



Grant County
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT
Excellence in Service and Leadership

Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee

FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 27, 2016

SeaTac Radisson Hotel

PRCC Meeting Representatives

Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS

Bob Rose, YN

Jeff Korth, C. Andonaegui (Alt), P. Verhey (Alt) WDFW

Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GCPUD

Denny Rohr, D. Rohr & Assoc, Facilitator

Jim Craig, USFWS

Kirk Truscott, CCT

Tom Skiles, CTUIR

Orlene Hahn, GCPUD

PRCC Meeting Attendees

Jim Craig, USFWS

Jeff Korth, WDFW

Scott Carlon, NMFS

Denny Rohr, D. Rohr & Assoc., Facilitator

Pat Wyena, GCPUD

Bob Rose, YN (via telephone)

Curt Dotson, GCPUD

Kirk Truscott, CCT (via telephone)

Orlene Hahn, GCPUD (via telephone)

Nathan Buck, GCPUD

Action Items from June 22, 2016 PRCC Meeting:

1. All committee members agreed upon a close of comment date for Volume 2 of the Draft 2015 Steelhead / Sockeye Survival Study Report to be July 27th.
2. PRCC members agreed that their respective Governing Board members of the WASCO Group would be contacted for discussion of the Predator Fish Recruitment Reduction proposal and to gauge their interest.
3. Korth agreed to discuss identified questions and comments with Murdoch regarding the Lake Wenatchee NNI proposal. Rohr will follow up with Korth as to how to proceed with the proposal, including the possibility of having Murdoch attend the July 27th meeting for further discussion.
4. Dotson agreed to make modifications to SOA 2016-03 and it will be distributed to all members for final review and consideration.

FINAL Meeting Minutes

- I. **Welcome and Introductions**
- II. **Agenda Review (D. Rohr)** – No additions were made to the Agenda.
- III. **Meeting Minutes Approval for May 25 and June 21, 22, 2016 (D. Rohr)** – Rohr affirmed approval of the May 25th draft minutes, having received approval from all PRCC members either verbally or by email. The June 21st draft minutes for the Subyearling Workshop are currently in process of development. The June 22, 2016 minutes were approved subject to Truscott and Skiles' approval which Rohr will get via email.

- IV. **Action Items Review from June 22, 2016 meeting (D. Rohr)** – All Action Items will be discussed further during today's meeting.
- V. **Discussion: NNI Funding Proposal – “Predator Fish Recruitment Reduction” (B. Rose)** – Rose stated there have been lots of discussions on this. The last thing was Geoff McMichael requesting \$10,000 to do some further studies and scoping this out. Carlon talked to Gary Fredrichs. Gary was on the other end of the scale from where he was when first talked to. Gary wrote the letter turning it down from the WASCO Group stating the Corps and possibly BPA should be participating in it. Gary did like the idea of the study and seeing if it could produce any results. Rose stated we could be at least 5 years out before anything would be considered by the federal group. Rose made an appeal to the PRCC realizing the \$10,000 isn't very much to spend to at least scope out the concept. This proposal would at least tie up and clean up any questions about whether or not it is a valid study. Rose was asked to define what the WASCO Group is. He explained there was a fund that was the result of a settlement agreement that had \$110,000/year put into it. Then it was forgotten about for 9-10 years. Rose started asking about the fund and went through the records. There is probably about \$1.5 million now. Rohr will talk with Rose further to see how to get the ball rolling. Based on a memo from Geoff McMichael dated June 20, 2016 there are at least 4 questions that would be worked on for the \$10,000. Rohr is to resend Geoff McMichael's 4 question memo out to the PRCC. **The PRCC approved the \$10,000 with McMichael subject to Skiles.**
- VI. **Discussion: NNI Funding Proposal – “Factors Influencing the Survival of Juvenile Spring Chinook Salmon in Lake Wenatchee, WA”, Andrew Murdoch, WDFW (J. Korth)** – Korth and Andrew Murdoch answered some questions that were identified during the June 22, 2016 PRCC Meeting. Murdoch's answers are in Red and Korth added his in Blue.

