

**Klamath Basin Lost River and Shortnose Sucker Recovery Plan
Recovery Implementation Committee Interview Summary
October 10, 2008**

PROCESS

Between August 29 and October 1, 2008, 20 of the 23 stakeholders that have agreed to participate in the Sucker Recovery Implementation Committee (RIC) were interviewed to understand their interest in the Sucker Recovery Plan and to gain their perspectives on what might assist and potentially impede the development and implementation of a successful Recovery Plan.

The following questions were asked:

1. What is your interest in the Recovery Plan?
2. What is your level of understanding or experience with the recovery planning process?
3. How can your organization assist with implementation?
4. What do you think will be the controversial aspects of the Recovery Plan?
5. What will allow the plan to be successful?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The interviews were confidential, and this summary highlights major points expressed by the stakeholders regarding these questions, and provides responses randomly organized without attribution to any individual or group.

1. What is your interest in the Recovery Plan?

The interests of the participants are varied, but virtually all participants were interested in getting the suckers de-listed, recovered, or ensuring their long-term survival. Most participants mentioned several specific interests. These include:

- Many of the participants spoke of a balanced restoration process that includes fish recovery and agricultural sustainability
- Effects on water use in general
- A realistic, effective, implementable recovery plan
- Promoting a collaborative recovery planning process
- Sucker population dynamics
- Water for birds and refuges
- Recovery of fish to allow subsistence harvest
- Wetlands and habitat restoration
- Water quality and TMDLs
- Health of the lakes
- General ecosystem and environmental health
- Recognizing the interaction of different planning processes (i.e., salmon recovery, dam removal)
- Relation of sucker recovery to adjacent land use management
- Effects of recovery plan on existing projects and/or programs

Responses:

A balanced process of restoration that respects landowner perspectives and gives credit for efforts done.

Understand the status and what is known about suckers. How it fits with other watershed, RAC, and TMDL efforts.

Water for refuges and birds, regulatory measures for water supply affecting delisting.

Effect on the Klamath Project and water users, water quality and quantity; getting the suckers de-listed.

Population dynamics of listed fish. How the science affects and is reflected in policy. Developing measures to define recovery.

Recovery of suckers.

Sucker recovery, and relation to wetlands, economy, general environmental health.

Ensuring the recovery of the species, and healthy ecosystem.

Habitat restoration, changes in Tule Lake and refuge lands.

Represent the public trust in sucker recovery.

Responsible for management of game fish by statute. Ensuring long-term survival of the suckers.

Adopt a balanced land and water management plan that will benefit several species and change the ways in which water is used.

Water quality and the relation of sucker recovery to TMDLs (beneficial use).

Protection of resources and sustainability of production on privately owned property.

Interested in a collaborative process. How to support environment and agriculture.

See species recover as quickly as possible. Interaction of the Project Operations Plan and the Recovery Plan.

Getting fish back in numbers that will allow subsistence harvest.

Water quality, suckers and the health of Klamath Lake.

Water quality, quantity, habitat restoration and improvement, and (*relation of sucker recovery to*) resource management – grazing and timber sale.

Facility management on the river.

Interested in realistic recovery with realistic benchmarks.

Interested in water quality issues and a plan that is easily implemented, realistic, understandable by layman and sets realistic goals that can be achieved and realistic outcomes.

More water available.

2. What is your level of understanding or experience with the recovery planning process?

The following table provides a very general overview of the different types of experience and knowledge related to sucker recovery planning.

(Note: numbers in the table do not add up to total number of interviews because of the combination of experience related in responses.)

No Experience or Knowledge of Recovery Planning	General Understanding of Recovery Planning	Have Looked at or Read the 1992 Plan (to some degree)	Familiar with Technical Issues	Have Participated in Recovery Planning
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Responses:

General understanding of recovery planning. Technical understanding of what is involved in applying recovery planning to specific projects required by the original sucker plan (1992). Have not read the original.

Have looked at the 1992 Recovery Plan, been involved in numerous watershed and RAC works, some involving suckers. Not aware of current status.

Never involved with recovery planning process, but aware of nexus and private lands issues relative to sucker recovery.

Participated in 1992 Recovery Plan as a stakeholder with a more substantial role in the process as co-applicant. Aware of difficulties with the 1992 plan [i.e., unrealistic recovery goals (200 year recovery statement); no prioritization - an equal ranking of priorities meant they had to do everything.]

