



Grant County
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT
Excellence in Service and Leadership

**Priest Rapids Fish Forum
Conference Call**

**Wednesday, 3 February 2021
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.**

FINAL MINUTES

PRFF REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Lewis, USFWS
Ralph Lampman, Donella Miller, YN
TBD, Wanapum
Jason McLellan, Kirk Truscott, CCT
Mike Clement, Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Patrick Verhey, Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Breean Zimmerman, WDOE
Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Keith Hatch, BIA
Tom Skiles, CRITFC/CTUIR
Erin Harris, Grant PUD

ATTENDEES

RD Nelle, USFWS
Mike Clement, Grant PUD
Steve Lewis, USFWS
Jason McLellan, CCT
Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Ralph Lampman, YN
Patrick Verhey, WDFW
Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Monica Blanchard, WDFW
Erin Harris, Grant PUD

Action Items:

- Laura Heironimus will contact ODFW regarding their plans to capture and tag adult sturgeon downstream from McNary Dam in 2021.
- Mike Clement will discuss with Donella Miller the plan to use Upper Columbia larvae if the pandemic precludes the collection of broodstock in 2021. Mike will see if Donella is okay with using larvae as a backup and whether larvae can be reared at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery.
- Grant PUD will work on a plan for using Upper Columbia larvae if broodstock cannot be collected. Grant PUD will share the plan and timeline with Jason McLellan.
- Jason McLellan will contact managers to see if surplus sturgeon can be used in the Priest Rapids program and will see how long the hatcheries can hold the surplus fish.

- Tracy Hillman will set up a meeting/conference call with the PRFF, RRF, and ASWG following the first four weeks of adult lamprey trapping at Priest Rapids Dam. The purpose of the call is to determine if adults collected during the second four weeks of trapping will be translocated to sites upstream from Wells Dam or released at Kirby Billingsley Hydro Park.

I. **Welcome and Introductions** - Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the call and participants introduced themselves.

II. **Agenda Review** - Members reviewed and approved the February agenda.

III. **Approve December Meeting Notes** – Draft December Meeting Notes were reviewed and approved.

A. **Review Action Items from December Meeting**

1. Steve Lewis will provide an update on the Bull Trout Five-Year Status Review during the January 2021 Meeting. **Complete. Steve Lewis, RD Nelle, and Tracy Hillman provided an update during the February meeting.**

IV. **White Sturgeon**

A. **Update on Juvenile Rearing** – Mike Clement reported that Donella Miller could not participate in the meeting today. He reported that all juvenile sturgeon at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery are doing well and average about 1 fish/pound. He added that the mortality that Donella had observed previously has declined. He said he and Chris Mott have been communicating with Donella on a time to test (for autopolyploidy) and tag fish. They are still working to find a date to do this work.

Laura Heironimus asked what percentage of the fish on station have fin deformities. Chris Mott answered about 97% of the fish have deformed fins. He added that this is higher than last year. Laura noted that Columbia Basin Hatchery is also reporting a high percentage of fin deformity. Mike said fin deformity in past years has been about 30-60%. Laura asked what causes fin deformity. Jason McLellan responded it is likely a combination of things, but most likely related to rearing density and fish transitioning to feeding. If densities are high and food is limiting, the fish will nip each other's fins. He added that if the deformity is skeletal, the cause is most likely genetic. Mike noted that deformities at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery are not skeletal and are almost entirely fin deformities. A summary of percent fin deformity is available in the annual reports for review.

B. **2021 White Sturgeon Activities: Broodstock Collection, Spawning, and Rearing** – Mike Clement reported that Grant PUD is planning to collect broodstock downstream from McNary Dam this year. They intend to use 1-2 boats and the same number of staff as in the past (before 2020). He said Donella Miller has offered volunteers to help collect broodstock; Blue Leaf will process the fish. Mike noted that Chelan PUD will not collect broodstock this year as they have transitioned to larvae collection. Mike asked Laura what ODFW is planning to do in 2021. Laura shared that ODFW does not have the budget this year. Chris Mott reported that he spoke with ODFW and they have no funding for their work this year. Laura said she will contact ODFW to determine their final plans for 2021.

