects were received totaling \$2M, which is more than expected funding. PCSRF funds are still pending. In the riparian grant round, 1 project was received and it requested less than the total funds available; staff will be exploring options to use the remaining funds. In the Targeted Investments grant round, 2 projects were received, which is under the limit for how many projects can be submitted to the statewide grant competition; if both projects are cleared for funding, staff anticipate that both will be submitted.

9) Legislative Outreach

The group briefly reviewed the Board's legislative outreach activities since the January meeting and discussed the outcomes of the legislative session. The Board reviewed the proposed post-session thank you letter to legislators and expressed support for sending it out under the chair's signature. The group briefly discussed developing a proactive policy statement this spring, to inform future discussions with decision makers, instead of waiting for October.

Adjourned 4:04