



Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

FINAL APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

1:00 pm

Microsoft Teams

PRCC Representatives

Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS
Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN
Chad Jackson, P. Verhey (Alt) WDFW
Curt Dotson, Peter Graf (Alt), GCPUD
Denny Rohr, D. Rohr & Assoc, Facilitator

Jim Craig, USFWS
Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (alt), CCT
Tom Skiles, CTUIR
Erin Harris, Admin Ass't, GPUD

PRCC Meeting Attendees

Curt Dotson, GPUD
Keely Murdoch, YN
Chad Jackson, WDFW
Tom Skiles, CTUIR
Scott Carlon, NMFS
Talmadge Oxford, BOR

Peter Graf, GPUD
Denny Rohr, D. Rohr & Assoc, Facilitator
Erin Harris, GPUD
Jim Craig, USFWS
Kirk Truscott, CCT

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- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Denny Rohr welcomed everyone and introduced Talmadge Oxford, new BOR Area Manager for the Columbia-Cascades Area Office. Rohr asked each committee member to provide self-introductions with a brief description of their background included.

 - II. **Talmadge Oxford, the new BOR Area Manager for the Columbia-Cascades Area Office in Interior Region 9: Columbia Pacific Northwest - USACE to discuss avian predation activities in the Columbia Plateau Region, particularly the activities taking place on Goose Island** - Curt Dotson asked Talmadge Oxford to share the organizational structure with a focus on staff who are in charge of Goose Island work and how Talmadge fits into the position? Talmadge Oxford shared that he has worked with Mark Maynard since March

and is not familiar with the regional stance. He said he will get an answer to the committee. Curt Dotson shared a brief history that the USACE Walla-Walla District was working on the Columbia Plateau and the Portland District was working on avian issues on the lower Columbia River. The USACE and other stakeholders in the region worked on a management plan (IAPMP) for the Columbia Plateau Region. The management plan included a lot of work from consulting firms and stake holders to obtain data resulting from the work being done with avian colonies on different islands and their dissuasion plans. Goose Island and Crescent Island both had large nesting colonies of water birds, with Caspian terns being the primary predatory bird of interest. He shared that he was the go-to person between the BOR and PRCC committee. Tom Skiles added over the last 15-20 years the State, Feds and Tribes have spent millions of dollars that provides us with important information regarding the impacts of avian predation on the out-migrating salmonid populations. We know the group of birds, their locations, what they eat and their environmental factors, and we have done predation modeling. This is an extremely robust data set obtained with the monies we have spent to characterize and chronicle the problem. The tribes want to make a switch from research and monitoring to active management to create some change. Tom Skiles said he will share all this information with Talmadge Oxford. Kirk Truscott also stated the interest is in reducing the predation levels to an acceptable level, and he is looking forward to having a discussion on what the BOR expectations are to ensure sufficient management to minimize the avian predation impacts to the Priest Rapids Project. Scott Carlon agreed with these excellent summaries and shared the efforts to move the colonies to a different location. Scott also shared that the BOR has an egg-take permit, but we are concerned that dissuasion is not enough. Scott thanked Talmadge Oxford for taking in all the information. Keeley Murdoch shared she looks forward to having continued dialog in the future. Talmadge Oxford shared he will learn more about what the details of the BOR responsibilities are in the region regarding avian predation from Scott Hoefler, BOR Environmental Services Manager, Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region, on Thursday when they meet, and he plans to share that information with committee members in the future. Denny Rohr stated that he and Talmadge Oxford have discussed having a special meeting of the BOR and PRCC to discuss this subject in more depth. Accordingly, Rohr will continue to work on the scheduling of this special meeting. **Action: Denny Rohr will follow up with Talmadge Oxford for further update on this topic and scheduling of a special meeting.**

III. Agenda Review – No additions were made to the agenda.

IV. Meeting Minutes

A. September 22, 2020 – Approved

V. Review of Actions Items from September 22, 2020 Webinar Conference –

1. ACTION: 91% Combined Survival Estimates for Covered Species. Curt/Denny to send out reports to committee members and more discussion will take place at the next meeting. – **To be discussed during today’s meeting.**

