



MIDDLE METHOW NEWS

Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation

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Issue Number 3 | July 2011



SEPA and You

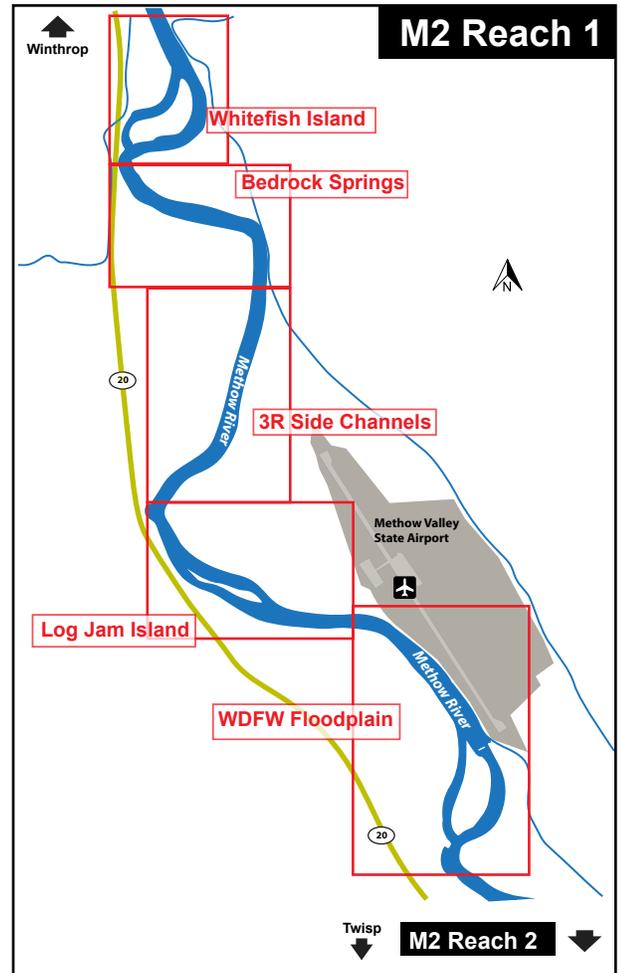
The comment period for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Review of the overall Middle Methow Reach 1 Project closed on May 18th, 2011. MSRF will review and respond to all comments received. These responses, along with any new information developed during the comment period, will be included in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The DEIS, scheduled for completion this summer, will include a separate summary of all comments received with clear responses from the design team as an attachment. Once the DEIS has been submitted to the Okanogan County, the Planning Department will review it and issue a final determination. The county will then advertise its determination and open a second 30-day comment period to solicit public input. The county will review any additional comments received prior to affirming, rejecting, or modifying its final determination.

Although SEPA typically does not include a formal scoping period, MSRF requested the County open up the process to increase public input early in project development and design. According to Char Schumacher with the Okanogan County Planning Department, the only mechanism to expand the process was for the county to issue a Determination of Significance (DNS). According to MSRF President, Chris Johnson, "MSRF welcomes the Determination of Significance. We wanted to create an opportunity for greater public involvement in the design process, and this allowed us to do it."

Two public SEPA scoping events for Reach 1 were held in mid-April. To reach the widest audience, one was an evening meeting in Winthrop, and the second was a Saturday morning event in Twisp. The meetings provided MSRF and the Bureau of Reclamation an opportunity to present the project concepts and answer questions. The county also solicited written comments through a direct mailing to landowners to reach those who may not have been able to attend the scoping events.

For more information on the comment process, contact Char Schumacher, Okanogan County, at (509) 422-7113, cschumacher@co.okanogan.wa.us or Chris Johnson, at (509) 429-1232, msrf@communitynet.org. The expanded SEPA checklist and supporting documents are available online at <http://www.methowsalmon.org/m2/sepa.html>



Regional Salmon Recovery Organization Releases *The Power of Partnership*

The Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board has released a 13 minute video called *The Power of Partnership*. The video highlights local landscapes and tells a compelling story underlying the salmon recovery efforts in our region. The video can be seen at the organization's web site, www.ucsr.org/videos. A limited number of DVDs are also available for outreach and education efforts for schools, non-profits, and salmon recovery partners. The UCSRB assists partners with the implementation of *The Upper Columbia Spring Chinook and Steelhead Recovery Plan*, a non-regulatory document developed to restore self-sustaining spring Chinook and steelhead populations and guide these species off of the endangered species list.



