



Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

Teams Meeting
Friday December 16, 2022
1:00- 3:45 PM

Final Meeting Minutes

PRCC Representatives and Alternatives

Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS	Jim Craig, USFWS
Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN	Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (alt), CCT
Chad Jackson, A. Murdoch (Alt) WDFW	Tom Skiles, CTUIR
Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD	

Meeting Attendees

Scott Carlon, NMFS	Jim Craig, USFWS
Keely Murdoch, YN	Kirk Truscott, CCT
Chad Jackson, WDFW	Tom Skiles, CTUIR
Curt Dotson, GPUD	Nathan Buck, Wanapum
Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD	

Actions Items from December 16, 2022, Meeting

- Timeline/Schedule illustrating key decision milestone for 2025 Survival Evaluation. Presented at Meeting on 12/16/2022 – **to be sent out to PRCC.**
- Revise SOA 2022-03 (Expansion of Fish Mode at Wanapum Dam) per agreed edits and resend for further consideration by PRCC. **Vote will be called for on January 24, 2023.**
- Finalize SOA 2022-04 (NNI Fund Termination-Standards Achieved) with agreed upon edits and Final version to PRCC Membership - **to be sent out to PRCC.**
- GPUD to review comments provided on 2025-2027 survival evaluations and be ready to discuss at the January 24, 2023 meeting.

- PRCC Membership to review the RTR Avian Predation 2023 proposal for NNI funding and be ready to discuss and vote on the proposal at the January 24, 2023 meeting.
- Request for WDFW to provided update on Wenatchee PIT-Tag Barge Operations and Data Collection efforts. **(C. Jackson to arrange)**
- Request for RTR to provided update on Avian Predation 2022 efforts and activities (January Meeting).
- Request for CCT to provided update on Northern Pike Removal Efforts **(February Meeting - K. Truscott to arrange)**
- Request for Grant PUD to include the study fish rejection information in appendices of future survival evaluation final reports.
- Request to ensure that RTR had incorporated K. Murdoch’s ask to include and analysis/breakdown of the avian predation rate (and rearing type) of those smolts that are PIT-tagged at Rock Island as part of the RTR evaluation compared to the avian predation rate (and rear type) of those smolts that are PIT-tagged upstream and detected at the Rocky Reach facility – to see how the two different “source” of PIT-tagged smolts compare in avian predation rates.

Decision Item(s)

- PRCC Finalized and approved SOA 2022-04 (NNI Fund Termination-Standards Achieved).

I. Welcome, Announcements and Introductions

II. Agenda Review

- WDFW (A. Murdoch) presented an adult steelhead overshoot/fallback PowerPoint to a joint meeting of the HCP & PRCC from 11:00 – 12:00, prior to today’s PRCC meeting.
- Bryan reminded the PRCC that the SOA 2022-04 (NNI Fund Termination-Standards Achieved) was not on the agenda but would be discussed and a vote taken today.

III. Meeting Minutes Status

- November 16, 2022, PRCC meeting minutes were distributed by Bryan Nordlund by email on November 29, with comments due by December 28, 2022.
- October 25 PRCC meeting minutes comments were due November 10 and are in the process of being finalized.

IV. Review Items from November 16, 2022 Meeting

- T. Dresser to send out the WDFW letter regarding Priest Rapids and Wanapum Dams Adult Fish Count Discrepancies dated November 7, 2022. **Completed.**
- Timeline/Schedule illustrating key decision milestone for 2025-2027 survival evaluations - **to be send out to PRCC.**
- Language added to draft SOA (2022-04) to clarify current survival study performance standards achieved - **to be send out to PRCC.**

V. 2022 Fish Passage Operations Report

- **Video Fish Count Investigation.** Grant PUD provided a high-level summary of activities that were conducted in 2022 to determine causes for fish counting issues. This included the following.
 - i. internal education.
 - ii. development of a tracking system of when picket leads were open/closed, duration open and if fish were observed passing.
 - iii. QA/QC checks on fish counters.
 - iv. system/equipment reviews.
 - v. internal oversight/supervision, training, etc.

Grant PUD reported that at this time it believes that most of the fish counts errors are human-error related. Grant PUD explained the difficulties it had with retaining fish counters over the season, as well as human error associated with power outages.