How to handle the taking of Bull Trout? For the study, DFW has Scientific Collecting Permits which are probably adequate. If not, we would need a Section 7 permit. Recall that FWS has been on board with this study in the past and is currently involved in drafting the study. Jim was going to verify this for Grant PUD. Jim spoke with FWS's Judy Neibauer and it is her opinion that the work proposed herein would need additional coordination and discussion between WDFW and FWS ES as it is not real clear from the study what the anticipated level of handling and take might be. Therefore it is difficult at this time to make a determination as to whether the existing permit is sufficient. It is presumptive to consider what 'take' might look like before we know if bull trout are the primary problem and what that problem actually looks like.

What are the FWS permit requirements plus the process to follow re the permits? See above. **Has consideration been given to perhaps starting with a full blown pikeminnow removal program for a couple of years to determine if that will solve the problem?** This would require new permits and without any information that this is a major problem (we don't even have a population estimate), it would be difficult to defend this program. Permitting and testing years would significantly eat into the 10 years Grant PUD has left. At the conclusion of the study, we should have enough information to implement a pikeminnow removal program if warranted.

How confident is Andrew that this proposal can be completed within a 3 year timeframe (it is an ambitious proposal)? Very much so. This proposal was developed by the research types that do this kind of work, including Dr. Beauchamp, among the premier researchers in this field. Despite Grant PUD's misgivings on this front, Lake Wenatchee is not the Snake or Columbia River. DFW has successfully completed this type of work on Moses Lake and Banks Lake. Lake Wenatchee is more similar to those studies.

What other management plans are in place to address this issue? No management plans are in place that I am aware of. No comprehensive studies ongoing, either. Grant PUD has ongoing M&E in the river and DFW/FWS have bull trout tagging studies.

Has there been consideration of employing other incremental approaches to solve the problem? None have been proposed at this time, including a pikeminnow removal pgm. At least not formally. The primary issue is the lack of solid information. This study will provide the information needed to make informed management decisions. Anything else would simply be informed guesses.

What are the White River chinook priorities and how would this proposal relate to Recovery?

Recovery is not only based on a single robust population in the Wenatchee; diversity is also an important factor. Since the Nason Creek and Chiwawa Creek have already effectively been homogenized through hatchery programs, only the White and Little Wenatchee remain. NOAA is not likely to agree to compositing. Scott was going to verify this. Nor would that be the right thing to do. Any hatchery program upstream of Lake Wenatchee at this time could not be justified. The potential survival bottleneck in Lake Wenatchee would make any program unsuccessful. If actions to address this survival bottleneck are successful, both the White River and Little Wenatchee major spawning areas would benefit greatly. All VSP parameters would be positively influenced for example: Abundance – Higher smolt survival will result in more adults. Productivity – Data suggest the relatively large smolt size has a higher SAR than other spawning areas in the Wenatchee. Spatial – Both the White and Little Wenatchee need to be fully occupied with spawners Diversity – Both from a genetic and life history perspective (i.e., Chinook using a lake).

Grant has 10 years left to show that they have done everything they can to support the White River spring Chinook population, at which point the PRCC will be evaluating Grant PUD's actions. The PRCC will need this information for that evaluation, and the best defense Grant PUD can have is that they have provided the information and at least attempted to use it. I don't think the PRCC should accept anything less in the end. Not taking action to understand what might be done and just waiting until these pops blink out and the problem goes away would be our collective utmost dereliction of duty.

OTHER??? If necessary, we can get Andrew to call in to address 'other' and/or more fully the above. The data from the study will also be directly used in our Life Cycle Model (LCM). The LCM could then be used to help prioritize other actions that are currently not considered in the Biological Strategy of the Recovery Plan. As a result, potential new projects could be implemented in the Lake, White or Little Wenatchee. However, without the information required to make these inferences, status quo will be maintained that will not result in recovery.

