

## **Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) Meeting**

**In Person at Wanapum Hydro Office Building  
and Microsoft Teams  
Tuesday, August 26, 2025  
1:15 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.**

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **PRCC Representatives, Alternates, and Facilitation**

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|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Tom Dresser, Rod O'Connor (Alt),         | Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN     |
| Tim Taylor (Alt), GPUD                   | Tom Lorz, Pete McHugh (Alt), CRITFC         |
| Scott Carlon, NMFS                       | Clayton Buck, Wanapum                       |
| Bill Gale, USFWS                         | Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA, Facilitator   |
| Chad Jackson, Andrew Murdoch (Alt), WDFW | Kristi Geris, Anchor QEA, Technical Support |
| Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (Alt), CTCR |                                             |

#### **Meeting Attendees**

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|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA, Facilitator    | Rod O'Connor, GPUD |
| Karl Veggerby, Anchor QEA, Technical Support | Tim Taylor, GPUD   |
| Kirk Truscott, CTCR                          | Scott Carlon, NMFS |
| Pete McHugh, CRITFC                          | Bill Gale, USFWS   |
| Tom Dresser, GPUD                            | Keely Murdoch, YN  |

#### **Action Items**

- L. Rohrbach will work with T. Dresser to identify proposed dates for a PRCC Policy Committee meeting, including a timeline for materials preparation. *(This item is ongoing)*.
- Grant PUD will develop a first draft of talking points for the White River hatchery program assessment process for engaging with the public. *(This item is ongoing)*.
- Grant PUD will inquire internally with Public Affairs about obtaining assistance with developing a community outreach plan for the White River hatchery program assessment process. *(This item is ongoing)*.
- PRCC representatives will consider consistency of the guiding principles with the Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement (SSSA) in the Conceptual

Approach to Evaluating Survival Study Outcomes (Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document) and will prepare for additional discussion on mitigation-related guiding principles (Nos. 4 to 7) during the PRCC September 23, 2025, meeting.

- PRCC representatives contributing edits to the Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document will include citations for specific SSSA sections. (*This item is ongoing*).
- PRCC representatives will consider modifications, if any, needed to approve the draft statement of agreement (SOA) *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates* for discussion during the PRCC September 23, 2025, meeting.
- Grant PUD will inquire with Real Time Research (RTR) about an interim update on the 2025 RTR Avian Predation Study, Objective 4.1. (*This item is ongoing*).

### **Review Items**

- A draft Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on May 27. PRCC live edits and comments from the July 22 and August 26 meetings were distributed on September 2.
- The draft SOA, *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates*, was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on July 18.

### **Decisions and Approvals**

- None.

#### **I. Subyearling Workshop Recap (Joint Session 8 with Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee)**

The PRCC and Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee (HCP-CC) convened Joint Session 8 to discuss the 2024 Subyearling Chinook Salmon Workshop (see separate joint session minutes).

#### **II. Welcome, Announcements, Agenda Review, and Meeting Minutes Approval**

L. Rohrbach welcomed the PRCC and reviewed the agenda. No additions or changes were requested by PRCC members, and the agenda was approved by all parties in attendance.

The draft July 22 PRCC meeting minutes were distributed by K. Geris, with revisions submitted by the Yakama Nation, on August 19. One additional edit was made to the notes during the meeting. The minutes were provisionally approved by members who attended that meeting. B. Gale approved via email immediately following the meeting.

### III. Actions Items Review

Action items from the PRCC July 22 meeting and follow-up discussions were as follows  
(*Note: Italicized text corresponds to agenda items from the July 22 meeting.*):

