Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

Webex
Tuesday, November 28, 2023
1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

PRCC Representatives and Alternatives

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

Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA
Bryan Nordlund, Facilitator
Kirk Truscott, CTCR
Curt Dotson, GPUD
Tom Dresser, GPUD
Rod O'Connor GPUD
Tim Taylor, GPUD
Bill Gale, USFWS
Chad Jackson, WDFW
Andrew Murdoch, WDFW
Keely Murdoch, YN

Action Items

- PRCC members will review the 2016 sub-yearling workshop agenda and materials, and recommend topics or speakers for the 2024 workshop.
- B. Nordlund will email the PRCC members to schedule a meeting to hear Real Time Research's (RTR) presentation of avian predation study details for January 8 or 9.

Review Items

- The working Draft Chinook salmon Subyearling Workshop Agenda was distributed on November 28, 2023.
- Grant PUD's Final 2025-2027 Smolt Survival Study Plan (V7b) was distributed following the meeting, on December 11, 2023.

Decisions and Approvals

- The PRCC approved SOA 2023-02 regarding Grant PUD's Draft 2025-2027 Smolt Survival Study Plan, with the inclusion of dead-fish releases documented in version 7b of the study plan

I. Welcome, Announcements and Agenda Review

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

II. Meeting Minutes Status

- The October 24 PRCC meeting minutes were distributed by email on November 19, with revisions due by November 28. No revisions were made, and they were approved in the meeting by Representatives in attendance. T. Lorz and S. Carlon approved by email following the meeting.

III. Action Items Review

- *PRCC members will review the 2016 sub-yearling workshop agenda and materials, and recommend topics and/or speakers for the 2024 workshop.*
  This item will be discussed in today's meeting.
- *C. Dotson will share information on change in number of tern nests in Columbia Plateau.*
  This update will be provided by the contractor (Real Time Research) when they present their findings in January.

IV. Survival Study Plan:

C. Dotson sent the most recent version (V-7a) of the Grant PUD's Draft 2025-2027 Smolt Survival Study Plan on November 14, 2023 with the draft Statement of Agreement 2023-02, requesting approval of the plan in today's meeting.

A. Murdoch commented that although the first downstream array below Priest Rapids Dam (PRD) is approximately 76 km downstream at Ringold, and the likelihood that dead fish could be detected that far downstream may be low, he would like to see the historical data this assumption is based on. Curt Dotson confirmed that based on prior studies (Miller et al. 1999 and Timko et al. 2007), along with the work conducted by Rebecca Buchanan (Buchanan et al. 2021), this detection point will be farther downstream than any dead fish are likely be transported. Murdoch said Buchanan's et al.'s model and those releases were tested in a much different river environment (in the Snake River and lower Columbia River); PRD has greater flow and a faster flow environment. C. Dotson said tests were done by HTI in past studies for false positives by releasing batches of 50 fish. C. Dotson agreed to review the past reports to identify the studies, analyzed by Skalski et al. This was originally tested when survival studies were transitioned to acoustic tags, with new detection points at downstream arrays. A. Murdoch said it would be helpful to review that historical data because the false positives are a big concern.

B. Nordlund asked A. Murdoch to elaborate on the potential differences in dead fish transport compared to the Buchanan et al. study. A. Murdoch said the Columbia River water transit time from Priest to McNary is much faster than the mainstem lower Columbia or the Snake River. Based on river flow velocity in the Upper Columbia River dead fish are going to move much farther than in the mainstem Snake River or lower Columbia River. K. Murdoch seconded that it would be helpful to circulate old reports showing the dead fish release results because many of the participants are newer to the PRCC.

C. Dotson said Grant PUD will add a dead fish release component to this upcoming survival study to validate estimates from earlier studies to move forward with requesting approval for the study. C. Dotson noted that adding the dead fish releases would increase the study cost by approximately $25,000. This could be implemented in the first year, and results can be brought to the PRCC to determine whether it should occur in subsequent years. K. Murdoch and C. Jackson thanked C. Dotson for that addition to the study plan.

