June, 2023 WorkingLinks Workshop Summary

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Triangle Associates

WorkingLinks Workshop Summary

Dates: June 28 & 29, 2023

Location: Hilton Seattle Airport & Conference Center, 17620 International Blvd, Seattle, WA

Workshop Purpose & Goal: The purpose of this meeting was to convene connectivity planners and contributors to kickstart the development of an interagency statewide connectivity strategy in Washington. With successful funding secured from the legislature, including resources for hiring a contractor and developing spatial priorities, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife aims to bring together key actors to begin the process of creating a comprehensive habitat connectivity action plan. The primary goal is to initiate discussions around a strategic vision and plan of action for coordinated connectivity efforts across Washington.

 Objectives:
- Set the stage to develop an interagency statewide connectivity strategy in WA.
- Identify regional and statewide connectivity planning, policy, and implementation needs and challenges.
- Build state agency champions and leverage actionable partnerships to access funding.

 Desired Outcomes:
- Shared understanding of existing connectivity planning and ongoing actions in Washington state.
- Identify gaps and discuss the needs for effective connectivity planning in Washington.
- Engage stakeholders and partners to explore potential roles and mutual support.
- Facilitate discussions on communication strategies, workgroup formation, and the overall planning process.
- Develop a roadmap for securing resources from the legislature in preparation for the 2024 legislative session.

Day 1 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28: LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Opening Remarks - *Jen Syrowitz, Conservation Northwest*
 Jen Syrowitz delivered the opening remarks, emphasizing the workshop's purpose. She highlighted the collective efforts of individuals who have been working on wildlife connectivity for an extended period. Jen mentioned that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has recently secured funding to develop a connectivity action plan, aiming to enhance Washington's competitiveness in obtaining infrastructure funding. It was emphasized that transportation is just one aspect of the comprehensive action plan, which encompasses multiple components necessary for successful connectivity. Jen acknowledged the absence of important parties, including Tribes, and clarified that the meeting was intentionally kept small to facilitate a productive working session.

Championing Connectivity in Washington: Exploring Washington's Efforts and Future Vision

Ruth Musgrave, Senior Policy Advisor for Natural Resources in the Governor's Office

Ruth Musgrave spoke to the involvement of the Governor's Office in addressing connectivity issues. She mentioned that the Governor's Office, as well as the Office of Financial Management, is supportive of this cause. Implementers were encouraged to reach out to both offices for letters of support. Additionally, Ruth emphasized the importance of increased coordination among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to amplify efforts.

Ruth stressed the urgency to protect biodiversity, highlighting that Washington state is at a critical juncture with access to federal funding and support. The need to safeguard biodiversity has never been more pressing. The state is grappling with the challenges posed by rapid growth, which is impacting connectivity, access to recovery zones, and the availability of habitat.

Ruth shared a successful example of the salmon recovery package that was submitted to the White House. She expressed that the Governor's Office has the potential to do the same for connectivity and transportation issues.

Margen Carlson, Habitat Program Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Margen Carlson discussed the connectivity efforts at WDFW, emphasizing the availability of abundant data and analysis for such work. However, there is a pressing need for broader support and understanding of these efforts. Several important issues must be addressed to promote progress in habitat connectivity. First and foremost, it is crucial to help people understand how habitat connectivity directly affects them. Additionally, rallying around clear priorities is essential to drive improvements forward. Finally, garnering public support from various stakeholders, including landowners, agencies, and legislators, is paramount.

Both WDFW and WSDOT are renewing their leadership commitments to prioritize continuity in connectivity work and support related projects.

April Magrane, NW Region Lead Biologist, Washington State Department of Transportation

April discussed the role of WSDOT in promoting connectivity. Compliance holds significant importance in their work, and WSDOT operates within a regulatory framework to ensure a safe, efficient, and innovative highway system while also protecting wildlife and collaborating with agency partners. WSDOT adheres to the Secretary's Executive Order 1031.02, which aims to enhance and preserve connections for high-quality natural habitats.

Rather than adopting a linear approach, WSDOT considers the diverse relationships between communities and the natural and built environment. They also prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts, as well as maintain Climate and Natural Hazard Resilience teams.

Meeting mandated deadlines is a crucial aspect of WSDOT's work. Adjusting engineering or planning processes to accommodate habitat connectivity can have schedule implications, underscoring the importance of early information sharing in their operations.

Crafting a Roadmap: Insights into Developing a Statewide Action Plan - *Patty Cramer, Wildlife Connectivity Institute*

Patty Cramer shared insights into developing a statewide action plan for connectivity. All information is available on wildlifeconnectivity.org.

Some of the key takeaways for developing an action plan include:

- Transportation and planning agencies, both at the metropolitan and regional levels, require data and information regarding wildlife movement.
- It is crucial to incorporate wildlife concerns by implementing checkpoints within the transportation planning process.
- Foster engagement and encourage others to develop an interest in wildlife vehicle conflicts and wildlife connectivity, motivating them to take action.
- Initiate the planning process well in advance, ideally 5-10 years ahead of time.

