

Klamath Basin Coalition of the Willing Plan of Action

At its August 26th, 2020 meeting, the Klamath Basin Coalition of the Willing (Coalition)—a collaborative endeavor comprised of individuals from across the region representing diverse stakeholder interests and Native American Tribes—affirmed support for this Plan of Action (Plan). A list of supporting parties is included in Addendum I below. This final version of the Plan supercedes all previous drafts.

This Plan outlines work the Coalition has advanced over several meetings without its federal and state partners. The Plan reflects ongoing collaborative engagement among a diverse set of parties from across the basin—including various environmental organizations, water users, Native American Tribes, business interests and local counties and cities among others.

The work described below illustrates agreements which the Coalition has forged together on:

- The group’s overarching goals.
- A media policy and definition of consensus to initially aid decision-making until the group’s organizational structure is further defined.
- Acknowledgement of the necessity and value of the group’s work, whether dams are removed or stay in place.
- Sub-regional projects designed to advance the Coalition’s goals and foster greater levels of collaborative engagement.
- Evaluation criteria for prioritizing both emerging and future project concepts.
- Strategic lines of action that will guide future Coalition work and build capacity for greater collective impact across the region.

The Plan is not designed as a comprehensive strategic planning document. Nor does it yet solve difficult resource management and sustainable economic development challenges facing the Klamath Basin. Rather, it provides a report back of ongoing collaboration and a pathway forward for local residents dedicated to working together and seeking support from their federal, state, philanthropic and community partners. Effective implementation of the strategic lines of action below will enable the Coalition to generate traction towards its stated goal of solving some of the most pressing social, ecological and economic challenges facing Klamath Basin communities.¹

Background

The Coalition was originally convened by Alan Mikkelsen, US Department of Interior (DOI), to engage parties throughout the Klamath Basin—from the Klamath River headwaters in Oregon to where it flows into the Pacific Ocean in Northern California—following the failure of past negotiated agreements. The Coalition attempts to address sustainable management of fish and water, including water quality, agriculture, wildlife, and recreation, by identifying actions that

¹ Supporting parties and individuals are listed in Addendum I.

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local communities can implement and sustain into the future. Federal participation is essential due to the current level of federal influence over resource management, tribal trust obligations and contractual obligations to water users in the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Project.²

After a series of Coalition meetings in 2018 and early 2019, non-federal and state agency participants chose to begin meeting on their own. This break, generally welcomed by both Mr. Mikkelsen and the parties involved, was primarily driven by the group's inability to candidly discuss relevant issues in the Klamath Basin due to multiple lawsuits against the federal government. The Coalition initially met without its federal and state partners in the spring of 2019 and began brainstorming what it called "sweet spot" projects which could address a broad set of concerns and help the group find common ground. Shortly thereafter, the group brought in impartial facilitation services to aid its collaborative endeavor.

Over time, the Coalition has evolved into a grassroots group, guided primarily by diverse stakeholder groups and Native American Tribes from across the Klamath Basin.

Coalition Administration

Upon securing a new facilitator in summer 2019, the Coalition simultaneously formed an *ad hoc* steering committee to assist with future agenda development, meeting logistics and fundraising. The Coalition also partnered with the Family Water Alliance, a locally-based 501(c)(3) organization with longstanding connections to communities throughout the region, to administer any funds secured to support facilitation services. At times, individual steering committee members have fielded media inquiries about the collaborative process.

Reflective of its diversity and commitment to collaboration, the Coalition has to date secured facilitation resources from the Humboldt Area Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Rogue River Irrigators, Ducks Unlimited, the states of Oregon and California, the federal government, and three local counties—Klamath, Modoc and Siskiyou. Most importantly, all participants at Coalition meetings regularly contribute significant time and resources for long travel from communities throughout the Klamath Basin.

Coalition Meetings: May, 2019 – August, 2020

Coalition Goals

At the outset of its work without federal and state partners, the Coalition agreed on two overarching goal statements that reflect the group's strong commitment to collaboration on issues which have long vexed the Klamath Basin.