Respect the River

A program sponsored by the USDA Forest Service



Let Sleeping Logs Lie

When a tree falls into the river during high water, it begins a new life. Water tumbles under the branches, pours over trunks, and scours out plunge pools where fish can rest. Fallen logs turn the river into a complex place—full of pools and riffles, fast spots and slow spots, a place brimming with life. Algae, microbes and insects find new homes on fallen wood. Submerged branches offer cover for the fish while aquatic insects cling to the wood, and algae grows. Fish feed in the pools that form downstream and hide near submerged logs and branches.

Whether standing next to the water or floating downstream, dead wood will be recruited during future windstorms or high flows to provide habitat essential for salmon. Clearing or cutting downed wood from the river removes this essential resource. Before disturbing this valuable natural cycle, please consider letting sleeping logs lie.

Fish Update

It's an important time of year for fish the Methow Valley. This year, a deep snow pack and a cool spring are causing a longer than normal spring run-off in the streams and rivers. Higher peak flows are an important part of the natural river process. High flow events allow the river to build and maintain habitat complexity, which benefits fish and the riparian ecosystem over the long-term.

For fish biologists, the field season is underway, and the local USGS crew is continuing their work tracking fish movement and habitat use. In the Methow River, spring is when steelhead spawn, baby Chinook salmon (known as "fry") emerge from their redds, and juvenile steelhead smolts and yearling spring Chinook begin their long migration to the Pacific.

Who is where, and when?

Steelhead spawn from late March through early June, with the peak usually in the second week of April. Spawning begins earlier in downstream reaches and proceeds upstream as the snow recedes, flows increase, and water warms. By mid-April, spawning steelhead adults have reached the



reaches of Middle and Upper Methow River. Steelhead use a wide range of spawning habitat, ranging from the Methow River to smaller tributary streams. Eggs laid earlier in the river begin to hatch at the end of June, while eggs laid later may hatch as late as mid-July. After rearing in freshwater for 2-3 years, steelhead smolts migrate out to the ocean in the spring.

Wild Spring Chinook Salmon fry typically start to emerge in March. Once they emerge, they seek safety from predators by moving to shallow, slower moving water and channel margins with good cover. Juvenile spring Chinook will spend an entire year near their freshwater birthplace before heading to the sea. As water temperatures and flows increase during April through June, hundreds of thousands of both wild and hatchery-reared Chinook smolts begin their outmigration towards the Columbia River. Around this same time, adult spring Chinook salmon begin their upstream journey from the ocean back to the Methow.



Migratory Bull Trout take advantage of spring high water to begin a slow migration upstream from overwintering habitat in Lake Pateros and in deep holes in the Methow River. They migrate to small headwater streams where they will spawn in September. Large bull trout feed on juvenile fish, including whitefish, sculpin, trout, salmon, and steelhead, and on whitefish and steelhead eggs. Bull trout eggs laid in the headwater streams the previous fall begin to hatch in March. The young fish will remain near where they emerged, hidden in organic matter on the streambed, until they are large enough to catch bigger prey and avoid predators.



Pacific Lamprey spawn in the mainstem Methow and Chewuch Rivers April through July. The young lamprey, called "ammocoetes," are approximately 1/4" when they emerge from the gravel. Three weeks later they move to silty and sandy areas of low current velocity. They remain there for 4-7 years before migrating to the ocean. Adult lamprey return to the Methow, arriving in August through October, and spend the winter among large river rocks before spawning in the spring. Like salmon, adult lamprey die after spawning.



