

Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) Meeting

Microsoft Teams
 Tuesday, February 24, 2026
 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Conference Call Minutes

PRCC Representatives, Alternates, and Facilitation

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

Meeting Attendees

Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA, Facilitator	Tim Taylor, GPUD
Kristi Geris, Anchor QEA, Technical Support	Scott Carlon, NMFS
Pete McHugh, CRITFC for CTUIR	Chad Jackson, WDFW
Tom Dresser, GPUD	Andrew Murdoch, WDFW
Rod O'Connor, 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.)*
- The Joint Fisheries Parties (JFP) will review and respond to Grant PUD's revisions to the draft statement of agreement (SOA) *Survival Evaluations - Path Forward*. *(This item is ongoing.)*
- Grant PUD will verify whether dead fish releases were used in the studies presented in the ongoing review of past survival studies. *(This item is ongoing.)*
- Grant PUD will consider looking into route-specific survival data as they relate to avian predation presented in the ongoing review of past survival studies. *(This item is ongoing.)*

- Grant PUD will update the draft White River Spring Chinook Program Public Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement Guide with suggested responses to the talking points. (*This item is ongoing.*)
- Anchor QEA will reach out to K. Truscott and B. Gale (not in attendance) to obtain their approval of the PRCC January 27 meeting minutes. (*Note: K. Geris emailed a request for approval via email on February 25. B. Gale abstained via email on March 6, and K. Truscott approved via email on March 23, 2026.*)
- Grant PUD will contact Real Time Research (RTR) and ask about the following: 1) a 1-hour follow-up call with the PRCC on March 10; and 2) whether a recommendation from the PRCC for a preferred approach for estimating spring Chinook Salmon predation rates is needed before the PRCC discuss this again in their March 24, 2026, meeting.
- Anchor QEA will reach out to K. Truscott and B. Gale (not in attendance) to obtain their approval of the SOA *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates*. (*Note: K. Geris emailed a request for approval via email after the PRCC conference call on February 24. B. Gale approved via email on March 6, and K. Truscott approved via email on March 20, 2026.*)
- P. McHugh will provide a draft PRCC No Net Impact (NNI) Funds Specification Sheet for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission's (CRITFC's) wild Hanford subyearling passive integrated transponder (PIT)-tagging project for discussion, with Jeff Fryer (CRITFC Project Lead) in attendance, during next month's PRCC March 24, 2026, meeting.
- PRCC representatives will be prepared to vote on the PRCC NNI Funds Specification Sheet for Grant PUD's and Chelan PUD's project titled *Tag Effects Evaluation for Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon* during next month's PRCC March 24, 2026, meeting.¹

Review Items

- A draft *White River Spring Chinook Program Public Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement Guide* was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on September 22, 2025.
- The revised draft *SOA Survival Evaluations - Path Forward* was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on November 20, 2025.
- The *Juvenile Steelhead Survival Synthesis Priest Rapids Project (2008-2017)* was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on January 26, 2026, for the PRCC to

¹ Grant PUD and Chelan PUD will also request approval of their draft study plan during next month's joint subyearling session (Joint Session 15).

review and identify questions to use as a reference upon receiving the forthcoming 2026 survival study results.

- The draft *APPENDIX C: Predation and Survival of Passively Recaptured Steelhead and Yearling Chinook in the Middle Columbia River*² was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 20 and is available for review with edits and comments due to Grant PUD by March 13, 2026.
- The *Avian Predation in the Columbia River Basin: 2025 Draft Annual Report* was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 23 and is available for review with edits and comments due to Grant PUD by March 13, 2026.
- The draft report, *Calendar Year 2025 Activities Under Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project License (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [FERC] No. 2114)*, was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 26 and is available for a 30-day review with edits and comments due to Grant PUD by March 27, 2026.

Decisions and Approvals

- PRCC members present approved the *SOA Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates*, contingent on approval from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). (Note: USFWS and the CTCR approved via email on March 6 and March 20, respectively.)

I. Welcome, Announcements, Agenda Review, and Meeting Minutes Approval

L. Rohrbach welcomed the PRCC and reviewed the agenda. The agenda was approved by all members in attendance.

The draft January 27 PRCC conference call minutes were distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 10. Edits were received from P. McHugh. K. Geris also added distribution of action items and review items. The revised minutes were distributed on February 18. K. Murdoch provided one additional clarifying edit. The minutes were approved by members who attended that meeting. Anchor QEA will reach out to K. Truscott and B. Gale (not in attendance) to obtain their approval of the minutes. (Note: K. Geris emailed a request for approval via email on February 25. B. Gale abstained via email on March 6, 2026.)