- Identify the most pressing problems that challenge the social, ecological and economic health of Klamath Basin communities.

² At the time this initial description of the Coalition was put forward, many participants, at the request of DOI staff, responded to a set of overarching principles to guide the group's work. Some Coalition participants believe there is value in revisiting their respective responses in a collaborative setting, and with agency partners.

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- Develop and implement strategies to solve these challenges.

Building on an early suggestion by DOI staff, the Coalition also agreed early on to generally avoid the topic of dam removal in this collaborative setting unless desired. The group believes that its work together, and any emerging or forged agreements and associated action steps, is both necessary and valuable, regardless of whether dams are removed or stay in place.

At the July, 2019 meeting, the first with impartial facilitation support, Coalition participants broke into small groups and began exploring what works well in their new setting (i.e., collaboration without federal and state partners), challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, and guiding principles that motivate and keep the group together under difficult circumstances.

Situational Assessment

In advance of the September meeting, the facilitator conducted a rapid situational assessment with a balanced yet not exhaustive set of Coalition participants in order to gain insight into relevant issues, participant needs and interests, and other socio-political dynamics that inform Coalition discussions. The assessment revealed the following challenges and motivating factors which, in summer/fall 2019, were driving the group's work.

- Momentum is needed in what many perceive as a process that is not producing results or even traction towards common goals—not a lot of fruit yet born from the collaboration.
- Many feel the Coalition should forge an initial agreement that outlines the rationale and purpose of the collaboration, and provides a “scope of work” that focuses future efforts.
- A range of constructive projects are currently taking place across the region, however, broad scale integration, networking and information sharing remains limited, as has been noted in past studies about the Klamath Basin.
- Notwithstanding ongoing litigation,³ some believe elements of past agreements still hold promise if group collaboration in time evolves to a place of creating solutions around sustainable water management.
- Many, though not all, believe lessons can be drawn from the Yakima process that may inform how to address challenges facing the Klamath Basin.
- For some, motivation to collaborate is driven by both despair and an abiding hope that people can still work together to resolve longstanding resource management challenges and bring peace and prosperity for all in the basin.
- Coalition participants—many having been involved in these issues for years—possess a remarkable amount of mutual respect for each other. This may be the strongest asset that helps the group continue doing important work together.

³ This Plan acknowledges but does not attempt to describe various ongoing litigation related to the Klamath river system, and the sustainable use and management of its waters.

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Opportunities to Finding Group Agreement

In September and October, meeting participants discussed what a Coalition Plan of Action might look like and agreed on a Plan that:

- Describes the rationale and purpose of the group.
- Builds on sub-regional exploration of challenges, human conflicts and existing or emerging project ideas that address Coalition goals.
- Presents strategic lines of action that guide future collaborative engagement.
- Helps secure support from federal and state partners, as well as private foundations.
- Creates networking and communication which enables basin-wide coordination among parties working collaboratively to achieve the Coalition's goals and solve the region's most pressing challenges.

To prepare the Coalition for a later decision, the facilitator, at the October meeting, introduced and secured initial group agreement to a definition of consensus that could be used to assess the level of support on any proposed plan or project:

Consensus means all Coalition participants either fully support or can live with a particular decision and believe that their constituents can as well. In reaching consensus, some participants may strongly endorse a particular proposal, report or recommendation while others may simply accept it as "workable." Others may only be able to "live with it" as less than desired but still acceptable. Still others may choose to "stand aside" by verbally noting disagreement, yet allowing the group to reach consensus without them, or by abstaining altogether. Any of these actions constitutes consensus.

Group Agreement: Outreach and Media Relations

Media has at times expressed interest in the Coalition's work. In response, the group discussed and came to agreement on an outreach and media relations policy for those participating at Coalition meetings.

Coalition participants are asked to speak only for themselves or the constituency they represent when asked by external parties, including the media, about the Coalition's work, unless there has been a formal adoption of a statement, report or recommendations by the Coalition. Participants also have the freedom to express their own opinions to the media. Participants should inform media and external parties that they only speak for themselves and do not represent other participants or the Coalition as a whole. The temptation to discuss someone else's statements or positions should be avoided.