Summer Chinook Salmon spawn later in the year than spring Chinook, so their fry hatch later in the spring. Baby summer Chinook begin to migrate to the ocean shortly after emerging from the gravel.



Coho Salmon hatch in the spring and remain in the fresh water for around 1 year. Yearling coho smolts migrate downstream to the ocean with the spring high water.



Resident Rainbow and Cutthroat Trout typically spawn in the spring, often in smaller tributaries. Trout start emerging from the gravel about 4-5 weeks after fertilization.



You can track the progress of fish as they move upstream at <http://www.fpc.org/adultsalmon/AdultCumulativeTable.asp>



MONITORING PROGRAM CONTINUES WORK

The local USGS crew is continuing their multi-year project to track fish behavior in the Methow River. This large-scale effort to monitor how fish use the river, both before and after M2 project construction, will help quantify the effects of habitat improvement work in the Middle Methow.

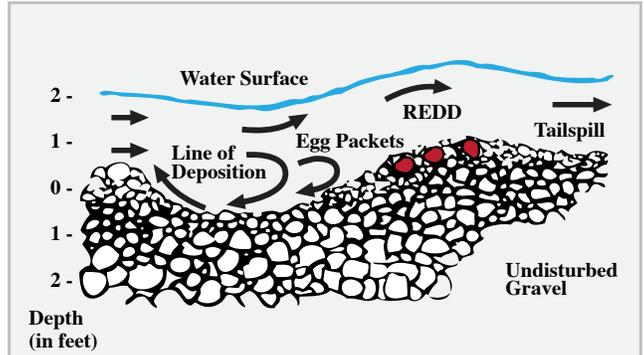
A crew of four to six people will collect juvenile salmonids in the river margins and backwaters from Mazama to Carlton. To do this, the USGS will catch fish using electro-shockers and fish traps. Once caught, each fish is weighed, measured, implanted with a PIT tag, and then released back into the river. The PIT tags allow the fish to be tracked as they move over electronic detection arrays located in various places throughout the river system.

The USGS is also monitoring and observing side-channel habitat to understand how fish use these areas. Side channels can be important rearing areas for juvenile salmonids. This spring, summer, and fall, the crew will monitor side channels along the Methow River to estimate juvenile fish production. This effort will help biologists define fish habitat preference, as well as fish survival and growth, over the year.

As the river rises in the spring, new emerged fish (fry) migrate to the river margins and into side channels in search of food and cover. The USGS crew collect the fry using nets. These juveniles are then counted, weighed, and measured. The crew uses great care when handling these small sensitive fish. Later in the season, the crew will return to the sites to recapture these fish to see how much they have grown in each habitat area. Growth rates in different habitats and areas of the Methow can then be compared to see where fish do best.

While the focus of the USGS study is on salmon, the crew is sampling all species of fish in the Methow in order to better understand how the different fish interact and how this interaction affects salmon production. This broad effort will provide the USGS with a more complete understanding of the current health of salmon populations.

Data collection for the USGS study began in 2008. With Phase 1 of the M2 habitat project construction scheduled to begin in 2012, the study will provide scientists with four years of pre-implementation data. Study findings are reported to the Bureau of Reclamation every three years, and PIT tagged fish can be followed online at http://www.ptocentral.org/dbaccess/InStrmDtctn/InStrmDtctn_form.html.



Protect Our Gravel

Salmon eggs spend 2 to 6 months in gravel nests called redds. After emerging from the egg, the little fish hide in the gravel until their yolk sac is used up. Soon they begin to feed on algae and microorganisms, and eventually become free swimming fry.

Riverbed gravels are full of life. Walking or driving through side channels and gravel can harm these young fish beneath the gravel surface.



Monitoring and Survey Access

Monitoring agencies such as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Columbia Research Lab will be collecting and sampling thousands of fish to monitor their migration patterns and life cycles in and out of the Methow Valley.

For more information regarding fish information in the Methow please call:

Wesley Tibbits (USGS) 997-0640 ext. 3 and or Charlie Snow (WDFW) 997-0048.

