YAKIMA BASIN FISH AND WILDLIFE RECOVERY BOARD

Approved Minutes of the September 23rd 2026, Board of Directors Meeting

The meeting was held at the Ellensburg City Hall with remote participation via Zoom.

Board Members Present in Person: Adam Fyall (Benton County); Steve Becken (City of Prosser); Richard Bloom (City of West Richland); Nancy Lilliquist (City of Ellensburg); Geoff Scherer (City of Roslyn); and Daniel Tiliano (City of Yakima).

Board Members Present Remotely: Sara Ehmer (Yakima County); Delano Palmer (City of Ellensburg); Juliet Potrykus (City of Yakima); and Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation).

Staff Present: Alex Conley, Cheyne Mayer, and Amber Knox.

Guest Speakers: Todd Myers (Washington Policy Center) and Paul Ward.

Members of the Public: Abby Bailley, Colleen Malmassari, Julie Schilling, Connor Thompson, and one unidentified attendee.

Before the meeting, the group toured the Lower Kittitas Reach and Reecer Creek floodplain restoration projects from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Lunch and Workshop Session

The workshop session was called to order at 12:42 p.m.

Todd Myers of the Washington Policy Center presented the proposed Salmon Recovery Permit Accelerator bill.

Myers explained that the proposal would create a permit-acceleration function within the Washington State Office of Regulatory Assistance for state-funded salmon-recovery projects. The proposal would identify regulatory barriers, recommend changes to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), and compile requests for legislative consideration. Members discussed the distinction between the Revised Code of Washington and the WAC, possible applications to culverts and Floodplains by Design projects, the anticipated fiscal note, potential cost savings, and opportunities to coordinate with housing-permit reform. Myers said supporters could assist through letters or other statements of support and invited follow-up questions by email.

Todd Myers left at 12:59 p.m. Connor Thompson joined remotely at 1:03 p.m. Paul Ward and Sara Ehmer joined remotely at 1:06 p.m.

At 1:09 p.m., Paul Ward, Director of Federal Government Relations at the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), led a discussion of federal updates and sea-lion predation legislation, with a focus on H.R. 9621 which just passed out of committee in the House.

Ward reviewed sea-lion predation on migrating salmon and legislation that would expand removal authority in the lower Columbia River and western Washington. He described implementation under the 2018 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, examples

from the Ballard Locks, Willamette Falls, and Bonneville Dam, and the financial and operational challenges of removal programs. Members discussed effects on Chinook salmon, steelhead, and smolts; differences between California and Steller sea lions; population safeguards; tribal participation; opposition to the proposal; and the bill's uncertain congressional schedule. Ward said he would monitor the legislation, review recent federal changes to the Endangered Species Act, and return in early 2027 with appropriations priorities.

Paul Ward left at 1:44 p.m.

At 1:45 p.m., Alex Conley led a discussion of potential Board policy positions and outreach plans for winter 2027.

Business Meeting

The business meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m.

1) Welcome and Introductions: Board members and guests introduced themselves. Chair Adam Fyall confirmed a quorum and stated that Secretary Nancy Lilliquist would assume facilitation when he left.
2) Agenda and Review of Minutes: Nancy Lilliquist moved to approve the agenda and minutes. Richard Bloom seconded the motion. The Board of Directors approved the motion without opposition.
3) Updates:
    a. Annual Meeting: Members thanked the Yakama Nation, John Washines, and Brandon Rogers for their hospitality in August.
    b. Fish and Water: Staff reported that reservoir levels for this year are above recent years, though still below average, except for Rimrock, which may end up with above average carryover. Members discussed an October 21 Benton County workshop on cloud-seeding technology and possible state support for a pilot project. Spring Chinook returns were poor, summer Chinook and sockeye returns improved, and steelhead returns at Bonneville are likely to be the lowest since counting began in 1938.
    c. Recovery Program: Staff provided updates on stargrass work and the Gold Creek and Amon Thermal Refugia projects, which are currently in construction. Staff also reported on bull trout recovery coordination, redd surveys, and a proposal to host the Salvelinus confluentus Curiosity Society meeting in the Yakima Basin in 2027.
4) Public Comment: No public comments were offered.
5) Correspondence: The Board reviewed two support letters signed by Alex Conley, and approved a letter concerning Populus and a statement addressing recreational impacts on the South Fork Tieton River. No concerns were raised.

