



Priest Rapids Fish Forum

Conference Call

Wednesday, 7 May 2025

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

FINAL MINUTES

PRFF Members

Emily Orling, USFWS
Ralph Lampman, Keely Murdoch, YN
Nathan and Clayton Buck, Wanapum
Jason McLellan, Bret Nine, CTCR
Mike Clement, Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Tracy Hillman, Chair

Patrick Verhey, Benjamin Cox, WDFW
Melissa Peterson, Chad Brown, WDOE
Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Steve Lewis, BIA
Pete McHugh, CRITFC

Meeting Attendees

Mike Clement, Grant PUD
Cory Kamphaus, YN
Shannon Adams, YN
Nathan Buck, Wanapum
Patrick Verhey, WDFW
Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Emily Orling, USFWS
Steve Lewis, BIA
Tracy Hillman, Chair

Ralph Lampman, YN
Tim Taylor, Grant PUD
Tygh Schuster, YN
Pete McHugh, CRITFC
Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Nate Patterson, YN
Joseph LeMoine, Grant PUD
Erin Harris, Grant PUD

Action Items:

- Mike Clement will share Grant PUD's sturgeon catch data with Laura Heironimus.
- Laura Heironimus will conduct a literature search to determine whether there is more recent information on White Sturgeon spontaneous autopolyploidy.
- Laura Heironimus will reach out to Jason to see whether Jason has any updated information on spontaneous autopolyploidy.

- Tracy Hillman will organize a White Sturgeon Subgroup meeting. The group will review the 2016 stocking SOA, while considering the most recent monitoring/indexing data, and determine whether there is a need to update the SOA.
- Tracy Hillman will send the PRFF a placeholder for the Pacific Lamprey Subgroup meeting that will be held on Wednesday, 6 August 2025.
- Ralph Lampman will share the updated Pacific Lamprey survival strategy with the group.
- All members will review the strategy and provide comments to Ralph Lampman by Friday, 6 June 2025.
- Tracy Hillman will share the 2018 Adult Pacific Lamprey NNI SOA with the group.
- Ralph Lampman will provide information on the number of adult lamprey to be PIT tagged at Bonneville Dam in 2025.

Decision Items:

- The PRFF agreed to extend the 2016 White Sturgeon Stocking SOA one additional year. This will cover the collection of broodstock in 2025 and the number of juveniles to be released in 2026.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the meeting and identified all attendees.

II. Agenda Review

The PRFF reviewed and approved the May agenda with no additions.

III. Approve April Meeting Notes

The PRFF reviewed and approved the 2 April 2025 meeting minutes.

IV. Review Action Items

The PRFF reviewed the following action item from the April meeting:

- Tracy Hillman will distribute the Guidance for Evaluating Spontaneous Autopolyploidy in White Sturgeon Supplementation Programs (June 3, 2020) to PRFF members. **Complete.**
- Tracy Hillman will reach out to PNNL, RRF, and ASWG on whether 2 July or 6 August works for them to participate in a virtual Pacific Lamprey Subgroup meeting. **Complete. The meeting will take place on 6 August.**
- Tracy Hillman will distribute Ralph Lampman’s Upper Columbia Juvenile Lamprey Source Datasheet to the PRFF. The PRFF will update source numbers in the spreadsheet. **Complete. See Section VI.**
- Ralph Lampman will develop a juvenile Pacific Lamprey survival strategy. **Complete. See Section VI.**

V. White Sturgeon

Juvenile White Sturgeon Releases – Mike Clement reported that they released juvenile sturgeon into the project area over a two-day period (9-10 April). During the first day, 2,000 juveniles were released

into Wanapum reservoir at the Vantage Boat Launch. On the second day, 1,250 juveniles were released into the Priest Rapids reservoir from the Desert Air Boat Launch.

Spontaneous Autopolyploidy Discussion – Last month, Tygh Schuster reported that of the 3,445 fish tested, 166 were positive for spontaneous autopolyploidy (4.8%). Positive fish originated primarily from tanks that incorporated gametes from females 1, 4, and 5. Tygh thought the increase in autopolyploidy might be related to mechanical stress during egg stirring, but he was not certain. During the last meeting, Mike Clement asked for some time to discuss this during the May meeting.

