

**Thompson Falls Technical Advisory Committee  
NorthWestern Energy**

**Annual Meeting for 2024 Calendar Year**

December 14, 2023  
10:00 – 1:00  
NWE Missoula Office

Zoom Meeting Option  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88918547636>  
Passcode: 005551

**Attendees**

**NorthWestern:** MaryGail Sullivan, Andy Welch,  
Grant Grisak, Joe Hagengruber, Jon Hanson, Jordan  
Tollefson

**FWP:** Abigail Maddigan, Jason Blakney, Ladd  
Knotek, Mike Hensler

**USFS:** Josh Shulze

**MDEQ:** Keenan Storrar

**FWS:** Carter Fredenberg

**CSKT:** Craig Barfoot

**Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group:** Sarah  
Busmire

**New Wave:** Kristi Webb

**Welcome/Introductions**

Quorum is present with representatives from FWS, FWP, CSKT, and NorthWestern

**Review 2023 Activities** – PowerPoint Presentation provided by Jon Hanson

- Fish Ladder and Monitoring
  - March 23 through October 4
    - (closed a little early due to draw down for maintenance and replacement of flashboards)
  - Not closed for high flow in 2023

**2024 Ladder Operations**

- Discussion on whether to continue per 2023 operations and work station protocol.
- Does the TAC want to continue tagging when water temperatures are over 20 °C? Do we want to maintain water restrictions when temperatures exceed 20 °C?
  - Carter (FWS) - It would be worth tagging Brown Trout.
  - Jon (NorthWestern)– The initial reason for not tagged when temperatures exceed 20 degrees C was fish were super stressed. Fish are stressed even without tagging. If we do elect to tag fish when temperatures exceed 20 °C, we should set an upper threshold.
  - FWP (Jason, Mike) need to discuss and will provide feedback by January 14, 2024.
- FWP – review Ladder operations and get back to NorthWestern on thoughts regarding measurements for non-salmonids and tagging protocol when temperatures exceed 20 °C. FWP review and return with decision by January 14, 2024

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**2023 TAC funded projects report**

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Agency/Contact</b>	<b>TAC Approved Cost</b>	<b>Status</b>
TR Conservation Easement	FWP/TPL	\$100,000	
Thompson River road consolidation planning	TU/LCFWG	\$5,000	
Big Rock barrier design	FWP	\$34,000	*2021 project update

**Review End-Of-Year 2023 Budget and Reserve Account**

**2023 Project Summary**

**Thompson River Conservation Easement** (Jason Blakney, FWP)– \$280k NorthWestern, \$250 from Avista. Trust and Public Land (TPL) is working with Green Diamond on final cost for conservation easement acquisition (40 acres). Funding is still needed, but not sure exactly how much is needed. The project has gone through public scoping process. Appraisal of the 40-acres is pending. The Environmental Assessment will be released in 2024, and the goal is to finalize the easement in fall 2024.

**Big Rock Creek Barrier Design** (Jason Blakney, FWP) – In 2023, waiting on the contractor to submit feasibility report. The goal is to have a report from the contractor in 2024 with feasibility information on location, costs, etc. for proposed barrier.

**Review/Discuss 2024 TAC Proposals and Allocate Funds**

<b>Budget for CY 2024</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
Reserve Account Balance start of 2024	\$109,935
Reserve Account Commitments	\$13,473
<b>Uncommitted Reserve Funds start of 2024</b>	<b>\$96,462</b>
2024-1 TR Road Consolidation Coordination	\$5,000
2024-2 Jocko genetics update	\$3,757
2024-3 Pathogen Survey	\$5,000
*2024-4 Submersible PIT antenna	\$50,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$64,475</b>
<b>Budget for CY 2024</b>	<b>\$35,525</b>

Jon (NorthWestern)– motion to approve all three proposals, he'll write up pathogen sampling proposal for group. Total \$13,575.

**Voting TAC Members: Unanimous Yes**

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FWP (Mike Hensler, Jason Blakney, Ladd Knotek)  
FWS (Carter Fredenberg)  
CSKT (Craig Barfoot)  
NorthWestern (MG, Andy, Jon)

**2024 Proposed Projects for TAC Funding**

**Jocko River Genetic Baseline Update – Craig Barfoot (CSKT)**

- Consolidating across 3 years and now have enough Bull trout samples to process, for North and South Fork Jocko River. Update baseline for drainage.
  - Craig is sending to Abernathy (TAC costs), CSKT pay for costs to send to University of Montana lab

**Thompson River (TR) Road Consolidation Coordination – Sarah Busmire (LCFWG)**

- Sarah – presentation on consolidation coordination 2023 and future efforts in 2024-2025
  - LCFWG organized two stakeholder meetings in 2023 (Feb, Nov)
    - Landowners and natural resource partners
    - County commissioners, road department, etc.. productive discussion with diverse stakeholders
    - Looking at thermal imaging of drainage, inputs of cool water inputs
- FWP – prioritizing the lower 19 miles of the Thompson River drainage. This prioritizes the coldest sections of river to reconnect areas cut off and improve and add stream mileage and habitat.
- **Pathogen – Jason (FWP)**
  - No formal proposal yet (Jason has the info, Jon will prepare proposal documentation)
  - Every 5 years, pathogen surveys in 4 tributaries to Cabinet, 4 tributaries to Noxon, 4 tributaries to Thompson Falls Dam (generally Thompson River).
    - Request is to sample 2 streams: West Fork Thompson River and Fishtrap. FWP would cover costs of other 3 streams that are WCT.
    - Estimate \$5000 from TAC.
      - Fish Lab Bozeman and FWP staff Thompson River, FWS staff help, NorthWestern staff help
      - Sampling needs to complete 2024
      - Idaho does sampling every year because of fish transport (BULL and WCT upstream of Cabinet Gorge Dam) program.
      - Pathogen testing is a FWP requirement
- \*Submersible PIT antenna project was approved after the annual meeting. Purchase of 4 submersible antenna to begin further fine scale fish movement evaluation and testing below the main channel dam.