



Grant County  
**PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT**  
*Excellence in Service and Leadership*

**Priest Rapids Fish Forum  
 Conference Call**

**Wednesday, 6 May 2020  
 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.**

**Call-In Number: 1-800-977-8002, Bridge: 6958211**

**FINAL MINUTES**

**PRFF REPRESENTATIVES**

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

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

**ATTENDEES**

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RD Nelle, USFWS  
 Mike Clement, Grant PUD  
 Tom Skiles, CRITFC/CTUIR  
 Chris Mott, Grant PUD  
 Erin Harris, Grant PUD  
 Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Donella Miller, YN  
 Patrick Verhey, WDFW  
 Johnny Buck, Wanapum  
 Breean Zimmerman, WDOE  
 Laura Heironimus WDFW

**Action Items:**

- Members will send their comments and edits on the Spontaneous Autopolyploidy Guidance document to Tracy Hillman by Friday, 22 May 2020.
- Laura Heironimus will ask Phil Bates, Idaho Power Company, to provide information on the guidelines they follow to ensure only 8N sturgeon are stocked into the Snake River.
- RD Nelle will provide the PRFF with the Upper Columbia Pacific Lamprey Regional Management Unit report.

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** - Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the call and participants introduced themselves.
- II. **Agenda Review** - Members reviewed and approved the agenda with no additions.
- III. **Approve 26 March Meeting Notes** – Draft 26 March Meeting Notes were reviewed and approved with edits.
  - A. **Review Action Items from the 26 March Meeting**
    - 1. Members will continue to work on the draft white sturgeon autoploidy guidance document, which will be distributed to the PRFF before the 6 May meeting. **Ongoing.**
- IV. **White Sturgeon Management Plan**
  - A. **Update on Juvenile Rearing** – Donella Miller said they continue to rear maternal families separately at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery. She said the fish continue to grow and are doing well.
  - B. **Juvenile Marking, Tagging, and Screening** – Chris Mott said there is no new information on when they will receive the Coulter Counter. As far as he knows, parts are still being held up in Malaysia as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Grant PUD will not be able to screen the juveniles on station this spring. Chris added that marking and tagging is also on hold because of the Governor’s orders associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He said, consistent with the PRFF decision last month, they intend to mark and release the one maternal group that has no evidence of spontaneous autoploidy (SA) as soon as the Governor’s orders are relaxed. This release of about 670 juvenile sturgeon will likely occur later spring or early summer this year.

Mike Clement asked Donella Miller if the Yakama Nation has or will relax their social distancing orders sometime soon. Donella responded that the Yakama Nation is following the guidelines from the Governor. They will not relax the orders until the Governor indicates it is okay to do so. She added that Yakima County has the highest per capita infection rate on the west coast. She said at the hatchery they are working single person shifts and night shifts for safety purposes. Also, the County is experiencing an increase in crime because of the statewide shutdown. Donella noted that they have an adequate supply of proper PPE at the hatchery and they follow cleaning procedures at the end of work shifts.
  - C. **Update on 2020 Broodstock Collection** – Chris Mott reported that because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor’s stay-at-home orders, Grant PUD will not be able to safely collect white sturgeon broodstock this year. Therefore, as discussed and approved by the PRFF during the last PRFF meeting, Grant PUD will hold on station the four maternal groups that tested positive for low levels of SA. These fish will be reared until next year at which time they will be screened for SA, marked, and released into the project area in 2021. Thus, Grant PUD will be able to release juvenile sturgeon into the project area in both 2020 and 2021.

Chris added that there are about 1,000 juveniles per maternal group on station at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery (N = ~4,000). He said all fish would be screened for SA before they are released next year. Only 8N fish will be released. Mike Clement said Grant PUD will share part of the 4,000 fish at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery with Chelan PUD. That is, based on target release numbers for each project area, roughly 60% of the 4,000 fish will remain at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery and will be released into the Priest Rapids Project Area in 2021, while the remaining 40% of the fish will be transferred to Columbia Basin Hatchery for rearing and later will be released into the Rocky Reach Project Area in 2021. All fish will be tested for SA before they are released into their respective project areas. Mike said Donella will coordinate with the Columbia Basin Hatchery manager

to determine the most appropriate time to transfer the fish from the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery to the Columbia Basin Hatchery.

Tracy Hillman asked each voting member present if they approve the decision to not collect white sturgeon broodstock this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor's orders. All members present agree that white sturgeon broodstock should not be collected this year.<sup>1</sup> They all agreed that human safety is a priority. Tracy said he will submit in writing this decision to Ecology to make sure it is consistent with the 401 Certification.

Mike let Donella know that Grant PUD is willing to help her in any way they can. Tracy thanked everyone for their support and flexibility under a difficult situation.

- D. **Spontaneous Autopolyploidy Guidance Document** – Tracy Hillman said that he received input from CCT and WDFW on the SA Guidance document. He submitted the updated document to the PRFF last week for review. Tracy walked through the document and described updated information and identified comments that still need to be addressed. Based on discussions during the meeting, Laura indicated that she would ask Phil Bates (Idaho Power Company) if he can provide a brief summary on their guidelines for releasing only 8N sturgeon into the Snake River. She also agreed to work with Chad Jackson and Patrick Verhey on rewriting the guidelines for screening wild sturgeon larvae. The PRFF agreed that all wild larvae need to be screened for both 12N and 10N fish before release. In addition, the guidelines should include a discussion on the numbers of additional wild fish to be held as a buffer if 12N or 10N fish are identified within the group. Finally, the PRFF agreed that Dr. Andrea Schrier should review the final draft.

The PRFF will review the draft guidance document and provide edits and comments back to Tracy by Friday, 22 May 2020. Tracy will then update the document and resubmit it to the PRFF for review before the June meeting.

- E. **Other White Sturgeon Items** – None.

V. **Pacific Lamprey Management Plan**

- A. **Adult Trapping in 2020** – Mike Clement indicated that Grant PUD is still planning to trap adult Pacific lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam beginning late July. They intend to trap for eight weeks, working four 10-hour days per week. At this time, the plan is to transport the fish from Priest Rapids Dam to Kirby Billingsley Hydro Park, where the fish will be released.
- B. **Other Pacific Lamprey Items** – Mike Clement reported that he was on a conference call last week that talked about prioritization of Pacific lamprey actions in the Upper Columbia and asked RD Nelle to share his thoughts on the call. RD said the mainstem discussion was about fish passage and added that the regional management plans are moving forward. He said the PUDs and ACOE are coordinating and that the CCT will receive funding from BPA to do lamprey work in the Okanogan basin. RD said he will provide the PRFF with the Upper Columbia Pacific Lamprey Regional Management Unit report.

VI. **Bull Trout Management Plan**

- A. **Update on Winter Bull Trout Monitoring** – Mike Clement indicated that they observed no bull trout passing through open (watered) fishways at Priest Rapids or Wanapum dams during the period 15 November 2019 through 15 April 2020. This is the winter period when they normally do not count fish passing the dams. This past winter, however, based on a request from the USFWS, they counted fish passing through watered ladders at the projects. Normal fish-counting operations began on 15 April.

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<sup>1</sup> Voting members present included WDFW, USFWS (RD Nelle on behalf of Steve Lewis), YN, GPUD, and CRITFC/Umatilla. CCT (Jason McLellan) approved the decision following the meeting.

**B. Other Bull Trout Items – None.**

**VII. Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the PRFF will be on Wednesday, 3 June 2020 at the Grant PUD Natural Resources Office in Wenatchee.