Korth stated if we cannot come to a decision that will move us forward on the White River we will all be culpable in the end. Dotson stated that the impression that Grant PUD isn't/hasn't worked on the White River issue isn't accurate – Grant PUD has already spent \$23 million on the White River. We (Grant PUD) have ongoing M&E for White River. Korth reiterated that we need to do everything we can and this proposal is an avenue to overcome the lack of knowledge that currently exists. Korth stated Grant PUD has the obligation for the mitigation of the White River. This goes back to the HCP. Dotson asked if the study were to go forward and pikeminnow were determined to be the "villain" would it mean that Grant PUD would have a pikeminnow removal program in Lake Wenatchee? The M&E program is through the Hatchery program. Dotson stated that BPA started their pikeminnow program 25-30 years ago with very few (if any) studies conducted to determine that pikeminnow eat salmon smolts. Dotson also stated that in the main stem behind WD and PRD, the reservoirs are artificial structures and he could see where Grant has responsibility for a predator population developing in that reservoir, but Lake Wenatchee is a natural lake (not the product of a dam being built) and a natural structure, so why would Grant be responsible for a predator population that lives in a "non-impacted" body of water. Were these predators always in the lake? Rohr stated what I'm hearing from some members is there are a lot of questions until the study is done and it starts to answer the questions. Korth stated this Committee has an SOA that requires a decision in

2026 and unless we embark on studies that provide the limiting factors and mitigation actions needed, it will be difficult to make that decision. The whole package is \$2.8 million. Rohr briefly described a memo received from PRCC Hatchery SC facilitator Elizabeth McManus that was sent in March, 2016 that perhaps relates to this discussion. He will forward that information to PRCC members. Korth to send out info regarding where NOAA is going. Korth asked is there a lack of confidence that this will result in a meaningful management action. A lot of the members wondered if a predatory fish removal program, which could impact bull trout, would be possible, based on the listing of bull trout, even if the study indicated that predatory fish are shown to be the major reason for the low smolt survival rate out to the White River. The primary issue is the lack of solid information. Why are we hesitant to take this step? I think people are being careful as this is a lot of money. Maybe there are some corners that we can cut to bring down the cost a little bit but this is the kind of money that was spent on Moses Lake and Banks Lake. It was asked what way is everyone leaning. Rose, Korth, Truscott and Carlon were all a "Yes". Craig abstained. Dotson stated that at this standpoint he needs to have internal discussions at Grant. He can't deny more information is very helpful. Craig, Carlon and Dotson all will talk to their internal folks. Rohr asked that at the next meeting in August we need to have this more closely pinned down. Rohr will talk with Skiles about this proposal. SOA-2013-01 was mentioned.

- VII. **ACTION ITEM: SOA 2016-03, Schedule for Conducting Survival Evaluations – Yearling Chinook, Sockeye and Steelhead (C. Dotson, D. Rohr)** – The Committee approved this SOA with the contingency that Rose will get back to Rohr after he discusses this further with Parker next week.
- VIII. **ACTION ITEM: Close of Comment for Draft 2015 Steelhead / Sockeye Survival Study Report (C. Dotson, D. Rohr)** – Dotson stated he did get comments from Craig and Truscott. Truscott discussed additional comments that he had after reviewing it again with the Committee which included: (1) How the results are being characterized? (2) 1% vs 5.4 avian predation factor. Trying to avoid contradictions in the document. On Page 32 second paragraph the last sentence. Earlier in the report when talking about biotic conditions there was a reference to avian. (3) Three year average. Dotson and Truscott to talk about these comments further offline. Dotson to send another draft version out with changes highlighted for all PRCC members to view.
- IX. **ACTION ITEM: SOA 2016-04, Decoupling Sub-yearling from Steelhead Performance Standard and Linking to Yearling Chinook for Purpose of Calculating NNI Funding** – The question was asked why steelhead was a surrogate (for the purpose of calculating NNI funding) for the summer sub-yearling Chinook and not spring yearling Chinook. Why, as presently in place, does the performance of a steelhead more closely related to what might be happening to a summer sub-yearling Chinook and not a spring yearling Chinook? Dotson stated that the past 10 years of fish studies in the PR Project don't support this (steelhead) assumption This SOA is asking to decouple from steelhead and put them (sub-yearling summers) back with spring yearling Chinook (as they were prior to 2011). Truscott stated because we don't have survival studies for sub-yearling Chinook he is more inclined to utilize steelhead rather than yearling Chinook just to put in an error factor. Sockeye have the highest survival rate of any. Dotson stated we are paying for sub-yearlings mortality based on high avian predation rates on steelhead when sub-yearlings have the lowest avian predation rate of the three species of smolts. And we have study results that show this. The concern about the impact to NNI funding was bought up if the sub-yearlings were decoupled from steelhead and linked to yearling Chinook survival rates. Some thought was given to the need to keep the NNI funded to help increase sub-yearling survival. Dotson stated that the summer Chinook population in the mid-Columbia is the highest/strongest population of fish that we presently have. What is the timing on this? Vote: Bob – I need more time. Is there anything specific that Curt needs to look at or answer specifically about this. Denny will try to ask Joe Lukas the question next week when they

meet. Curt could add sockeye to the table? Curt was approaching it scientifically. More time needed and talked about next month. The Committee is to be prepared to vote next month.