Information about the instream PIT tag detection program is at this website:

http://php.ptagis.org/wiki/index.php/USGS_Instream_Sites

Yakama Nation, Reclamation, Wild Fish Conservancy and Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation will also have science crews in the rivers again this spring. Michael Notaro of Watershed Resource Solutions will be contacting landowners as work progresses. If you have questions or concerns, please call Michael at (509) 429-2939.



Yakama Nation Reach 2 Update:

Lewisia Road to Twisp (LRT Reach) Project Moves Forward

The Yakama Nation has released a project concepts report detailing field analysis findings and restoration alternatives throughout the lower half of the Middle Methow Reach (LRT Reach). The report was completed by the Yakama Nation's habitat restoration design consultant Inter-Fluve, Inc. Digital copies of the report can be downloaded on the Yakama Fisheries UCRHP website: <http://host119.yakama.com/Habitat/UCHR/UCHR.html>.

The report identifies three major project sections within the lower half of the Middle Methow Reach. Restoration concepts within each of these project sections include:

- Pool Enhancement
- Side Channel Enhancement
- Bar Apex and Mid-Channel Logjams
- Backwater Channels and Alcoves
- Enhancing Natural River Migration Processes
- River Bank Log Jams & Large Wood Enhancement of Existing Riprap



Hans Smith
Yakama Nation
Habitat Biologist

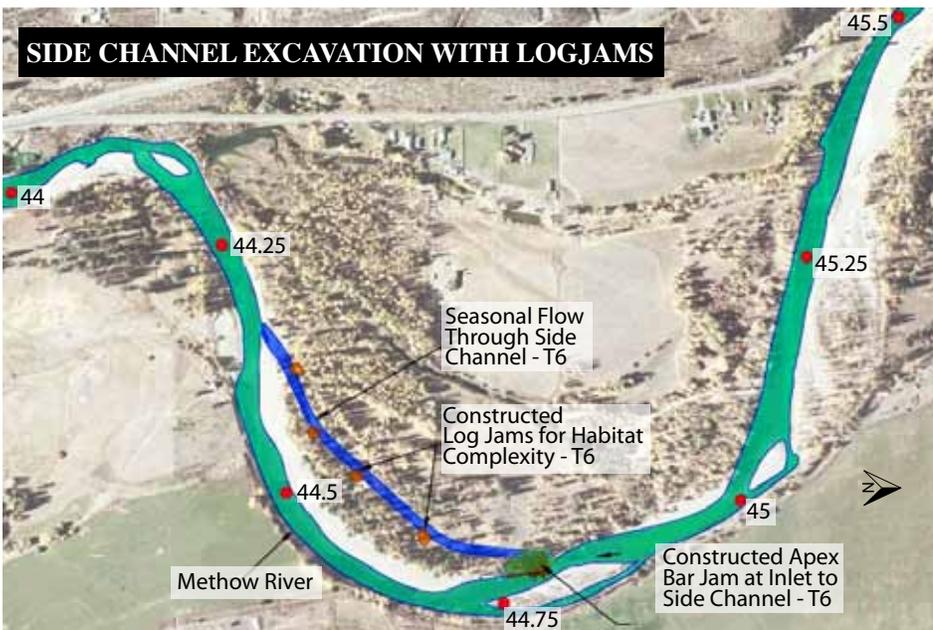
Local Habitat Biologists employed by the Yakama Nation are now contacting landowners in the LRT Reach to solicit project support and gain access to private lands for further design level survey. The Yakama Nation is working to secure landowner agreements and construction level designs for two of the major subreaches by the end of 2011. The next stage will initiate environmental permitting and public notification for specific projects. It is expected that two major restoration projects will be undertaken by the Yakama Nation in the LRT Reach in the summer and fall of 2012. Further design level survey; landowner agreement solicitation; and finalization of restoration designs, permitting, and public notification will continue in 2012 in the other subreaches, with expected project implementation to take place in 2013.