² In fulfillment of RTR's 2025 Avian Predation Work, Subobjective 4.1, as approved by the PRCC on April 22, 2025, and for inclusion in RTR's 2025 Avian Predation Annual Report.

II. Actions Items Review

Action items from the PRCC January 27 conference call and follow-up discussions were as follows (*Note: Italicized text corresponds to agenda items from the January 27 conference call.*):

- *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.
- *The JFP will review and respond to Grant PUD's revisions to the draft SOA Survival Evaluations - Path Forward.*
This item is ongoing.
- *L. Rohrbach will send questions to RTR pertaining to whether the goals of Task 3.2.b RIS Yearling Chinook PIT tagging in their 2026 proposal can be achieved using passive detections at Rocky Reach Juvenile Bypass instead of tagging additional spring Chinook Salmon at Rock Island Dam. Responses will be discussed during the PRCC conference call on February 24.*
The PRCC's questions were sent to RTR on January 28, and RTR responses were distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 20, 2026. This will be discussed during today's conference call.
- *Grant PUD will review JFP edits to the revised draft SOA Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates for discussion during the PRCC conference call on February 24.*
A revised SOA for approval was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 19, 2026. This will be discussed during today's conference call.
- *Grant PUD will verify whether dead fish releases were used in the studies presented in the ongoing review of past survival studies.*
This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will consider looking into route-specific survival data as they relate to avian predation presented in the ongoing review of past survival studies.*
This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will update the draft White River Spring Chinook Program Public Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement Guide with suggested responses to the talking points.*
This item is ongoing.
- *Grant PUD will inquire about updating next year's annual Fish Mode Summary Memorandum to include minutes, hours, and date ranges when fish mode at Wanapum Dam operated below 11,800 cubic feet per second (11.8 kcfs).*
T. Dresser met with internal engineering staff and confirmed these data can be provided in the annual summary report. Anchor QEA will remind Grant PUD of this request this fall.

- *Grant PUD and other PRCC parties will review the USFWS and National Marine Fisheries Service Fishway Prescriptions requirements and processes related to recording adult counts of all species.*

L. Rohrbach recalled this is a desire to revisit the value of shad counts and understand the biological relevance of tracking shad at Wanapum and Priest Rapids dams. This is not about checking the regulatory requirements. S. Carlon said the fishway prescriptions just require fish counts and do not identify species. This requirement had more to do with changing from vertical count boards to video. L. Rohrbach suggested closing this action item, and she will coordinate with B. Gale to follow up on his recommendation to understand how to track shad in a meaningful way in the basin. S. Carlon and K. Murdoch agreed with this path forward.

III. RTR 2026 Avian Predation Work

The Task 3.2.b PRCC questions and RTR responses (Attachment A) were distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 20. The draft 2025 Avian Predation Annual Report, Appendix C, was distributed on February 20. The draft 2025 Avian Predation Annual Report was distributed on February 23. Edits and comments on the draft 2025 Avian Predation Annual Report and Appendix C are due to Grant PUD by March 13.

T. Taylor suggested that PRCC members review these documents and determine whether another check-in with RTR would be helpful or is needed. RTR is available for another check-in call on March 3, March 10, or March 17. Unfortunately, RTR is not available to attend the PRCC March 24 meeting.

L. Rohrbach asked when RTR needs to know whether tagging additional spring Chinook Salmon at Rock Island Dam (RIS) is moving forward. T. Dresser said RTR did not specify a date, but sooner than later because field work preparations, including hiring staff, are already underway and it is anticipated that due to the warm and dry winter conditions, fish movements in the basin could occur 1 month earlier than typical. That said, as discussed last month, while Grant PUD is already moving forward with contracting with RTR, if there are components that do not have PRCC consensus, these can be removed from the scope or adjusted after the fact. He re-emphasized what RTR said regarding tagging yearling Chinook Salmon as being a 1-year opportunity for the PRCC—and the entire region. He has heard in regional meetings several times that avian predation on yearlings is missing in the Upper Columbia River. He understands the concern with handling fish, but this is a unique opportunity.

K. Murdoch appreciates that the PRCC now has the draft 2025 Avian Predation Annual Report and Appendix C for review. For today, she suggested discussing the Task 3.2.b PRCC questions and RTR responses, considering a decision is needed on the scope of

work for this year, and she would like to share some thoughts on this document for consideration.

K. Murdoch clarified she is not saying no to a spring Chinook Salmon analysis; rather, the Yakama Nation (YN) is questioning what the better sample is to use to analyze the spring Chinook Salmon data. She found RTR's responses helpful; however, she does not agree with some of the characterizations about hatchery dominance being a result of biased estimates. There are documented data showing that spring Chinook Salmon upstream of the Rocky Reach Dam Juvenile Bypass (RRJ) are overwhelmingly of hatchery origin. These proportions are different at RIS, but these are still hatchery dominated. This hatchery dominance at RRJ is consistent with the run composition in the Upper Columbia River and it is not a flaw or bias of the PIT-tag detection dataset at RRJ.

