



Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

Microsoft Teams
Tuesday, March 26, 2024
9:00 a.m. to 9:40 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

PRCC Representatives and Alternatives

Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD
Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (Alt), attCTCR
Tom Lorz, CTUIR
Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS

Bill Gale, USFWS
Chad Jackson, Andrew Murdoch (Alt) WDFW
Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN

Meeting Attendees

Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA
Bryan Nordlund, Facilitator
Kirk Truscott, CTCR (attended virtually)
Curt Dotson, GPUD

Tom Dresser, GPUD
Rod O'Connor GPUD (attended virtually)
Tim Taylor, GPUD (attended virtually)
Andrew Murdoch, WDFW

Action Items

- C. Dotson will inform the PRCC of any updates to the 2025–2027 Smolt Survival Study data plan, should they arise. (*This item is ongoing*).
- T. Dresser will reach out to committee members to discuss future PRCC facilitation options.

Review Items

- The updated draft 2024 Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Agenda (v.4) was forwarded to the PRCC following the meeting on April 10, 2024.
- Grant PUD's *Draft 2023 Activities Under Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project report* (Progress and Implementation, or P&I Report) was sent by Evelyn Zepeda on March 6; responses were due by April 7, 2024. (*Note that no comments from PRCC members were received by the due date*).

Decisions and Approvals

- None.

I. Welcome, Announcements, and Agenda Review

Bryan Nordlund welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. No additions or changes were requested by PRCC members.

II. Meeting Minutes Status

The February 27 PRCC meeting minutes were distributed by Kristi Geris on March 12, 2024.

B. Nordlund reviewed the action items from the previous meeting.

- *Anchor QEA will distribute a revised 2024 Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)/PRCC meeting schedule with the updated in-person Wenatchee, Washington, venue.*

A revised meeting schedule was distributed to the PRCC by Kristi Geris on February 28, 2024.

- *Curt Dotson will inform the PRCC of any updates to the 2025–2027 Smolt Survival Study data plan, should they arise.*

No new updates were shared in today's meeting.

- *Keely Murdoch will ask about funding sources for the 2024 Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop during the HCP Coordinating Committees meeting, notably as it relates to No Net Impact (NNI) funding contributions, and will report back to the PRCC.*

K. Murdoch was not present in the meeting, but emailed her conclusion prior to the meeting that YN does not feel it would be appropriate to use NNI funds for this workshop.

III. Progress and Implementation Report Review Process

Grant PUD's *Draft 2023 Activities Under Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project report* (Progress and Implementation Report, or P&I report) was sent by Evelyn Zepeda on March 6, 2024, for 30-day review. Grant PUD has a tight schedule for submitting the report to FERC may not be able to address comments if they come in after April 7.

T. Dresser said this report is a summary of all activities implemented by Grant PUD over the previous year.

(Note that no comments were received from PRCC members by the due date).

IV. Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Planning

T. Dresser said Grant PUD has withdrawn a proposal to use any NNI funding for that workshop. The PUDs are working together to cover the costs of the workshop.

V. 2024 Fish Passage Operations

A. Fish Ladder Inspections

C. Dotson said all fish ladders at Wanapum Dam (WAN) and Priest Rapids Dam (PRD) are back in service, since March 20 and March 25, respectively.

B. Fish Spill Updates

2024 Spill Committee

Grant PUD is seeking 2 volunteers from the PRCC to serve on the annual spill committee, which can be convened to help make in-season decisions about fish spill. *(Following the meeting, B. Nordlund confirmed by email that S. Carlon and B. Gale will serve on the 2024 spill committee.)*

2024 Spill Operations Plans

C. Dotson said historically spill passage begins mid-April based on numbers of smolts observed.

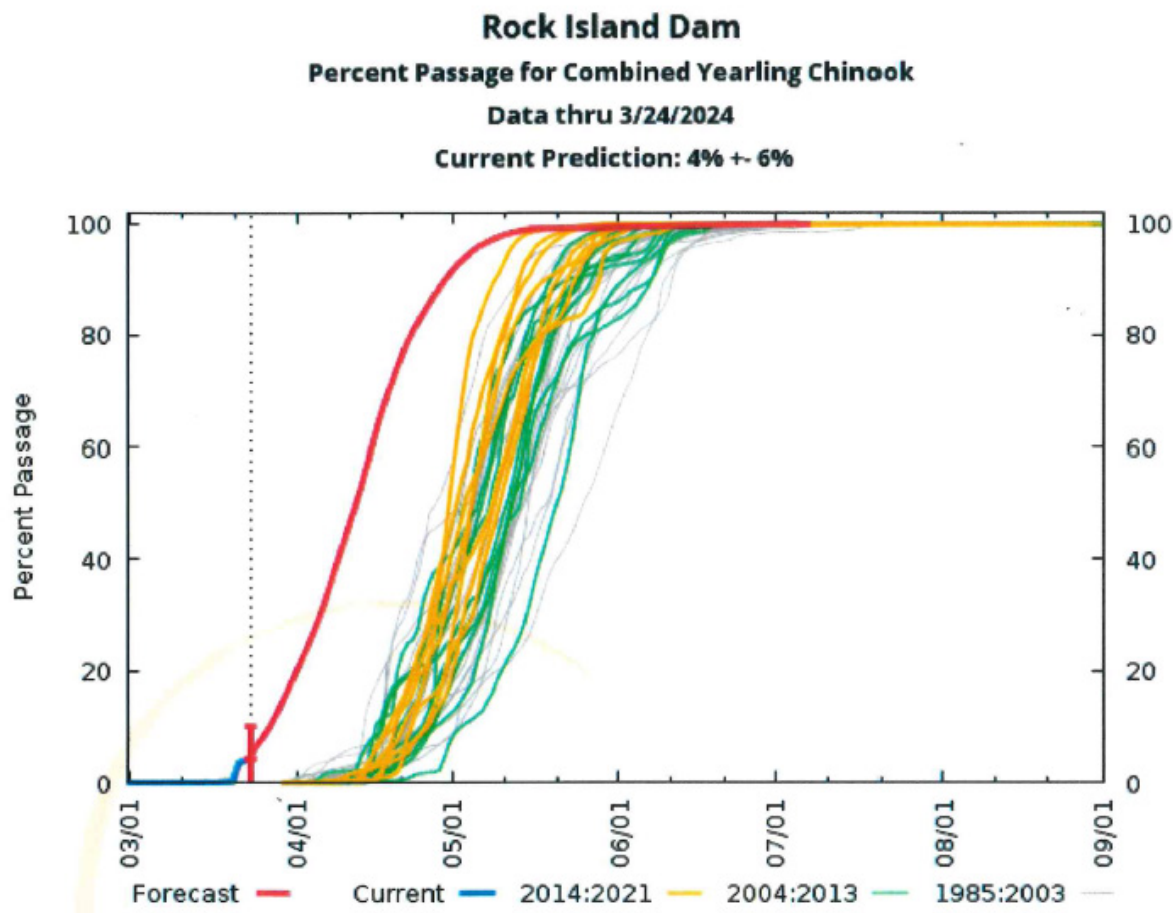
K. Truscott asked if the summer Chinook salmon that were released early from Dryden Pond triggered a fish-spill event at Rock Island Dam (RIS), and whether Grant PUD has plans for a limited or interim fish-spill event. The juvenile bypass structure at WAN and PRD is usually scheduled to open a certain number of days after RIS starts spilling. K. Truscott said he is asking to consider options for the protection of fish that may start to move downstream through the system.