`Lessons learned from a project in New Mexico include:

- Ensure data accuracy and reliability to achieve high-quality results.
- Identify crash hotspots, considering potential underreported incidents in certain areas.
- Utilize fish data to enhance culvert improvements.
- Engage partners early in the project to foster collaboration and shared objectives.
- Consider ecological and transportation factors to prioritize projects and understand data's influence on decision-making.
    - Maintain a healthy skepticism towards models and their limitations.
    - Be aware of internal biases that may affect weighting or prioritization.
- Utilize diverse engagement methods, including one-on-one interactions, to involve individuals who may face participation challenges.
- Recognize the importance of tribal involvement and view tribes as valuable allies.
- Seek opportunities to establish partnerships that enhance project effectiveness.
- Promote wildlife awareness within the agency culture at both the headquarters and local levels through educational programs, one-on-one trainings, partnerships, and research initiatives. This top-down approach ensures comprehensive adoption.

Key Considerations for Developing a Successful Policy Agenda - *Logan Christian, National Caucus of Environmental Legislators & Senator Mimi Stewart, New Mexico*

Logan Christian shared the key considerations for a successful policy agenda based on examples from other states around the country.

Some legislative trends, studies, and action plans from other states include:
- Conduct comprehensive studies on wildlife corridors and crossings to gain a thorough understanding of their specific requirements and develop a well-defined action plan for wildlife corridors.

- Promote, and if necessary, mandate, interagency coordination for the implementation of action plans, fostering collaboration among relevant agencies.
- Support, authorize, and allocate funding for the establishment and development of coalitions focused on wildlife conservation and corridor protection.
- Implement measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of new infrastructure on wildlife and their habitats.
- Enforce statewide reporting requirements and data collection initiatives to ensure consistent monitoring and evaluation of wildlife conservation efforts.

Funding Considerations:
- Establish a dedicated fund specifically for wildlife connectivity projects. This fund can address one of the major obstacles to completing such work, encompassing general support for crossings, targeted assistance for specific crossings, land acquisition for habitat protection, or bond programs.
- Explore the potential for transportation and conservation sectors to serve as revenue sources for additional funding streams.
- Conduct studies aimed at identifying diverse funding sources to sustain wildlife connectivity initiatives.

Washington-specific actions included:
- Building proactive mitigation into transportation planning
- Creating a source of dedicated funding for crossings
- Continue building a statewide connectivity coalition

Senator Mimi Stewart (NM) discussed the noteworthy bills and programs in New Mexico that focus on wildlife protection and connectivity. One notable achievement is the [Wildlife Corridors Action Plan.](), which was preceded by a 2.5-year study. This comprehensive study identified areas in the state where wildlife collisions frequently occur, providing valuable data and a map that outlined the highest priority projects.

Furthermore, Senator Stewart emphasized the significance of fostering public support and establishing connections throughout the state. It is crucial for various groups across the state to collaborate and endorse the bill, even though some farmers and ranchers in New Mexico initially opposed it. The bill's success relied on extensive outreach efforts and soliciting public comments, with the team making concerted efforts to engage all regions of the state.

Maximizing Resources and Impact: Biennium Funding, Action Planning, and Spatial Synthesis Needs - *Julia Michalak PhD, Priority Habitats and Species Section Manager, WDFW & Harriet Morgan, Climate Change Coordinator, WDFW*

Julia Michalak and Harriet Morgan discussed their goals for the upcoming biennium while considering the available resources. The agency's primary objectives are to build upon existing work, support and amplify the network, and prioritize action over analysis.

Regarding spatial data, WDFW aims to compile a list of short-term priority actions to seize funding opportunities and develop a plan for long-term spatial priorities. They are actively assessing what resources are currently available and what additional support is needed. Moreover, WDFW will assign roles and responsibilities for priority projects and locations as part of the overall implementation strategy.

In terms of the Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan, WDFW intends to foster a collaborative partnership to identify and prioritize key locations and projects that enhance state connectivity. They recognize the importance of engaging with Tribes and view them as integral to the success of this endeavor. To facilitate this, WDFW plans to establish internal and external working groups while coordinating with a steering committee to synthesize the information gathered and develop a comprehensive action plan.

To date, WDFW has conducted internal discussions to strategize for the biennium, reviewed connectivity action plans from other states, held interviews with wildlife and transportation agencies in those states, secured funding for the 2023-25 biennium to develop their strategy, and organized a Tribal webinar to gather insights.

Moving forward, WDFW envisions several avenues for engagement, including participation in the steering committee, advisory groups, quarterly briefings, and a review period at the project's conclusion to gather input and feedback.