K. Murdoch said there are many benefits of using passive detections at RRJ. For example, the following:

- Actively PIT tagging migrants of unknown origin at RIS introduces unnecessary unknowns. There can be coded wire tag (CWT) detection errors for identifying hatchery-origin fish, imperfect CWT retention, and spring Chinook Salmon cannot consistently be identified as hatchery origin because (if reared in acclimation sites) they do not have eroded fins as observed in steelhead. Given that spring Chinook Salmon are such a small component of the run, small errors can make a big difference.
- She understands the benefit of leveraging passive detections of PIT tags already deployed in actively migrating fish. She keeps hearing "1-year check-in," but she is unsure what a 1-year check-in will provide from a management perspective. In contrast, leveraging existing data with RRJ passive detections amounts to another data analysis at a lower cost and higher value and would allow RTR to make this an annual evaluation. This would create a dataset to compare changes in predation from year to year to help understand dissuasion activities effects on predation without tagging additional spring Chinook Salmon at RIS every year.
- Regarding differences in geographic scope, she is not aware of evidence showing elevated Caspian tern predation in the RIS pool. RTR's 2023 report included an analysis of passive detections of steelhead at RIS versus RRJ and how this translated into predation rates. This was non-conclusive. In some years there was higher predation at RIS and some at RRJ. There is already a commitment to tag steelhead at RIS, this dataset is already started. The data suggest that predation on steelhead at RIS versus RRJ is comparable. Therefore, observing a difference in predation based on passive detections at RRJ is way to gauge whether there is meaningful predation in the RIS pool. As a

comanager tasked with improving outcomes, she *does* want to understand whether there is meaningful predation at RIS; however, to date, this has not been observed. If RIS is not a predation hotspot, she does not see an issue with going to using passive detections at RRJ for these data. Steelhead have higher predation rates than Chinook Salmon, so if there is a difference in predation, this would be observed in steelhead.

L. Rohrbach suggested RTR's concern about misinterpreting results due to overrepresentation of hatchery fish is a question about correcting for bias in the data if using a convenience-sample approach. K. Murdoch believes the convenience-sample criticism is misplaced. She does not view RRJ as a convenience sample. She just listed several reasons why RRJ is a more important sample. RTR continues to assert RIS is a random sample of fish. At RIS, there is no ability to correct for bias, because these biases are not well understood. At RRJ, there is the ability to correct for bias, because it is clear where these fish are from. At RIS, the data show that less than 1% of spring Chinook Salmon choose the RIS bypass as a passage route. It involves volunteering up the gatewells with no guidance screens, there are project operations effects, and there may be temperature effects. One analysis appeared to show that the proportion of fish choosing this route increased over the duration of the run, so maybe some fish are not strong enough to take this route. There is unknown population bias. The trap efficiency is low. To say RIS is a random sample is scientifically unfounded.

L. Rohrbach clarified that RTR is using the term "convenience sample" as a statistical definition, not a criticism. T. Taylor explained that a convenience sample is related to the sample design, like stratified sampling and random sampling. A lot of this information is detailed in the report. He believes it will be more productive to first read the report, then have these conversations with RTR so everyone has a clear understanding, as opposed to developing perceptions of what their comments mean.

T. Taylor noted, in general, no matter what the sampling approach is, there will always be perceived bias to combat; the design just needs to be transparent and address this. When discussing what is representative or which methods to use to calculate a composition estimate, it is more about whether the methods were truly representative to begin with. He cautioned that just because an estimate is derived from certain methods, this does not mean it is a true representation of the composition. It is important to consider everything, as opposed to concluding one method is better than the other.

P. McHugh said whether a simulation study captures comparison and contrast accurately seems key. For example, if the simulation framework is supposed to be random but it is not, this could make the contrast not informative.

L. Rohrbach reiterated the question about the benefit of a 1-year check-in, that is, and asked for additional discussion on what this benefit is versus initiating a long-term dataset. Also, what about geography? What might be missed by going with one versus the other? K. Murdoch said the YN likes the idea of analyzing spring Chinook Salmon annually because this supports management decisions. She believes there is limited value in a 1-year check-in. RTR's response to the 1-year check-in describes value to support Grant PUD's survival study. If the value in the 1-year check-in is directly related to Grant PUD's survival study, then tagging should be implemented and funded as part of the survival study. L. Rohrbach recalled discussing this last month, Grant PUD described it as related to both predation and survival studies and acknowledged it is difficult to draw clean lines between the two studies.

