



Grant County **PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT**

Priest Rapids Fish Forum

Wednesday, 3 June 2015
Grant PUD Wenatchee Office

PRFF Representatives

Stephen Lewis, USFWS
Bob Rose, YN
Doris Squeochs, Wanapum
Jason McLellan, CCT
Mike Clement, GCPUD
Debbie Williams, GCPUD

Patrick Verhey, Chad Jackson, WDFW
Pat McGuire, WDOE
Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Keith Hatch, BIA
Chris Mott, GCPUD
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Attendees

Patrick Verhey, WDFW
Pat McGuire, WDOE
Jason McLellan, CCT (via phone)
Mike Clement, Grant PUD
Chad Jackson, WDFW
Jim Powell, BCAHS (via phone)
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Tom Skiles, CRITFC (via phone)
RD Nelle, USFWS (via phone)
Bob Rose, YN
Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Doris Squeochs, Wanapum
Aaron Jackson, CTUIR (via phone)

Action Items:

1. Chris Mott will contact Paul Grutter (Golder) to see if he can call into the next meeting to discuss the sturgeon population assessment work that will be conducted in 2015.
2. Members of the PRFF will decide during the next meeting if juvenile sturgeon collected as larvae will be the primary fish for release into the Priest Rapids Project Area.
3. Mike Clement will check with Grant PUD legal staff to determine if surplus mitigation sturgeon can be released into areas outside the Project Area (e.g., Snake River or Zone 6)
4. The PRFF will identify what questions they have for the Canadian experts (Steve McAdam and Villy Christensen) on Ecopath with Ecosim. They will also identify what data are available to populate the model.
5. Tracy Hillman will contact the Canadian experts and identify what questions they have for the PRFF.
6. Tracy Hillman will identify major themes for the proposed White Sturgeon Workshop to be held in September. Tracy will then ask for comments and edits from the PRFF. Tracy will share the themes with the PRFF policy representatives and ask them for their feedback and questions to help guide the workshop.

7. Tracy Hillman will check with the RRFF to see if they agree with the sturgeon workshop process and schedule.
8. PRFF voting members will share the four policy-level questions from the Pacific Lamprey Subgroup with their policy representatives. Members will report their findings to the PRFF during the next PRFF meeting.

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

- II. **Agenda Review** – The agenda was approved with one addition: discussion on juvenile sturgeon monitoring in 2015.

A. **Meeting Minute approval** – 1 April 2015 – Approved.

B. **Action Items from March Meeting:**

1. Chris Mott or Blue Leaf will send an email inviting PRFF members to participate in Grant PUD's sturgeon broodstock fishing. **Complete.**
2. Tracy Hillman will review PRFF Protocols regarding participation and voting. **Complete; Tracy shared with the Forum the protocols regarding participation and voting.**
3. Tracy Hillman will poll PRFF members for agenda items for a May meeting. **Complete; members elected to skip the May meeting because of a lack of agenda items.**

III. Update on White Sturgeon Management Plan (WSMP)

A. **Update on Juvenile Releases** – Chris Mott reported that a total of 6,500 juvenile sturgeon were released on 30 April and 1 May. Fish released averaged about 198 grams. About 71% of the fish were released into Wanapum Reservoir and 29% were released into Priest Rapids Reservoir. One release in Wanapum Reservoir was near deep water (Frenchman Coulee Launch).

B. **Juvenile Sturgeon Monitoring in 2015** – Mike Clement said that there will be no juvenile sturgeon index monitoring in 2015. Juvenile indexing occurred last year and will occur again in 2016. Chris Mott noted that Golder and Blue Leaf Environmental will set out egg mats to collect sturgeon eggs downstream from Rock Island Dam. Collected eggs will be placed in *in situ* incubators. This work will be used to assess natural production of sturgeon. Mike indicated that population assessment work will also occur this year.

Tom Skiles said that because of the Wanapum drawdown last year and the significant loss of benthic invertebrates in the reservoir (as described in the benthic analysis report), it would be wise to collect stomach contents from sturgeon this year. The purpose is to examine the effects of the drawdown and dewatering on sturgeon food. In addition, the effects of dewatering could be assessed by examining growth rates of juvenile sturgeon.

Mike indicated that the population assessment work will help assess growth rates. Jason McLellan said this work will provide estimates of abundance, growth, length, weight, condition, and maturation. This work is described in Appendix D in the WSMP (Objective 2; Task 3). Jason also noted that growth rates can be compared with several historical surveys in Wanapum Reservoir.

