

**PNW FW Mussel Workgroup meeting  
Wednesday 8 June 2016, 12 - 1:10 pm**

Present: Kevin Aitkin (USFWS), Michele Blackburn (Xerces Society), Emilie Blevins (Xerces Society), Liz Bockstiegel (WDFW), Heidi Dunn (Ecological Specialists, Inc.), Matt Hill (EcoAnalysts), Marci Koski (USFWS), Gary Lester (EcoAnalysts), Alexa Maine (CTUIR), Maureen Minister (Port of Portland), Matt Paroulek (Port of Portland), Chris Sato (WDFW), Celeste Searles Mazzacano (CASM Environmental), Al Smith (ODFW ret'd), Cynthia Tait (USFS), Teal Waterstrat (USFWS)

**Agenda**

- Welcome and Introductions (Celeste Searles Mazzacano, CASM Environmental)
- EcoAnalysts: New mussel projects and potential collaborations (Gary Lester, EcoAnalysts, Moscow ID; Heidi Dunn, Ecological Specialists)
  - o EcoAnalysts is an aquatic ecology firm, their core work is bioassessment services and taxonomy, also algae and marine invert taxonomy; always been interested in freshwater mussels, get them in occasional samples, have done some mollusk work for dam re-licensing projects
  - o pursuing merger with Ecological Specialists in Missouri (Heidi Dunn), should be formalized by end of June. Heidi has been a member of the workgroup for some time, worked with mussels since 1978, dealing mostly with the interior basin, and is looking forward to bringing her mussel expertise to new territory and PNW clients
  - o they recently visited with several tribal groups and talked about their work
  - o Heidi is also president-elect of FMCS, mentions they have been looking to get more representation from our PNW group as well
  - o Emilie—saw recent publication of new national strategy and additional resources on FMCS web site, great place to find information
- Mock-up for new workgroup web site (Teal Waterstrat, USFWS; Alexa Maine, CTUIR; Celeste Searles Mazzacano, CASM Environmental)
  - o outline for pages and links/materials/resources to include was sent to group along with agenda; feedback solicited
  - o overall people seem happy with the outline; workgroup members are invited to share additional comments with web site subcommittee

- o Emilie—Xerces just filled their web site position, and the new hire will be available to work on the web site set-up in the coming months
- o Celeste—would like to connect with Xerces staff as soon as possible, plan is to have all the pages set up and then designated workgroup members will be responsible for maintaining and updating page
- o What will the page design look like? → focusing just on content to start with, haven't determined what the site visuals will be; if there are web sites that members feel are particularly well-done, please share with Teal, Celeste and Alexa
- o Kevin—old web site is still available; we will likely keep it up until the new site is launched to maintain some web presence
- o field guide section is good; is Burch still relevant? Western names haven't changed as much, plus there is historic interest; can include links to sites with synonyms to help avoid confusion about species names
- o Cynthia—does workgroup have other social media presence? → we have Facebook page and iNaturalist project page; Celeste tries to post items on a semi-regular basis but has been too busy lately to post a lot, knows that fresh content is needed to drive interest and get new “likes”
  - Cynthia chairs the Desert Fishes Habitat Partnership; they have Facebook “fish Fridays”—every other Friday they find something interesting about a desert fish and post it—regular postings are great for outreach
  - Teal, Cynthia, and Alexa are willing join the admin team for FB page, Celeste will set that up today
- Mussel die-off reporting (Emilie Blevins, Xerces Society; Teal Waterstrat & Kevin Aitkin, USFWS; Al Smith, ODFW ret'd; Celeste Searles Mazzacano, CASM Environmental)
  - o subgroup has been working a letter that members can share with their colleagues and partners to solicit information about mussel die-offs; draft shared with members prior to meeting
  - o Emilie will be collating the reports and set up a GoogleForms page that will allow people to report die-off data online
  - o Comments:
    - should clarify that 1st URL in letter leads to a field guide

- if data submitted through GoogleForm, should be able to attach it directly to a GoogleSheet that could be shared with workgroup
  - past or just present & future? Emile has collected some past reports already, and it would be good to have as complete a database as possible; probably best to wait until GoogleForm is ready to roll and report it that way to save Emilie an extra data-entry step
  - can we embed photos right into a GoogleForm? yes, send images to Emilie
  - Heidi—FMCS is currently updating the AFS Monetary Values Book for fish and mussel kills; looking for examples of when these values have been used in the past as well as evidence of mussel kills. They will be sending survey to hatcheries soon to get info on monetary values, have also been compiling list of propagation facilities and they will send survey there as well. Heidi sent an example form with the kinds of data the committee is looking for to the group as guidance (i.e., location, date, cause, kill estimate, was there also a fish kill).
- Freshwater mussel citizen science project in Thurston County, Washington (Liz Bockstiegel, WDFW)
  - o working with Teal and Chris to develop project; goal is to do recon in streams in Thurston Co.; working now with partners and school districts to identify streams and volunteer groups
  - o want to raise awareness about freshwater mussels, still scoping out survey sites
  - o will submit data to Xerces, iNaturalist, WDFW
  - o hoping this pilot will spawn other and/or larger survey projects for WDFW databases (i.e. Priority Habitat and Species)
  - o How is permit issue being addressed? → Liz and Teal will apply for STP and people will work under their supervision
  - o Thurston County stream team is very active in water quality and macroinvertebrate monitoring work, has large existing volunteer base, interested in getting into mussel surveys
  - o Teal and Chris—Liz has done an amazing job working on this, project will help show WDFW how important mussel work is, will be well-placed to start incorporating mussel work into regular surveys