Where does all the spring melt go?

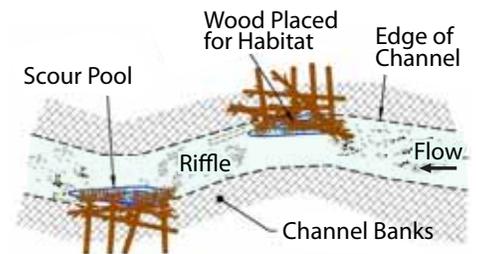
Not all of it is tumbling toward the Columbia. Some of it percolates into gravel bars covered with high water. Some water seeps underground in riparian areas next to the river, and more oozes into sediments deposited behind big logs near the riverbank. Later this summer, rain will be scarce, and mountain snow will be nearly gone. Floodplains, streamsides, and sediments will slowly release water stored during spring melt. The rivers and their plant and animal communities need the water stored by wetlands, floodplains and riparian zones.

Restoration of juvenile fish rearing habitat along the LRT is a high priority for the Yakama Nation. Restoration concepts for existing sidechannels such as the one shown below at the Two Channels Sub-Reach aim to increase the period of connection of cold water sidechannel habitats with the main stem Methow River by augmenting sidechannel flows with groundwater gallery systems. Habitat improvements also include adding large wood pieces into the sidechannels to provide more diverse cover and hydraulic complexity important to meet juvenile rearing needs.

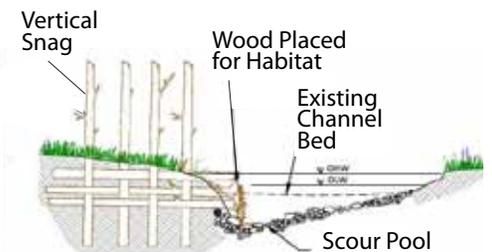


- Methow River Miles
- Methow River
- T-6 Side Channel Excavation
- T-6 Logjam Footprint
- T-6 Side Channel Apex Bar Jam Footprint

TYPICAL PLAN VIEW



TYPICAL CROSS SECTION



NOT TO SCALE



Meet the Scientist

Brian Fisher - Ecologist & MSRF Project Manager



When Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (MSRF) needed a project manager for their section of the upcoming M2 project, they were looking for someone with specific qualifications. They needed someone who had the scientific background to participate fully in the design process, as well as someone with experience working in the field with contractors and heavy equipment. In addition, they wanted someone local who could advocate for the community during project development. Fortunately, MSRF already had someone on staff who met all three requirements. That someone was Brian Fisher.

Brian's background and experience made him the natural choice to lead the M2 project for MSRF. As an aquatic ecologist, he is interested in how the organisms found in and around water interact with their physical environment and with other organisms. Brian applies his knowledge to help MSRF develop projects that improve conditions not only for fish, but also for the river and surrounding ecosystem.

Before joining the MSRF team, Brian inventoried streams and forests for the US Forest Service, conducted habitat and watershed evaluations with the Pacific Watershed Institute, and sampled fish with the US Geological Survey. Since 2009, Brian has worked as a project manager for MSRF, gaining direct experience managing the construction phase of habitat improvement projects. He will use his ecological and construction experience as he manages the M2 project throughout the design, permitting, construction, and revegetation stages.

Growing up in Wenatchee, Brian fell in love with the landscape of the East Cascades and moved to the Methow Valley in 1999. When he is not wading in the valley's rivers and streams, Brian is a gardener, beekeeper, birder, and skier. He shares these activities and interests with his family in their old farmhouse near the confluence of the Methow River and Libby Creek. A shoreline landowner himself, Brian is grateful for the opportunity to work in the Methow watershed and develop projects that help support healthy fish, wildlife, and human communities. "As an ecologist," he said recently, "my real interest is in healthy ecosystems. Salmon are a keystone species, so by improving habitat for fish, we can benefit our entire local ecosystem."

Warm Weather & Fast Water Call for Caution



10 WAYS TO PADDLE SAFELY

1. ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET

Wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times on the water.