Shortly after acquiring a new facilitator, the Coalition decided to delay work on the group's organizational structure in favor of breaking into sub-regional groups that would discuss challenges and work to design and build consensus on projects which have potential to address the group's overarching goals. Coalition participants acknowledge and understand

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the need for the group to further explore and forge agreement on an organizational structure that provides clear “rules of engagement” for all participating parties. Many believe other groups working on water-related challenges across the west may provide model examples of good governance and lessons learned that could prove useful in the Klamath Basin.

Establishment of Regional Sub-Groups

The Coalition identified five geographic sub-groups within which to advance its work. Individual participants self-selected their desired sub-group, yet were also encouraged to participate in regions where they could bring the most value-add to the collaboration. Most individuals have stayed in the same group over several months, however, a few rotate between different sub-groups. The regional sub-groups, each comprised of anywhere from four to ten persons, include:

- Refuges
- Upper Basin (above upper Klamath Lake)
- Klamath Lake
- Mainstem of the Klamath River
- Scott River and Shasta River
- Trinity Region

Regional Inventory of Challenges, Project Development and Determination of Priorities

At the October and November meetings, the sub-groups began identifying and exploring challenges to the ecological and economic health of each region, discussing associated human conflicts, and brainstorming existing and emerging projects which could address identified challenges and conflicts.⁴ At the culmination of each meeting, each sub-group provided a report back to the full Coalition on the progress of its work, responded to questions, and secured input from the larger group.

As project ideas matured, the full Coalition developed and came to agreement on a set of criteria for evaluating and prioritizing emerging concepts. A simple dot-voting exercise led to selection of five primary criteria for ranking projects under consideration in each sub-group. The top five criteria⁵ include:

1. Project or package of projects will realize multi-benefits (e.g., parties, fisheries, ecosystem restoration).

⁴ Coalition participants regularly engage in structured dialogue and utilize worksheets to capture outputs of their respective discussions. The facilitation team, in turn, transcribes and sends all notes generated back to each regional sub-group. These notes are not included in this Plan, however, they form the foundation of the Coalition’s work to date, particularly in relation to the development of project pre-proposals.

⁵ The full set of criteria that were discussed and considered by the Coalition are included in Addendum II.

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2. Project seeks consensus and is broadly supported by different parties.
3. Project contributes to desired future restored conditions (overall restoration).
4. Project concept, strategy and implementation plan is well developed, including clear goals and monitoring protocols.
5. Project cultivates “our science” versus “adversarial science” – proceed with joint proposal to get the best available science.

Each sub-group applied the evaluation criteria to identify its top 1-3 projects. Shortly after this time, a funding opportunity arose based on FY20 resources appropriated for the Klamath Basin by Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley. This catalyzed the full Coalition—including all its active sub-groups—to quickly turn project concepts into actionable, collaborative work across the region.

Development of Project Pre-Proposals

At the February meeting, the facilitator announced that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) agreed to receive pre-proposals from the Coalition. Initially, an end-of-February deadline was set for submission of pre-proposals seeking FY20 funds. However, this deadline was extended to mid-March. This allowed each sub-group, supported by review from the full Coalition, to further refine its respective work and secure the broadest base of support for each project put forward.

Building on the project ranking exercise, most sub-groups identified one or more pre-proposal ideas for FY2020 federal funds. The refuges sub-group may seek support for its project outside this particular pre-proposal process. All sub-groups also identified priority projects that could be further developed and considered for any available FY2021 federal funds. The Coalition’s priority FY2020 and FY2021 projects⁶ include:

<i>Sub-region</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>FY2020</i>	<i>FY2021</i>
Upper Basin	Sprague river water quality analysis	**	
Upper Basin	Flood plain restoration action study		**
Klamath Lake	Biochar		**
Refuges	Alternative energy analysis	**	
Mainstem	Expanded use of PIT tags	**	
Mainstem	KDD winter water storage feasibility		**
Mainstem	On Project Plan		**
Scott/Shasta Rivers	Groundwater recharge study	**	
Scott/Shasta Rivers	Water yield feasibility study		**

⁶ Although nine priority projects emerged from this most recent collaboration, each sub-group has a longer list of projects it considered when applying the evaluation criteria (Addendum III). Moreover, going back to its May, 2019 meeting, the Coalition generated a still longer list of what it believes are potential “sweet spot” projects from across the basin and of interest to many participants.