Grant PUD will contact RTR and ask about the following: 1) a 1-hour follow-up call with the PRCC on March 10; and 2) whether a recommendation from the PRCC for a preferred approach for estimating spring Chinook Salmon predation rates is needed before the PRCC discuss this again in their March 24, 2026, meeting.

IV. DECISION: Decoupling Summer Subyearlings and Steelhead SOA

The revised draft SOA, *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates*, was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 19. One version showed tracked changes from last month and Grant PUD edits made between meetings. A clean version showed only the changes made by Grant PUD since the last meeting. The PRCC reviewed the clean version and provided live edits (Attachment B), which was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris after the conference call on February 24. Discussions were as follows.

Bullet No. 4

T. Dresser said these edits are based on what Grant PUD heard from the PRCC last month, which was that NNI funds will be used to partially or fully fund a pilot laboratory study. Additionally, the PRCC will consider using NNI funds for other evaluations deemed necessary. This is important to make clear for future PRCC members, 5 years from now, that other projects can be considered. This is what NNI funds were intended to do. NNI funds were designated to address and improve performance standards within the project area.

L. Rohrbach asked S. Carlon, as a longstanding member of the PRCC, whether he agrees with this interpretation of use for NNI funds. S. Carlon agreed the first priority of use is within the project area. Anything that follows is based on PRCC consensus.

K. Murdoch requested clarification about the intended meaning of "other evaluations". T. Dresser said he wanted to avoid identifying any particular studies in this SOA, but one example might be studying "what is an active migrant." He recalled that the Salmon

and Steelhead Settlement Agreement does not include this definition, and over the past years, a lot of different opinions have been expressed about what this is. Addressing active migrants may be an information gap the PRCC is missing. K. Murdoch said this is a good clarification. T. Dresser added that it would be disingenuous for Grant PUD to ask the PRCC to use NNI funds for a 3-year subyearling survival study; this would be on Grant PUD to fund. He believes there is language in this SOA that provides flexibility and will require more discussion in future years.

L. Rohrbach suggested adding “to fill information gaps” to clear up the vagueness in “other evaluations”. T. Dresser agreed with this edit.

K. Murdoch asked if the third sentence applies to both the first and second sentences. T. Dresser said yes. K. Murdoch said this is a good clarification.

Bullet No. 5

T. Dresser said this is the proposed language from the latest JFP version, accepted in full, with no additional edits.

Bullet No. 6

T. Dresser said this is the proposed language from the latest JFP version, accepted in full, with no additional edits. He noted that Grant PUD accepted the JFP edits that PRCC consensus is required for scope approval.

Decision

PRCC members present approved the SOA *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates*, contingent on approval from the CTCR and USFWS.

Anchor QEA will reach out to K. Truscott and B. Gale (not in attendance) to obtain their approval of this SOA. *(Note: K. Geris emailed a request for approval via email after the conference call on February 24, 2026.)*

(Note: USFWS and the CTCR approved via email on March 6 and March 20, respectively.)

V. Additional PIT Tagging of Hanford Fall Chinook – Potential Request for NNI Funding

L. Rohrbach recalled a PRCC request that, when being asked to approve funding requests, to be provided with an understanding of how much NNI funds are available before approving more projects.³ She shared on Microsoft Teams the Q4 2025 PRCC NNI Habitat Unencumbered Funds Report, which was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 19. In this report, she calculated an estimated Q1 2026 amount,

³ Discussed during the PRCC March 25, 2025, meeting.

minus the recently approved 2026 RTR Avian Predation Study and 2026 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby,⁴ as follows:

\$6,209,782.01
Less \$384,882 (2026 Avian Pred, Quincy Derby)

T. Dresser agreed this mostly captures through Q1 2026, but this total does not include the contribution that went into the NNI fund on February 15, which is about \$745,000.

