

**Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership  
Board Meeting Minutes  
BBNC Office, Anchorage  
May 20, 2009**

**I. Introductions**

Present at the meeting were:

Tim Troll, Nushagak Mulchatna Wood Tichik (NMWT) Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and SWASHP Board Chair

Tiel Smith, Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC)

Christopher Estes, AK Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and staff to National Fish Habitat Board

John DeLapp, US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) & SHP Regional Coordinator  
John W, TNC

Glenn Elison, The Conservation Fund (TCF)

Matt Miller, ADFG Sportfish

Susan Flensburg, Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)

Marjorie Dunaway, NMWT Land Trust

Nanci Morris was unable to attend.

**II. Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**III. Minutes**

Glenn moved to approve the minutes from the March 13, 2008 meeting. Matt seconded. Motion passed.

**IV. Election of Officers**

Tim is willing to continue as Chair and Glenn as Secretary. Tiel is willing to take on the Vice Chair position. Glenn also serves as coordinator of the group, a role he would like to give up. The program has grown rapidly and they may be able to raise enough money to fund a part-time position. Christopher moved to approve the officers as presented. John DeLapp seconded. Motion passed.

**V. Information Items**

**Moore Foundation Grant Status:** Glenn explained that the Moore Foundation grant was renewed 18 months ago. They have money for acquisition of Native allotments and for large conservation easement deals with Native corporations (like Aleknagik). The grant runs for another 3.5 years. They have about \$5 million for habitat conservation, of which approximately \$1 million has been spent. Moore recently launched a review of its salmon program in the North Pacific. The outcome will determine the future of the program. So far there has been positive feedback from Moore, but Glenn is eager to get more conservation easements going with Native corporations. He attended a Moore meeting in late April where they focused on partnerships and advocacy in British Columbia and Southeast Alaska. Those programs are more focused on building constituents and land rights, much different than our focus here. Moore's salmon habitat

program seems to be moving forward and people are generally pleased with the results, including the work in Russia. The foundation has suffered a major hit in its endowment and is looking to spread out its grant payments, which will be good for us. Funding from Moore is restricted to conservation units, or possibly those areas contiguous to them. Conservation units represent about 60% of Southwest Alaska. About \$1.5 million has been earmarked for Native allotment acquisition, and about \$3.5 to \$4 million for large tracts.

Christopher asked about adding a water element to the existing program. Glenn thought it would be better to pursue a new grant rather than amend the existing one. Tim will be drafting the strategic plan and one element may be to prioritize where acquisitions should occur. Glenn explained that the original 2003 grant had a specific section for water (e.g., instream flow measurement), but it was decided to focus more on habitat. This is the only grant Moore has that is habitat focused. Moore has contracted out the program for review. The review team includes Gunnar Knapp. There was some discussion of match requirements for the grant. The original objectives were 3:1, but Moore is requiring 2:1. Sue suggested the BIA water management grant program may be a source for matching funds. This can be done through the Office of Self Governance, rather than as a grant, so it can be counted as a non-federal match.

Doug explained that TNC received \$1.3 million from Moore. Their work includes four components: water quality studies, anadromous stream catalog surveys, ground water and instream flow work around Pebble, and a risk assessment of Pebble mine. As part of the permitting process for Pebble, they're working with state and federal agencies and regulators to provide information, perspective, and conservation-related input.

Tim noted that TNC has been the administrator for some of the Moore grants. TNC has submitted more proposals than were funded. They were hoping to get habitat protection funds for areas outside conservation units, but Moore elected not to fund those at this time.

**Habitat Conservation Projects:** Glenn discussed the projects he's been involved in and distributed a graphic showing acquisitions over the past ten years. There was a big jump in 2002-03 due to funding from the Moore Foundation. TCF has helped acquire 94,000 acres in 71 different tracts in Southwest Alaska, in every conservation unit. In 2008, they closed on 15,300 acres along the Agulowak River, and will close on the balance of that parcel in August. They have picked up 20 allotments through FWS over the years. Glenn continues to talk to Togiak Natives Ltd. about an easement on their land. He's hoping to get an easement along the upper Alagnak with the Igiugig Corporation. Parcels near Chignik and Becharof Lake on the Alaska Peninsula as well as on Nerka Lake are in the appraisal process.