Not much experience with recovery planning. Has read 1992 Recovery Plan.

No experience. Has sat in on Bull Trout recovery meetings and has looked at previous sucker recovery plan.

No direct experience in recovery planning. Involved in response to exposure of private company of sucker jeopardy ruling.

Limited experience with recovery plans. Have followed recovery plans, legal knowledge of what is required to be in plans, understand the lay of the land in the Klamath Basin.

Been involved in settlement process in technical role, and understands tug of war between different roles in the Klamath. Has consulted re: coordination for ESA, and setting up projects for compliance with mitigation, but is new to suckers.

Neophyte. Has been asked to participate on advisory groups. Experience with habitat issues and understands issues based on work “in the trenches”.

Worked with USFWS to implement previous sucker recovery plan.

Read previous Recovery Plan in relation to Upper Klamath Lake, and attended meetings related to sucker recovery and water quality.

Has read the 1992 Recovery Plan, and is familiar with the background.

Involved with ISRP

Understands technical aspects and significance of recovery planning. First plan has been involved with.

No experience with recovery planning or fisheries.

Has read some of the Recovery Plan as it relates to water quality and (agency).

Experience is low. Slight involvement in recovery plans with (*other bird species*). Was involved in a cursory examination of the 1992 plan.

Not really experienced. BiOps, and ESA experience. Familiar with the concept and has read the documents. Experience with legal issues related to sucker recovery.

3. How can your organization assist with implementation?

Examples of the ways participants felt that their organizations could help with implementation, included:

- Working with landowners and agricultural interests
- Outreach and education
- Human resources
- Funding assistance (finding grants or agency funds)
- Expertise with restoration projects
- Legal knowledge
- Partnership building and collaboration
- Facilitating permitting processes
- Assuring consistency with existing agency plans and mandates

Responses:

Could work with landowners to integrate agricultural practices with recovery goals (include/utilize agriculture practices as tool in recovery).

Assist with outreach and education. Can bring knowledge of how different groups are working.

Can provide expertise, people and physical resources, and knowledge of how agency private lands programs can work on river systems.

Direct relationship to management of project facilities, can help to define what can make things work.

Helping the public to understand the science behind recovery.

Partnership building.

Potential purchase of lands for recovery.

Experience in the restoration of Williamson Delta.

Outreach and education.

Assist with finding funding for projects.

Help to facilitate transactions involving water permitting with the state– expertise with water law and administration in OR.

Facilitation of agreements.

Connections to private landowners.

Help with jurisdictional issues related to fish passage (juvenile protection), and fish ladders (adult protection), fisheries closures. Can help where coordination with other OR agencies and permits are required.

Can assist with habitat restoration to help stream flows and water quality.

Can help with outreach and with implementation of projects on private property.

Restoration projects, outreach network.

Funding, staff and technical expertise.

Leadership in implementation through staff and staff expertise.

Make sure management is consistent with plan and that activities help to improve water quality and quantity.

Implement management activities, (*working within*) partnerships with other agencies, federal, state and tribal.

Help with education and outreach. Help with monitoring.

4. What do you think will be the controversial aspects of the recovery plan?

Controversial aspects of the recovery planning process cited by participants could very generally be grouped into a few categories:

- Need for specific recovery goals (uncertainty); moving recovery targets; prioritization
- Recovery actions affecting private lands, agriculture
- Lack of credit for, or lack of documentation of previous efforts
- Perceptions of agencies; top-down, agency driven planning
- Different values attached to suckers
- Lack of understanding or acceptance of scientific information
- Relationships between different groups
- Lack of funding, cost
- Water adjudication issues (including Tribal water rights)
- Effects on water availability of lake level or streamflow requirements
- Coordination of sucker recovery with salmon recovery or the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement
- Water quality (background vs. anthropogenic, TMDLs)

Responses:

Top-down, agency driven plan will not get agriculture to support it.

The recovery goal is a moving target, which creates resistance because the target is not solid.
How many suckers are out there?

There has been a lot of habitat restoration, land removed from agriculture – credit for previous efforts and understanding of how those efforts have helped.

Gaining acceptance by stakeholders who don't share the same value of sucker fish (see as trash fish).