State Wildlife Connectivity Action Plans - *Steph DeMay, Climate Change Research Scientist*

Steph DeMay shared findings from existing wildlife connectivity action plans primarily from western states. The review focused on understanding where connectivity initiatives are taking place, how to address related issues, and what actions can be taken. Notably, the research emphasized landscape connectivity rather than road connectivity. Steph also conducted interviews with agency staff from the participating states to gather insights.

The study identified three primary modeling approaches: expert workshops, connectivity models, and pre-existing datasets. Landscape planning, unlike transportation planning, is a more intricate process with an infinite number of stakeholders and no clear lead implementer or authority. Additionally, landscape planning offers a range of action options. The ultimate goal is to establish connections between projects and the road system. Some states have considered tracking changes over time, but those considering it typically face significant levels of development and landscape transformation.

Currently, states are working on integrating maps into their agency work. They hope that partners will utilize the provided maps for their own initiatives while continuing to evaluate their efforts.

Lessons learned from other states engaged in similar work include:

- The importance of effective communication and buy-in
- Incorporating flexibility at various scales
- Building trust with private landowners, and
- Leveraging NGO partners to disseminate information about the work

The composition of steering committees in other states varies, often depending on funding availability and staff capacity. Wildlife and transportation agencies are typically the primary participants, and substantial funding is required to organize large-scale meetings.

Lightning Presentations by Partner Organizations: Creating an awareness of statewide connectivity efforts

Diverse agencies and organizations from across the state shared their ongoing work, achievements, and obstacles in the field of landscape connectivity.

Statewide Efforts: High-level Talking Points

Glen Mejia, WSDOT
- Challenges: effectively communicating priorities, securing funding, limited capacity, and absence of a comprehensive action plan.
- Satisfied with the existing data availability

Patty Garvey-Darda, USFS
- Striving towards road ecology and integrating stewardship into highway design
- Established a multi-agency team to delineate connectivity emphasis areas
- Seeking assistance with monitoring efforts and gathering positive feedback for their work

Jennifer Vanderhoof, King County
- The King County wildlife corridor was established in the early 1990s and integrated into community plans with the objective of promoting biodiversity and creating a continuous network to support natural habitats.
- Challenges encompass issues such as annexation, the limited linear nature of the corridor, unresponsive partners, misalignment of streams and rivers, existing vegetative corridors, and a lack of consideration for climate change and species' life history requirements.
- King County is seeking a practical and effective long-term approach to wildlife conservation, incorporating updated scientific knowledge.
- Internally, the agency possesses new data and intends to pursue land acquisition. They are collaborating with partners to identify and establish connections between biodiversity areas and are implementing an education and outreach campaign to incentivize positive environmental practices.

Meade Crosby, University of Washington
- Goal of the Cascadia Partner Forum is to maintain a resilient and connected Cascadia in the face of climate change, with intact core areas that are ecologically connected, biodiverse, resilient to disturbance, and contain refugia
- Barriers to implementation are sociopolitical rather than technical, and require the capacity to understand, coordinate, authorize, motivate, and fund actions
- The team is focused on the sociopolitical landscape and barriers to implementing the science
- The team identified six key strategies and 75 accompanying actions: Establish formal government structures and center indigenous leadership; mainstream transboundary large-landscape resilience; conduct joint assessment and monitoring; shared understanding of large

landscape resilience; invest in relationship building required to build social capital; establish a sustainable funding model

Brian Stewart, CNW

- Engaged in wildlife monitoring efforts along I-5 and collaborating with WDFW Land Acquisition.
- CNW serves as the official sponsor for the Chehalis Basin, presenting a significant opportunity for promoting connectivity.
- Conducting outreach and educational initiatives for students, providing public presentations, and encouraging volunteer participation.
- Challenges include the underutilization of maps in conjunction with beaver restoration efforts and a lack of a central linkage for I-5.
- Key requirements involve project facilitation, securing funding for both fish and terrestrial work, and garnering support for project-specific needs.

Mark Eldroch, Panthera

- Panthera possesses a wealth of available data and is enthusiastic about collaborating with agencies and existing partners. They can also offer analytical support in relevant initiatives.
- Recognizing the significance of storytelling, Panthera emphasizes its role in shaping the narrative and is well-equipped to contribute in this aspect.
- Engagements with WDFW are underway to initiate discussions regarding the social and policy landscape surrounding the relevant topics.

Janet Gorrell and Julia Michalak, WDFW

- WDFW is assessing the state of connectivity in the past, present, and future, fulfilling its role as an agency responsible for leading, partnering, supporting, and providing conservation knowledge and priorities.
- While WDFW wields influence with the legislature, its regulatory authority is limited.
- The Wildlife program consists of six units that are strongly backed by scientific research. The program's objectives include identifying core or priority areas and monitoring how they evolve over time, with explicit consideration given to connectivity. Additionally, the program emphasizes data collection, analysis, synthesis, and dissemination to leverage existing information and propose mitigation measures.
- The Habitat program, which encompasses fish passage, is another multifaceted division. It aligns its priorities with the Growth Management Act and offers spatial data and technical assistance for critical fish and wildlife habitats. For non-regulatory matters, the program relies on the best available science. Furthermore, the program heavily depends on its regional staff.

