Priest Rapids Fish Forum Meeting

Wednesday, 4 December 2019
10:00 a.m. – 11:40 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

PRFF REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Lewis, USFWS	Patrick Verhey, Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Ralph Lampman, YN	Breean Zimmerman, WDOE
Pat Wyena, Wanapum	Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Kirk Truscott, Jason McLellan, CCT	Keith Hatch, BIA
Mike Clement, Chris Mott, Grant PUD	Tom Skiles, CRITFC/CTUIR
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator	Erin Harris, Grant PUD

ATTENDEES

Chad Jackson, WDFW	Donella Miller, YN (Via phone)
Mike Clement, Grant PUD	Steve Lewis, USFWS
Patrick Verhey, WDFW	Doris Squeochs, Wanapum (Via phone)
Chris Mott, Grant PUD	Paul Anders (Via phone)
Erin Harris, Grant PUD	Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Action Items:

- Donella Miller will check with UC Davis on their availability to screen juvenile sturgeon for 12N this spring.
- Chris Mott and Mike Clement will let the PRFF know if they intend to purchase a Coulter Counter to determine the occurrence of white sturgeon autopolyploidy.
- Chad Jackson will see if Laura Heironimus is available to help write the autopolyploidy guidance document.
- Donella Miller and Laura Heironimus will check with ODFW on collecting white sturgeon broodstock downstream from McNary Dam in 2020 and when the collection event is likely to occur.
- Chris Mott will coordinate with Jason McLellan on the use of the "new" sturgeon population model to inform future release numbers in the Priest Rapids Project Area.

I. Welcome and Introductions - Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone and participants introduced themselves.

II. Safety Briefing – Tracy Hillman provided a safety briefing for meeting participants.

III. Agenda Review – Members reviewed and approved the agenda with the addition of a bull trout update.

IV. Approve November Meeting Notes – Draft November Meeting Notes were approved with edits.

A. Action Items from November Meeting:

1. Donella Miller will check with UC Davis on their availability to screen juvenile sturgeon for 12N this spring. Ongoing.

2. Donella Miller will discuss with UC Davis the potential effects of releasing low numbers of 12N fish into the Priest Rapids Project Area (e.g., the number of 12N fish that will survive to breed, the survival to maturation of 10N fish produced from those matings, and any other results [modeling or otherwise] that would inform management decisions). Complete. As noted below, the PRFF agrees to only release 8N sturgeon into the Project Area. Therefore, there is no need to check with UC Davis on this action item.

3. Paul Anders will share the Management Plan for Spontaneous Autopolyploidy in Cultured White Sturgeon in the Lower Columbia and Snake River Impoundments and other related publications with the PRFF. Complete. The report was sent to the PRFF following the November meeting.

4. Chris Mott said he will coordinate with Jason McLellan on the use of the "new" sturgeon population model to inform future release numbers in the Priest Rapids Project Area. Ongoing. Chris said the model will be completed by August 2020; however, the model can be used early next year to evaluate future stocking levels in the Priest Rapids Project Area. The early version will not have all the bells and whistles as the final product but should be helpful in determining future stocking levels. The model is being developed in R.

V. White Sturgeon Management Plan

A. Update on Juvenile Sturgeon Rearing – Donella reported that she sampled juvenile sturgeon on 2 December. At that time, fish averaged 9.93 fish per pound, which is much greater than estimates made in November (19.22 fish per pound). Donella said the difference in size is in part due to culling in November. Although they do not cull based solely on size, they do remove any unhealthy fish, which tend to be smaller than the rest. She added that the fish are doing well.

B. Guidance on Releasing Autopolyploidy Sturgeon into the Priest Rapids Project Area – Members present indicated that no autopolyploidy (12N) sturgeon will be released into the project area. Tracy Hillman referred to an email from Jason McLellan, who was unable to attend the meeting today, noting that the CCT do not want any 12N sturgeon released into the project area. Thus, the PRFF will move forward with the understanding that no 12N sturgeon will be released into the Priest Rapids Project Area in 2020 or in the future.

Given the decision to release no 12N sturgeon into the project area, members present discussed the need for a guidance document that explains the process by which the PRFF and hatchery managers will prevent the future release of 12N fish into the project area. Tracy shared the following outline for the guidance document that he prepared under the direction of the Rocky Reach Fish Forum (RRFF). Parentheticals were added during the meeting.