- o probably start surveys in late July/early August; may start with presence/absence surveys to ID streams that will have more intensive surveys done next summer; if working with school groups will shift surveys to September, which is still a good time to be looking for mussels
- *Margaritifera falcata* projects in Clark County and beyond via Columbia River Fish & Wildlife Office (Marci Koski, USFWS)
  - o have funds for mussel work but relatively undefined at this point, 2016 will probably be more of a planning year
  - o working with Sean Connelly (USFWS-OR), who recently hired a fellow who will be involved with Mussel Academy this summer and do some mussel outreach
  - o want to use funds to get more info about mussels in their region; want to figure out data needs, likely looking mostly at *M. falcata*; surveys were done in 2005 and want to repeat to see effects of urbanization
  - o if anyone in the group has ideas about specific data needs in this area, please share with Marci
  - o also looking for info on updated database → need to go through Xerces to get a copy, e-mail Emilie ([emilie.blevins@xerces.org](mailto:emilie.blevins@xerces.org))
  - o Emilie—Xerces is doing assessment of western species extinction risks, has identified watersheds that were never surveyed or surveyed long in the past, could share these locations publicly in future but leery of doing so now since it hasn't gone through external review yet; once published it will be able to view via interactive map on IUCN web site, but for right now people who will be out in the field can e-mail her and she can send them a list of watersheds/streams of interest
    - Kevin—how is Xerces measuring urbanization? → using GIS layers to see vegetation/impervious surfaces
    - Al—there are some streams he knows of where habitat has improved in urban areas; great to be able to have quantitative comparisons of past vs present, the west has really lagged behind on that
- McBride Slough mussel surveys for Port of Portland (Celeste Searles Mazzacano, CASM Environmental)
  - o project to remove and contain contaminated sediments via carbon capping and excavate to will be implemented in 2017

- o last year the workgroup provided comments on the restoration plan urging the Port to do mussel surveys to determine whether salvage will be needed; McBride has not been surveyed previously but past surveys in the Slough revealed *Anodonta* both upstream and downstream
- o Port of Portland is working with CASM Environmental this year to assess potential mussel habitat in the project area and conduct surveys to see whether mussel salvage will be needed in 2017, so they can plan ahead; working at this site is complicated by the need to avoid suspending contaminated sediments while doing surveys
- Mussel projects in Crystal Springs Creek 2016 (Michele Blackburn, Xerces Society)
  - o mussel salvage relating to several culvert removals in SE PDX in areas where *Anodonta* present is planned for 8 July 2016 with BES; Al will be helping with survey and salvage along with Crystal Springs Partnership; fish salvage and construction will begin July 12
  - o 3rd year of volunteer-based surveys to look at recolonization in Crystal Springs Creek in Westmoreland Park after mussels were salvaged prior to a large restoration project there in 2013; no date set yet but will be in August, Michele will share final date with group in case anyone would like to come out and help
  - o Al—who is doing the fish rescue? → not sure, possibly ODFW
  - o Celeste—was working at park last week and found shell of predated adult *Anodonta* well into the park, not a tagged (rescued/recolonizer) mussel but encouraging; people have seen otters at the park so they may be finding mussels to eat
- Additional items/announcements
  - o Celeste is teaching a 2-day mussel class at Portland State University on 11-12 August 2016 as part of their Environmental Professional Program (EPP 725). Al taught this course 4 times in the past 10 years or so; it is aimed at people who are already working as biologists, engineers, restorationists, etc. and want to learn more about mussel ecology, conservation, identification, and survey and salvage techniques. Feel free to distribute information to anyone who might be interested; course details at <http://tinyurl.com/hq3w44d>
  - o When is the next FMCS symposium? → March 26-30, 2017 in Cleveland OH; want to do a snail workshop on Sunday and a more advanced mussel ID class that Tom Waters will be teaching; theme is “ecosystems and what mussels can do for us”; next one after that will be in Austin TX in 2019, still considering ideas for 2018 workshop

- o The next workgroup meeting will be in September; Celeste will send out a Doodle scheduling poll in August to set a date.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm. Thanks to everyone who participated!