DAY 2 - THURSDAY, JUNE 29: BUILDING A ROADMAP TOGETHER

Understanding the State of Spatial Data in Washington, WDFW and TerrAdapt

This session included a high-level overview of the current state of spatial data in Washington, various aspects are highlighted, with a particular emphasis on the data provided by the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group, climate connectivity, and the TerrAdapt platform. These informative presentations were conducted by both WDFW and TerrAdapt staff. The topics covered included the state of spatial data in Washington, encompassing climate-driven range shifts, the availability of data, and landscape monitoring.

State of Spatial Data: High-level Talking Points

Statewide Connectivity Analysis - *Mark Teske, Fish and Wildlife Planner, WDFW*
- There are several connectivity analyses available, including the Columbia Plateau, Cascades to Coast, and Arid Lands Initiative Conservation Portfolio.
- Users can access the data through platforms such as Data Basin and the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WWHCWG) website to review various data layers.

Climate-driven Range Shifts - *Julia Michalak PhD, Priority Habitats and Species Section Manager, WDFW*
- There are three emergent approaches to climate connectivity: environmental gradients, projected future ranges, and climate trajectories and analogs.
- In the case of environmental gradients, species are expected to shift directionally along climatic gradients as temperatures warm.
- Projected future ranges involve mapping where species are likely to be in the future and connecting their present range to those future ranges.
- Lastly, climate trajectories and analogs involve tracking climatic conditions over time and connecting locations to where their climatic conditions will be in the future.

TerrAdapt and Landscape Monitoring - *Andrew Shirk, Executive Director, TerrAdapt*
- TerrAdapt offers 30m resolution monitoring that is updated annually and tracks land cover, forest structure, and disturbance.
- The monitoring provided by TerrAdapt includes dynamic habitat and connectivity models.

Understanding the State of Policy for Connectivity Conservation in Washington

This session included a review of the current state of policy in Washington regarding connectivity conservation. By delving into the historical context, the political environment, and the utilization of tools such as the Growth Management Act and local land use planning, presenters shed light on the efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting connectivity within the state. Furthermore, CNW (Conservation Northwest) and WDFW (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) staff discussed the state of connectivity in Washington, including key policy milestones, the political landscape influencing conservation efforts, and the role of essential tools like the Growth Management Act and local land use planning in fostering connectivity.

State of Policy for Connectivity: Presentations High-level Talking Points

History of Connectivity in Washington
- Establishing statewide legislation to prioritize connectivity and ensure sufficient funding for staff, project construction, and land acquisition has been crucial.
- Past funding and legislative efforts focused on pragmatic human issues.

Habitat Connectivity Policies and Land Use Planning
- There are state and local connectivity policies and regulations, including the Open Space Act, the Growth Management Act, the Shoreline Management Act, Comprehensive Plans, Open Space Plans, Critical Areas Ordinance, Zoning and Subdivision codes, and Shoreline Master Program
- While there are state laws specifically focused on open space, there is still room for improvement, as they are not mandatory for all jurisdictions.
- Planning jurisdictions are required to identify open space corridors, including fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, with the objective of preserving populations within their natural geographic areas.
- Some local examples supporting habitat connectivity include:
  - Open Space Taxation Act
  - San Juan County Land Bank
  - Tacoma's Open Space Restoration

World Café Activity: Policy Needs and Recommendations

A dynamic and participatory discussion to identify the gaps in existing policy and explore the necessary measures needed to address policy needs.

Key:

- ❖ = Priority items

Spatial Data Questions and Answers

What's working	- Abundance of datasets available. - Wide utilization of PHS data. - Strong utilization of state data, plans, and maps. - Availability of national maps. - Effective utilization of WWHCWG (Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group) and SWWCWG (SW Washington Wildlife Connectivity Working Group). - Motivated and qualified professionals actively working with the data. - Clear goals for prioritizing shovel-ready projects and identifying long-term data and analysis requirements.

What's not working	❖ Easy access and communication processes are not in place. ▪ Data sources outside the PHS are less relevant. ▪ Non-state data is seldom incorporated. ▪ Involvement of local communities, particularly in rural areas, is crucial for garnering support. ▪ Unclear how to use the data: There needs to be better access and understanding of data ▪ Smaller jurisdictions rely on available data at the county and legislative district level. ▪ Outdated spatial data persists. ▪ The variety of available map products can be overwhelming. ▪ Modeling efforts should focus on connecting ecosystems and identifying biodiversity hotspots.
What's needed	❖ Story maps and animation ❖ Engineering estimates ❖ Consolidation and curation of data into a single source ❖ Statewide interagency data sharing ❖ User-friendly instructions for accessing relevant maps and data sets ❖ Effective storytelling using the data ❖ Development of a plan to integrate new connectivity maps with existing priorities ▪ Clear interpretation of map features and their significance. ▪ Identification of private lands that are prioritized for acquisition. ▪ Agreement and understanding with Tribal communities. ▪ Integration of climate change and zoning considerations into the maps. ▪ Establishment of tribal liaisons to address data sharing challenges. ▪ Preparation of grant-ready exhibits. ▪ Collaboration with jurisdictions to accommodate their timelines, even if they differ from the timeline for dynamic maps.