Lack of understanding of the cyclical nature of fish – unusual events being seen as typical.
Need clear presentation of information.

Application of TMDLs and relation to background sources.

Relationships between Tribes and irrigators on the Sprague.

Private lands, riparian corridors and fish. “Takings” issues.

Fear and paranoia.

Funding connected to legal requirements.

Quantification of recovery goals.

Amount of money to research and how allocated.

Negative view of federal agencies as not getting much done.

Being able to measure, quantify benefits of management actions (Other factors, surrogates).

Impatience.

The way the ESA is written in terms of the focus on numbers.

Getting people to care about the recovery of suckers, communicating in a context that people understand.

Uncertainty.

Long wait period between actions and results.

Change – people may feel threatened.

Adjudication issues.

Impacts on agricultural groups.

Need to coordinate or accommodate needs of salmon recovery.

Any need for greater streamflow or higher lake levels.

Improving riparian areas on private land (dependent on approach).

Having a federally funded program with political opposition.

Tribal water rights.

Regulation of water use.

Relation of off-Project irrigators vs. Project irrigators.

Basic distrust of science.

Water management.

Relations to anadromous fish in Klamath River.

Effects on private landowners.

Efforts that focus on water quality will be long term and difficult to achieve.

Balance of regulatory and voluntary processes. Weakness in voluntary efforts-

Needs to be some type of reg compliance as an incentive.

Denial as to the value of fisheries.

Anything that affects the harvest of grass, planting barley or irrigating. Cost to farmers. Any impact to private agriculture.

Polarized extreme interests around the cause of sucker decline: agriculture all problem, or none of problem.

Focus on fish alone without accounting for effects on agriculture community.

Concern that other plans have resulted in millions of dollars and years of efforts that have not recovered the species.

Lake levels and sucker recovery.

Water quality in Upper Klamath Lake.

Water quantity.

Polarized view of water quality and to what extent it is a factor.

Lake levels and river flows.

Availability of water for agriculture.

Value of required projects in terms of costs and benefits, particularly if requiring fallowing or taking crop land out of production to increase wetland size, without seeing definite need.

Some questioning whether there is a problem and how various factors are important or not.

Lack of clear end-point.

Time lag between restoration actions and results.

Problem with focus on agriculture for lake water quality problems and perception that background sources are not being appropriately included.

Suspicion of agency science, data sources.

Developing quantitative value for recovery: population size is difficult to evaluate, or to come up with a number that is meaningful.

Defining actions on private lands, and in areas that are largely conveyance systems (Lost River).

Different metrics used to judge the health of the system.

Concerns of agriculture about water delivery and actions required for recovery of fish.

People worried about government control of private land.

Hard to understand what limiting factors are on populations but water quality will be a big one.

Funding for people to do things on private land.

Water storage, water quantity or delivery, water quality, fish habitat.

Lake elevation, water management.

Cost.

Anything that adds more regulatory levels.

Inclusion of something that has been tried before that people know won't work.

Linkage to unrealistic TMDL goals.

5. What will allow the plan to be successful?

While many of the factors for success of a Sucker Recovery Plan are the converse of issues highlighted as controversial, several were different. The general categories included:

- The single most frequently mentioned factor for success was the setting of a solid, realistic, quantifiable goal (target, objective, criteria, outcome, benchmark or metrics) for recovery, generally defined as delisting of the species
- Flexibility and adaptability in plan and implementation
- Balancing agricultural interests and restoration tactics, partnering with agriculture and landowners
- Broad inclusion of stakeholders and their knowledge and perspectives, and broad dissemination of meeting notes and other information
- Open, inclusive scientific process (in development of plan and in monitoring and evaluation)
- Balancing incentives for participation with regulatory requirements
- Celebrating the positive, giving credit for work already done
- Prioritization of restoration actions to achieve recovery
- Inclusion of methods to evaluate and test actions to see how they are working and can be improved
- Developing agreements (agencies, other groups), and holding people to what they agree on.
- Inclusion of “creative alternatives” (i.e., “walking wetlands”)
- Assuring adequate funding for staff, infrastructure, and education
- Learning from past scientific, planning, and restoration efforts (e.g., Hatfield)

Responses:

Need a balance of agriculture practices and restoration tactics in recovery strategy.

Truly partnering with agriculture. Farmers need to have concerns addressed.