2. Avian Predation on ESA-listed Juvenile Salmonids on the Mid-Columbia River, 2020, Real Time Research. ACTION: Curt Dotson will send the contract expiration date to Denny Rohr for distribution. -**Completed.**

VI. UPDATE - Barkley Irrigation Co Permanent Point of Diversion, Completing Implementation of the Permanent Solution -No new update. PRCC Habitat SC are still considering the land purchase option. **Action: Denny Rohr will keep committee advised.**

VII. UPDATE – 2020 FCRPS BiOp and Avian Predation Activities – Denny Rohr reminded committee members that this was talked about in last month’s meeting and today it was discussed with Talmadge Oxford. Denny Rohr also stated these decisions are up to committee members if they agree to a special meeting. Accordingly, after further discussion, committee members agreed to move forward with a special meeting with the BOR as discussed above in agenda item II. **Action: Denny Rohr will work on scheduling a special meeting with the BOR.**

VIII. Lower Columbia River Sea Lion Activities

A. Additional update information from last meeting – Tom Skiles looked further into what the Tribes have been doing with sea lion activities on the lower Columbia River. Tom Skiles reported he spoke with the CRITFC staff member who oversees sea lion removal work effort about the 5 year take permit that allows for taking up to 540 California sea lions and 176 stellar sea lions. Tom was told that Covid-19 and this year’s fire season created many delays and that the team did euthanized 3 small sea lions. Further, due to the late start, they will be working through November and should get 2-3 more sealions euthanized. They had hoped to create “shock and awe” dissuasion. Chad Jackson reported he is working on getting an update from WDFW staff on their work effort and plans moving forward. Scott Carlon asked if the plan is to trap the sea lions and then later euthanize them? Tom Skiles shared they trap and transport to an offsite location where the euthanizing is done in multiple stages with multiple injections that takes about 3 hours. The sea lions are large and require 8 people and an entire day to work through the process. Peter Graf asked if this all takes place near Bonneville or if it goes up the Willamette River also? Tom Skiles shared it is at both locations and they get euthanized at the same location. Denny Rohr commented he has learned there is several hours safety training required that staff working with the team must take as the sea lions can be 9-12 feet long and up to 2500 pounds in weight. Denny Rohr also stated he has been told by tribal staff members that hanging them out after they euthanize them also does work for dissuasion. All agreed to continue monitoring this activity going forward.

IX. 91% Combined Survival Estimates for Covered Species.

Tom Skiles shared he hoped everyone took the time to read the combined survival estimates report that was distributed by Denny Rohr. Tom Skiles and Keely Murdoch met with Fish Passage Center (FPC) staff to discuss the report and ask for their review. The fish passage center stated that their biggest concern was with confidence intervals and sample size. Tom went on to share that the FPC raised the concern of inter-annual variation due to small sample sizes in some years. Tom stated that the data presented can have large implications for achieving NNI therefore certainty in the data is critical. Tom stated that the FPC discussed using hatchery fish as a method to increase sample size. As the memo discusses, the adult survival may be high but there is concern with error and certainty particularly in years with low sample sizes. Peter Graf thanked Tom and Keely for sharing the analysis ahead of this meeting and happy the data was checked and confirmed. Peter continued that he believed the FPC memo identified three issues - data aggregation, sample size, and life-cycle analyses. Peter shared PowerPoint slides to further discuss those issues.