Communication and Coordination

What's working	❖ Engaging with state and federal legislators. ❖ Highlighting the multi-benefit aspects of connectivity efforts. ▪ Utilizing videos and maps to showcase wildlife crossings.

	▪ Utilizing priority maps. ▪ Organizing meetings and workshops, such as Wildlinks and Cascadia Connects. ▪ Promoting collaboration among scientists and managers. ▪ Coordinating efforts between agencies. ▪ Incorporating visual data. ▪ Leveraging partnerships with WWHCWG (Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group) and SWWCWG (SW Washington Wildlife Connectivity Working Group). ▪ Recognizing the urgency of connectivity initiatives. ▪ Sharing success stories and data from I-90 crossings, potentially a sign that includes a sign with wildlife crossing information, cost savings and reduced collisions. ▪ Using existing projects as collaboration models. ▪ Implementing on-the-ground projects in rural communities. ▪ Establishing notification systems. ▪ Promoting engagement between jurisdictions and agencies.
What's not working	❖ Disconnect between scientists and policymakers. ❖ Absence of a clear leader or convener with the authority to drive change. ❖ Lack of champions for the work at higher management levels. ❖ Absence of a cohesive vision or narrative to effectively communicate with the public and policymakers. ❖ Interagency silos, particularly between WSDOT and WDFW. ❖ Challenges in effectively communicating to general audiences. • Insufficient internal outreach within agencies to prioritize connectivity. • Infrequent meetings to address connectivity issues. • Limited capacity and available staff to work on connectivity projects. • Existing signage is often disregarded. • Disconnection between local and statewide priorities. • Lack of trust with rural landowners and constituents. • Limited understanding of available tools among different agencies. • Challenges in accessing and sharing available science and data. • Public information and language are not accessible to all audiences. • Skepticism regarding the effectiveness of connectivity projects. • Development of reports and plans that are not read or utilized. • Jurisdictions showing low responsiveness to agency outreach.

	• Limited shared ownership of large-scale plans and implementation efforts.
What's needed	❖ Upgrades to fish passage infrastructure. ❖ Early and meaningful involvement of Tribal representation and partners to provide Indigenous leadership and coordination. ❖ Improved communication and coordination between state, federal, and Tribal agencies. ❖ Development of a grassroots campaign to inspire public support and participation. ❖ Coordinated public information campaign on connectivity and corridors. ❖ Collaboration with storytelling specialists as partners. ❖ Utilization of storytelling techniques to engage politicians and the public. ❖ Diversifying outreach to the legislature and counties beyond traditional lobbyists. ❖ Conducting focused discussions with clear goals, outcomes, action items, and accountability. ▪ Coordination and engagement with NCRS (Natural Resources Conservation Service). ▪ Addressing concerns of rural populations. ▪ Creation of a table for working lands and fair distribution of contributions. ▪ Establishment of a central statewide connectivity group. ▪ Identification and involvement of all interested partners. ▪ Highlighting the benefits to fish and wildlife to broaden the appeal of connectivity initiatives. ▪ Addressing the East/West divide. ▪ Improvement of visual materials for effective messaging. ▪ Advocacy efforts in elementary schools. ▪ Inclusion of Mountains to Sound in messaging and communication campaigns. ▪ Finding social science solutions to understand how to communicate about connectivity in a way that resonates with people. ▪ Encouraging shared accountability. ▪ Ensuring equitable funding for backbone organizations and partners. ▪ Naming corridors and cores to engage the public. ▪ Developing logos and branding for clear identification. ▪ Establishing meaningful and frequent communication channels.

Policy

What's working	❖ Availability of dedicated federal funding. ▪ Increasing interest and focus on connectivity. ▪ Growing interest and opportunities for connectivity work. ▪ Implementation of voluntary acquisition programs. ▪ Streamlined restoration projects, particularly by USFS (United States Forest Service). ▪ Update to the Statewide Climate Response Strategy. ▪ Engagement with the Governor's Office and House and Senate Transportation Committee Leadership. ▪ Utilization of the WA Cap and Invest fund to support resilience efforts and connectivity opportunities. ▪ Interest and support from the Commission.
What's not working	❖ Ambiguities in land use policies. ▪ Lack of a dedicated funding stream. ▪ Insufficient funding to support agency orders and intent. ▪ Misconceptions about the purpose of connectivity projects in rural areas, leading to opposition from both politicians and constituents. ▪ Inadequate enforcement of existing projects. ▪ GMA (Growth Management Act), SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act), and CAO (Critical Areas Ordinance) lack project-level requirements. ▪ Need for stronger GMA language to make connectivity a standard requirement. ▪ Existing loopholes in SEPA resulting in landscape changes. ▪ Insufficient consideration of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for corridors connecting critical habitat areas. ▪ Communication and coordination challenges among supportive partners. ▪ Complexity in navigating the process. ▪ Limited investment in new ideas. ▪ Lack of incentives for voluntary connectivity efforts. ▪ Instances of elected officials circumventing policies and regulations. ▪ Narrow definitions of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCAs) in CAOs. ▪ Net loss of critical areas.

