



## Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

In person at Wanapum Dam, HOB Room 107 and Webex  
Tuesday, July 25, 2023  
1:00 p.m. to 2:25 p.m.

### Meeting Minutes

#### **PRCC Representatives and Alternatives**

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Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD  
Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (Alt), CTCR  
Tom Lorz, CTUIR  
Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS

Bill Gale, USFWS  
Chad Jackson, Andrew Murdoch (Alt) WDFW  
Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN

#### **Meeting Attendees**

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Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA  
Bryan Nordlund, Facilitator  
Curt Dotson, GPUD  
Rod O'Connor GPUD  
Tim Taylor, GPUD (Online)

Scott Carlon, NMFS (Online)  
Bill Gale, USFWS  
Chad Jackson, WDFW  
Andrew Murdoch, WDFW  
Keely Murdoch, YN

#### **Action Items**

- B. Nordlund will contact J. Ferguson (HCP-CC Chair) to propose that steelhead overshoot and fallbacks at the upper Columbia River projects be presented as a joint topic in the next HCP-CC and PRCC meeting.
- B. Nordlund will discuss with J. Ferguson a proposal to convene an annual HCP and PRCC Policy overview meeting on the same day each year.

#### **Review Items**

- None

#### **Decisions and Approvals**

- None.

## **I. Welcome, Announcements and Agenda Review**

- No changes to the agenda were requested, and the PRCC approved the agenda.

## **II. Meeting Minutes Status**

- Draft June 27 meeting minutes were distributed on July 11. No comments or revisions were received. All representatives that were present in that meeting approved the minutes; C. Jackson abstained from approving because he did not attend the June 27 meeting.

## **III. Action Items Review**

- *B. Nordlund will contact T. Lorz regarding Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation input to Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) processes.*

B. Nordlund said that T. Lorz is unable to participate in the PRCC, and for the time being the CTUIR are unlikely to participate regularly, but that they are encouraged to reach out with questions about agenda topics or documents they receive. T. Lorz will be retained on the distribution list for receiving agendas, meeting minutes and other relevant documents. This item is complete.

## **IV. Steelhead Fallback – Ongoing Coordination and Discussion**

B. Nordlund asked C. Jackson how he would like to go forward on coordination with the PRCC around steelhead fallback discussions which are ongoing for upstream projects in the HCP-CC.

C. Jackson summarized that an alternative approach to the analysis of steelhead overshoots has been introduced by Chelan and Douglas PUDs that reviewed a large number of passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag detections through McNary Dam, and they have made some inferences about what fall back rates are. There are now two separate narratives. The estimates presented by WDFW (A. Murdoch) which suggest there are from 1,900 to 4,000 overshoots per year based on expanded PIT tag detections. Chelan PUD and Douglas PUD used raw PIT detections to estimate that overshoots number in the 100s of fish. Douglas PUD and Chelan PUD provided two different presentations related to their given projects. WDFW is still evaluating the PUDs' analyses. There will be meetings held in August to work through the numbers and to understand the scale of the problem.

C. Dotson asked if the PUDs took the same approach for their individual projects. A. Murdoch said they were similar but used slightly different PIT tag groups. He said they examined Snake River Steelhead overshoot numbers in general, instead of discussing how it may relate to their project operations. It was a not only a different analysis from WDFW's but also a different perspective with different comparisons. Douglas PUD also used CWTs to estimate straying from the Snake River to the upper Columbia River, which is a different dataset, because CWTs are only obtained if the fish die or are recovered at the hatcheries or in harvest. The conclusion from analysis of CWTs was

that there are not many Snake River overshoots to the upper Columbia. K. Murdoch said an analysis based on CWTs does not show how many were not recovered, whether they successfully went back downstream or not. That analysis does not show the magnitude of the scope or the issue. The CWT data are interesting but it's uncertain what the data show about fallbacks; CWT data in steelhead are really only relevant for estimating harvest rate, which occurs mostly in terminal fisheries.