During the meeting today, members reviewed the Guidance for Evaluating Spontaneous Autopolyploidy in White Sturgeon Supplementation Programs, which was prepared by the Fish Forums in 2020. Members focused specifically on the section of the report that describes what measures can be taken to minimize the occurrence of autopolyploidy. Laura Heironimus indicated that she will research the literature to see if there is more recent information on what measures can be taken to minimize autopolyploidy.

Cory Kamphaus said that the occurrence of autopolyploidy this year was compared to last year, which had a very low occurrence. He wondered whether the occurrence last year is a good representation of the occurrence of autopolyploidy and asked whether the occurrence was higher in previous years. Mike responded that the incidence in previous years was around 20 fish. Nate Patterson noted that the highest incidence was 60 fish. Cory said they have been discussing this internally and believe it may be useful to track who is stirring eggs and see if there is a relationship between who stirs the eggs and the incidence of spontaneous autopolyploidy. He said they have a lot of help during this process, which is good, but they would like to make sure all staff are trained adequately in egg stirring. Thus, the Yakama Nation is looking into ways to minimize autopolyploidy in the future.

Laura noted that timing of injections along with egg stirring can result in spontaneous autopolyploidy. She added that even if you do everything perfectly, there will still be some level of autopolyploidy because it can be inherited from some maternal lines. She recalled that graduate students in Andrea Schreier's lab have been studying spontaneous autopolyploidy. She said the guidance document is a good starting point, but it may need to be updated, which is why she agreed to review the literature. She also agreed to reach out to Jason McLellan to see if he has recent information on spontaneous autopolyploidy.

Mike Clement asked Tygh whether he reached out to any caviar farms to see if they have useful information on spontaneous autopolyploidy. Tygh responded that he did not reach out to caviar farms but did reach out to Joel Van Eenennaam, Andrea Schreier, and the Kootenai Tribe to see if they had thoughts and suggestions on how to minimize spontaneous autopolyploidy. They confirmed that what is in the guidance document is relevant and the incidence is likely related to the timing of injections and egg stirring. These are all things the Yakama Nation will try to improve at the hatchery.

Adult Broodstock Collection and 2016 SOA Extension – Tracy Hillman indicated that the PRFF needs to discuss whether they want to extend the 2016 White Sturgeon Stocking Statement of Agreement (SOA) another year. He said the PRFF has reviewed and extended the SOA one additional year each year since 2000. After reviewing the 2016 SOA with the group, Tracy asked whether the group would like to extend the SOA one additional year. All parties present agreed to extend the SOA one more year. This extension covers broodstock collection in 2025 and juvenile releases in 2026.

Laura Heironimus said that because stocking is tied to monitoring, it may be a good time to convene the White Sturgeon Subgroup to discuss stocking levels and develop an updated SOA. Members agreed and directed Tracy Hillman to identify some possible dates for the Subgroup meeting.

Mike Clement indicated that Grant PUD will collect broodstock over a two-week period beginning on 12 May. The goal is to collect enough broodstock to support a 6x6 spawning matrix. Mike Clement added that they will use the same fishing guides as before to help them collect broodstock this year. He added that the Yakama Nation is ready for the fish, Grant PUD has their transport permits, and two boats and crews are ready to begin work. As before, fishing will occur between McNary Dam and the Umatilla Bridge.

Mike said they will record data on any tagged fish they capture and share those data with ODFW. Laura asked Mike to share those data with her too. Laura added that there appears to be little natural-origin recruitment within John Day reservoir and any additional data Grant PUD can provide will help inform WDFW's stock assessment work. Mike said he will share the data with Laura. They have about 10 years of catch information. Mike also noted that they do catch smaller sturgeon (3-4 foot) but avoid fishing in areas where there are lots of smaller fish.

Other White Sturgeon Items – No additional items were discussed.

VI. Pacific Lamprey

Pacific Lamprey Subgroup Meeting – Tracy Hillman said that most people supported meeting on 6 August for the Pacific Lamprey Subgroup Meeting. Tracy will send a placeholder to participants for the 6 August subgroup meeting.