Tom noted that he thought there had been an examination of sturgeon stomach contents in the past. Jason indicated that Golder collected stomach contents from only a few CRITFC sturgeon. Jason said that the sample size was too small to generalize to the entire population.

Members asked if Paul Grutter with Golder could call into the next meeting to describe in more detail the population assessment work to be conducted in 2015. Chris Mott said that he will contact Paul to see if he is available to conference with the PRFF.

- C. Update on Broodstock Collection** – Chris Mott reported that crews in two-three boats fished for 12 days and caught 154 sturgeon downstream from McNary Dam. This equates to about 13 fish per day. A total of 15 males and 13 females were transported to Marion Drain. Spawning activities last week resulted in an 8x10 matrix and a 1x5 matrix. Thus, there are 85 families on station at Marion Drain. Jason McLellan asked if the PUDs are considering collecting broodstock in other pools/locations in the future. Chris said that they are and that ODFW may also want broodstock collection activities to occur in other locations. Bob Rose said that the Yakama Nation shares those concerns and suggested the boils just downstream from The Dalles Dam may be an ideal location for collecting broodstock.

Chris indicated that larval collections will occur for about two-three weeks in Bonneville Pool downstream from The Dalles Dam. Chad Jackson said that WDFW will do pilot larvae collections in both The Dalles and Bonneville pools for the PUDs (Grant and Chelan PUDs). Because of warmer water temperatures, collections will start on 28-29 May. These larvae will be transported to Ringold Hatchery for rearing to yearlings. Voting members of the PRFF will determine during the next meeting if larval sturgeon will be considered the primary fish for release into the Project Area.

Bob asked if surplus juvenile sturgeon could be held in the hatchery another year and released in the Project Area as age-2 fish. This would provide a safety net in case adequate numbers of broodstock and/or larvae could not be collected to reach the release goal of 6,500 fish in a given year. Some questioned the genetic benefits, noting that the genetic benefits would likely be minimal. Nevertheless, members thought that it was worth consideration and that the Forum should develop a strategy for establishing separate groups for broodstock. Bob asked if the Forum has legal mechanisms to release surplus mitigation fish into other areas, such as the Snake River or Zone 6 (between Bonneville Dam and McNary Dam). Mike Clement noted that releasing Grant PUD-raised fish outside the Priest Rapids Project Area would likely result in issues associated with misappropriation of public funds, but he will double check and update the PRFF during the next meeting.

- D. Phase 2 Sturgeon Conservation Program (Ecopath with Ecosim)** – Chris Mott said that he and Lance Keller spoke with Steve McAdam about using Ecopath with Ecosim (EwE) to estimate carrying capacities for white sturgeon within the Project Areas. Steve indicated that he has a student that may be interested in the work. He estimated that it would take about two years to complete the work. According to Chris, Steve agreed that an ecosystem approach would be better than using a population model. He also told Chris that Villy Christensen at the University of British Columbia is the ecosystem modeling expert.

Jason McLellan also talked with Steve McAdam about the EwE model. Steve told Jason that the EwE model has not been used for white sturgeon to date; however, there is interest in modeling sturgeon if funding is available. Steve suggested that the PRFF arrange a conference call with Villy, Steve, and other interested parties to discuss the needs of the PRFF, the EwE model, and available data that could be used to populate the model. Tracy Hillman recommended that the PRFF identify what questions they would like to ask the experts and also identify what data are available to populate the model. Tracy will coordinate with the experts in Canada and identify what questions they have for the Forum. Once we have exchanged information and questions, the PRFF and RRFF White Sturgeon Subgroups will set up a conference call with the experts.

White Sturgeon Workshop – Tracy Hillman indicated that because not all parties could agree to the SOAs, he received calls from policy representatives stating their desire for the PRFF to host a white sturgeon workshop that would give policy representatives the opportunity to ask the technical representatives (and outside experts if necessary) questions about carrying capacity, estimation of carrying capacity, and how those estimates will guide future juvenile release strategies. Members of the Forum agreed that a workshop would be wise and recommended that the workshop occur during the regularly scheduled meeting in September. Thus, both the PRFF and RRFF could meet jointly to address policy-level questions/concerns. Bob Rose asked that Tracy Hillman identify the major themes for the workshop. Tracy will then share those with the PRFF and seek comments/edits. Once the themes for the workshop are finalized, Tracy will share those with the policy representatives and ask that they provide feedback and questions to help guide the workshop. Tracy will check with the RRFF to see if they agree with the process and schedule.

