Meeting Summary

Salmon Recovery Funding Board
Issues Task Force

September 11, 2003 9:30 am – 4:30 pm and September 12, 2003, 8 am - 1 pm
Port Angeles, WA

Members Present
Steve Tharinger, Chair; Shirley Solomon; Craig Partridge; Doug St. John; Laura Johnson; Steve Leider; Jeff Breckel; Jim Kramer; Steve Martin; Tim Smith; Tom Laurie, Jim Fox.

Also present: Brian Walsh, Rollie Geppert, Cathy Lear, Mary Peck, Roy Huberd and Larry Ward.

Lead Entity Strategies
The meeting opened with discussion regarding the development, content and use of lead entity strategies and their relationship to regional recovery plans. The draft Strategy Outline, revised after the May lead entity workshop, had been circulated to the lead entities and third- and fourth-round technical panel members for comment. Responses had been provided to ITF members prior to the meeting. Shirley Solomon, LEAG Chair, summarized the discussion of the draft Strategy Outline that occurred at the September 8th LEAG meeting.

The ITF reached the following conclusions regarding the development, content, and use of lead entity strategies:

- The proposed Strategy Guidance should not be prescriptive. It should be useful to lead entities seeking specific guidance on strategy development but flexible enough to allow lead entities the ability to incorporate other approaches as long as they can be justified scientifically.
- Most lead entities do not have the time or resources to make significant changes in their strategies in time for the fifth grant round. For the SRFB's fifth round lead entities should be asked to provide a summary of their current strategy demonstrating how it addresses the 12 questions, including the details in the Strategy Guidance.
- The Strategy Guidance should explain how lead entity strategies relate to regional recovery plans and how strategies and their implementation will evolve as regional recovery plans are developed and implemented. The evolution, as envisioned by the ITF, is outlined below.

Evolution of Lead Entity Strategies

- The lead entity strategy(ies) become the nonregulatory habitat protection and restoration portion of the regional recovery plan. The lead entity list(s) become part of the regional recovery action plan. The lead entity's fish goals (and resulting habitat goals) are general and tentative until they have been established at the regional level.
- Regional recovery plans establish fish goals and priorities across watersheds.
- Lead entities use fish goals to develop watershed habitat goals, and in turn update restoration and protection priorities for the watershed.
- Lead entity project list(s) become part of the regional plan's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Regional boards develop region-wide monitoring strategies coordinated with the state's Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy and with the participation of lead entities and other watershed groups.
- Lead entities become more engaged in developing watershed-level monitoring strategies and may participate in monitoring and evaluation efforts at the watershed level.

- Strategies should be focused, identifying specific actions that are the greatest priority for the watershed and the sequence for those actions. Identification of priority actions will lead to identification of focused priority *areas* or may lead to distributed actions that address watershed processes.
- Salmon population viability characteristics (PVCs) will not be determined until the NOAA-Fisheries Technical Recovery Teams (TRTs) complete their work. In the mean time, lead entities will have to be fairly general in setting fish goals. As the TRTs complete their work and regional planning products are completed, more specific goals will become available.

The ITF also proposed specific changes in the draft Strategy Guidance. The changes will be reflected in the draft presented to the SRFB at its September 25-26, 2003 meeting.

ITF members recommended that at the next SRFB meetings, several lead entities give a presentation on their strategies, focusing on their approaches to the 12 questions and the Strategy Guidance. This would help give the Board a better understanding of lead entity strategies and help the Board focus more on overall strategies rather than individual projects.

Small Grant Program
Krystyna Wolniakowski from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Dennis Canty from Evergreen Funding Consultants presented a revised proposal for a small grant pilot program. The proposal was the result of discussions with them at the previous ITF meeting. They proposed that SRFB contribute $300,000, to be matched by $300,000 from NFWF, for four pilot areas—three in Puget Sound and one outside the Sound. A total of $150,000 would be provided to each local partner, three of which would be lead entities, with additional matching funds provided by the local partners, if possible, and grant recipients. Grants to project sponsors would be limited to $50,000 in combined NFWF and SRFB funds. Funding criteria would be based on the scientific merits of the project and also on how the project helps develop community support for salmon recovery. After discussion about the need for such a program and NFWF's experience with the Community Salmon Fund, the ITF voted unanimously to recommend that the SRFB fund the proposal.

Role of the SRFB Technical Panel
Jim Fox and Jim Kramer presented a brief history of the Technical Panel, discussing how its role has evolved during the four SRFB grant cycles. Several ITF members representing lead entities expressed their concerns that the Technical Panel was redundant with local technical teams and that last round's team visits were not always useful or valued.

The ITF discussed the five functions that the Technical Panel provided in past grant cycles:

1. Advise lead entities on strategy and project list development.
2. Provide an independent scientific review of the technical merits of projects submitted by lead entities for SRFB funding.
3. Advise project applicants on how to improve projects in order to increase the benefit and certainty rating and the cost effectiveness.
4. Provide a technical evaluation of lead entity projects from a single, statewide perspective in order to provide the SRFB with a tool for making funding decisions across watersheds.
5. Advise the SRFB on how to improve its evaluation criteria and the overall grant evaluation process.

After discussion about the increasing capacity for lead entities to bring forward high quality projects that address high priority needs in their watersheds and the future role of regional recovery boards, and the previous day's discussions regarding lead entity strategies, the ITF came to the following conclusions:

- The Technical Panel should be more collaborative with the lead entity participants, providing more of a consulting function.

- The Technical Panel should be in contact with lead entities regarding the lead entity strategies as soon as possible.
- The SRFB needs new ways to decide how much funding to apply to each lead entity list since the *benefits* and *certainty* ratings no longer provide good tools for "drawing the line."
- After the fifth grant round, regional recovery plans may play a role in helping determine allocation priorities across watersheds within a salmon recovery region.
- Lead entities merge biological values and community values in development of their strategies and evaluation of their projects. The SRFB should not separate them again in its evaluation process. The fifth round Panel should address both and not be just a "technical" panel.

The ITF agreed to the following new functions for a fifth round Advisory Panel.

1. Serve as a bridge between lead entities, regions and the SRFB in development and evolution of local and state-wide/regional strategies.
2. Review and comment to lead entities and the SRFB on the consistency of project lists with the strategies for both biological and community objectives.
3. Highlight concerns and questions to lead entities and the SRFB about project benefits and certainty. This allows the Panel to be in a collaborative and consulting role.
4. Advise the SRFB and lead entities on process improvement.

The ITF members recommended that the membership of the Panel be modified to reflect these new functions.

Fund Allocation Across Lead Entity Areas
The ITF began a discussion of how the SRFB could approach allocation of funds across lead entity lists. Methods discussed included the use of formulas, perhaps based on number of WRIAS, numbers of threatened and endangered populations, area, and other factors. Also discussed was distribution based on the overall quality of the lead entity strategy, list and projects. ITF members decided to examine current policies that affect fund allocation as a starting point for the next meeting.

Next ITF Meeting:
October 16 (evening) and October 17, 2003. Location to be announced. Topics will include: fund allocation across lead entity areas, composition of the proposed Advisory Panel, a discussion on urban (versus rural) projects and on acquisition.

Meeting adjourned about 1 p.m.