Tracy Hillman remarked that it is good that Grant PUD is planning to collect broodstock but asked what happens if the pandemic does not allow broodstock collection this year. He asked Jason McLellan whether there will be larvae collection even if the pandemic continues and whether there may be surplus larvae available in case Grant PUD cannot collect

broodstock this year. Jason responded that they were able to collect larvae last year during the pandemic and believes they will collect larvae again this year. Jason added that it is possible that they will have surplus larvae this year and noted that they currently have about 1,000 surplus larvae from the collection last year (~500 at the Colville Resident Fish Hatchery and ~500 at Sherman Creek Hatchery). Jason said the fish average about 60-80 grams per fish. Mike asked Jason how long hatchery managers can hold surplus fish at their facilities. Jason responded he will need to talk with the managers but thinks they can hold them for a while. Jason added that he will need to know soon if Grant PUD wants to retain these fish for the Priest Rapids program. Chris Mott said Grant PUD will determine their 2021 plan and timeline and share that with Jason as soon as they can.

Mike asked other members for their thoughts on broodstock collection and the possible use of wild larvae as a backup if broodstock cannot be collected this year. Laura Heironimus and Patrick Verhey indicated that larval collection would be the best option as a backup if broodstock cannot be collected this year. Mike reminded the Forum that Upper Columbia sturgeon (fish from Cranbrook) have been released into the Priest Rapids project area in the past. Steve Lewis agreed with WDFW and asked if Grant PUD plans to switch to larvae collection in the future. Mike responded that Grant PUD may propose that in the future, but they are not comfortable with making the change at this time. RD Nelle agreed with using Upper Columbia larvae as a backup. Ralph Lampman said he will defer to Donella. Mike said he will contact Donella and discuss this with her. Jason agreed with the approach and recommended that Grant PUD consider reserving surplus fish from both last year's collection and this year's (given the uncertainty associated with the number of surplus fish from the 2021 collection effort).

Mike thanked everyone for the discussion and said he will contact Donella and discuss the proposed plan with her. Jason will see if the surplus larvae can be used for the Priest Rapids program and how long the surplus fish can be held.

- C. **Update on 2020 White Sturgeon Annual Report** – Mike Clement said their consultant (Golder) finished a rough draft of the 2020 White Sturgeon Annual Report and it contains a lot of information. He added that the draft report will be sent to the PRFF next week for review. As a spoiler alert, Mike said they are finding that fish released mid- and lower reservoir tend to have higher survival rates than fish released at the upper end of the reservoir. Mike noted that Paul Grutter (Golder) will present monitoring and indexing results to the PRFF during the March meeting.
- D. **Other White Sturgeon Items** - None.

V. Pacific Lamprey Management Plan

- A. **Update on 2020 Pacific Lamprey Annual Report** – Mike Clement provided a brief update on the draft 2020 Pacific Lamprey Annual Report, including the revised organization of the report based on comments received last year. Tracy Hillman noted that the report was sent to the PRFF on 25 January and comments are due to Mike by 25 February 2021.
- B. **Adult Trapping in 2021** – Mike Clement reported that Grant PUD intends to conduct their adult lamprey trap and transport program in 2021. It will be the same as last year with adults collected during the first four weeks of trapping going to the Douglas PUD program and adults from the last four weeks of trapping being used for the Grant PUD program. Mike reminded the Forum that Grant PUD's program includes collecting adults at Priest Rapids Dam, transporting them upstream of Rock Island Dam, and releasing them at Kirby Billingsley Hydro Park. He said last year all adult lamprey (even those collected for the Grant PUD program) were released upstream from Wells Dam. This was based on a

decision made by the Aquatic Settlement Working Group (ASWG). RD Nelle asked if this is the plan again in 2021. Mike said this will likely occur in 2021 but will defer to members on the ASWG. Ralph Lampman responded that adult lamprey collected this year may be translocated to sites upstream from Wells Dam. He said the goal is to increase numbers of lamprey upstream from Wells Dam. The translocation goal is to release 500 adult lamprey per year upstream from Wells Dam.