A. Murdoch asked if the dead fish would be released in the tailrace of PRD, and suggested fish should be released in the forebay, tailrace and other locations. C. Dotson said that the dead fish would be added to the currently-planned releases of live fish making up the control group of the study, as in the past studies. A. Murdoch agreed the details about where dead fish are released could be discussed further in the future.

K. Truscott asked if Grant PUD will report the origin of fish accepted or rejected for the study (hatchery or natural; or adipose present or adipose absent). C. Dotson confirmed that Grant PUD will also scan fish for coded wire tags (CWTs) to determine the origin of all ad-present fish.

All parties present approved SOA 2023-02 regarding Grant PUD's Draft 2025-2027 Smolt Survival Study Plan. C. Dotson distributed a revised final version (V-7b) including the dead fish releases, following the meeting on December 11, 2023.

V. Fish Mode Operations Report

C. Dotson summarized the results of the report on 2023 fish mode turbine operations at Wanapum Dam, with the key takeaway that a 41% reduction in the number of start/stops of the turbines was observed since implementation of PRCC SOA 2022-03, which expanded the flow range of Fish Mode at Wanapum Dam from a prior minimum of 11.8 kcfs down to 10.0 kcfs.

B. Nordlund asked if the PRCC would like to see this reported out in future years. K. Truscott said yes, because operations change with power generation needs, and he would certainly like to know about operations in fish mode through the years of the survival study. C. Dotson agreed, this will be reported through at least 2027, according to the SOA (2022-03). K. Truscott asked if the data could be broken down by month. C. Dotson said he could put that request to his staff. Fish mode is in operation from mid-April through mid-August.

VI. Subyearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Planning

Meeting materials from the 2016 subyearling workshop were distributed on October 6, 2023. K. Murdoch said the agenda was worked on in HCP-CC meeting. The draft list of agenda topics, with key outreach leads was distributed to the HCP-CC earlier in the day, and L. Rohrbach forwarded this to the PRCC during the meeting.

VII. Facilitation

T. Dresser asked to hear opinions from PRCC members about how a new facilitator should be identified. C. Dotson suggested that one approach would be for the PRCC to open up the search more broadly.

B. Nordlund said the his workload has been less than before Anchor QEA's involvement and said he would be willing to extend his tenure until a good replacement is found, including beyond the end of his current contract. L. Rohrbach confirmed Anchor QEA would continue to support the PRCC.

K. Murdoch said her main concern is that the process is open and transparent and that the PRCC be involved in that process. One approach is to develop a request for qualifications (RFQ), but that is not the only way to do that. The PRCC could brainstorm a list of people they would like to consider and for a slightly smaller search.

All agreed that they appreciate that an open and transparent process should be pursued.

B. Gale said he is comfortable with the current facilitation, but if an RFQ is the chosen approach, there could be an interview committee designated with a smaller set of PRCC representatives.

T. Dresser said he understands the desire to go through a transparent process. Grant PUD would likely ask for the facilitation role to go through the competitive bid process. Grant PUD would not be supportive of a subset of the PRCC for an interview team process; Grant PUD felt every member of the PRCC should participate in the interview process.

B. Nordlund asked T. Dresser to provide some clarity on the process for preparing the RFQ. T. Dresser said he would ask the PRCC to collectively agree to what attributes they want for a facilitator. The PRCC would decide what type of interview questions should be asked. B. Nordlund asked if certain individuals could be informed about an RFQ to be released, and T. Dresser said that would be allowable.

VIII. 2023 Fish Passage Operations Report

- ***Fish ladder inspections***

C. Dotson said Grant PUD is now in the phase of ladder inspection and maintenance. Based on the biological opinion from USFWS on bull trout, only one ladder is taken offline at a time at the dams so passage is always provided for bull trout. B. Nordlund suggested viewing the fish ladders when they are dewatered to fully appreciate the infrastructure; C. Dotson agreed and said that members could contact him for a site visit.

- ***Fish spill updates***

Adult spill ended on November 15 at both PRD and WAN.

- ***Fish counts for 2023 (April 15 – November 15)***

Fish counts at WAN and PRD were complete on November 15, 2023.