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Following the February meeting, each sub-group collaborated outside the Coalition meeting setting to develop their respective pre-proposals. Refinement of all emerging pre-proposals occurred at the March Coalition meeting. Shortly after this time, three pre-proposals were submitted for consideration to USFWS, including the Sprague River water quality analysis, expanded use of PIT tags in the Klamath River, and a Scott River groundwater recharge study.

In late April, USFWS announced project awards, pending submission of final proposals, which occurred in June following a series of project workshops. The Sprague River water quality analysis was funded by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). This allowed the Upper Basin subgroup to put forward another proposal and thereby secure USFWS funds for a riparian restoration survey of the Wood, Williamson, and Sprague rivers.

Anticipated Next Steps – Strategic Lines of Action

Based on the collaborative engagement described in this Plan, the Coalition is well positioned to advance distinct yet interrelated strategic lines of action in the months ahead, including:

- *Develop and Implement Coalition Projects*
The Coalition believes its recent work in sub-groups has been constructive and resulted in the identification and development of several priority project concepts, as well as additional project ideas from around the basin which can and should be re-visited. This project-based focus will remain a central element of the group's collective work ahead. Furthermore, the Coalition continues to believe that impartial facilitation support not only creates an inclusive and productive working environment, but takes the burden off participants to organize and advance the collaboration.

Recognizing the interconnected nature of many issues in the basin, a number of Coalition participants would like to get involved in more than one sub-group. However, this is often not practical at this stage, particularly for individuals who are deeply embedded with work in their respective sub-region/sub-group. As such, the Coalition recognizes that having each sub-group regularly provide report backs and solicit input from the full group will continue to foster open dialogue, enable sharing and analysis of important data and information, and build greater consensus along the way. Moreover, regularly bringing work back to the full group creates greater problem solving capacity and support for each sub-group as needed.

Many believe a foundational step to successfully advancing project-based work—focused on priority issues such water quality, fisheries and ecosystem restoration, water recharge and storage, and other water related topics—is to acknowledge past efforts, then evaluate what has worked, what has not, and how this informs next steps. This is particularly true in the upper basin, but in principle applies to all sub-regions. Several Coalition project ideas—including all three FY2020 pre-proposals submitted to USFWS for potential funding—are specifically designed to analyze and build upon previous efforts and associated lessons learned. Understanding both accomplishments and failures from the past will help the Coalition to further refine and act on its priorities, and secure broad-scale buy-in to work needed across the region.

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The Coalition now seeks to advance its priority projects and generate significant momentum towards stated goals, if implementation funding can be secured soon from federal, state and/or philanthropic partners. A particular emphasis has been and will continue to be placed on jointly designing, implementing and then, at key milestones, evaluating the outcomes of each sub-group's work. In time, this highly collaborative approach is expected to build trust, generate measurable impacts, and thereby position the group to eventually coalesce, scale up and better integrate its work across the basin.

- *Explore and Further Define Important Organizational Structure*

The Coalition currently functions as a kind of *ad hoc* coordination and information sharing body, supported by participation from a wide range of interested parties hailing from across the Klamath Basin. Some are veterans of previous regional-level processes that sought to achieve a water balance and foster healthy ecosystems and communities in the region. Others are new to this particular group, yet appear equally committed to collaborative engagement. All are driven to build collaborative capacity, demonstrate local leadership, and forge necessary and beneficial partnerships.

It remains an open question as to whether the Coalition should establish itself as a more formal body. The group has discussed the issue and sees advantages but also significant challenges to becoming a legally registered entity or simply developing a comprehensive organizational structure. Many think collaborative, project-based work remains a more valuable use of time at monthly Coalition meetings. Initial priority projects have been funded and additional project ideas are still under development. Moreover, it is broadly recognized that developing bylaws or a charter can be a challenging and consuming exercise for a large and highly diverse group. That said, the group recognizes an immediate need to put proper organizational structure, transparency and accountability protocols in place, and thereby maintain the ability to provide assurances that public money used to support the group is properly managed.

