

**Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee
Statement of Agreement (SOA) on Performance Standards
Evaluations for Juvenile Steelhead**

Submitted to Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee: March 7, 2007

Approved by Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee: March 9, 2007

Statement of Agreement (SOA)

The Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) agrees that the source of test fish (i.e. gateway dipped) may be one of the major causes for the lower-than-expected Project steelhead survival estimates seen in 2006. The PRCC also agrees that that a "Fish Source Evaluation" comparing fish collected via gateway dipping at Wanapum Dam versus fish collected from the Rocky Reach Bypass facility is a valid study to determine if gateway dipping is an acceptable source of test fish for future Grant PUD survival studies.

The PRCC agrees that a Fish Source Evaluation study comparing fish sources and the methodologies used in Grant PUD's and Chelan PUD's acoustic tag survival studies is warranted. The PRCC approves the fish source evaluation study provided that a 2007 Fish Source Evaluation Study Plan is submitted. Grant PUD will provide the 2007 Fish Source Evaluation Study Plan to PRCC members by March 16, 2007.

Background

In 2006, Grant PUD released a total of 1,517 acoustic-tagged run-of-river hatchery steelhead to estimate juvenile survival through the Priest Rapids Project. Paired release-recapture methods were used to estimate survival through the Wanapum and Priest Rapids dams/reservoirs. Releases were conducted every other day from May 7, 2006 to June 2, 2006.

Using this paired release-recapture method, survival through the Wanapum development (dam and reservoir) was estimated to be 71.95% (SE=2.85%). Passage survival through the Priest Rapids development was estimated at 71.64% (SE=2.97%). Survival through the Priest Rapids Project (both developments) was estimated at 57.25% (SE=3.02%).

Known and unknown factors may have contributed to the lower-than-expected Project passage survival estimates seen in 2006. A comparison of survival estimates in a section of the Wanapum reservoir (i.e. Rock Island tailrace to Sunland Estates, approx. 18 river miles) between Grant PUD and Chelan PUD steelhead releases found Chelan PUD-released fish survived 1.104 times higher than Grant PUD study fish, 97.92% and 88.72%, respectfully. This comparison of study fish release groups and the much lower-than-expected Project passage survival estimates brought into question study methodology for fish surgery and handling during Grant PUD's 2006 steelhead survival study. These preliminary survival estimates (Wanapum development, Priest Rapids development, and the Priest Rapids Project) were presented to the PRCC on November 29, 2006 and subsequently discussed on January 23, 2007 (see PRCC meeting minutes <http://www.gcpud.org/stewardship/nmfsdocuments.htm>).

PRCC members discussed fish handling and surgical methodology, along with "fish source" as the likely primary cause for the lower-than-expected survival estimate seen in 2006. Grant PUD proposed that the 2006 steelhead survival estimates be invalidated and not used as year one of the three-year evaluations to determine the arithmetic average survival estimate needed to meet or exceed the performance standard set for steelhead. A SOA was signed by the PRCC February 28, 2007 invalidating the 2006 steelhead Project survival study.