X. **Updates**

- A. **Avian Predation Activities (C. Dotson)** – Nothing new to report. Reports have been sent out. Nesting season has wrapped up. The Blalocks have over 1,000 birds. Twinning Island – nothing developed there. Lake Lenore is growing a little with 7 nests. Northern point on Potholes seems to have fizzled out
- B. **Hatchery Activities (T. Dresser)** – Nothing new to report
 - 1. Carlton Acclimation Facility
 - 2. Nason Creek Acclimation Facility – Korth gave Grant PUD kudos for getting this task completed. Different designed screen was put in place. The screens meet the NOAA screening criteria.
 - 3. Priest Rapids Hatchery Modifications
 - 4. Penticton Hatchery
- C. **Hatchery Permits: Sec 10 Consultation/Summer Chinook, Sec 7 Consultation/Bull Trout. (T. Dresser)** – Nothing new to report
- D. **2016 Survival Study (C. Dotson)** – Numbers are being crunched.
- E. **2016 Spill Schedule (C. Dotson)** – Rock Island smolt index numbers seem to be dropping, indicating that the run is winding down. We are in fish spill mode.
- F. **NNI Funded Projects**
 - 1. **2016 Real Time Research / Oregon State university – “Evaluation of Caspian Tern Management to Reduce Predation on ESA-Listed Salmonids in the Columbia Plateau Region” - (C. Dotson)** – Ongoing. Need to wait until August before interrogating some of the areas for tags, waiting for the last of the birds to leave the areas. It will be late November/December before the report comes out.
 - 2. **Upper Columbia Fish Screen Monitoring Program Phase I - II Contract Extension – (J. Korth)** – Ongoing
 - 3. **Mid-Columbia River Intake Screen and Diversion Assessment (2016-17) – (T. Dresser)** – Ongoing
 - 4. **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II – (J. Korth)** – Ongoing
 - 5. **Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) Instream Flow Improvement Project (T. Dresser)** – Ongoing
 - 6. **AgriLaser – Autonomic (Green Laser) for Caspian Tern Deterrent (C. Dotson)** – Nothing new to report.

XI. **Committee Reports (D. Rohr)** – No new reports sent out.

XII. **Quarterly NNI and Habitat Funds Report – 1st Quarter, 2016 (D. Rohr)** – Nothing new at this time.

XIII. **Next Meeting** – August 24, 2016, SeaTac Radisson Hotel, 9:00 am; Reminder of moving PRCC Meetings to Wenatchee beginning in October.

Action Items from July 27, 2016 PRCC Meeting:

1. **Meeting Minutes Approval June 22, 2016 (D. Rohr)** – The June 22, 2016 minutes were approved subject to Truscott and Skiles' approval which Rohr will get via email.
2. **NNI Funding Proposal – “Predator Fish Recruitment Reduction” (B. Rose)** – Based on a memo dated June 20, 2016 there are 4 questions that would be worked on for the \$10,000. Rohr is to resend Geoff McMichael's 4 question memo out to the PRCC.
3. **Discussion: NNI Funding Proposal – “Factors Influencing the Survival of Juvenile Spring Chinook Salmon in Lake Wenatchee, WA”, Andrew Murdoch, WDFW (J. Korth)** – Rohr will talk with Skiles about this proposal.
4. **ACTION ITEM: Close of Comment for Draft 2015 Steelhead / Sockeye Survival Study Report (C. Dotson, D. Rohr)** – Truscott and Dotson to work offline regarding these questions and comments, and Dotson to send another draft version out with changes highlighted for all PRCC members to view.
5. **ACTION ITEM: SOA 2016-04, Decoupling Sub-yearling from Steelhead Performance Standard and Linking to Yearling Chinook for Purpose of Calculating NNI Funding** - All PRCC members will review and come to the August meeting prepared to discuss this SOA in detail.