The following are fish counts as of November 15, 2023:

I. Project	Spring Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Summer Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Fall Chinook Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Coho Salmon	Steelhead
Priest Rapids	18,888	51,102	44,970	235,270	16,651	7,617
Wanapum	19,152	57,251	27,884	228,172	11,461	7,522
Rock Island	17,619	51,574	17,628	247,772	17,690	8,326

Updates

II. Review of Outstanding No Net Impact-Funded Projects

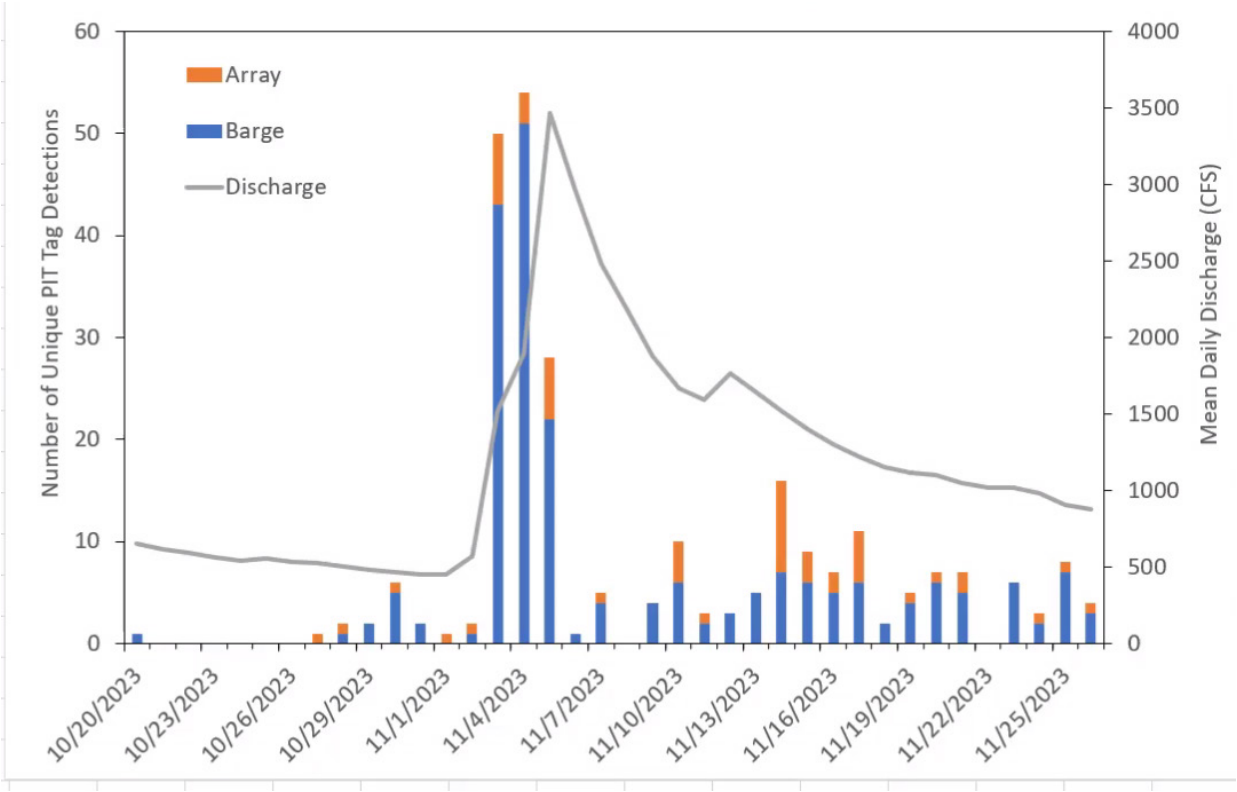
- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**
  No update.
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022 to 2024)**
  No update.
- **Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife PIT-Tag Detection Barge**
  Murdoch said the PIT-tag barge is being taken out of the Wenatchee River this week. The barge arrays detected the fall outmigration period.