**NMWT Land Trust Update:** Tim said the LT Board will meet in June. The LT has made preliminary offers on two parcels identified through the traditional use area conservation plan (TUACP). The first is one locals wanted to see protected at the mouth of Old Man Creek on the Mulchatna. It's 160 acres and the cost will be approximately

\$200,000. There is a \$40,000 NFHP grant available through TNC that could be used (by September 2010) for a portion of the cost. The second property is 40 acres at the mouth of Harris Creek above Koliganek. Koliganek Corporation has committed \$10,000 towards acquisition and Tikchik Narrows Lodge (Bud Hodson) has committed \$5,000. This parcel is surrounded by Native corporation land and it may provide an opportunity to test what TNC wants to do in acquiring an allotment, transferring it to a Native corporation with a conservation easement on it, then trading that for a larger easement of equal value on Native corporation land elsewhere. The LT would enforce the easement in a situation like this. The LT and TNC have prioritized all Native allotments along the Nushagak.

Tim said the LT Board is also working on Land Trust Alliance (LTA) standards for compliance. Ward Jones continues as Board chair. Last year they added 28 miles to the anadromous stream catalog, using partnership and other funds. Work will continue this year, with a focus on tributaries to the Kvichak. The Park Service is also involved in the upper Chulitna. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has been contracted to install gauges on the Stuyahok and Mulchatna, and Trout Unlimited (TU) has helped provide a gauge on the Kaskanak. An instream flow reservation application has been filed on the Kaskanak and they hope to file on the Stuyahok and Mulchatna within the next six months. Christopher commented that protection here is much more cost effective than in the lower 48 and should help to assure continued funding.

Sue described other funding that has been used for these projects. BIA has provided a grant to help support work on the Stuyahok and Mulchatna. In addition, BBNA received \$50,000 for a second-year grant, with the possibility of a one-year extension, as well as another BIA grant through the self-governance process. Once work on the lower Kaktuli is done, that equipment will be available for other sites.

There was a lot of discussion on how to track the various funding sources, their timelines, and who's doing what projects. John commented that the NFHP has been very supportive of all efforts and if anyone thinks they need an extension beyond the five-year grant period, they should request it sooner rather than later.

**Washington, D.C. Visit:** During the appropriations process in March, Glenn met with delegation staff (and Congressman Young personally) to encourage their support of the NFHP. Glenn and John were also in D.C. in early May. The SWASHP received an award from the Department of the Interior (DOI). Glenn, Bobby Andrew, and Molly Chythlook were videotaped discussing habitat protection issues while they were in D.C. The interview should be on the DOI website. Both Senator Begich and the DOI representative received a copy of "Rivers of Life." Glenn suggested doing a local award ceremony during the BBNC Leadership Conference in December.

Sue said an awards ceremony would be great and suggested a cohesive presentation to describe what's been going on. Discussion of other possible events included a booth at the Alaska Forum on the Environment, Coastal America meetings, a presentation at AFN, and Native regional resource managers' conference.

**Media Outreach and Coverage:** Glenn said the Aleknagik Natives Ltd. (ANL) deal received some coverage in lower 48 magazines, but there was little interest in Bristol Bay publications. Glenn hopes to get something in the BBNC newsletter once the rest of the deal is done. Tim said they've had some media outreach at TNC. The national magazine will feature their salmon program, including the scientific work and additions to the anadromous stream catalog. National Geographic magazine has contacted TNC and wants to do a Pebble-related piece. A lot of the exposure for Southwest Alaska is tied to Pebble. TNC is trying to show that there are other things going on and that even if Pebble goes away, there are still issues (e.g., legal fragmentation).

Chris suggested forwarding any media releases to Ryan Roberts, the communications contact for the partnerships. He will get them on the national website. In addition, the Land Trust newsletter will be out soon, and items for BBNC's newsletter are due mid-August. Tiel said BBNC's village leadership conference will be December 7 – 8 at the Marriott in Anchorage. There was some discussion about who to invite, including Denby Lloyd (ADFG Commissioner) and Kelly Hepler (Chair, NFH Board).

**Website Status / Use:** Glenn stated that in recognition of the change to the partnership, he had a new logo drafted and will have letterhead made. The website needs updating. After official recognition in June 2008, Glenn had the web designer search and hold possible URLs. "swaksalmonpartnership.org" seems to be the favorite. Glenn will continue to work on updating the site.

**Other Activities:** Tim noted that there is a move to get language tacked onto the farm bill that would allow Alaska Native corporations to make conservation-type land donations and get the same tax benefits that western ranchers get, which is more than what's available now. Tom Harris with Tyonek has taken the lead on it, and is working with LTA. Their attorney has contacted TNC to get language in the bill. This would make a big difference in incentives and be a major benefit to Alaska, particularly if village corporations get some benefit from it. It was pointed out that several organizations have farm bill coordinators and suggested that the issue could be brought up at the June 23 national partnership meeting.