On aggregation Peter stated that Grant provided two analysis, first was a simple accounting of all PIT-tagged fish that have passed through the PR Project and their conversion upstream. This was an aggregation of all data available and in the early years the sample size was small. The goal was to use all data available. Grant PUD also had PNNL do a CJS survival analysis to Rock Island. This analysis included more fish because it estimated detection efficiency at Rock Island and therefore included fish from the Wenatchee Basin. This PNNL analysis used a weighted average where the weighted was based on sample size. Using the PNNL model the sample size doubles or more. Peter stated that using a multi-year average is consistent with the way we calculate survival studies. The FPC memo looked only at the initial DART analysis which did have smaller sample size, but they did not discuss the PNNL analysis that included larger samples and reported standard errors. Peter stated that we did not include hatchery fish due to concerns with harvest and straying, which is consistent with how conversion rates are estimated. For summer Chinook and sockeye, a meaningful number of fish are harvested. Peter shared he did calculate the survival of hatchery spring Chinook through the project, which was slightly higher than wild spring Chinook. Peter then shared slides showing estimates of adult survival calculated by other entities including the UCSRB, NOAA, the FPC, and WDFW. Peter stated that they all match Grant's and PNNL's estimate and in the case of the FPC life cycle model estimate passage through the Priest Rapids Project, is the highest estimate in the Columbia Basin. Tom Skiles shared that the FPC put in their memo that they do believe the conversions are quite high and consistent with what they see in the Snake River Basin. Peter shared his confidence is that the data provides the same high results year after year. Tom Skiles went on to say that it is difficult to have confidence within each year when there are small samples but by looking at the aggregation you can develop that kind of confidence. Keely added the concept of using a conversion rate for survival is ok and the concept of using the PNNL report is a better way to go and she asked for a write up of the PNNL report besides just the data tables. Peter stated that the PNNL report was distributed to the committee after last meeting. Keely asked about the sample size, if it represents the run-at-large to the upper

Columbia, not sure how many fish are required to represent the run-at-large, and this is where she feels hatchery fish need to come in. The settlement agreement with NNI are blind to whether these fish are wild or hatchery with the survival rate applying to the entire run. Keely also shared concerns with the identification on what the coordinating committees roll is, she believes the committee should have oversight on the equivalence of adult survival study in terms of methods and results along the same lines as done with juvenile studies. Keely would like discussion on what are the right fish and sample sizes to use in studies. Another concern Keely shared has to do with the language in the settlement agreement, understanding how the adult and juvenile rates interact. Keely shared when reading the performance standards, Action 1 of Appendix A, it reads the 91% standard includes a 93% project level reservoir and juvenile performance standard, and reading these she believes the juveniles have to reach 93%, but she understands that others interpret the language differently. With full transparency the YN have requested a review of the settlement language from their legal counsel as the language is concerning to Keely. Curt Dotson asked if Keely's request to their attorneys is for the whole agreement or the one piece. Keely shared she will provide them the whole document and ask them about Article 1 as the standards are referred to in Article 1. Scott Carlon shared the language in the settlement agreement came from the 2004 BiOp and that the intent was always if you confidently measure adult survival, you can use that number in combination with your juvenile survival rate and that standard must be 91%. Scott stated as author of that paragraph, he guarantees the intent was if we can't measure adults, the standard is 93% for juveniles and if we can measure adults you can combine both to meet 91%. Keely stated that she was not a signer on the agreement but is a technical representative and that is why she asked for the legal review. She went on to say if this is a poorly written document that means we signed a poorly written document and what did we believe we were signing; she doesn't believe they were signing a poorly written document. Scott Carlon said one of the reasons we use so few fish in our juvenile estimates is because of the high detection efficacies using acoustic tags. Scott asked Peter, is one of the confidences we have is due to the high detection efficacies as adults move up in the system? Peter confirmed that yes, the detection efficiencies in the ladders are near 100% when using several ladders. Kirk Truscott shared he agrees with Keely's process concern and feels it would be better if went through a similar process, similar to a study design and results of juvenile survival studies, and had this occurred, we might not have some of these questions. He also thinks the calculated conversion rates are high and representative of the PIT-tagged fish of any given year. He went on to talk about juvenile fish that may not have been tagged because they are too small and if we are missing part of the run because of this tagging limitation. Peter Graf apologized if people feel this was a process error, because this data is already available, and he was just gathering the data and results and shared them with committee members. Tom Skiles doesn't understand why these fish aren't representative at the run-at-large, is it timing or size difference? Kirk said it's unlikely in most years for juvenile fish pit tagged out of the Wenatchee River would have been consistent with the run-at-large. Keely shared you are missing one set of life history strategy but getting another life history strategy and does