What's needed	❖ RCO-WWRP (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office - Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program) should create grant opportunities specifically for stand-alone connectivity projects or strategic locations. ❖ Development of a long-term connectivity action plan with legislative-appropriated funding allocated to support implementation. ❖ Agency representation and testimony at local land use hearings to advocate for connectivity considerations. ❖ Implementation of stricter laws and regulations to enhance connectivity efforts. ❖ Allocation of funds for scoping and design phases, not solely limited to "shovel ready" projects. ❖ Establishment of stronger policies to support landscape connectivity mechanisms. ▪ Identification of existing incentives and partners to effectively promote them. ▪ Implementation of proposed actions and initiatives. ▪ Establishment of statewide interagency data sharing protocols. ▪ Support from elected officials who prioritize environmental concerns. ▪ Presence of a dedicated champion for connectivity efforts. ▪ Coordinated messaging that can be adapted for different geographic areas and target audiences. ▪ Utilization of administrative contacts within the Governor's office to maximize support. ▪ Update of state bridge and road standards to include requirements for wildlife connections. ▪ Policy lobbying, access, and coordination between WSDOT, WDFW, and NGOs. ▪ Identification of policy-level engineers within WDFW and WSDOT. ▪ Full implementation of an integrated and codified habitat connectivity network. ▪ Development of WSDOT regional connectivity plans. ▪ Establishment of management requirements for PHS (Priority Habitats and Species) biodiversity. ▪ Voter pressure on elected officials to take coordinated action. ▪ Implementation of repercussions for lack of action. ▪ Strong leadership from NGOs and stakeholder groups to drive policy advancements.

Working Groups

Following the World Café activity, workshop attendees self-selected into two working groups to discuss either Policy or Spatial Data. The working groups engaged in discussions on prioritizing, sequencing, funding, and implementing strategies to address the issues and challenges identified during the World Café activity.

Policy Working Group

2024 Legislative Session

The group discussed goals for the 2024 legislative session and initiated the development of a strategy to introduce legislation during that session. Three key components identified for successful legislation were Governor's involvement, NGO leadership, and agency support. It was also important for the legislation to address concerns specific to Eastern Washington. Another aspect of the long-term strategy involved incorporating wildlife in fish passage efforts, introducing a mitigation bill, and considering net ecological gain as a priority.

Key Needs - The Policy Working Group has identified three key needs for effective policy implementation:
1. Science
2. Strategic Advocacy
3. Storytelling

Challenges - Identified common challenges that arise in policymaking include:
- Funding constraints and declining revenue
- Policy complexities
- Capacity limitations
- Communication and storytelling gaps
- Human infrastructure requirements
- Connectivity engineers
- Need for joint guidance from the FHA (Federal Highway Administration) for state transportation and wildlife plans (this is coming)

Goal: The goal for 2025 is to receive and allocate funding.

Strategies - The group discussed strategies for authorizing legislation in the upcoming legislative session, focusing on connectivity. The following strategies were identified:
1. Implement a connectivity mandate to encourage competition for funding.
2. Incorporate WDFW's 125K action plan and leverage its funding for connectivity initiatives.
3. Include language in the legislation that emphasizes the coordination and collaboration among agencies for the development and implementation of connectivity plans.

Legislation - The group aims to craft the legislation to achieve the goal of receiving and allocating funding by 2025. Components of the authorizing legislation include:
- Authorization of planning efforts.
- Directives for inter-agency implementation.
- Establishment of a dedicated account for connectivity funding.

- Consideration of additional items important to legislators, such as ranching and city bridges, which can be included in the intent section of the legislation.