Tim also mentioned that the region is pushing BLM to delay implementation of lifting restrictions on mining given the coordinated planning activities underway in the region. In light of this, BLM should be at the table.

The Land Trust has received a \$20,000 coastal grant and a \$7,000 Pacific Coast Venture grant. These will be used to begin the planning process with Native corporations, working with their boards to identify critical salmon habitat on their lands. They're working with the major landowners on the Nushagak, starting at Koliganek, since they have the most habitat that's critical for salmon. Tim has also been planning an exhibit in celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of commercial fishing in Bristol Bay. Sponsors include National Park Service, the Land Trust, FWS, and the Partnership, as well as private money. It will open in Dillingham in June. The message is that the reason we still have a commercial fishery is that the habitat is still in good shape. After Dillingham, the

exhibit will go to Homer in 2010 and Anchorage in 2011. Christopher commented that next summer Anchorage is hosting the national meeting of fish and wildlife agencies in July. In addition, the national partnership will meet next month.

#### **VI. National Fish Habitat/Southwest Alaska Salmon Partnership Update**

Tim explained that the technical committee met in April to work on a strategic plan. Corrine at TNC led the group through a modified CAP process to develop a strategic plan. The national partnership letter of acceptance required a more comprehensive strategic plan consistent with the newer guidelines. Tim will take the notes from the April meeting and draft a strategic plan. The group will meet again in the fall. TNC and the LT will help with the process. The group concluded that the most immediate threat to the area is mining, so that will drive some of the Steering Committee activities, but there are larger Land Trust issues as well.

There was some discussion about who will review products. Tim expects to pull in experts on certain components. Christopher commented that the western Native trout initiative overlaps most areas, and they will be updating their plan to include native trout species. Roger Harding in Juneau is the technical lead for the project and Robin Knox is the coordinator. There are 10 – 12 western partnerships vying for national money.

Tim commented that UAF is conducting unique programs related to the Nushagak estuary. Todd Radenbaugh (UAF Bristol Bay) attended the last technical committee meeting.

#### **VII. Expansion of the Board**

There was considerable discussion of how to expand the Steering Committee to include the right people. Glenn said that, because of the partnership designation, we need to review the bylaws adopted in 2002. The main issue is whether the right people are involved in the Steering and Technical committees. In 2002, state and federal agencies did not want to be visibly involved in leadership roles. Now the partnership is larger and the focus is broader with agency involvement at different levels. It was suggested that we look at the newly updated Western Native Trout Initiative bylaws to see if there's anything to borrow. The technical groups are where all stakeholders should be represented, and can be more inclusive. The Mat-Su project included all pertinent state and federal agencies as partners, but not all are on the Steering Committee.

Tim suggested major landowners, such as BLM, DNR, and maybe Calista, should be on the Steering Committee. Other recommendations included Lake & Peninsula Borough, NOAA Fisheries (Steering Committee), USGS (Technical Committee). Glenn will look at the WNTI bylaws, propose changes, and circulate for comment. John noted that the authorizing legislation provides funding for NOAA, FWS, and BLM to participate.

Tim suggested a formal invitation be sent to USGS, NOAA, BLM, DNR, and LPB (especially a representative from Alaska Peninsula communities). Other suggestions were National Park Service, and NRCS.

### **VIII. Technical Committee Update**

The committee had its first meeting in April and is working on the strategic plan. See the previous discussion for more details. There was additional discussion about the Board versus the Steering Committee. It was recommended that someone draft an organizational flow chart showing the Board and committees.

### **IX. Communications**

The group discussed letters to send out. Some organizations have a communications committee. Christopher will let Glenn know who he wants on the cc list.

### **X. Other Business**

John noted that the FWS coastal wetlands program grant application period is still open. There is \$18 million for habitat protection, a \$10 million increase over last year. The deadline for application is June 26. So far there are no Alaska proposals. There was some discussion about what the funds can be used for. The coastal area includes any area that is tidally influenced.

### **XI. Next Meeting**

Glenn said they will try to schedule meeting for the fall and spring, and the next meeting will be at the call of the chair, probably after September. It was noted that the Kenai strategic plan might be out for review soon. Glenn thanked BBNC for hosting this meeting.

### **XII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.