E. Other White Sturgeon Items – None

IV. Update on PLMP

NNI (No Net Impact) Update from Pacific Lamprey Subgroup – Tracy Hillman reported that the Pacific Lamprey Subgroup met on 28 May at Grant PUD in Wenatchee, WA. Grant PUD laid out their draft recommendation on how to address Lamprey NNI. The draft proposal includes: (1) annual deposit of money into a Lamprey NNI Account, (2) adult trapping and transportation, and (3) ten-year biological check-ins. The duration of the proposed NNI agreement would be for the life of the license (39 years). In addition, the proposed NNI actions would be in fulfillment of juvenile survival studies if agreed to by the Forum. During the Subgroup meeting, Bob Rose shared his spreadsheet that identified possible studies and actions associated with NNI. The spreadsheet also identified the estimated costs of each action. Because the implementation of an NNI account and modifications to the PLMP would require approval at the policy level, the Subgroup identified four policy-level items that the PRFF need to discuss with their policy representatives. Those are:

1. Is there policy support for a proposed recommendation to establish an NNI account that will fund adult and juvenile NNI actions within the Priest Rapids Project Area? Grant PUD would provide annual contributions to the NNI account and may front-load the account to support the implementation of key projects. The account would be set up like the PRCC Habitat Subcommittee Fund and would be controlled by the PRFF. Thus, the PRFF would determine by consensus what projects would be funded and who would do the work. This proposal defers juvenile survival studies for the life of the license (39 years).
2. Is there policy support for proposed recommendation #1 with inclusion of juvenile survival studies? In this case, however, survival studies would be funded through the NNI Fund. That is, Grant PUD would contribute funds annually to the NNI account (as in #1) and those funds would be used to address both NNI actions and any future juvenile survival studies (under #1, funds would only be used for NNI actions; there would be no juvenile survival studies). The amount contributed to the NNI fund would be the same for both recommendations #1 and #2. That is, Grant PUD would not increase the annual contribution to the NNI account under recommendation #2.
3. Is there policy support for an annual contribution of about \$117,000 per year for the life of the license (39 years)? This contribution level was based on estimating the cost of a three-year juvenile survival study, and dividing that amount by 39 (the number of years

remaining in the license). When necessary, an additional amount of about \$62,000 would be spent on adult trap-and-haul. This money would only be used for trap-and-haul to address adult NNI, and would not be available for other NNI actions if trap-and-haul is deemed unnecessary in a given year.

4. Finally, is their policy support for an NNI agreement lasting for the life of the license (39 years) with ten-year biological check-ins? For example, would the parties support recommendation #1 or #2 for a duration of 39 years? The biological check-ins would be used to guide what future actions would be funded with NNI money; there would be no adjustments to the annual contributions to the NNI account based on the biological check-ins (annual contributions would only be adjusted for inflation).

The Subgroup asks that each voting member of the PRFF discuss these four issues with their policy representatives and be prepared to share your findings with the PRFF during the July meeting.

- A. **Adult Monitoring** – Mike Clement reported that Rod O'Connor with Blue Leaf will provide a white paper and maybe a presentation at a future meeting outlining the 2015 Pacific lamprey study plan. The plan will include direct release of about 125 tagged adult lamprey in the lower Priest Rapids Left Bank Ladder to try and determine why it takes lamprey longer to move through that section of the ladder. All detection locations at the Priest Rapids Left Bank Ladder and Wanapum Ladders will remain the same. Only the entrance and exit at the Priest Rapids Right Bank Ladder will be monitored.

Mike indicated that this year the Army Corps of Engineers will not tag adult lamprey in the Columbia River. However, the Warm Springs Tribes will tag adult lamprey in the river. These fish will increase the sample size of tagged fish in the river. Finally, Mike noted that since May, three unique tags have been detected in the Project Area. These fish were tagged last year.

- B. **Update on Gaps under Picketed Gates at the OLAFT** – Mike Clement said that Grant PUD has created gaps under the picketed leads that will allow adult lamprey passage at the OLAFT. He reported that Grant PUD engineers have modified the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that WDFW and the YN use when operating the OLAFT. The “lamprey mode” will be implemented as a normal operating procedure during the lamprey season.
- C. **Other Lamprey Items** – None

- V. **Next Meeting** – 1 July 2015 at Grant PUD in Wenatchee, WA.