P. McHugh introduced a potential upcoming request for NNI funds to support additional PIT tagging of wild fall Chinook Salmon in the Hanford Reach as a component of CRITFC's ongoing work. He said Jeff Fryer (CRITFC), along with other parties, have been CWT tagging and PIT tagging Hanford wild fall Chinook Salmon over the years. P. McHugh said J. Fryer approached him about whether the PRCC might support doubling the PIT tagging effort in 2026, considering the benefit to the ongoing reach-based survival analysis and getting more clarity on the uncertainty in the survival estimates for Hanford Reach fall Chinook Salmon by increasing the number of tags in the system. The request is to cover the additional tags to augment the existing effort, which is up to 10,000 PIT tags already, so this could get up to 20,000 PIT-tagged Hanford wild fish in the system. The last time these numbers were achieved was in 2007. Since then, there have been efforts of 5,000 to 10,000 PIT tags, but detection efficiency at McNary Dam has declined due to juvenile spill. The last year of any large release of PIT-tagged Hanford wild fish was the 2022 migration year. The total cost of the request for NNI Funds depends on the deliverables, which are still under discussion. In one version, just getting the tags out is the deliverable. J. Fryer is also contemplating a component for RTR to look at avian predation estimates for subyearlings. Staff time is another cost variable. The rough cost of just acquiring tags plus indirect costs is about \$50,000 to \$55,000 range. P. McHugh said if the PRCC is interested, he can provide a draft NNI Funds Specification Sheet ahead of the PRCC March 24 meeting and invite J. Fryer to the discussion. *(Note: J. Fryer later clarified that the last year of any large release of PIT-tagged Hanford wild fish was the 2024 migration year.)*

L. Rohrbach asked for clarification about the outstanding costs outside of the rough estimate. P. McHugh said the \$50,000 to \$55,000 does not include staff time, J. Fryer time, and possibly an RTR evaluation, which would be additional.

T. Dresser said Grant PUD is interested in hearing more from J. Fryer and is supportive of inviting him to the PRCC March 24 meeting. Grant PUD is interested in whether

⁴ Both NNI-funded projects were approved during the PRCC January 27, 2026, conference call.

J. Fryer has reached out to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for additional funding or the Wasco Fund if that is still available. Grant PUD is also interested in hearing more about the exact value of this effort. S. Carlon believes the Wasco Fund is still around.

P. McHugh asked whether this is in reference to Wasco County. S. Carlon said yes, there is a unit at The Dalles Dam, but he believes this fund is more associated with the unit at McNary Dam.

P. McHugh clarified that he is a neutral messenger as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation member on the PRCC, but this is a CRITFC project.

K. Murdoch said the YN is also interested in hearing more from J. Fryer about this project. She is interested in how this will benefit the reach-based survival analysis, what is he currently seeing in uncertainty in estimates, and what he would expect to get with extra tags. P. McHugh noted that J. Fryer has shared a lot of these data with the Fall Chinook Work Group.

P. McHugh will provide a draft PRCC NNI Funds Specification Sheet for CRITFC's wild Hanford subyearling PIT-tagging project for discussion, with J. Fryer (CRITFC Project Lead) in attendance, during next month's PRCC March 24, 2026, meeting.

VI. Subyearling Laboratory Evaluation NNI Funds Specification Sheet

L. Rohrbach shared on Microsoft Teams a PRCC NNI Funds Specification Sheet for Grant PUD's and Chelan PUD's project titled *Tag Effects Evaluation for Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon* (Attachment C), which was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 23. Grant PUD is requesting NNI funds in the amount of \$195,766.60, which is broken down in Attachment C. This is an even split across NNI funds, Chelan PUD, and Grant PUD.

R. O'Connor recalled reviewing a draft study plan last month, comments were received from the CTCR and the YN, and the plan is to address these comments during today's joint session, to follow the PRCC meeting. Grant PUD has been working with Chelan PUD, Spheros Environmental, and Abernathy Fish Technology Center to develop a budget with a commitment to implement in 2026. This budget covers the work as described in the draft study plan. Next steps are to have a discussion during today's joint session and work through comments. The hope is by the end of today, committee members and Grant PUD are comfortable with a path forward and can vote to approve a final study plan and this NNI funding request in March.

PRCC representatives will be prepared to vote on the PRCC NNI Funds Specification Sheet for Grant PUD's and Chelan PUD's project titled *Tag Effects Evaluation for*

Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon during next month's PRCC March 24, 2026, meeting.⁵

VII. 2026-2028 Smolt Survival Studies Preparations

R. O'Connor said Grant PUD has no new updates this month, and can provide an email update, if needed.

VIII. 2025 Fish Passage Operations Report

A. Fish Ladder Inspections

No updates were shared.

B. Fish Spill Updates

No updates were shared.

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

The following are final adult fish counts from April 15 through November 15:

Project	Spring Chinook Salmon ^a		Summer Chinook Salmon ^b		Fall Chinook Salmon ^c		Sockeye Salmon	Coho Salmon	Steelhead
	Adults	Jacks	Adults	Jacks	Adults	Jacks			
PRD	15,932	842	38,260	920	21,707	1,272	141,503	16,221	9,363
WAN	15,784	1,470	41,158	993	10,410	723	139,607	16,063	9,110
RIS	14,532	1,017	39,868	1,194	7,905	306	139,677	15,874	7,880

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**

The final 2025 Wenatchee River PIT Tag Antenna Barge Report was distributed to the PRCC by K. Geris on February 13, 2026.