- *L. Rohrbach will work with T. Dresser to identify proposed dates for a PRCC Policy Committee meeting, including a timeline for materials preparation.*  
This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will develop a first draft of talking points for the White River hatchery program assessment process for engaging with the public.*  
This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will inquire internally with Public Affairs about obtaining assistance with developing a community outreach plan for the White River hatchery program assessment process.*  
T. Dresser said he has begun working with Grant PUD's internal affairs team. The PRCC will be asked to work through some questions at the next meeting and provide feedback on whether the appropriate stakeholder groups have been captured in the document. A draft of this material will be sent around before the next PRCC meeting. This item is ongoing.
- *PRCC representatives will consider consistency of the guiding principles with the SSSA in the Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document and will prepare for additional discussion on mitigation-related guiding principles (Nos. 4 to 7) during the PRCC August 26, 2025, meeting.*  
The PRCC discussed this topic further in today's meeting. This will be a recurring item on the agenda for future meetings. L. Rohrbach will reach out to members for specific agenda items within the agreement that need to be discussed. This item is ongoing.
- *PRCC representatives contributing edits to the Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document will include citations for specific SSSA sections.*  
This item is ongoing.
- *PRCC representatives will consider modifications, if any, needed to approve the draft SOA Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates for discussion during the PRCC August 26, 2025, meeting.*  
This item will be discussed in today's meeting. Discussions will continue among PRCC representatives who also represent the Joint Fisheries Parties (JFP), between PRCC meetings. This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will notify the PRCC of the end of juvenile spill and transition to adult spill conditions.*

T. Dresser updated the PRCC that juvenile spill ended when 97% of juvenile outmigrants passed Wanapum Dam on August 1, 2025. This is a few weeks earlier than usual. This item is complete.

- *Grant PUD will inquire with RTR about an interim update on the 2025 RTR Avian Predation Study, Objective 4.1.*

A project update will be provided at the next PRCC meeting. This item is ongoing.

#### **IV. 2026 Smolt Survival Study Updates**

T. Dresser said there are two helicopter companies interested in pursuing this project who recently participated in a mandatory site walk as part of the bidding process. The mandatory site walk is obligatory to be able to bid on the project; at least two qualified contractors that were expected to bid on the project were unavailable for the site walk due to wildfire duties. The PUD will be reviewing project bids on August 27, 2025. More updates will be shared in future meetings.

R. O'Connor said Rebecca Buchanan has developed the statistical plan for the 2026 yearling survival study. He discussed the consequence if a dead fish from one of the dead fish releases were detected on an array downstream of one of the dams. It is unlikely this would be an issue, but they planned what would happen if it were an issue. The result of a dead fish detection would be an increased bias in the survival estimate, resulting in reduced precision.

#### **V. Conceptual Approach to Evaluating Survival Study Outcomes**

PRCC representatives will consider consistency of the guiding principles with the SSSA in the Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document and prepare for additional discussion on mitigation-related guiding principles (Nos. 4 to 7). PRCC representatives contributing edits to the Path Forward – Conceptual Discussion Document will include citations for specific SSSA sections.

L. Rohrbach recapped the progress made in last month's meeting to identify steps that would be undertaken to be able to accept a survival study result. This month, the PRCC was asked to focus on whether use of the No Net Impact (NNI) Fund should continue and what forms of mitigation should be considered if juveniles performance standards are not met.

Regarding NNI funds, there was consensus to use of funds to improve survival first to address a survival shortfall as a stop-gap measure while measures are undertaken to improve survival. The purpose of the NNI Fund is not to use those funds to address project survival issues that are under Grant PUD's control (e.g., predator control and removal), which they are obligated to address separately, as defined in the SSSA. Use

of the NNI Fund has continued longer than was conceptualized at the time the SSSA was signed.

K. Murdoch said a next step will be to refine goals and methods for studying travel time and behavior. Study objectives must be clearly identified. One study question is whether behavior changes when higher temperatures begin.

S. Carlon said, regarding performance standards, he does not view the NNI contribution as alternative mitigation. Those standards need to be met.

K. Murdoch said she is confused about whether the PRCC is talking about temporary or permanent mitigation. Achieving the standard is not optional. It is confusing why alternate mitigation would be needed. If Grant PUD wanted to have a different form of mitigation, that would have to be a policy-level discussion; that cannot be authorized through this committee. The SSSA for non-listed species allows the PRCC to decide on alternate mitigation if it cannot realistically achieve the goal. Agreeing to some other type of mitigation for listed species does deviate from the SSSA, because the only temporary mitigation identified to mitigate for the biological consequences of the shortfall is the NNI fund.