Grant PUD reported that in planning for the 2023 fish counting season, they are conducting an internal review to determine the most effective and efficient means to provide accurate and timely fish counting. Options under consideration for viewing fish count video included internal sourcing (as has been done in past) or via an external contractor. In addition, Grant PUD plans to continue internal education outreach, QA/QC work, preform system and equipment upgrades, data collection efforts on picket lead cleaning, and explore means to address data loss due to power outages caused by human error.

- **Fish ladder inspections.** Coordination between Grant PUD staff and T. Skiles is ongoing to select a date for a dewatered ladder tour. Grant PUD reported that a single ladder (one each at Wanapum and Priest Rapids) is currently dewatered, and this will continue until annual maintenance is complete.
- **Fish spill updates.** No updates until 2023 due to no on-going fish spill at this time.

- **Fish counts for 2022 (April 15 – November 15 – Final).** Grant PUD reported that all fish count reporting has been completed for Wanapum and Priest Rapids Dams for 2022. Grant PUD further reported that the Wanapum fish count were substantial over-counted for sockeye, while other species such as coho were substantial under-counted.
- **Discussion/Vote on revised Fish Mode at Wanapum Dam.** T. Skiles (CRITFC) started the discussion off by saying that he was not comfortable stating that this revised Fish Mode operation provided a survival benefit. He further indicated that there is uncertainty associated with this proposed change due to the wide confidence intervals associated with the flow levels tested. T. Skiles also recognized that the number of starts and stops of a turbine unit were something not considered in the 2005 analysis and that these starts and stops could have a negative impact on smolt survival. T. Skiles indicated that he would likely vote “yes” on this proposal but would be more comfortable with a Fish Mode expansion down to 10 kcfs, rather than the 9.5 kcfs floor originally proposed. He further recommended that the SOA needed to include “off-ramp” language and “check-in’s” in case there is an indication that survival is not being achieved. This would result in fish-mode reverting to the original range of 11.8-15.7 kcfs.

K. Murdoch (YN) agreed with T. Skiles that the wide confidence intervals associated with the flow levels tested gave her cause for concern and created a level of uncertainty, as did as the fact that smolt survival data between the flows of 9-11 kcfs range was not available. K. Murdoch also agreed that an “off-ramp” was needed to be included in SOA 2022-03, as well as a check-in on survival under the new Fish Mode. K. Murdoch also suggested that data on the reduction of the number of turbine starts and stops needs to be provided annually to the PRCC to confirm that by lowering the range of fish-mode down to 10 kcfs would indeed reduce the number of turbine stop/starts.

K. Truscott (CCT) agreed with comments provided by YN and CRITFC and further recommended that route-specific data needed to be collected to ensure that this operation change did (or did not) impact overall smolt survival for the PRP. T. Dresser (Grant PUD) indicated that this is above and beyond Grant PUD’s requirements for survival testing as required by FERC license. The Project’s FERC license requires a project-wide survival estimate. Per T. Dresser, measuring route specific survival will have a large logistical and financial impact on Grant PUD.

C. Dotson (Grant PUD) explained that based on the number of fish detected passing at a specific turbine flow levels and trying to tie that back to a survival estimate at that flow would be extremely difficult to accomplish. C. Dotson also explained the number of data points would be extremely limited due to the limited amount of time that a turbine would be actually operating in the new lower Fish Mode range (10-11.8 kcfs) at the same time that a tagged smolt was passing through that specific turbine operating in the new range.

C. Jackson (WDFW) indicated that he was ok on 9.5 or 10 kcfs for the lower Fish Mode range, but he believes there needs to be some type of post survival study evaluation if PRP survival standards are not achieved during the upcoming survival study check-ins.

S. Carlon (NOAA), Jim Craig (USFWS) and N. Buck (Wanapum) agreed with comments made by T. Skiles, K. Murdoch, and K. Truscott.

The PRCC discussed the merits/need and limitations of collecting route specific survival information at Wanapum. T. Skiles provided the 2015 draft survival report (Behavior and Survival Analysis of Juvenile Steelhead and Sockeye Salmon through the Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project in 2015) as something for the PRCC to consider as a possible study design (i.e., determining the percentage of tagged smolts that use the three possible passage routes past Wanapum) to potentially assess fish survival at Wanapum with a revised Fish Mode.

The PRCC did not take a vote on SOA 2022-03. B. Nordlund wrapped up the discussion by stating that he would revise the Draft SOA based on comments provided by the PRCC and send that back out for review. K. Truscott asked Grant PUD if this was something that the PRCC could vote on at the January meeting. Grant PUD agreed.

