
Springflow Habitat Protection Work Group

Meeting 10 Minutes

September 23, 2020

2:00-4:00pm

1. Confirm attendance

All Work Group members were present.

2. Meeting logistics

Jamie Childers provided an overview of virtual meeting logistics and meeting points of contact.

3. Public comment

No public comments.

4. Approve meeting 8 minutes

A motion was made by Cindy Loeffler, seconded by Patrick Shriver, to approve the meeting minutes from Meeting 8 (August 21, 2020). In the absence of objection, the minutes were approved by consensus.

5. Issue 3 Motion discussion

No issues were raised regarding the written version of the Issue motion. It will be incorporated for consideration of Part 2 of the Work Group charge.

6. Discussion of summary of Issues 1 through 3 for the Part 2 Charge

Jamie Childers and Myron Hess have begun development on summary document that will serve as Part 2 of the Work Group Charge and will consolidate meeting material, drafted motions, and comments and summarize activities from Part 1 of the Work Group. This document will eventually be presented to the implementing committee and, upon approval by that committee, will become the Part 2 charge. The current version of the draft is available in the Chat section of the Teams site for the Work Group and is named "10_part 2 discussion document.pdf." Jamie has developed question that can be used, going forward, in development of proposals for technical evaluations.

One of the goals for Part 1 was to clarify and refine the broad issues set out in the May 2019 discussion document. Along those lines, Jamie has pulled questions from comments on each of the overarching issues covered by the group. Some of these questions could be answered now, while others require further study. At the end of the document is an updated version of the table from Part 1 of the Work Group Charge, containing a "study set a" and "study set b" to further clarify the Work Group process moving forward.

Myron Hess announced his aim for this meeting regarding the draft as focusing more on consideration of the overall approach than on specific language. If the approach is agreed upon, a revised version would be sent out to the group.

Charles Kreitler raised the question of garnering expert input in refining the questions. Jamie Childers noted that some questions probably are sufficiently developed to support development of a scope of work, such as validating the Hardy model to 2014 data, but for others will need further input. Myron Hess added that for some questions, “set a” studies may be contracted out to experts to recommend a specific study approach that might be undertaken.

Kimberly Meitzen inquired about whether this effort may be a combination of HCP staff denoting what they can accomplish internally and what needs to be put into statements of work to put up requests for proposals and seek contractors. Jamie responded that scopes of work will need to be defined to inform any decision about relying on staff resources versus contractors. Additionally, there is a need for consideration of which questions are feasible to pursue at this juncture.

Cindy Loeffler and Doris Cooksey voiced support for the proposed report format.

7. Discussion of the process for submitting a Part 2 Charge

Myron Hess stated his aim to have the Part 2 Charge completed for the December 17th Implementing Committee meeting with Work Group meetings in October and November to get that done. Patrick Shriver noted the need for adequate time to review drafts, noting, for example, the amount of time required for review of each of the topics in the Issue 4 matrix.

Charles Kreitler mentioned that various Issue 4 AMP (Adaptive Management Process) recommendations will fold into the original three issues discussed and noted the need for integration of the inquiries into the other major issue areas.

8. Overarching Issue 4 discussion regarding categorizing and focusing AMP study topics

Previously, the two focuses of the group were 1) what are the appropriate categories for topics under the AMP list and 2) focus on priority topics for the Work Group. The aim of this discussion was to reach agreement on appropriate categories and what would fall into the Work Group priority list.

In Part 1 of the Work Group Charge, Issue 4 is as follows: The Implementing Committee should ensure that a rigorous review process, involving input from qualified experts in addition to the Science Committee, is undertaken, as soon as reasonably possible, to inform study design for each of the above-listed technical evaluations and to assess the extent to which adaptive management study commitments included in the EAHCP that are related to flow impacts have been met, will be met, or should be adjusted.

With respect to the adaptive management study commitments, Myron Hess generated the list of HCP commitments based on a review of the HCP, primarily Chapters 4 and 6. Chad Furl responded to that list by identifying previous and ongoing work related to each topic. Myron then proposed a categorization approach and categorization for each item in the matrix document. Regarding this proposed categorization, Patrick Shriver suggested rephrasing “No obvious inconsistency with EAHCP study commitments” (in green highlighting) as “Appears consistent with EAHCP study commitments” and rephrasing “Permit extension issue” (in teal highlighting) to “Deferred for permit extension consideration”.