Steve Lewis asked if there is justification for the release of all captured fish to sites upstream from Wells Dam. He said we need to be accountable for what happens to those fish. Tracy Hillman summarized the approved SOA, which requires Grant PUD to collect adult lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam and release them upstream from Rock Island Dam. What happens to the fish beyond that is outside the SOA; however, as long as Grant PUD transports the fish upstream from Rock Island Dam, they have met the requirements of the SOA. Tracy reminded the Forum that last year Chelan PUD, a member of the Rocky Reach Fish Forum (RRFF), objected to the translocation of all captured fish to sites upstream from Wells Dam. They, like USFWS, questioned whether some of those fish would enter and spawn in the Wenatchee and Entiat rivers. Chelan PUD also commented that transporting all fish upstream from Wells Dam confounds dam counts and conversion rates. To that end, the RRFF asked to be included in discussions regarding the translocation of all adult lamprey collected at Priest Rapids Dam to locations upstream from Wells Dam. Tracy said all three groups need to be included in discussions on what happens to adult lamprey under the Grant PUD program. Ralph suggested a meeting or conference call after the first four weeks of collection in 2021. Members agreed and directed Tracy to set up a meeting/call with all three groups after the first four weeks of trapping.

Monica Blanchard (WDFW) asked if there is a document that identifies where all the fish have been released each year. Ralph said there is a table in the Douglas PUD report that identifies release locations. Mike asked whether there is an effort to track or monitor the success of the translocation program upstream from Wells Dam. Ralph responded that they have been tracking translocation efforts through juvenile monitoring (electrofishing and rotary screw traps) and hopefully through eDNA, genetic, and pheromone sampling. They need funding for the eDNA and pheromone sampling.

- C. **Other Pacific Lamprey Items** – Ralph Lampman summarized the recent three-day (19-21 January) juvenile lamprey workshop organized by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). Ralph said several entities (local, state, federal, and tribal) participated in the workshop with the goal of discussing juvenile lamprey survival and behavior through the Federal Columbia River System. He noted that they discussed passage routes, run timing, injuries, fish condition, effects of spill, and other factors affecting juvenile passage. He said they identified objectives to address management questions and discussed available technology needed to monitor juveniles. Ralph indicated that they intend to start work at Lower Granite Dam using acoustic and PIT tags. He also said the group discussed how to monitor predation rates and discussed the use of eDNA and bar-coding techniques. They talked about wiring a second dam for detection of juveniles and setting up additional detection check points. Ralph said they would like to sync Columbia River studies with work in the Upper Columbia. Mike Clement added that the process includes the Corps drafting recommendations and sending those out for scientific review.

Tracy Hillman reported that the next Lamprey Info Exchange will be on 9 February 2021. He said the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative (PLCI) and the Lamprey Technical Workgroup will continue the 4th Annual Lamprey Information Exchange - 2021 Webinar Series with the second installation of this series, "[Lamprey Ecology & Ecosystem Services](#)". Details for this session can be found [here](#).

VI. **Bull Trout**

- A. **2020 Bull Trout Annual Report** – Mike Clement indicated that the draft 2020 Bull Trout Annual Report was sent to the PRFF for comments on 15 December 2020. Comments were due on 18 January 2021. The final report was submitted to FERC and the PRFF in late January. Mike noted that they observed three bull trout in the fishways in 2020.
- B. **Update on USFWS Five-Year Status Review** – Tracy Hillman shared that the USFWS is currently identifying and evaluating threats to bull trout in the core areas. The conference call scheduled last week was cancelled. The next call will be on 26 February from 9:00 am to noon. Members should contact Erin Britton Kuttel (erin_brittonkuttel@fws.gov) for more information.
- C. **Other Bull Trout Items** – None.

VII. **Next Meeting: 3 March 2021**