C. Dotson answered that as far as he was aware, RIS had not engaged in fish-spill operations for the early fish release from the Dryden facility. For Grant PUD's projects, usually juvenile passage operations start is approximately 2 days from RIS to WAN, then 1 day from WAN to PRD. The trigger for initiating spill is observation of 2.5% of the estimated downstream migrants, and once numbers decline the standard error on that estimate takes effect; Grant PUD feels the 2.5% of the total outmigration has not started yet to set the beginning of the fish spill season. T. Dresser said that at this time, Grant PUD has no intent to start an interim spill, to start up and then shut down, and start up again at a later date. That would be a logistical hurdle with dam operations.

C. Dotson said this week there was tainter gate spill (10 tainter gates were open), and with normal operations at WAN for this year all turbines are running between 13.61 and 13.68 kcfs, which is right in the middle of the range for fish mode. In this case, the normal operations are providing some safe passage. A. Murdoch asked what the tainter gate spill is. C. Dotson said the tainter gate spill occurs 70 feet below water surface. A. Murdoch noted that may not entrain juveniles that tend to be surface oriented.

C. Dotson showed a graph with 37 years of downstream yearling Chinook salmon passage data at Rock Island to illustrate that the increase in outmigrants observed so far (shown as a blue line) does not likely represent more than 2.5% of the outmigrants, and that the increase in numbers typically occurs in mid-April. The red line showing forecasted outmigrants is based on that spurious observation of fish from Dryden Pond. K. Truscott asked, if this release from Dryden is not likely to exceed the 2.5% of the total outmigration, will Grant PUD still able to protect 95% of the outmigrants? Dotson

confirmed that is the case and that Grant PUD is still waiting for the spring outmigration to take place.



K. Truscott said he wanted to confirm today whether there is a simple switch that (Grant PUD) could be turned on to allow for some interim juvenile spill. He said tainter gate spill is not the same as surface spill for surface-oriented juveniles. He said he understands Grant PUD’s response that operations are not able to be adjusted on an interim basis.

(Note that based on observed fish numbers, Grant PUD initiated fish-spill and fish-mode operations on Thursday, April 4, at WAN and Friday, April 5, at PRD. C. Dotson indicated via email that this is approximately 2 weeks earlier than all previous fish-spill seasons, but numbers indicated that spill should start.)

C. Fish Counts for 2023 (April 15 to November 15)

The following are final adult fish counts for 2023:

Project	Spring Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Summer Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Fall Chinook Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Coho Salmon	Steelhead
Priest Rapids*	18,888	51,102	44,970	235,270	16,651	7,617
Wanapum	19,152	57,251	27,884	228,172	11,461	7,522
Rock Island	17,619	51,574	17,628	247,772	17,690	8,326

UPDATES

VI. Review of Outstanding NNI-Funded Projects

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**
No update anticipated.
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022 to 2024)**
Kirk Truscott will ask Holly McLelland when to anticipate final results and will invite her to present.
- **WDFW PIT-Tag Detection Barge**
No update anticipated. The barge is currently in the river.
- **2024 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby**
No update anticipated.
- **2024 RTR Avian Predation Study**
No update anticipated.

VII. Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittee updates have been distributed by email.

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum – met March 6, next meeting April 3.
- Habitat Subcommittee – met March 14, next meeting April 11.
- Fall Chinook Work Group – met October 3, next meeting May 7.
- Hatchery Subcommittee – met March 20, next meetings April 17 and 18 (a special all-day meeting focused on the feasibility of a White River hatchery program).

VIII. SOAs Discussed in 2024

SOA number	Key Words	Last Discussed	Status
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-- = none to date

IX. Next Meetings

The next PRCC meeting is scheduled for April 23 at 9:00 a.m., in person, at Confluence Technology Center. A Microsoft Teams link will be included in the agenda.

X. Future PRCC Facilitation (PRCC members only)

T. Dresser will reach out to PRCC members via email to discuss specific facilitation concerns.