1. Introduction

    a. What is autopolyploidy? (*Described in the 2019 CRITFC document and other literature*)
    b. What level of autopolyploidy occurs naturally? (*Unknown but assumed to be very low*)
    c. What are the short-term and long-term effects of autopolyploidy on populations? (*Described in the 2019 CRITFC document and other literature*)
    d. What is the purpose of this document? (*Describe methods to prevent the release of 12N sturgeon into the project area*)
2. Level of Risk
    a. What is an acceptable level of autopolyploidy in hatchery releases for supplementation programs? (*The PRFF agreed that no 12N sturgeon will be released into the project area*)
3. Guidelines from other Hatchery Programs
    a. What are the guidelines for dealing with autopolyploidy in other hatchery programs? (*Other sturgeon supplementation programs screen fish for 12N and release only 8N sturgeon*)
4. Methods for Minimizing Autopolyploidy
    a. What measures can be taken to minimize the occurrence of autopolyploidy? (*Described in the 2019 CRITFC document and more recent studies*)
5. Guidelines for Dealing with Autopolyploidy within Family Groups from Broodstock
    a. When should screening occur? (*Initial testing will occur as early as possible to document the incidence of 12N. If 12N is detected, additional screening of all fish will occur prior to release to ensure only 8N fish are stocked in the project area*)
    b. How many fish should be screened from each family group? (*Initial screening will follow the sample sizes provided by Andrea. If final screening is necessary, all fish will be tested prior to release*)
    c. What to do if family groups include autopolyploidy? (*Describe various scenarios and identify which ones are dealt with on a case-by-case basis*)
6. Guidelines for Dealing with Autopolyploidy in Wild Larvae Collections
    a. When should screening occur? (*Screening of all fish will occur before release to ensure only 8N fish are stocked in the project area*)
    b. How many fish should be screened? (*All fish will be screened prior to release*)
    c. What to do if autopolyploidy is present? (*Only 12N fish will be released*)
7. Conclusions
    a. Identify sources of uncertainty and information gaps
8. References

Members indicated that the outline is a good starting point and the entire report should not be more than 6-10 pages. Tracy indicated it would be good to include as background in the document the guidelines outlined in the current SOA that address genetic issues (i.e., release number per maternal cross). Members also suggested including guidance on various rearing scenarios. For example, guidelines may differ depending on whether maternal groups can be reared separately for only short periods of time versus groups that can be reared separately for longer periods of time. That is, because of rearing space limitations, juveniles rearing at Columbia Basin Hatchery need to be blended mid-way through the rearing period, while juveniles rearing at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery can be reared separately throughout the full rearing period. Guidelines for each of these scenarios will need to be established. Other issues may need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis (not described explicitly within the guidance document). For example, what

should be done with a single maternal group that has a high level of 12N (e.g., >60%) and the others have low or no 12N? Alternatively, what should be done if all maternal groups have high levels of 12N? These are scenarios that can be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Members noted that a guidance document will be useful to future new members, hatchery managers, and will serve as a damage control document. It will also help the PUDs better prepare their annual budgets for the sturgeon programs.

Members discussed who should write the guidance document. Tracy recommended not assigning writers until the RRFF reviews the outline. Depending on comments/suggestions from the RRFF, a single document can be written that addresses both the Grant PUD and Chelan PUD programs.

Chris Mott indicated that Grant PUD is currently looking into purchasing a Coulter Counter (equipment used to determine 12N). Chris said a good counter costs about $22,000 (not including training). He said if they elect to purchase a counter, they may have it in time to evaluate the juvenile sturgeon currently on station at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery. They are also looking into the cost of having other entities screen their fish (e.g., UC Davis, Kootenay, etc.). At this time, they have not made a decision on what they will do. They will let the PRFF know what they decide to do.

There was discussion about the possibility of setting up a regional testing center. That is, entities that need to screen juvenile sturgeon could jointly purchase a Coulter Counter and set up a regional screening station. This was recommended by Chelan PUD during the November RRFF meeting; however, at this time, Chelan PUD has not reached out to other entities (e.g., Grant PUD, Douglas PUD, CCT, YN, etc.). Grant PUD said they will also consider this idea but indicated there are legal/contracting issues, coordination issues, and additional staff training that must be evaluated. Donella noted that the YN will likely purchase a counter in the future.

Chad Jackson noted that a lot of information contained in the 2019 CRITFC Management Plan can be included in the guidance document. Paul Anders noted that there is also more recent information that can be included in the guidance document.

The PRFF will wait to see comments/edits from the RRFF before the PRFF assigns writing tasks.

C. Other White Sturgeon Items – None.

VI. Bull Trout

A. Off-Season Bull Trout Passage – Mike Clement said Grant PUD is performing fish counts specifically for bull trout within the operational fishways during the winter of 2019-2020 at Priest Rapids and Wanapum dams. This will exclude fishways dewatered for annual maintenance. He said they hired two new fish counters, who will work 1-2 days per week from December through March. Video monitoring is set up and collecting passage data.

VII. Northern Pike

A. Suppression Efforts in Lake Roosevelt – Tracy Hillman reported that Jason McLellan provided him with an email regarding northern pike monitoring in Rufus Woods. The email states that the CCT conducts eDNA monitoring and a year-long creel survey on Rufus Woods. The earliest detections of northern pike in Lake Roosevelt were from the recreational fishing creel survey. The CCT also has plans to conduct a reservoir-wide fish population survey in the near future. Tracy said Jason will provide more information during the next PRFF meeting.

VIII. Next Meeting: The next PRFF meeting will be on Wednesday, 5 February 2020 at the Grant PUD Natural Resources Office in Wenatchee, WA.