2. DON'T DRINK WHILE PADDLING

Avoid alcohol, which impairs the coordination and balance you need to control a canoe, kayak, or raft.

3. STAY LOW

Learn how to enter and exit your boat safely and stay low in your boat when possible. Most paddlesport-related drownings are the result of capsizing.

4. KEEP YOUR BALANCE

Don't overload your boat. Distribute passengers, secure gear evenly and low, and leave your dog on land.

5. PRACTICE THE WET EXIT

Learn how to get out of, hang on to, right, and re-enter your capsized boat.

6. DON'T GET LEFT IN THE COLD

Dress for the weather conditions and be prepared for coldwater immersion. Hypothermia is a danger any time of year.

7. PLAN AHEAD

Know the water you're paddling, plan your day of paddling, and file a "float plan" so that someone knows where to find you and when you plan to return.

8. NEVER PADDLE ALONE

Companions can come to your aid if you get in trouble. New paddlers should paddle with someone more experienced—it's a great way to learn and remain safe if there's a mishap.

9. BE IN COMMAND

Know how to move your boat forward, back, and sideways, and how to stop using paddle strokes. Watch ahead for hazards like undercut rocks, bridge pilings, large branches and trees, big drop-offs, or other boats.

10. LEARN ABOUT YOUR BOAT

Consider taking a canoe or kayak safety class. Call 1-800-929-5162 or visit www.acanet.org to learn about classes offered by the American Canoe Association.



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Landowners Dodged a Bullet This Spring

The spring runoff is behind us, leaving many riverfront landowners wondering if they should take action to protect their homes or property from high river flows. When rivers in the area rise to unusually high levels, Okanogan County may issue an emergency declaration like the one on June 7th. While this makes it easier to get permission from WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to work in the river, landowners need to be aware that an emergency is not the same as a free pass:

• Emergency permits—verbal approval from WDFW and the Corps is still required. Before taking any action, remember to contact these folks:

WDFW: Contact Area Habitat Biologists Lynda Hoffman (509) 997-9428 or Connie Iten (509) 826-3123; after hours call the Emergency HPA Hotline: (360) 902-2537. For more information, visit <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/hpa/>

Corps: Contact the Columbia River Section Chief Dave Martin (206) 764-6848; after hours call Muffy Walker (206) 200-9954, or Alisa Ralph, (206) 452-9495.

For more information visit

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/Menu.cfm?sitename=REG&pagename=Emergencies>

Retroactive environmental review of the actions may be required

• After the water recedes, landowners may have to remove or modify any placed rock or fill and/or mitigate for the environmental impacts of their actions at their own expense

The best time to protect your property from the effects of high water is during low water. By planning ahead, landowners can understand the true costs of the project, have more accurate design and construction, and explore partnerships that may help offset the costs and mitigate the effects of the planned work.

M2 Reach 1 Project Schedule: What's Next?

• **Piezometers:** These test wells are needed to measure the availability of groundwater in certain project areas throughout the year. MSRF installed test wells this spring after careful site selection and landowner consultation.

• **Landowner Meetings:** Over the next few months, project partners will be meeting with small groups of landowners to discuss possible design options for specific areas. We will only move forward with designs that are acceptable to the landowners involved.

• **Public Scoping:** MSRF is developing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement based on input received during scoping for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process.

• **Design Alternatives:** By summer 2011, we will select our preferred design alternatives for the WDFW Floodplain and Whitefish Island project sites and begin to move forward with more detailed design process for project implementation in 2012.

• For more information:

www.methowsalmon.org/m2reach1.html



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Reach 1 Habitat Project Contacts

Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation:

Chris Johnson 509-996-2787

Reclamation Methow Sub-Basin Liaison:

Jennifer Molesworth 509-997-0640 ext260

Reach 2 Habitat Project Contact

Yakama Nation Upper Columbia Habitat

Restoration Project: Hans Smith, 509-996-5005

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Middle Methow Habitat Project News