Logistics:

To achieve the above goals for the 2024 legislative sessions, the group identified the following components:

Components for Success in the 2024 Legislative Sessions:	
Drafting the bill	1. Develop a draft based on input from Janet, Julia, Harriet, Tom, Paula, Jess, and Ron. 2. Share the draft with the Governor's office, represented by Ruth Musgrave.
Components of the bill	• Exclude regulatory elements to focus on other aspects. • Include agency directives that lead to funding and support for connectivity initiatives. • Direct agencies to actively explore and seize opportunities to enhance connectivity work.
Roles, responsibilities, and contributors	• CNW will identify legislative champions to support the bill. • CNW will determine the most effective approach for advancing the bill, such as seeking support from the Governor's office, building vocal support from stakeholders, forming an NGO coalition, engaging jurisdiction coalitions, etc. • The bill requires strong support from relevant agencies. • It is crucial to gain the support of transportation committee members to ensure successful progress of the bill.
Tribal partnership	• Share draft priorities with adjacent or affected tribes. • Begin by engaging with the Tribal council.
Partnerships	▪ Initiate partnerships with Transportation Committee districts. • Engage with the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. • Seek support through letters from children at the zoo. • Collaborate with the Cattleman's Association. • Establish partnerships with ungulate/game non-profits. • Involve sportsmen in supporting the initiative.
Potential Legislative Champions	• Senator Jake Fey • Senator Marco Liias • Sharon Shoemaker • Beth Doglio • Senator Christine Rolfes • Senator Salomon • Representative Barcus • Representative Kretz

Key Takeaways from the Policy Group Discussion and Workshop:
- Efforts should be tailored to address specific concerns of legislators and their constituents.
- Draft legislation should include clear timelines for implementation.
- There is an opportunity to develop what is necessary for Washington State and begin with small steps to build momentum.
- Efforts should secure funding for agencies to support the work and conduct necessary scientific research.
- Provide detailed descriptions of the work that has already been accomplished.
- The timing of the bill should align with the budget year.
- Develop a strategy focused on engaging the Transportation Committee.

For the next steps, the group discussed the following actions:
1. Creating a near-term action plan as part of the long-term strategy.
2. Working towards authorization of state and federal funds in 2024 and beyond.
3. Developing a comprehensive communication and coordination approach.

Spatial Data Working Group

The Spatial Data working group convened to explore the available data and address the challenges identified in the World Café activity. During the discussion, the group emphasized the following priorities:

- Leveraging existing work to optimize resources.
- Concentrating on near-term objectives.
- Taking immediate action by utilizing the available data.

The group decided to focus on initiatives that can be accomplished within the next biennium, making effective use of the funding provided by WDFW.

Problem Statement and Challenges:
The group formulated problem statements and guiding questions to narrow down the discussion focus. These include:

- What is the process for prioritization, what values guide it, and who are the stakeholders being represented?
- Who are the users of the maps and data, and for what specific purposes?
- How can the various layers of information be effectively integrated?
- How can short-term priorities be transitioned into long-term strategies?
- How can overlapping priorities be addressed and reconciled?
- Lack of consensus regarding where the work should be conducted.
- Limited funding specifically allocated for targeted initiatives.

Several challenges arose during the discussion, such as ensuring the inclusion of diverse views and perspectives, determining the key stakeholders to involve, and gaining widespread support and buy-in for the mapping efforts.

Goals

The group proceeded to establish goals for utilizing the available spatial data and brainstormed ideas to address the identified problem statements.

Problem Statement	Goals
What is the prioritization process? **How will address overlapping priorities?**	1. Overlay data layers to identify priority areas. 2. Align landscape priorities with transportation priorities. 3. Focus on places in need and extend efforts beyond those regions. 4. Identify connected landscapes and their intersections with existing infrastructure. 5. Highlight mega-corridors for special attention. 6. Utilize existing prioritization mapping as a foundation for short-term mapping initiatives. 7. Develop a concise set of priorities to provide clear guidance for decision-making. 8. Leverage existing work, especially from WSDOT, to inform and strengthen the overall efforts.
Values and Representation	• Embrace a non-exclusionary approach to ensure inclusivity and representation of diverse perspectives. • Recognize that habitat does not have to be perfect to possess value and contribute to conservation efforts. • Strive for data and analysis that are useful at multiple scales, accommodating various needs and applications. • Maintain a statewide focus and implement crosschecking mechanisms to ensure comprehensive coverage and consistency.
Users and Applications of Maps and Data	• Incorporate data work into the PHS. • Ensure the usefulness of the product across multiple scales. • Integrate county-level modeling and values into the analysis. • Recognize that the final product will be utilized at various scales and for different purposes. • Utilize visual imagery that enables local zooming and provides clear labels for priorities.

-**Clear consensus on project locations and priorities.** -Targeted funding for identified projects.	• Develop a list of scientifically defensible projects to pursue. • Utilize the best available science to initiate implementation at the county level, integrating it into local codes and regulations.

Key Takeaways from the Spatial Group Discussion and Workshop:

1. Utilize WSDOT analysis for short-term efforts to leverage existing data and ongoing work.
2. Incorporate a landscape narrative, highlighting mega-corridors and other significant features.
3. Ensure inclusion of statewide and regional priorities in the data and analysis.
4. Make the data usable at multiple scales to accommodate various needs.
5. Include comprehensive metadata in the maps, such as priorities and ongoing projects.
6. Consolidate all relevant information in a single accessible location.
7. Maintain transparency in the prioritization process to foster trust and understanding.