Incentives for participation.

Credit for work already done.

Hear from everybody.

The results of meetings need to be broadcast (i.e., use local educational channel).

Holding public meetings when the public can come.

Celebrate things that are positive.

Do some experimental tests – what works and what doesn't – (such as fish trapping on Williamson), and test in Recovery Plans.

Look at Strategic Habitat Conservation (USFWS).

Need to be thinking about what is really achievable to maintain a viable population. (Are all areas needed for reproducing surviving populations?)

Relative prioritization.

Look closely at what has been done and evaluate how that is working and can be improved.

Looking for the bottlenecks to concentrate on.

Generate cooperative relationships with private landowners along upper tributaries. How to be effective with restoration actions on private lands.

Being able to count fish.

Research improved.

Have to draw on expertise of all people involved, scientists, managers, NGOs, public...have to have buy-in from all those people. Can't please everybody. How are agreements framed?

Hold people to what they agree upon. Getting sign-off on the rules and define ways to maintain agreement.

Time and money – real investment in education and infrastructure.

Creative solutions (organic farming, "walking wetlands").

Shifting perspectives.

Support from landowners in the Basin.

The plan is a science-based plan that is honest about what is needed for recovery. Success would be enough acceptance of a plan that it is credible and real to achieve recover.

Tightly written plan.

Plan that achieves recovery AND addresses local perspectives.

Fair and transparent process.

Good outreach and education.

Inclusiveness of all stakeholders.

Incentives.

Regulatory action.

Open process that forces openness and honesty.

Education.

Acceptance and buy-in by the local community. (Accepted may mean no economic impact.)

Plan needs to look at relation of agriculture community health and fish health in terms of unintended consequences, i.e., restrictions on farming result in selling farms and development has water quality effects on fish.

Need strong coordination among agencies, including written agreements between agencies on roles.

Be clear at the first meeting of the RIC about goals and objectives and the role of RIC in process.

Plan includes concrete actions that can be taken.

Real peer review.

More open and honest scientific process.

Realistic approach to balancing suckers and agricultural needs.

Recognition that agriculture has been doing conservation.

Understanding how well previous projects have worked.

Acknowledging all aspects of the problem and giving people something they can do fairly easily.

Agencies don't dismiss judgement of scientists (and sucker planning process).

Bring all concerns and assumptions into scientific deliberations.

Gather more monitoring data.

Bringing public along in terms of making information understandable.

Openly listening to and considering public questions and concerns.

Working one on one with individual ranchers.

Funds to make the process work.

Follow through.

Make sure to look at the same data, same starting point.

The Recovery Team coming to consensus on strategies will stimulate others to take the plan and come to their own agreements around the data.

Transparency, openness, having a cross section of "true" stakeholders, have the ability to have input and a chance to be heard.

Getting people to work together – understanding and communication within the committee and outside with the public, stop rumors and mistruths – cost, time and effectiveness of process.

Clearly success requires agreement from all stakeholders or some compromise from stakeholders, get buy off from the stakeholders.

Plan will have to be enforced and followed.

Getting people on the same page as far as what the science is saying. There have been a lot of scientific efforts; how have the results changed the hypotheses?

Have to have community behind this.

Have a flexible and realistic plan, adaptable based on what natural cycles provide in terms of water.

Look at the Hatfield process, particularly the Crisis to Consensus plan in relation to watershed.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Not base recovery on #'s alone, but on population parameters, survival rates, age structure, other. Problems where based on numbers: are counts accurate?

There are a lot of things positive. Things have improved. Klamath Basin has the reputation as place of water problems, but there are positive things; that is only part of the picture. Need to take pride.

Need to promote what is there intrinsically, abundant natural resources.

How will this be affected by dam removal agreement? Settlement agreement could be a limitation on the plan – restoration money, retirement of water (30K ac/ft), greater demand reduction – what could be limiting, who and what could come into play?

Settlement does say that environmental laws would need to be followed, but water deal would have implications for lake levels.

Wants to see reviews of projects that have been done – FW monitoring.

Add: Lava Beds/Butte Valley RCD, Mike Burns, Theresa Wright ((530) 667-3473) – Tule Lake rcd@cot.net).

Get reports out to the general public about what has happened with previous projects, and how they have worked in helping recovery.