- **2023 Avian Predation Proposal (RTR) – Request for NNI Funding.** C. Dotson provided a high-level summary of the work that RTR proposes for 2023 including Caspian tern colony (CATE) monitoring, PIT tag recovery and predation rates (per page 4 of proposal). C. Dotson indicated that RTR is requesting \$297,669 to continue avian predation work in the Columbia Basin. The PRCC asked if there was an increase over last year's amount for aviation predation monitoring. C. Dotson replied that it was about a \$4,000 total price increase over last year's evaluation.

C. Dotson stressed the importance of this work and how it has greatly benefited the region. He further explained that a new CATE is developing on an island within Lake Lenore, and that re-colonization of Crescent Island (by terns) is occurring with the number of nests and terns increasing over the past two years. Without this work, the USBR will not be able to measure avian predation rates, per their required actions spelled out in the Federal Hydro system Biological Opinion (BiOp).

C. Dotson and T. Dresser reported that Grant PUD continues to meet with USBR in an effort to develop long-term passive CATE dissuasion methods such as vegetation and/or large structures (woody debris/rocks, etc.). T. Dresser also reported that the USBR has contracted with USDA-Wildlife Service to dissuade terns from nesting on Goose Island and those efforts will be the same as last year.

C. Dotson passed along that USBR has stated to Grant PUD that they are committed to reducing the Goose Island CATE to less than approximately 40 pairs of nesting Caspian terns as required under the Inland Avian Management Plan. That they have contracted with USDA-Wildlife Service to monitor the number of

nesting Caspian terns on Goose Island throughout the season, and that they use USDA-Wildlife Service monitoring data to evaluate whether they are meeting their goal of 40 pairs or less.

Per C. Dotson, the USBR further recognizes that they use and benefit from RTR's annual colony-size estimate for Goose Island and that USBR has a better understanding of how the Goose Island colony fits into regional spatial and temporal trends for Caspian terns. USBR also acknowledged that they have a required avian salmonid smolt predation rate of less than 2.0% per CATE colony. The USBR uses the predation rate generated by RTR's PIT tag work to see if they are meeting this BiOp requirement.

VI. 2025-2027 Survival Evaluation Discussion. C. Dotson indicated that he had not been able to review all the provided comments prior to the meeting and that he was still reviewing reports that were cited in some of the comments. He did provide a high-level summary of the comments received to date, which included the following (but limited to).

- K. Murdoch and C. Jackson raised a question related to the need to include avian predation work in Project survival evaluation, since RTR is doing this in a NNI funded study. K. Murdoch's concern is primarily related to double tagging (PIT and acoustic tags) study fish as this increases the tag-burden and ultimately results in larger fish being selected for tagging. In effect, this could lead to not tagging a portion (smaller fish) of the population. More detailed comments provided by K. Murdoch are included in the draft study plan. C. Dotson responded that the benefit of having a double-tagged smolt in a Project survival study is that by having an acoustic tag associated with a specific PIT tag, predation location is better known because of the time stamp of the acoustic tag. This type of information can assist Grant PUD in adjustments made to its own avian dissuasion programs (i.e. bird wires at the dams and the USDA contractors hazing predatory birds on the river).
- The PRCC will have further discussions on this topic during the January. PRCC meeting.

VII. (Agenda addition) Vote on SOA 2022-04 – NNI Fund Contributions. The original draft version of this SOA was modified based on suggestions by K. Murdoch. The PRCC unanimously approved the revised version. The final version of SOA 2022-04 will be distributed after this meeting.

VIII. Path forward from check-in survival study results. No discussion occurred

UPDATES

IX. Review of Outstanding NNI Funded Projects

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II.** Kate Terrell stated that Trout Unlimited had several calls with the Director of the Jones Shotwell Ditch Company (JSDC) to discuss next steps. JSDC's attorney is still

reviewing the documents provided by the sponsor and the sponsor is waiting to meet with JSDC and their attorney. In addition, the sponsor has been working on additional grant applications (worth \$700,000) for the project. They are also reviewing project permitting and engineering plans to see what needs to be updated before moving forward on this project.

X. Next Meetings

- January 24, 2023 – Virtual Meeting at 9 AM.
- February 28, 203 – Virtual Meeting at 9 AM.