  A. Murdoch reminded that the barge array was installed to estimate overwinter survival of subyearling Chinook salmon in the Wenatchee River, and to estimate the proportion that emigrate out of the river to adjust assumptions about overwinter survival in the Wenatchee River. A. Murdoch said the original plan was to operate the barge only in the spring, however the fish are moving out in the fall, and WDFW decided to operate the barge through the summer and fall. Detection efficiency is not as sensitive to flow changes than a smolt trap.

  Murdoch showed the number of unique PIT tag detections at the barge and at a flat plate array used to estimate adult passage, alongside river discharge (below). All data shown are wild yearling and subyearling Chinook salmon. There was a freshet in early November associated with a lot of fish movement.

  The flat-plate array anchored to the bottom does not give an accurate estimate of juvenile outmigration because the detection field is only from the flat-plate array to 16 to 20 inches of the lower part of the water column. The flat rate arrays are in the river all year long. The barge has a much larger detection range over the river depth but only for a portion of the river width, and the flat-plate array detects across the entire river width. The flat-plate array is designed to detect PIT

tagged adult fish which typically travel near the river bottom, while the barge is designed to detect juvenile fish throughout the water depth. The detection efficiency of the barge is not yet known. The flat plate array detected 53 tags; the barge array detected approximately 290 tags.



The barge will be launched back into the river in early February, to be operated through the summer migration period until mid-November again.

C. Dotson said the coverage by the flat-plate array should increase as water levels decline. A. Murdoch agreed that the flat-plate array will provide some indication of juvenile movement during the winter period when the barge is out of the river, but it won't be a direct comparison to the barge array detections.

The total number of detections with the barge array in October and November was about 290 detections; it's uncertain what percentage of the population that represents. C. Dotson asked if those detected were wild fish that were (PIT) tagged at smolt traps and A. Murdoch confirmed they were, and had all been tagged this fall. The first juvenile was detected in October 21 and all barge detections were juvenile spring Chinook. C. Dotson asked if the next downstream detection would be McNary Dam and A. Murdoch said that is correct. A. Murdoch said next spring there may be thousands of juvenile detections.

C. Dotson asked how will these data be used to determine survival estimates. A. Murdoch said any detections downstream of the Wenatchee River will be used to estimate detection efficiency of the barge, and then overwinter survival of wild fish in the Wenatchee basin will be estimated. The barge will be another

detection location that can be used for any Cormack-Jolly-Seber mark-recapture estimates in the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers.

- **Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby (planned for May 12 to 14)**. Completed for 2023.

- **2023 Real Time Research (RTR), Inc., Avian Predation Study.**
  C. Dotson said RTR is continuing to work on their report for this year's study. RTR did meet with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and BPA will be funding RTR for avian monitoring for the same level of effort as in 2023, from the estuary to the confluence of the Snake and Columbia rivers. RTR would like to present results from the 2023 study to the PRCC, around the same time as presenting a proposal and request for NNI funding in 2024. C. Dotson said RTR would like to present their results in a special meeting to the PRCC in early January, for 90 minutes to 2 hours. They could be available January 8 and 9, or January 15 and 16, morning or afternoon. C. Dotson asked if the PRCC would be agreeable and available to attend a presentation of the 2023 results in early January, and consider their proposal for 2024 funding for a decision in the regular meeting on January 23.

  Bill Gale asked if representation from the USFWS migratory bird program has been included in these discussions in the past if. C. Dotson said the Bureau of Reclamation coordinates with Michelle McDowell (USFWS) in the Portland USFWS Office for permitting and USFWS is well-informed of the program.

  C. Dotson said there will be a copy of the draft report and proposal shared with the PRCC ahead of the meetings.

  K. Murdoch said any of those dates work, however January 15 is Martin Luther King Day; her preference would be to plan for January 8 or 9 to allow more time to address comments.

  B. Nordlund said he would reach out via email to PRCC members to schedule this meeting for January 8 or 9.

III. Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittee updates have been distributed by email.

IV. SOAs Discussed in 2023

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

SOA number	Key Words	Last Discussed	Status
2023-02	Survival Study	November 28, 2023	Approved; final revisions and SOA distributed on December 11, 2023

V. Next Meetings

The next PRCC meeting will be virtual only, scheduled for December 19 at 1:00 p.m. (links to be included in the agenda).