- **2026 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby**

No updates were shared.

- **2026 RTR Avian Predation Study**

⁵ Grant PUD and Chelan PUD will also request approval of their draft study plan during next month's joint subyearling session (Joint Session 15).

Covered above.

IX. Subcommittee Updates

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

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum – met February 4, next meeting March 4.
- Habitat Subcommittee – met February 12, next meeting March 12.
- Fall Chinook Work Group – met October 7, next meeting April 30.
- Hatchery Subcommittee – met February 18 to 19, next meeting March 18 to 19.

X. SOAs Discussed in 2026

SOA number	Key Words	Last Discussed	Status
2026-01	Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival	February 24, 2026	Approved
2026-XX	Survival Evaluations - Path Forward	November 25, 2025	In Review

XI. Next Meetings

The next PRCC meeting will be on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., to be held in-person at the Confluence Technology Center in Wenatchee, Washington. A joint session with the Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee (HCP-CC) for a Subyearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Recap (Joint Session 15) will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (schedule TBD).

XII. Attachments

Attachment A – Task 3.2.b PRCC questions and RTR responses

Attachment B – Revised draft SOA, *Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates* (clean) – live edits

Attachment C – PRCC NNI Funds Specification Sheet for Grant PUD's and Chelan PUD's project titled *Tag Effects Evaluation for Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon*

XIII. Subyearling Workshop Recap (Joint Session 14 with Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee)

The PRCC and HCP-CC convened Joint Session 14 to discuss PUD updates on draft study plans (see separate joint session minutes).

From: Real Time Research, Inc.
To: Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee
RE: Responses to questions about tagging spring Chinook at RIS in 2026
Date: February 18, 2026

PRCC Questions

“To decide how to go forward with Task 3.2.b, the PRCC would like more information about whether the spring Chinook analysis can be done using passive PIT tag detections at Rocky Reach Juvenile Bypass (RRJ) instead of tagging additional spring Chinook at Rock Island Dam (RIS).

- The PRCC understands you are still finalizing the results of your analyses using the passive detections at RRJ and the Wenatchee Barge. Can these early results be shared with the PRCC in the next couple of weeks to help inform the PRCC whether it’s feasible to estimate survival and predation from the passive detections?

RTR Response: A draft report of the analysis has been submitted to the PRCC. In brief, results demonstrated that: 1) samples sizes of PIT-tagged smolts from RRJ were large enough to produce interpretable estimates of predation and survival, especially for hatchery fish, but sample sizes from the Wenatchee Barge (LWB) were often too small to generate reliable estimates; 2) the demographic makeup of fish passively detected at RRJ/LWB was largely skewed towards hatchery fish from specific hatcheries, which will bias estimates of predation and survival if these fish are not representative of the population at-large; 3) ways to improve models based on fish detected at RRJ/LWB includes re-weighting of the samples to better reflect actual population demographics, increase or augment tagging efforts using random sampling, and the tagging of more wild fish.

- What consequences would there be to the analysis of spring Chinook survival and predation if using passive detections as a starting point?

RTR Response: On potential advantage to using fish passively recaptured at RRJ/LWB are reduced handling and tagging effects that could bias estimates of predation and survival. Passive detections of spring Chinook and steelhead at RRJ/LWB, however, are further upstream than those that rely on fish detected/tagged at Rock Island Dam (RIS), fish that are currently being used as part of the Avian Predation Project. As such, results from RRJ/LWB would apply to a different group of tagged fish, at a different spatial scale (e.g., RRJ/LWB to McNary Dam) than that of RIS (RIS to McNary Dam). Fish passively detected at RRJ/LWB are also based on a convenience-sample, not a random sample, and as detailed in the analysis, using a convenience-sample significantly limits inferential capabilities (i.e., drawing conclusions about the population at large). Finally, sample sizes from the LWB are currently too small and limiting to represent fish from Wenatchee River in predation and survival analyses.

- The PRCC understands your earliest task is to ‘seed’ the islands with PIT tags. Do you need to confirm the spring Chinook study group sooner than later to move forward on seeding the islands?

RTR Response: The seeding of tags on bird colonies is not based on a specific group or species of PIT-tagged fish. As such, the decision to tag spring Chinook at RIS will not influence the seeding of PIT tags on bird colonies.

- Any other feedback on how selecting a different starting population for spring Chinook would influence the study implementation or potential outcomes is helpful.