Jacquelyn Duke noted that the green highlight and phrasing implies a finished task, rather than a work in progress under the scope of HCP, not this Work Group. She also posed a question regarding what happens if the Work Group does not flag a study commitment that has not been completed, will it get looked at? Jamie noted that any commitment in the HCP is required to be done consistent with the USFWS permit, unless it is removed from the HCP as part of the adaptive management process. Chad Furl responded that some of these green and teal highlighted topics are purposely in stasis as they are currently unanswerable without additional intensive research. He added that it is difficult to speak in general on these issues but that he likely could shed light on why specific issues were and weren’t done. One of the things he is seeking from this Work Group is helping to prioritize topics for study.

The group broke for 10 minutes and resumed to address comments made on the draft alphabetized Issue 4 matrix. Elaborations on comments made is noted below:

Matrix Topic C (Comal Springs Dryopid Beetle and Peck’s Cave Amphipod water quality issues). Comment submitted about phrasing, as noted above, of categorization, but no disagreement on proposed category.

Matrix Topic F (Predicted extended periods of low flows). Myron Hess noted that he had proposed a subpart of this topic for inclusion in the Work Group priority subset to assess predicted flow statistics for flow levels between 80 cfs and the minimum flow for each spring system. Charles Kreitler explained the need for integrated inquiries of flow levels in that range and what happens at each level. Adam Yablonski added that there is new information on pumping data and new developments, just as with data on species response to flows, to consider when assessing flow increments and impacts. Cindy Loeffler echoed Charles’ concern for understanding impacts of the range of 30- 80 cfs low flow as representing an extremely important issue.

Jamie Childers opened the Menti poll to rank the issues proposed for inclusion in the Work Group priority subset regarding which of the three proposed matrix categories was considered appropriate for each.

Matrix Topics H and I (Potential for cool water from springs to bypass Old Channel during low flow periods). For these topics, both of which address understanding the flow path during periods of low flows from locations where

water emerges from spring openings through Spring Lake, Charles Kreitler indicated it would be possible to track whether flow is heading down the new channel or old channel.

Matrix Topic P (Testing spring run connectivity). An initial comment was made by Charles Kreitler that sediments in spring orifices of Spring Lake were either sediments from dead biota or quartz sand brought in for beautification reasons and raised the issue of whether it should be removed. [This comment is more applicable to Topic AA and will be considered there.]

Additionally, Charles suggested a dye trace study under low flow conditions could yield results as to the connectivity of springs on the west wall. A dye trace study may prove to be simpler and more definitive than a study of genetics.

Matrix Topic R (Low-flow experiments with Comal Springs Riffle Beetle regarding survival and reproduction). Myron clarified that the proposed classification as a Work Group priority applies only for the survival component of this topic, not the reproduction component. Tom Arsuffi and Chad Furl expressed hesitation about whether we are far enough along, at this point, for additional Comal Springs riffle beetle study under this topic at the San Marcos Aquatic Research Center (SMARC). Cindy Loeffler noted a study of survival seems feasible. Tom Arsuffi suggested that ongoing riffle beetle monitoring may provide answers. Kimberly Meitzen clarified that a SMARC study would include a study of flow manipulation that is not possible in the field.

Matrix Topic S (Validation of Ecomodel results). Myron Hess and Charles Kreitler agreed upon the need for additional specificity for how to proceed with this issue. Myron noted that, if it is carried forward, Work Group would explore options for proceeding, including potentially by contracting for evaluation of approaches for doing so, and the Work Group could decide later if a feasible approach is available.

Matrix Topic AA (Sedimentation around spring openings in Spring Lake during low flows). Melani Howard indicated that she had forwarded Charles Kreitler's comments on the dumped sand, noted above under Matrix Topic P, to Robert Mace. Dr. Kreitler noted that the quartz sand may be bigger issue than small-grained sediment.

The Menti poll summary results regarding prioritization of the proposed Work Group priority subset topics were presented for consideration. However, because of the need for a closer look to better understand the individual underlying responses represented by the prioritization result, discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

10. Future Meetings

The SHP Work Group Meeting 11 is TBD.