At this time, the most practical step to further define needed organizational structure is for the Coalition to revisit its overall purpose, decision-making procedures, ground rules and other relevant process agreements. A subcommittee may soon be set up to explore this issue, review examples of good governance from other western states, and bring forward options or lessons learned on an as needed basis. This subcommittee may also develop proper transparency and accountability protocols and bring draft proposals forward for consideration by the full Coalition. In its current form, the Coalition is nimble and flexible, simultaneously advancing sub-regional work while staying attentive to good organizational structure and the need for basin-wide solutions. The group's current and foreseeable focus is directly linked to achieving stated goals and addressing unique needs across the Klamath Basin.

- *Work Towards Basin Wide Integration*

Proponents of a healthy, prosperous and sustainable Klamath Basin have long recognized that piecemeal solutions—often useful at generating localized progress in addressing longstanding challenges and associated human conflicts—are insufficient to fully address the scale and scope of water-related challenges facing the region. The Coalition believes

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in the importance of project-based work, yet simultaneously sees the need and remains committed to address larger, more complex challenges facing the region. This collaborative brings together leaders from Klamath communities far and wide who understand well that all parts of the system are connected. Everything and everyone is interdependent. If one area is unhealthy, it impacts the whole system. Any potential solutions to decades old resource management challenges must be designed, implemented, and, ultimately, scaled up with an ever-present eye towards regional-level integration and collective impact.

The Klamath Basin Integrated Fisheries Restoration and Monitoring Program (IFRMP),⁷ advanced under the leadership of USFWS, presents one optional framework for basin-wide integration. This program has relevance for the Coalition given that water-related challenges faced by many throughout the basin—from farmers, ranchers and small towns, to refuge managers and environmental advocates, to tribes seeking to maintain cultural and harvesting practices which have existed for millennia—are inextricably linked to stressed fisheries. According to the program’s website,⁸ the IFRMP seeks to use best available science within an adaptive management framework to develop basin-scale goals and objectives for the restoration and monitoring of fisheries in the Klamath Basin.

Many Coalition participants have been invited to contribute to the development of the IFRMP, with some finding the recent schedule and number of meetings about the program challenging, given other professional responsibilities. Others have requested that key issues, such as water quality, be embedded and not left out of the framework. Still others are undecided if they should commit time to helping contribute to the program, and look to those who have already been involved for advice and insight. It has been suggested that the full Coalition learn more about the IFRMP goals, approach and potential benefits, possibly lend support as the program evolves, but maintain its ability to operate in parallel with, rather than be dependent on, this multi-year USFWS effort.

Coalition participants see their ongoing collaborative engagement as a means to continue building trust, managing conflict and supporting communication and networking among committed people working in different parts of the Klamath Basin, yet towards a common goal. It is broadly understood that work in sub-groups/sub-regions will need to be shared and discussed regularly with the full Coalition—as well as federal, state, philanthropic and community partners—in order for all parties to understand and assess how progress in any one sub-region fits into the larger picture of creating solutions for the entire basin. Figuring out how to build a more integrated set of actions that generate needed collective impact across the region will no doubt be an evolving focus of the Coalition’s work.

⁷ The IFRMP has emerged as an outgrowth of recommendations about the state of science and adaptive management in the Klamath Basin from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine report, *Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River Basin: Causes of Decline and Strategies for Recovery* (2004).

⁸ <http://kbifrm.psmfc.org/>

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Addendum I – List of Supporting Parties

The following Klamath Basin parties contributed to, support, and are working collaboratively to advance this Plan of Action. Additional supporting parties are listed at the bottom of the table.