The source of this conceptual question at this time is if the NNI Fund is closed for contributions because standards are met for a given species, but then survival standards are not met in the future, is the NNI Fund still a tool in the toolbox? That is not spelled out in the SSSA, and Grant PUD is not supportive of reopening an NNI Fund if a species does not meet standards in the future. K. Murdoch said the SSSA seems to assume that once the standards are met, they are maintained. It does not envision a situation where standards are achieved but not maintained. What are the tools in the toolbox to re-achieve standards? In the SSSA, the only near-term mitigation they point to is the NNI Fund. When it comes to habitat mitigation, would Grant PUD be willing to put more money into a habitat fund? How is that different than the NNI Fund?

T. Dresser said the language is clear that if performance standards are met for a species, funding is terminated for that species for the remaining term of the SSSA. Grant PUD is also not supportive of developing and/or reinitiating an NNI Fund if standards are not met in the future; therefore, some other mitigation options may need to be defined to understand what the tools in the toolbox are if spring Chinook Salmon do not meet standards in the upcoming survival study, for example. If standards for listed species cannot be achieved, there are no alternative mitigation measures proposed beyond those outlined in the SSSA. If they are unable to achieve standards, Grant PUD would have to reconsult with the National Marine Fisheries Service, which could ultimately lead to a different mix of mitigation. But standards should be achievable for listed species.

K. Murdoch said, if the PRCC ends up in a situation where they have to re-achieve the standard, the NNI Fund seems like the mechanism to do that. The NNI Fund is for mitigation shortfalls. It is meant to provide some temporary mitigation while Grant PUD works toward achieving the survival standards; it is not meant to be the vehicle to achieve the standards—i.e., it is not intended to fix the problem itself.

One perspective is that the NNI Fund needs to be used to improve survival. The goal should be to put money into projects on the ground to try to improve survival in order to directly reduce mortality rather than try to mitigate for it.

T. Dresser said, if we look back over the years at what the driving contributor to the NNI Fund has been, it is probably Sockeye Salmon and steelhead. The intent from Grant PUD is that if there is still money in the NNI Fund after survival standards are met, then that fund is retained, and that is the money the PRCC uses if the shortfall comes up again.

P. McHugh said that, thinking back to the agreement, there were some clear assumptions about NNI. He said the PRCC needs to answer the question, when does undefined additional mitigation in lieu of achieving standards veer outside of the extinction risk analysis assumptions that underly the Biological Opinion? Input from NOAA may ultimately be needed on this.

K. Murdoch said the subsequent bullets in the draft SOA language are contingent on whether the PRCC has an agreement on additional mitigation, which they do not.

K. Murdoch sees it as a subbullet to No. 5.

This topic will require additional discussion; it will be retained on the agenda for subsequent meetings. L. Rohrbach will reach out to members for specific agenda items within the agreement.

Kirk Truscott said what he is hearing is more flexibility than during our previous discussion, and there is openness to consider a suite of options. However, the group would need to see a proposal to weigh in on a specific situation. We need to have a clearer roadmap to work off, not just for ourselves but our successors. Something beyond meeting notes will be needed to discuss this. P. McHugh agreed that concrete examples or sideboards would be helpful.

## **VI. Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates**

L. Rohrbach noted there is agreement among the PRCC that linking survival standards of these two species together does not really make sense, because they have very different migration behaviors and, as discussed last month, are affected by different survival challenges during migration through the project areas. However, there remains

a data gap about subyearlings' survival through the system. In July, the PRCC discussed perspectives on whether the current survival standard and mitigation rate for subyearlings is adequate.

K. Murdoch said the JFP met yesterday to discuss what revisions or additions could be made to this SOA so it could be agreed to. Not all members were available to meet, so they would like to continue their discussions outside of the PRCC, and there is not a concrete proposal that can be put forward today. The subset of the JFP that met yesterday can share the concepts the PRCC has been discussing and initial thoughts of them. While it may not make perfect sense to have them coupled, the PRCC also has not been able to find a better solution through past discussions that lasted many months. If it is decided to move forward with the current SOA structure that Grant PUD is proposing, the JFP discussed including a 5-year sunset period, which would accomplish the following: 1) provide Grant PUD some certainty on an end-date for contributing to the NNI Fund (due to assumed poorer survival of subyearlings); and 2) solidify a commitment to implement subyearling behavior study within the project area. A sunset clause would allow the group to finish their studies and get through this initial period. K. Murdoch continued that there is interest in studying subyearling Chinook Salmon behavior through Grant PUD's project reach. There might be an opportunity to piggyback on yearling survival studies because there will already be receivers in the water for the survival studies that could be used.