The June 21 HCP-CC minutes with presentations on steelhead fallback were approved today and could be provided for PRCC members.

C. Jackson said, for the PRCC, this topic is on hold. Grant PUD is spilling for fallback already and WDFW's goal is to work toward achieving fallback spill from the upper-river projects. This topic can remain on the PRCC agenda but there may not be much discussion until a decision is made in the HCP-CC.

A suggestion was made to request a joint agenda topic with the HCP-CC to hear methods and concerns directly. B. Nordlund will contact J. Ferguson (HCP-CC Chair) to propose that steelhead overshoot and fallbacks at the upper Columbia River projects be presented as a joint topic in the next HCP-CC and PRCC meeting.

#### **V. Survival Study Plan – Brief Update**

C. Dotson said Grant PUD has received no comments on the most recent version of the study plan; Grant PUD staff are fine-tuning details in the survival study plan, such as adjusting the fish transport plan. For example, the Washington Department of Transportation is going to be working on the Vantage Bridge starting the fall of 2023 through the summer of 2026. Previously, that was the approach to access Wanapum Fishtown; Grant PUD is working to find other routes to avoid traffic which may slow down the fish transport.

K. Murdoch asked to continue the discussion regarding fish size and tag burden. The study fish size is proposed to be 95 to 210 mm fork length, with a tag burden of less than 3%. K. Murdoch asked if Blue Leaf Environmental (BLE) could report to the PRCC what proportion of the smallest fish are going to exceed a tag burden of 3% when they are double tagged. K. Murdoch said BLE developed that type of analysis for the HCP-CC for Chelan PUD's survival study implemented this year, which had a lower tag burden of 2%. K. Murdoch asked, if the proportion of fish excluded turns out to be potentially significant, whether Grant PUD would consider tagging some fish with acoustic tags only to avoid rejecting some 95mm fish from the study, which is what Chelan PUD agreed to do.

C. Dotson said the Rock Island Dam smolt index data, which includes length and weight by species for Chinook salmon and steelhead, can be reviewed to determine the feasibility single-tagging some 95mm fish. There are approximately 10 years of steelhead data and 6 years of Chinook salmon data. K. Murdoch said she was mainly concerned about Chinook salmon, but the tag burden concern may also apply to steelhead. B. Nordlund asked if Chelan PUD routinely samples smolt size at their projects. K. Murdoch said Chelan PUD does sample at the smolt bypass; they used to be part of the Smolt Monitoring Program, which is no longer operating at Rock Island

Dam, but Chelan PUD is obligated to carry out some smolt monitoring as part of their settlement agreement. There were no weights taken at Rocky Reach Dam.

A. Murdoch asked whether passage route will be monitored. C. Dotson said no; that would require receivers to be placed on the concrete dam face at high and low locations to create a box for detecting fish on the X/Y/Z axis as it is passing through the various routes. The passage route evaluation at Wanapum Dam (WAN) required as many receivers to determine passage vectors as the whole survival study has planned. A. Murdoch asked if the passage route evaluation provided enough confidence to understand survival, and whether anything has changed operationally from those studies until now. Dotson said yes, there is a lot of confidence in understanding the proportions of fish selecting the different routes, and nothing has changed operationally – turbines are operated in Fish-Mode and the bypass is operated for juvenile non-turbine passage. A. Murdoch asked if surprising results occur from the survival study, whether the resolution will be sufficient to identify where the problems occur. C. Dotson said yes, the arrays will be placed to isolate where the decline in survival occurs within the PR Project (Rock Island tailrace to Priest Rapids tailrace), with timestamps, except at the dam itself. C. Dotson said changes in survival will be observed above a dam and below a dam (WAN or Priest Rapids Dam [PRD]), but no information on what route fish take through the dams will be provided. Dotson said there are over a decade of studies informing route selection.