Abby Bailley joined at 2:31 p.m.

6) Review and Approval of Fiscal Year 2026 Financial Statements and Form 990 Tax Return: Abby Bailley presented the draft financial statements and Form 990 tax return. She reported continued improvements in expense and payroll tracking and a clean audit with no findings. Members received one week to review the documents. Unless a concern is submitted by October 2, the documents will be considered approved; otherwise, action would be deferred to November. Richard Bloom moved to approve the financial statements and Form 990 under this process.

Nancy Lilliquist seconded the motion. The Board of Directors approved the motion without opposition.

Colleen Malmassari joined at 2:50 p.m.

7) Review of Updated Employee Handbook: Colleen Malmassari presented the updates to the employee handbook. She summarized the process for bringing the handbook into current compliance, eliminating redundancies, and incorporating Executive Committee review. Alex Conley will present a final draft to the Executive Committee on October 30 and seek Board of Directors approval in November.

8) Board Staffing:

    1. Recovery Coordinator Position and Hiring Plan: Richard Bloom moved to approve the position description and hiring plan, Nancy Lilliquist seconded the motion. The Board of Directors approved the motion without opposition. Staff intend to post the listing in October, interview in November or December, and target a start date of January 1.
    2. Shorett Proposal Addendum: Richard Bloom moved to accept the addendum to engage Sarah Elliot to manage the hiring process as presented. Nancy Lilliquist seconded the motion. The Board of Directors approved the motion without opposition.
    3. Executive Director Position Description and Succession Plan: Members discussed updates to the position description and succession plan.

9) Board Logistics:

    a. Resource Conservation and Development Contract: The Board of Directors reviewed the contract for Naches Forest Partnership support.
    b. Department of Natural Resources Contract: The Board of Directors reviewed the contract for Naches Forest Partnership support.

Nancy Lilliquist moved to approve the two contracts supporting the Naches Forest Partnership. Richard Bloom seconded the motion. The Board of Directors approved the motion without opposition and without discussion.

At 3:32 p.m., Adam Fyall transitioned to remote participation, and Nancy Lilliquist assumed facilitation of the meeting.

    c. Budget Scenarios: Staff reported that the Board of Directors can support the planned hire. If Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) funding does not arrive, the Board of Directors will revisit the budget and may need to seek operational cost savings.
    d. November 18 Board Meeting: Planned topics include the Naches Forest Partnership, Bull Trout Action Plan, employee handbook, Executive Director position description and transition plan, and quarterly financial report.
    e. Other Business: No additional business was raised.

Lead Entity Program Updates: Lead Entity Program Updates: The SRFB approved the ranked lists on September 15, fully funding six Yakima Basin projects and partially funding one. Staff are awaiting Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) funding and legislative funding for our Targeted Investment projects, which ranked first and fifth out of ten in the statewide ranked list.

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Citizens Committee will meet in October to review the grant round and consider scoring rubric/guidance changes. The Monitoring Committee will meet in November to determine priorities for an anticipated 2027 monitoring grant round. Staff are tracking the development of the monitoring and riparian grant programs and will be pushing for manual 18 updates to add a clear process for project termination and stop-work orders in light of the project termination negotiations that happened this year with the Teanaway River Mile 5 project.

Citizens Committee Openings: There are two openings in Benton County, and another may arise in Kittitas County. Richard Bloom and Steve Becken requested recruitment materials. Nancy Lilliquist requested a list of current committee members and affiliations. The Board of Directors plans to return to this matter in November and fill positions in January.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Approved by Board of Directors vote November 18, 2026.