<i>Local counties and cities, Native American Tribes and stakeholder groups</i>	
California Farm Bureau	California Waterfowl
Cal-Ore Waterfowl and Wetlands Council	CalTrout
City of Yreka	Dan Keppen and Associates, Inc
Ducks Unlimited	Family Water Alliance
Karuk Tribe	Klamath County Board of Commissioners
Klamath County Chamber of Commerce	Klamath Water Users Association
Modoc County Board of Supervisors	Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Hunters Association	Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations
Institute for Fisheries Resources	Shasta Watershed Conservation Group
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors	Sustainable Northwest
Trout Unlimited	Rogue Valley Irrigators
Yurok Tribe	
<i>Individuals (no affiliation)</i>	
Becky Hyde	Larry Nicolson
<i>The following parties support the Plan, yet were not actively involved in its development</i>	
Klamath Falls City Council	Klamath Falls Downtown Association
Klamath County Economic Dev. Association	Klamath County Home Builders Association
Scott River Watershed Council	Quartz Valley Indian Community

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Addendum II – Project Evaluation Criteria

The full brainstorm of potential criteria considered by the Coalition to evaluate its emerging project ideas—including results of an informal voting exercise that helped the group select its top five—is included here.

1. Project or package of projects will realize multi-benefits (e.g. parties, fisheries, ecosystem restoration) – 26 votes
2. Project seeks consensus and is broadly supported by different parties – 13 votes
3. Project contributes to desired future restored conditions (overall restoration) – 12 votes
4. Project concept, strategy and implementation plan is well developed, including clear goals and monitoring protocols – 8 votes
5. Project cultivates “our science” versus “adversarial science” – proceed with joint proposal to get the best available science – 6 votes
6. Leadership is ready, willing and able to advance work – 5 votes
7. Project has high probability of meeting defined goals – 5 votes
8. Project supports a “do no harm” principle (acknowledgement this may be difficult) – 3 votes
9. Project attempts to minimize or mitigate harm to anyone – 3 votes
10. Project has a high probability of getting funded by one or more sources and getting implemented – 2 votes
11. Project will reduce human conflicts – 2 votes
12. Project builds on needed compromises – 1 vote
13. Project is shovel ready and can be done in a reasonable timeframe (acknowledging there will be short and long-term projects) – 0 votes
14. Project aligns with and/or supports both stakeholder and agency goals and interests – 0 votes
15. Project has an effective operational and monitoring strategy – 0 votes

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Addendum III – Ranked Priorities by Sub-Region

The Coalition began brainstorming project ideas in May, 2019. Over time, sub-groups narrowed their respective lists of project ideas and used the top five evaluation criteria to rank projects and produce a priority list by sub-region. The following list emerged at the November, 2019 meeting. This list has not yet been prioritized by the full Coalition, and needs further exploration.

Upper Basin (above upper Klamath Lake)

1. Agency-Barnes
2. West canal treatment wetlands
3. Landscape scale floodplain reconnection assessment
4. Diffuse source treatment wetlands
5. Off-stream watering facilities for livestock

Refuges

1. Develop alternative energy to power D. plant (e.g. solar)
2. Federal subsidy for D. plant power cost
3. Conjunctive use/storage
4. Purchase water rights
5. Make refuge a purpose of Klamath project

Klamath Lake

1. Forest management
2. Biochar polyacrylamides
3. More science to address sucker fish survival – populations, production, habitat
4. (a) Re-restore wetland restoration | (b) Additional water storage
5. Dredging

Mainstem of the Klamath River

1. On Plan Project (OPP)
2. For increased water yield (thinning) (Mazama Forest Plan)
3. Lower Lake/KDD Storage Proposal
4. Gravel augmentation below IGD
5. Emergency spore dilution flow for Chinook
6. (a) Water quality trading for TMDL | (b) Carcass gutting/removal above “hot spots”

Scott River and Shasta River

1. Beaver dams (feasibility study)
2. Groundwater recharge (feasibility study)
3. High mountain lakes (feasibility study)
4. Ditch lining, lining Shastina (feasibility study)
5. Review irrigation practices
6. More water storage
7. Eyed eggs
8. Flow plan

Trinity Region

1. Instream flows for fish → proviso 2 water