RTR response: If managers are most interested in a specific stock or rear-type (e.g., wild) of spring Chinook, starting the model from a specific release site would allow for survival and predation of that group, which could be estimated without being masked by other, more abundantly tagged groups of fish. This is best achieved by tagging a random sample of fish at the release site. If managers are interested in the entire spring Chinook population, then the goal would be to have a starting sample with the same demographic make-up as the entire target population. To do this, managers may choose to 1) tag a random sample of fish from the ‘starting point’ or 2) determine what a representative sample looks like and re-weight a convenience sample of passively detected fish along all the identifiable and measurable demographic axes (tributary of origin, rear-type, migration timing, body size, etc.) to achieve an unbiased estimate for entire population. Each of these methods has varying benefits that are further explored in the draft analysis.

If requested and if the tagging of spring Chinook at RIS is approved in 2026, RTR can generate predation and survival estimates of spring Chinook and steelhead at both RRJ and RIS, providing a full suite of estimates and relative comparisons. Sample sizes at LWB, however, may not be adequate to generate reliable estimates of predation and survival in 2026.

Our proposal to tag spring Chinook at RIS in 2026 is intended to be a one-year “check-in” to quantify avian predation on spring Chinook in the Priest Rapid Project (which has not been done since 2016), tagging that would supplement or augment sample sizes of double-tagged (PIT, acoustic) spring Chinook that will be used in survival studies, fish that will be released into the tailrace of RIS in 2026. Although a sample size of 1,000 to 2,000 acoustic tagged spring Chinook in the Priest Rapids Project is sufficient to estimate survival (due to high detection probabilities at acoustic arrays), we will likely need a much larger sample size of PIT-tagged spring Chinook in 2026 to estimate predation (due to much lower detection and deposition probabilities on bird colonies). For these reasons, 2026 provides a unique opportunity to collect data on spring Chinook released into the tailrace of RIS.

**Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee
Statement of Agreement**

**Decoupling Summer Subyearling Survival Estimates
From Juvenile Steelhead Survival Estimates**

Submitted to the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee: February 24, 2026

Approved by the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee: _____

Statement: The Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) recognizes that the actual No Net Impact contribution rate for summer subyearling Chinook is unknown, as survival studies for this species have not yet been conducted. Decoupling applies solely to the calculation of annual NNI contributions for summer subyearling Chinook and does not alter performance standards or Covered Species obligations under the Settlement Agreement.

- The PRCC agrees that the current estimated baseline survival for summer subyearling Chinook (83.43%, ± 2.5 SE) will be used to calculate the annual NNI contributions for the 5-year duration of this SOA (2027-2032).
- Methodologies for NNI calculations, as described in Section 15.7 of the Priest Rapids Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement (SSSA), will remain unchanged.

In accordance with Section 15.6 (New Survival Estimates) of the SSSA, updated survival estimates for summer subyearling Chinook will be based on the arithmetic three-year average annual estimates, once survival studies are completed.

- Over the term of this five-year SOA, approved pilot studies will be conducted to address critical uncertainties which may include but not limited to fish source, travel time, tag effects, fish size, and emigration behaviors (e.g. residualism, active migrant, etc.), to support the development of a summer subyearling Chinook survival study plan.
- The PRCC agrees that No-Net-Impact (NNI) funds will be used to partially or completely fund approved pilot or laboratory studies directly supporting development of a subyearling Chinook survival study plan. The PRCC will consider using NNI Funds to partially or completely fund other evaluations deemed necessary to fill information gaps. All proposed expenditures require PRCC consensus approval of scope, budget, and protocols prior to obligation, consistent with the NNI Fund; Guidance Document and Spec Sheet.

- At the end of this SOA, the most current and best available scientific information and analysis collected over the five-year SOA timeframe (2025-2032) will be the standard of care for implementation as further described in Section 4.2 of the SSSA (Standard of Care).
- Any extension of this SOA requires consensus which may be based on documented study progress and agreed upon next steps. Absent consensus on an SOA extension (or some other consensus solution), by December 31, 2032, this SOA shall terminate and subyearling Chinook will be recoupled with steelhead (steelhead – 3.6%) for NNI calculations as described in Section 15.6 and Table 3 of the SSSA until which time approved subyearling Chinook survival estimates are established under Section 15.6.

Background:

In 2006, the Parties to the SSSA acknowledged that study methodologies to measure project passage survival rates had not been sufficiently established to conclusively measure summer subyearling Chinook survival. As a result, the Parties agreed that baseline survival for summer subyearling Chinook would be based on 2003 Project operating conditions for spring Chinook minus 3.6% (SSSA, Tables 1 & 3), transitioning to steelhead minus 3.6% in 2009 following the anticipated first three years of steelhead survival studies (SSSA, Table 3), and consistent with the surrogate relationship reaffirmed in PRCC SOA 2017-2. This relationship (Steelhead -3.6%) remains the default standard until project-specific subyearling data are available.

