Lead Entity Group (LEG) June 4, 2025 Ranking Meeting Summary

Elwha Heritage Center

In Attendence:

Courtney Bornsworth, LEG, City of Port Angeles

Hansi Hals, LEG, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe

Rebecca Mahan, LEG, Clallam County

Raymond Moses, LEG, Elwha Klallam Tribe

Tom Riepe, LEG, Citizen

Karen Teig, LEG, Citizen

Meggan Uecker, LEG, City of Sequim

Introductions given. Two people indicated issues with Zoom access, one was a technical team member who said a family situation arose that he had to deal with and the other decided there were enough people participating and they would attend to other obligations. This is the first time we have had a problem with the link that was shared so some troubleshooting is needed.

Recusals from Hansi Hals & Raymond Moses regarding projects from their organizations, but it is ok for them to weigh in on global consensus, big picture discussions.

The Lead Entity Coordinator walked LEG Members through the various parts of the grant round process as listed on the Agenda. There was approximately a 10 minute break early on so that members could review the Technical Team scoring.

Meggan Uecker, as a newer member, requested information about the scoring system creation and how the criteria weighting were developed and also the yellow highlighted scoresheet cells. The Coordinator will seek out this information.

One unique aspect about this year’s grant round was that the Johnson Creek Triples Fish Passage project, that has already been approved by the LEG in a previous year for funding; came back to the group because of a potential cost overrun that could be anywhere from $600k to $1.9 million. This derives from how the project is sequenced and constructed relating to what the primary landowner (Clallam County) needs, and also increased costs due to project delays in obtaining Right of Way which held up construction resulting in inflationary cost increases. It is not unusual for a project with a cost overrun to come back at grant time (or earlier) seeking funding. In addition, the LEG has previously sometimes run a biennial (lasting for two years) grant round and has also committed future year funding to projects with funding needs. What makes this project ask unique is the large range of the amount requested and the unknowns that need to be worked out with the landowner.

Also, while the project sponsor presented this project at the Initial Ground Round Presentations Meeting and also at the Final Grant Round presentations, we did not have the technical team score this project. They have already scored this project before and the LEG has approved it for $1 million funding. In addition, we have never asked the Technical Team to rescore previously approved projects with funding shortfalls.

The LEG would like to have a future discussion on how it handles cost overrun projects, particularly those of this magnitude. Is there an increased cost threshold that prompts additional review regarding cost-benefit and benefit to salmon or potential rescoring?

**Decisions Made as follows:**

**RIPARIAN PROJECT FUNDING**: In regards to the expected $617,422. in Riparian funds from the 2025 WA State Legislature, the LEG reached consensus to fund down the Technical Review Group-ranked project list of riparian projects (Elwha Riparian Revegation, Dungeness River Riparian Acquisition & Hoko River Watershed Riparian) as funding allows. NOSC will be asked if they can scale their Hoko Project down to use the remaining $80,034. in funding available. If not, the issue of what to do with that $80,034. riparian funding will come back to the LEG for further consideration. Riparian funding in general can only be used for riparian planting, invasives removal, stewardship or acquisition of riparian areas. More information can be found in the RCO Grant Manual if needed.

**NON-RIPARIAN PROJECT FUNDING:** The LEG also decided to fund down the TRG-ranked project list of the two non-riparian projects, Elwha Floodplain Design and Dungeness River Design, with SRFB & returned project funds. *IF* the federal Pacific Coast Salmon Restoration (PCSRF) funding comes through as before, the available allocation is estimated to be at $467,675 (what’s left after expected allocation of $647,109, before returning $330,334 allocation transfer to Skagit and infusion of $150,000k in returned project funds which came from McDonald Creek funding which could not add to the existing contract due to timeline issues and no bids). It is important to note that no PCSRF allocation for this year has been received. Normally the state would have received award notification in May.

Funding down the list with the estimated allocation leaves a $2,325. shortfall. The LEG decided that estimated $2,325 shortfall should be subtracted from the Elwha Floodplain design which was seeking $350k. Basis for this was that the almost completed Elwha CMZ has produced lots of technical documents that will help inform this design and may therefore reduce project costs. The Dungeness design is also barebones at $120k. Voting in favor of that motion was Karen Teig, Rebecca Mahan and Courtney Bornsworth. Voting against was Meggan Uecker and Tom Riepe who thought the funding should follow the TRG recommendation.

**Johnson Creek Triples Fish Passage Cost Overrun Request:**

The Board did ***not*** accept the TRG recommendation to allocate 2026 SRFB funds towards this project if there was a path to construction in 2026. There are currently too many unanswered questions including what the actual cost shortfall will be(the current estimated need ranges from $600k to $1.9 million), there are still issues to be resolved with the landowner. In addition, there is no surety as to what SRFB funding availability will be in 2026 or what other project needs will be. The LEG emphasized they are leaving the door open for the project sponsor to return to the LEG when they have a better handle on what their funding needs are and specifics for a path forward.

**LEG Staffing Transition:**

Tom Riepe, Meggan Uecker, Hansi Hals and Raymond Moses will serve on a subcommittee to work with the Coordinator regarding her transition to retirement potentially at the end of 2025 (with remaining vacation possibly taking her into early 2026).

**Upcoming LEG Meeting:**

There will be a need for a summer LEG meeting regarding Scope of Work & funding, tentatively around the middle of July. More to follow. Clallam County’s Cathy Lear has retired. Rebecca Mahan is now the Clallam County LEG representative.

**The Fish Report:**

Tom Riepe noted that Chinook salmon fishing is extremely limited (one per fisher) in Southeast Alaska due to species declines. Tom said that speaks to the need to keep an eye on where all of this is headed and working hard advancing salmon recovery efforts.

Hansi Hals noted drought conditions in the Hoko and also again for the Dungeness. There was limited snow pack and it is melting.

Ray Moses noted low steelhead redd counts in the Elwha.

**Project Updates:**

The County has almost completed work on the Elwha Channel Migration Zone study. There will be a public hearing before the Clallam County Commissioners in July.

Meggan Uecker indicated that work continues on the City of Sequim’s Comprehensive Plan. Courtney Bornsworth indicated the same is occurring for the City of Port Angeles and they have a public meeting scheduled from 5-7 p.m. on June 12th at the Red Lion. Work also continues on the Clallam County Comprehensive Plan. All three jurisdictions have information on their respective websites about their comp plan updates.

Prepared by C. Baumann

June 4, 2025