C. Dotson said fish mode operations have been expanded, and if there are significant differences in fish survival through the dam, additional work to add detection points in the juvenile migration routes can be added to understand where mortality occurs.

R. O'Connor said it was previously difficult to get PIT tag detection arrays to hold on the mid-river islands just upstream of WAN. A. Murdoch agreed the stationary locations at Beverly and Desert Aire provide some temporal variation, and there could be some opportunity to adaptively manage the study as it will be implemented across 3 years.

C. Dotson said the next step will be to issue a complete draft study plan for review by the PRCC.

## **VI. PRCC Policy Representatives Meeting Debrief**

The PRCC Policy Representatives Meeting was held on July 20, 2023 at the Wanapum Heritage Center.

A suggestion arose to host the annual HCP-CC and PRCC policy meetings jointly in the future because it is difficult to convene a large meeting of people from across the region, many of whom serve on both committees. B. Nordlund will discuss with John Ferguson a proposal to convene the policy meetings on the same day.

The PRCC Policy Representatives agreed to hold the July 20 date for a meeting each year. The HCP Policy Committee has decided not to meet this year lacking any new business to discuss.

C. Jackson asked if there is a plan to convene a Policy Representatives meeting on upcoming issues sooner than one year from now. B. Nordlund said that a meeting could be convened if a subcommittee recommends they consider a given topic at any time.

B. Gale said in the meeting there was a list of issues mentioned that are likely to need policy-level engagement. The two issues are going to be the White River hatchery program and hatchery recalculation. An impasse or a dispute is one reason to trigger a Policy meeting, but just eliciting Policy-level direction is another reason to convene the Policy Committee. K. Murdoch said the Okanagan Sockeye SOA will also require Policy-level guidance. Neither the recalculation nor the sockeye SOAs are very urgent to consider (recalculation will occur in 10 years, the sockeye is a 20-year SOA). K. Murdoch said there is an issues document for recalculation that has been started but requires more work. The White River hatchery program decision is needed in 2025/2026.

B. Nordlund asked that if there is a need to convene Policy guidance that he be informed so he can work toward informing those members. B. Nordlund asked if a topic goes to the Policy Representatives to provide a decision or guidance, whether it would involve the same representatives. K. Murdoch and B. Gale noted that the recalculation agreement is one that would make sense to hold as a joint meeting.

K. Murdoch said Hatchery Genetic Management Plan (HGMP) development was discussed within the HCP Hatchery Committees and PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee, and its necessary to know what will happen with the White River program to move HGMPs forward on other Wenatchee spring Chinook salmon programs. HGMPs could build off of the previous versions, and could be re-written with some flexibility for change.

## **VII. 2023 Fish Passage Operations Report**

Fish passage operations have started their 2023 season, summarized in the following subsections.

### **Fish Ladder Inspections**

K. Murdoch said she is meeting with Mike Clement (Grant PUD) on Friday to carry out the fish ladder inspections at PRD and WAN. In June she carried out the inspections in person; in July the inspection was done virtually.

### **Fish Spill Updates**

C. Dotson said there is no change to planned fish spill this month.

C. Dotson said, going into August, salmonid smolt counts will be monitored carefully; based on counts reports on the Columbia River Data Access in Real Time (DART) site, about 90% of the summer-run Chinook have passed. Grant PUD's requirement for summer (juvenile) fish-spill is to provide non-turbine passage (a.k.a spill) for 95% of the out-migration run.

B. Nordlund asked if variation in the WAN tail water elevations impact to juvenile survival with the operation of the WAN bypass are being considered. C. Dotson said there is a range of tail water elevations for operating the bypass based on the "behavior" of the flow of water coming out of the bypass at those elevations, and smolt survival rates based on what kind of bypass flow "behavior" that smolt encounters, to produce hydraulic conditions most favorable to juvenile fish.