Because site-specific studies had not been completed at the time of signing, inferences about Covered Species' survival (and NNI contributions) were initially based on surrogate data from off-site studies. Those data supported the assumption that spring Chinook survival was an adequate surrogate for steelhead survival. Accordingly, the baseline estimate for steelhead survival, until studies were conducted, was assumed to be equal to spring Chinook. Off-site data also supported the assumption that sockeye and summer subyearling Chinook survivals were likely to be lower than those for spring Chinook and juvenile steelhead (SSSA, Table 3). Therefore, the baseline survival values for both sockeye and subyearling summer Chinook were established at 2.7-3.6% lower than spring Chinook and juvenile steelhead (SSSA, Table 3)

To date, performance standard evaluations for summer subyearling Chinook have not been conducted, as study methodologies have not been sufficiently established to conclusively measure survival. Nor have the Parties determined the best path forward to conduct survival evaluations. It is the PRCC's expectation that data will be collected to inform the development of a survival study plan by 2032.

Literature Cited:

Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County, Washington (Grant PUD). 2024. Priest Rapids Project Annual Progress and Implementation Report to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Grant PUD, Priest Rapids Project No. 2141. Ephrata Washington 98823.

Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County, Washington (Grant PUD). 2006. Priest Rapids Salmon and Steelhead Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement. Grant PUD, Priest Rapids Project No. 2141. Ephrata Washington 98823.

**PRCC NNI Funds
Project Specification Sheet
Tag Effects Evaluation for Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon**

Date submitted: February 24, 2026
Project Sponsor(s) Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County and Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County.
Project Liaison: PRCC Representative – Tom Dresser ~ TDresser@gcpud.org
Project Title: Tag Effects Evaluation for Summer Subyearling Chinook Salmon
Project Type: Research (Juvenile Salmonid)

Project Location: Summer subyearling Chinook Salmon fry from Eastbank Hatchery, owned by the Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County (Chelan PUD) and then transferred to the Abernathy Fish Technology Center where the laboratory experiments will be conducted.

Project Justification: Although there is extensive literature on tag retention and minimum fish size for acoustic tagging, important information gaps remain for certain life stages and ecological settings. Until recently, acoustic tags were too large for the subyearling summer Chinook Salmon life stage, which can include individuals smaller than 95 mm fork length.

The newest generation of acoustic tags, such as the Juvenile Salmonid Acoustic Telemetry System (model SS400) and Eel-Lamprey Acoustic Tag are potentially small enough to use with subyearling summer Chinook Salmon. However, substantial uncertainty remains regarding tag-related mortality, temperature effects, and tag loss that may occur during run-of-the-river tagging of juvenile summer Chinook Salmon during outmigration.

This study is regionally important because it will improve understanding of tag effects under the environmental conditions subyearling summer Chinook Salmon may experience during outmigration. Accurately quantifying tag loss and post-tagging mortality is essential to minimize bias in survival estimates of subyearling summer Chinook Salmon when evaluating the potential effects of hydro-operations on outmigrating fish.

Project Description: Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County (Grant PUD) and Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County (Chelan PUD) will conduct a laboratory study with the primary objective to evaluate tag retention, post-tagging survival, and growth of hatchery subyearling summer Chinook Salmon surgically implanted with two types of acoustic tags and exposed to a set of thermal regimes characteristic of current and projected future conditions encountered during outmigration past Rocky Reach, Rock Island, Wanapum, and Priest Rapids dams. Additional details are provided in the study proposal.

Project Cost: Grant PUD is requesting that No-Net-Impact Funds in the amount of \$195,766.60 be allocated towards this project. Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County and Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County are also contributing towards this study proposal. An itemized budget for the funding requested from the PRCC is described below.

PROPOSED BUDGET				
Budget Item	NNI Funding Request	Chelan PUD Funding	Grant PUD Funding	Total Cost
USFW Abernathy Fish Technology Center	\$59,820.70	\$59,820.70.	\$59,820.70	\$179,462.08
Study plan development, Project management, Tagging crew, Analysis, and Reporting	71,062.08	71,062.08	71,062.08	\$213,186.25
Equipment purchases	\$24,150.49	\$24,150.49	\$24,150.49	\$72,451.47
Eastbank O&M		In-kind		
ATS – Dummy Tag Purchase ¹	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$120,000.00
Pit-Tag Purchase	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$2,200
TOTAL	195,766.60	195,766.60	195,766.60	\$587,299.80

¹ Grant PUD purchased 2,400 ATS Dummy Tags on 2/12/2026. This purchased will be split 3 ways.