L. Rohrbach said its understood that 5 years will not be enough time to learn all the PRCC needs to about subyearling Chinook Salmon survival.

K. Murdoch agreed, but said that this 5-year sunset idea helps hold things steady while the group studies survival, and it gives Grant PUD some time to retest yearling survival, if necessary, and potentially re-achieve the standard. This allows Grant PUD to get through what could be a bumpy period before the SOA expires. This also allows work to be done to fill in data gaps around subyearlings, for instance on piscine predation, and spell out the objectives and limitations of a survival study.

## **VII. 2025 Fish Passage Operations Report**

### ***A. Fish Ladder Inspections***

K. Murdoch did an inspection with Mike Clement (Grant PUD) last Monday; everything was normal. The pelicans have left the area.

### ***B. Fish Spill Updates***

T. Dresser updated the group when responding to action items, that juvenile fish spill ended and adult fish spill began on August 1, 2025.

### ***C. Adult Fish Counts for 2025 (April 15 to November 15)***

L. Rohrbach reviewed the adult fish counts through August 16, shown below.

| Project | Spring Chinook Salmon <sup>a</sup> |       | Summer Chinook Salmon <sup>b</sup> |       | Fall Chinook Salmon <sup>c</sup> |       | Sockeye Salmon | Coho Salmon | Steelhead |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
|         | Adults                             | Jacks | Adults                             | Jacks | Adults                           | Jacks |                |             |           |
| PRD     | 15,932                             | 842   | 38,314                             | 922   | 205                              | 73    | 141,229        | 6           | 2,851     |
| WAN     | 15,784                             | 1,470 | 41,687                             | 1,045 | 189                              | 55    | 138,952        | 1           | 2,683     |
| RIS     | 14,532                             | 1,017 | 39,868                             | 1,194 | 229                              | 25    | 139,476        | 0           | 1,934     |

Notes:

a: Chinook Salmon counted from April 15 to June 13 are considered spring Chinook Salmon.

b: Chinook Salmon counted from June 14 to August 13 are considered summer Chinook Salmon.

c: Chinook Salmon counted after August 14 are considered fall Chinook Salmon.

PRD = Priest Rapids; WAN = Wanapum; RIS = Rock Island

## **UPDATES**

### **VIII. Review of Outstanding NNI-Funded Projects**

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**

No updates were shared.

- **Northern Pike Removal**

No updates were shared.

- **WDFW PIT-Tag Detection Barge**

No updates were shared.

- **2025 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby**

No updates were shared.

- **2025 RTR Avian Predation Study**

T. Dresser said RTR's contract amendment to allow for additional analysis under Objective 4 was recently authorized. He contacted RTR to ask whether they would be interested in presenting preliminary results to the PRCC in the fall.

They responded with questions for the PRCC via email, forwarded on August 27.

L. Rohrbach requests, via email on September 5, that PRCC members respond via email to those questions and prepare to discuss a cutoff date for natural-origin outmigration timing in the next meeting.

### **IX. Subcommittee Updates**

K. Geris will continue to forward subcommittee notes and materials to PRCC members and alternates.

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum – met August 6, next meeting September 3.
- Habitat Subcommittee – met August 14, next meeting September 11.
- Fall Chinook Work Group – met May 6, next meeting October 7.
- Hatchery Subcommittee – will meet August 20 to 21, next meeting September 17 to 18.
  - White River Hatchery Program Update: None.

**X. SOAs Discussed in 2025**

| SOA number | Key Words                                 | Last Discussed | Status    |
|------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| 2025-XX    | Decoupling Summer<br>Subyearling Survival | July 22, 2025  | In Review |

**XI. Next Meetings**

The next PRCC meeting will be on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., to be held in person at the Wanapum Hydro Office Building in Beverly, Washington. There will be a virtual option. A joint session with the HCP-CC for a Subyearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Recap (Joint Session 9) will be held from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. (schedule TBD).

**XII. Attachments**

None.