## **Fish Counts for 2023**

C. Jackson said according to US v. Oregon, fish passed before June 16 are considered spring-run Chinook salmon, July 16 to end of July are summer-run Chinook salmon, after July they are considered fall-run Chinook salmon. The arrival timing is shifted later for the upstream projects. The counts reported in the agenda are from the Fish Passage Center; based on the different date cutoffs, those would be reported differently. R. O'Connor said for Hanford Reach fall-run Chinook salmon, the actual arrival date has varied across recent years.

A. Murdoch said at the PRF Off-Ladder Adult Fish Trap (OLAFT), species determinations are being made to better estimate actual spring Chinook salmon abundance using a combination of scale analysis, genetic analysis and previous tag records. Wild fish can be easily detected with scale analysis; separating hatchery spring Chinook salmon from hatchery summer Chinook salmon has to be done with genetics. This effort is intended to improve accuracy of data used in the upper Columbia tributaries patch occupancy model. Using June 15 as the cutoff for summer Chinook salmon works fairly well. Sample rate of spring Chinook salmon at the OLAFT has been much better this year. A systematic sampling rate was designed in order to PIT tag an adequate proportion of both the natural-origin and hatchery-origin run, and to avoid tagging more hatchery-origin fish than necessary if run sizes are larger than necessary. Therefore, there is not a standard sample rate each year. Generally, all natural-origin fish that are trapped are tagged.

The following were fish counts as of July 31, 2023:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Spring Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)</b>	<b>Summer Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)</b>	<b>Fall Chinook Salmon</b>	<b>Sockeye Salmon</b>	<b>Coho Salmon</b>	<b>Steelhead</b>
Priest Rapids	16,956	46,858	0	230,163	2	1,235
Wanapum	17,235	54,239	0	226,788	30	1,165
Rock Island	17,619	47,917	0	245,860	2	1,100

## **Updates**

### **VIII. Review of Outstanding No Net Impact-Funded Projects**

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**  
No update.
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022 to 2024).**  
No update.
- **Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife PIT-Tag Detection Barge.**  
A. Murdoch said the location of the barge is working well, but juvenile fish are not moving now. It will operate until early November. Once the data are organized, WDFW will give a presentation. A snapshot can be provided in the fall, but the estimated survival metrics could be provided following summer.

- **Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby (planned for May 12 to 14).**  
T. Dresser provided an email update on June 27 with results of the derby.
- **2023 Real Time Research, Inc. (RTR), Avian Predation Study.**  
C. Dotson said the project is between implementation phases. Nesting is done; RTR is starting to scan colonies for tags.

## IX. Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittees that report up to the PRCC are the hatchery and habitat subcommittees convened under the Priest Rapids Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement. The Fall Chinook Work Group and Priest Rapids Fish Forum have policy representatives convened under the Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification. All are signatories to the Fall Chinook Protection Act.

B. Nordlund has forwarded the subcommittee distributions received to date via email to PRCC members and alternates.

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum – met August 2, next meeting September 6.
- Habitat Subcommittee – met August 10, next meeting September 14.
- Fall Chinook Work Group – next meeting October 3.
- Hatchery Subcommittee – next meeting August 16.

## X. SOAs Discussed in 2023

SOA number	Key Words	Last Discussed	Status
2022-03	Fish Mode revision	January 24, 2023	Closed Approved
2023-01	Sockeye Salmon Program	January 24, 2023	Closed Approved
2022-02	Hatchery Production Objectives, 2024–2033	February 28, 2023	Closed Approved

K. Murdoch asked that the status be changed from “closed” to “approved,” which better communicates whether an agreement is not just finalized, but agreed upon.

## XI. Next Meetings

The next PRCC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 22 at 1:00 p.m. at Wanapum HOB 107.

B. Nordlund said his contract is expiring in one year with no new evaluations to be done within the term of the contract. It will be at Grant PUD’s discretion to identify a new facilitator.