Sustaining Momentum

Towards the conclusion of the workshop, participants engaged in discussions revolving around the following questions to establish the next steps for advancing the efforts:

- How would you prefer to continue engaging in this work going forward?
- How would you like to receive updates and stay informed about the progress of this work?
- What would an effective statewide public information campaign entail? What is the current narrative surrounding the initiative?
- How would you like to engage in this work moving forward?

Topic	Group Discussions
Engagement Framework Moving Forward	1. Form a steering committee with representatives from the east, west, regions, and headquarters to maintain engagement and ensure coordination. 2. Establish a larger advisory group to involve a broader range of stakeholders. 3. Develop subgroups focused on spatial data, policy, and communications, with frequent communication across the groups. 4. Implement quarterly email updates or listserv to keep participants informed. 5. Conduct advisory group meetings or briefings, tailored to the roles and responsibilities of participants, involving both statewide and regional representatives at the appropriate times. 6. Engage Tribal communities through quarterly briefings to foster collaboration and inclusivity. 7. Prioritize engagement efforts based on the level of involvement and workload of individuals, ensuring more engagement for those contributing more work. 8. Build a core team dedicated to maintaining ongoing engagement and coordination. 9. Organize 2-3 in-person meetings to facilitate active participation and engagement of the larger group. 10. Allocate resources for research, data collection, and literature review to inform decision-making and enhance the quality of engagement efforts.

Updates and Communications	1. Determine the level of engagement of participants to tailor the frequency and mode of communications accordingly. 2. Hold regular accountability meetings, ideally on a quarterly basis, to ensure ongoing progress and collaboration. 3. Share information through a listserv or quarterly report to keep interest parties informed of key updates and developments. 4. Ensure that email communications are targeted and provide relevant and informative content. 5. Establish a feedback mechanism separate from email replies to encourage active participation and input. 6. Utilize existing advisory and working groups to share information and coordinate efforts. 7. Decide on the appropriate channels and responsible parties for sharing information and communications, ensuring clarity and consistency.
Public Information and Outreach	1. Determine the key message for the public campaign, ensuring clarity and effectiveness. 2. Develop a comprehensive legislative or connectivity campaign to advocate for support and awareness. 3. Conduct proactive outreach to Tribes, non-profit organizations, and landowners for input and engagement before finalizing the plan. 4. Utilize Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to reach a broader audience. 5. Keep WA Connected (waconnected.org) website updated with relevant information from the WWHCWG. 6. Establish linkages between connectivity work and climate resilience and growth management initiatives. 7. Conduct internal outreach among agency staff to ensure alignment and understanding of the communication strategy. 8. Utilize various communication channels, such as videos, social media, and communications departments, to disseminate information effectively. 9. Recognize that different agencies and groups may have distinct narratives depending on their missions, but strive for a consistent overall message to avoid confusion or conflicting messages. 10. Employ social marketing and scientific approaches to promote pro-environmental behavior changes. 11. Tailor the message to each audience, considering the perspectives of anti, pro, and the moveable middle groups. 12. Foster coordination between the communication departments of WSDOT, WDFW, and CNW to develop a cohesive and comprehensive outreach campaign.

Complete answers to the questions from attendees are documented here.

Attendees:

Speaker and Attendee List Link: *https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u9YJor8yc-S3GQA3wcMKq5YUgcJFObcWUDpiJagAqC0/edit?usp=sharing*

Guest Speakers: Agency Leadership
- Margen Carlson, WDFW
- Ron Judd, WSDOT
- April Magrane, WSDOT
- Ruth Musgrave, Governor's Office

Guest Speakers: Planning and Policy
- Patty Cramer, Wildlife Connectivity Institute
- Logan Christian, National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
- Senator Mimi Stewart, State of New Mexico

Washington Land Managers, Connectivity Experts, and Stakeholders
- Jeff Azerrad, WDFW
- Marian Barijikian, WDFW
- Stephanie DeMay, WDFW
- Scott Downes, WDFW
- Mark Elbroch, Panthera
- Chris Elder, Whatcom County
- Patty Garvey-Darda, USFS
- Janet Gorrell, WDFW
- Sonia Hall, Consultant
- March Hershfield, WSDOT
- DeAnn Jones, WSDOT
- Glen Kalisz, WSDOT
- Glen Mejia, WSDOT
- Julia Michalak, WDFW
- Harriet Morgan, WDFW
- Jon Peterson, WSDOT
- Tim Quinn, WDFW
- Jessica Schafer, Consultant
- Andrew Shirk, TerrAdapt
- Brian Stewart, Conservation NW
- Kerston Swartz, Woodland Park Zoo
- Paula Swedeen, Conservation NW
- Jen Syrowitz, Conservation NW
- Mark Teske, WDFW
- Elizabeth Torrey, WDFW
- Jennifer Vanderhoof, King County
- Kara Whittaker, WDFW
- Alan Yanahan, FWS