that mean it's not part of the run-at-large? Peter shared that when all the fish come back as adults two years later, they pass through the project during normal run timing and should be representative. Chad Jackson shared the state met and discussed this and arrived at many of the same technical concerns that have already been shared today, and Peter presented information that Chad will be looking at again. Chad Jackson shared they are a little unsure about the process and have some different understanding on the 91% and curious what the Yakama legal counsel will provide. Jim Craig shared he was comfortable with what Grant proposed and stated that it is fairly obvious that adult conversions at the dams here are near 100%. Jim gave kudos to Tom and Keely for digging deeper, and the question he has is, how does Grant move forward in presenting the statistical deficiencies. Tom Skiles asked if using Tumwater couldn't be used? Peter Graf shared the CJS model with PNNL uses Tumwater as an upstream detection site above Rock Island. Tom asked if Grant is proposing to use the DART method or PNNL method. Peter replied that Grant is comfortable with both, the DART analysis being simple, but because there is concern with sample size and error the PNNL model is probably more appropriate. Denny Rohr asked Tom Skiles about his path forward. Tom shared the inclusion of hatchery fish may be something to look at and the FPC also mentioned using SARs, but he does not believe now is a good time to discuss it. **Action: Denny Rohr** will follow up with committee members regarding continued discussion at the November meeting.

- X. **Affirmation of Approval for Extension to October 31, 2021 of NNI Contract 601-35H, 2020 Quincy Valley Tourism Association Fishing Derby** The extension to 2021 was affirmed.
- XI. **Potpourri** - Nothing additional added.

UPDATES

- XII. **Avian Predation Activities** – No additional updates.
- XIII. **FCRPS BiOp – Corps/BOR Avian Predation Management in Columbia Plateau Region** – No additional updates.
- XIV. **Review of Outstanding NNI Funded Projects**
 - A. **Continued Support for UC Fish Screen Program** -Denny Rohr shared Danny Didricksen will be at the December meeting. D. Rohr will call Danny Didricksen to let him know the date.
 - B. **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II** - No update.
 - C. **“Non-Native Predator Recruitment Reduction – Phase I”** - No update.
 - D. **“Northern Pike Removal in Lake Roosevelt”** - No update.

- E. **2020 Quincy Valley Tourism Association Northern Pikeminnow Fishing Derby (moved to 2021 due to Covid-19)** – No additional update. See agenda item X above.
- F. **Avian Predation on ESA-listed Juvenile Salmonids on the Mid-Columbia River, 2020, Real Time Research** – Curt Dotson shared that RTR continues to work on data analysis and report writing. Denny Rohr asked when the next report will be out? Curt Dotson said November or late as January.
- XV. **Committee Reports** – Denny Rohr shared these were distributed electronically to members.
- XVI. **NNI and Habitat Funds Report, Q2, 2020** – Q3 update is expected to be sent out soon.
- XVII. **Next Meeting** – Discussion and consideration of committee members regarding leaving the November meeting at Tuesday the 24th as normally scheduled and moving the December meeting from Tuesday the 22nd to Tuesday the 15th.
Approved.

Action Items from October 27, 2020 meeting

1. **BOR / PRCC Special Meeting** - Denny Rohr will follow up with Talmadge Oxford for further update on this topic and scheduling of a special meeting.
2. **91% Combined Survival Estimates for Covered Species** - Denny Rohr will follow up with committee members regarding continued discussion at the November meeting.
3. **Continued Support for UC Fish Screen Program** - Denny Rohr shared Danny Didricksen will be at the December meeting. Rohr will call Danny Didricksen to let him know the date.

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