Update on Feasibility of a Juvenile Lamprey Survival Study – Ralph Lampman provided the group with a document titled “Juvenile Pacific Lamprey Passage Behavior and Survival at Upper Columbia River Hydroelectric Dams: General Study Design.” Ralph said the report is largely based on a proposed juvenile survival study at Rock Island Dam. Because the group just received the document, Ralph walked everyone through the report. He identified the study goals and objectives, relevant resource management goals and public interest considerations, existing information and need for additional information, project nexus, study methodology, statistical methods, and estimated cost and level of effort. Ralph also walked through his Upper Columbia Juvenile Lamprey Source Datasheet, which is included in the study design report. He added that the report provides suggested responses to the following questions:

1. What is the scope and scale of a survival study?
2. What survival model should be used?
3. What is an acceptable precision level?
4. What is the source of lamprey for a study?
5. How to deal with tag performance and biological/seasonal effects?

Steve Lewis asked whether the cost of monitoring was included in the budget. Ralph responded that monitoring acoustic tags is included in the budget. Tracy Hillman asked whether the lamprey-specific collector has been field tested. Ralph indicated that it has been tested in the lab, but they will also test it in the field this year.

The PRFF has 30 days to review the study design report. Comments are due to Ralph by Friday, 6 June.

Grant PUD Adult Trapping Efforts in 2025 – Mike Clement reported that Grant PUD will be collecting adult lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam for Chelan PUD's adult lamprey survival study at Rock Island Dam and Douglas PUD's study at Wells Dam. In addition, they will be collecting adult Pacific Lamprey following the approved 2018 Grant PUD Adult Lamprey No Net Impact SOA. He said they will begin

trapping earlier than in past years, likely beginning in mid-June, and will trap through early October. Mike said he is still coordinating with both Chelan and Douglas PUDs. He hopes that this will be a good run year given all the studies being conducted in the upper Columbia. Ralph noted that according to the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission predictions, we should see good numbers this year and for the next few years. Mike noted that if we have a relatively low run this year, Chelan PUD is the highest priority for receiving fish. Mike said he believes Chelan PUD needs 250 fish and Douglas needs 400 fish.

Emily Orling asked whether Grant PUD will be monitoring the percentage of the run that is captured for the studies. Mike responded that they do monitor the percentage of the run captured but noted that there is no target number that needs to be collected to meet the 2018 SOA. The SOA states that Grant PUD will fish four traps at Priest Rapids Dam for a total of 15 days during the peak migration period. All fish captured will be transported and released at Kirby-Billingsly Park upstream from Rock Island Dam. Tracy Hillman said he will share the 2018 SOA with the group. Mike said they generally capture about 14-17% of the run at Priest Rapids Dam. Based on an MOU with Douglas PUD, Grant PUD has fished an additional four weeks to collect fish for the Douglas PUD studies. This year, they will be collecting fish for a longer period to help Chelan PUD with their studies.

Other Pacific Lamprey Items – Tracy Hillman reported that the 2025 Lamprey Information Exchange is scheduled for 9-11 December 2025 in the Portland area. They are currently soliciting abstracts. The deadline for submitting an abstract is Monday, 30 June. This will be an in-person event but will provide virtual options for those who cannot attend in person.

Ralph Lampman reported that the Upper Columbia Regional Management Unit (RMU) meeting was held on Monday, 14 April from 9:00 am to noon. He said they talked about funding and identified items that are coming up in the future. They also reviewed the Threats Table to see if there were any changes that needed to be made. No changes were made. Ralph noted that there is a new RMU for Canada. This will be led by Joy Wade and Paul Grant.

Mike Clement asked Ralph whether there will be any tagging of adult lamprey with HDX PIT tags. Ralph said, yes, they are planning to PIT tag fish in the lower river beginning in June and going through August. Ralph will send the number of fish to be tagged to the group.

VII. Administration

No new administration business was discussed.

VIII. Adjourn

With no additional business to discuss, Tracy Hillman adjourned the meeting at 10:30 am.

IX. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the PRFF will be on 4 June.